

Legacy of a superhero

Shanxi Opera actor says he is proud to portray Guan Yu for over 40 years CHINA, PAGE 6



5G stations continue to mushroom BUSINESS, PAGE 8



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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12, 2024

Fostering of world-class firms stressed

Xi calls for improving modern corporate system with distinctive Chinese features

By MO JINGXI mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping emphasized on Tuesday the importance of leveraging the country's strength of socialism with Chinese characteristics to improve the modern corporate system and foster more world-class enterprises.

Xi made the remark when presiding over the fifth meeting of the central commission for deepening overall reform of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee. He is head of the commission.

The modern corporate system with distinctive Chinese characteristics features clearly defined ownership and responsibilities of companies, the separation of government functions from enterprise management, and scientific management.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, said that efforts should also be made to strengthen the Party's leadership and improve corporate governance.

To improve the modern corporate system with distinctive Chinese features, it was agreed at the meeting that it is essential to respect the principal role of enterprises in their

operations, adhere to a problem-oriented approach, and implement tailored policies based on factors such as the size, development stage and ownership of the enterprises.

Capable private enterprises should be encouraged to establish a modern corporate system, improve their corporate governance structure, and enhance risk prevention mechanisms, among others, the meeting said.

Xi also urged efforts to foster a globally competitive open environment for scientific and technological innovation, saying that it is important to insist on promoting innovation through opening-up.

He required work to be done to improve the systems and mechanisms for international scientific and technological cooperation, focus on opening-up in key areas and at crucial links, and overcome institutional weaknesses in opening-up and innovation.

It was stressed at the meeting that equal emphasis should be given to the strategies of "going global" and "bringing in", and international exchanges and cooperation in the scientific and technological fields should be expanded, for the country to get deeply involved in global sci-tech governance.

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France protests



Protesters chant slogans against the National Rally and its lead candidate for the European Parliament elections, Jordan Bardella, on Monday in Bordeaux, southwestern France, after the far-right political party handed a humiliating defeat to President Emmanuel Macron's party. CHRISTOPHE ARCHAMBAULT / AFP

MOUNTAIN COUNTY CHANGES ITS SPOTS TO ENSURE LEOPARDS THRIVE

Project to reinstate natural habitat on farmland is aiding survival of vulnerable native species

By HOU LIQIANG and ZHU XINGXIN in Heshun, Shanxi

Located at the end of a road in the Taihang Mountains, Leyi village has only 42 households with 70 residents, whose average age is 65. The densely vegetated mountains that surround the sparsely populated rural community, which has three residential areas, add to its sense of isolation from the outside world.

Recently, however, the village in Heshun county, Shanxi province, had an unusual horticultural activity. Over 10 villagers, most with gray hair, did something they had never done before when they planted flowering



shrubs on ridges among farm plots. The villagers are a key part of the Baoxiangtian project, which aims to restore natural habitats for vulnerable North China leopards. According to the project's initiator, the Chinese Felid Conservation Alliance, a nonprofit organization specializing in the protection of wildcats in China, "bao" stands for the leopard, "xiang" for villagers, and "tian" for farmland.

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Peace plan gains favor

Above: Palestinians mourn on Monday over the bodies of family members killed in an Israeli airstrike, outside the morgue at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al Balah, the Gaza Strip. Two recent airstrikes in Gaza have killed dozens of civilians. JEHAD ALSHRAFI / AP

Right: Members of the United Nations Security Council vote on Monday to approve its first resolution endorsing a cease-fire plan aimed at ending the eight-month Palestine-Israeli conflict in Gaza. The resolution, sponsored by the United States, was approved with 14 of the 15 Security Council members voting in favor and Russia abstaining. UNITED NATIONS VIA AP

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Nation's new astronauts include one each from Hong Kong, Macao

By ZHAO LEI in Beijing and LI BINGCUN and WU KUNLING in Hong Kong

China has selected 10 new astronauts, including two from the country's Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions, according to the China Manned Space Agency.

The agency said in a news release on Tuesday that the astronauts — eight spacecraft pilots and two science payload specialists — are the fourth group of members at the Astronaut Center of China, located in a northwestern suburb of Beijing. The science payload specialists were chosen from among applicants from Hong Kong and Macao, it noted.

Next, the new astronauts are scheduled to start systematic and comprehensive training at the center.

Along with the advances in international cooperation in China's manned space programs, foreign

nationals will also be selected to be trained as astronauts and take part in missions to China's Tiangong space station, according to the agency.

Huang Weifen, chief trainer of Chinese astronauts, said the finalist applicants from Hong Kong and Macao have passed several rounds of selection procedures, ranging from physical and psychological evaluation to spaceflight-related skill tests.

The astronauts will be tasked with serving inside the Tiangong space station as well as fulfilling the nation's manned missions to the moon, she added.

Noting that the spacecraft pilots in the fourth group of astronauts have been chosen from aviators serving in the Chinese armed forces, Huang said this is the first time that pilots from the Ground Force and Navy of the People's Liberation Army have been given an opportunity to

become astronauts. Previously, only aviators from the PLA Air Force had such a chance.

China started selecting the country's fourth generation of astronauts in October 2022. It is the first time that people from Hong Kong and Macao have had the opportunity to join the country's astronaut group.

Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu said on Tuesday that the inclusion of a Hong Kong specialist in the fourth-generation astronaut group is an "extremely inspiring and uplifting development". He called it a glorious milestone in the history of the SAR and its residents.

Lee said it highlights the city's unique status under the "one country, two systems" principle, reflects the nation's strong support and encouragement for Hong Kong's science sector, and acknowledges the research capabilities of scientists in the SAR.

The city will provide unwavering support to its scientists to make greater contributions to national science projects, he added.

The Macao SAR government said on Tuesday that the central government's move sends a powerful message of encouragement to young people in the city.

It added that Macao is committed to actively promoting the city's aerospace technology and its integration with other sectors, in order to facilitate the SAR's high-quality economic development.

An astronaut will be cleared for his or her first spaceflight after about two-and-a-half years of training, but that is subject to mission plans and developments, according to space officials.

Before the fourth group, China had 39 astronauts from three generations. Among them, 22 have taken part in 13 flight missions, including the latest, Shenzhou XVIII.

Several in the first generation who had not taken part in any spaceflights during their service have already retired.

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Lunar far side mission attests to China's space power

China has yet again proved its spacefaring prowess with another successful moon landing, this time for the unprecedented Chang'e 6 lunar far side sample return mission.

Indeed, as I write this, the precious cargo of an anticipated 2 kilograms of moon rocks from the lunar far side has already started its long journey home, with the Chang'e 6 ascender having lifted off from the lunar surface on June 3 at 23:38 GMT. This is only two days since, with the support of the Queqiao 2 relay satellite, the lander and ascender combination



successfully landed at a predetermined landing site in the South Pole-Aitken Basin on the far side of the moon, according to the China National Space Administration.

The ascender docked with the orbiter and reentry capsule combination and transferred a vacuum-sealed container holding the lunar samples to the reentry capsule.

This capsule is due to land in the Gobi Desert in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region on June 25. So two more weeks to go!

It is difficult to convey the great significance of this achievement, but it involves the implementation of various sophisticated spacecraft communication and mission control capabilities and several technological breakthroughs. This is taken together with the implementation of a careful lunar retrograde orbit design to place the spacecraft in the correct path.

As there is no direct line of sight between the Chang'e 6 robotic

probe and Earth, it was necessary to use the special in-orbit Queqiao 2 relay satellite, also known as "Magpie Bridge 2". The satellite was sent to the moon in advance specifically for the purpose of triangulating signals from Earth to Queqiao 2, and from Queqiao 2 to the Chang'e 6 lander.

The relay satellite's vital role and capability were already demonstrated during China's previous lunar far side mission in 2019, involving the Chang'e 4 robotic probe and the Queqiao 1 relay satellite.

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PAGE TWO

Leopards: Humans help survival quest



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The alliance, which has protected the North China leopard in Heshun for a decade, envisions a revitalized Leyi where both people and leopards thrive. The project aims to establish comprehensive biodiversity through eco-friendly and sustainable agricultural practices, said Huang Qiaowen, executive director of the alliance.

The program is an example of the multi-stakeholder governance model used for North China leopard conservation in Heshun, which involves not only the government but also social organizations, research institutions, and local communities.

A leopard subspecies native to China, North China leopards are under top national-level protection in China and were included on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species in 2012.

From May 2015 to June 2020, a total of 89 adult North China leopards were identified in Heshun, local authorities said.

The county's North China leopards stand out as the "sole visibly healthy and continuously expanding" population of the species in China, the Ministry of Ecology and Environment said in a media release early last year.

It is a "unique population source" for the continuation of the endangered animal, and Heshun plays a crucial role as a key channel for the animal's dispersal, the release stated.

Habitat integrity

The alliance's monitoring, aided by infrared cameras, revealed the presence of six North China leopards within a 20-kilometer radius of Baoxiangtian, Huang said. On Feb 9, the eve of this year's Spring Festival, the area was graced by a female leopard and three cubs, she added.

This density of the animals is notably high for the species, considering that the territory of a male North China leopard may extend beyond 100 square km, though that of a female is usually much smaller. Visitors standing in the Baoxiangtian project area may see no obvious signs indicating the presence of the carnivorous animal, which are known to avoid the presence of humans. But, they might chance upon traces of the shy creature if they venture into the mountains.

In a small hollow enveloped by trees, located less than half a km from Baoxiangtian, the scattered bones of a wild boar lay on the ground. Some parts are slightly weathered and blackened. These remnants were left by a North China leopard after it had fed on its prey.

The wide and deep valley where Baoxiangtian is nestled between two lush hills, should ideally be a favored roaming ground for wild animals. However, farming has disrupted the living environment of these creatures, contributing to the fragmentation of the North China leopard's habitat.

To address the problem, the alliance leased 5.6 hectares of farmland in the valley last year. The alliance aspires to restore the valley to a thriving habitat for wild animals by diversifying the crops and vegetation without using any chemicals.

The Baoxiangtian operation also

generates a steady income for local villagers. The alliance has established a cooperative named after Baoxiangtian and employs 11 villagers to assist with its operations, Huang said.

Last year, the alliance distributed harvests from Baoxiangtian, including corn, to the alliance's funding donors. "The produce was highly praised," she said with a gentle smile on her tanned face, a result of working in Baoxiangtian for a long time.

This year, the alliance plans to launch a farmland "adoption" program to connect Baoxiangtian with people from afar who share a deep concern for the North China leopard. Donors can adopt a plot of farmland as small as 1 square meter for an annual fee of 59 yuan (\$8.30) to support the cooperative's operations, she explained.

Those adopting more than 5 sq m will receive an annual allocation of 3 to 5 kilograms of produce from Baoxiangtian, she added.

Concerted efforts

Prior to the Baoxiangtian initiative, the alliance worked with local communities and authorities for a decade to explore solutions to enhance the protection of the endangered animal.

In April 2015, for example, with support from the government of Mafang township, which Leyi belongs to, the alliance funded the establishment of a patrol team named after *laobaozi*, the name for the North China leopard in the area.

The team, which has grown from five members to 20, is not only tasked with collecting data from the 400 infrared cameras the alliance has installed, but also conducts patrols to prevent poaching.

Qi Qiantang from Leyi is one of the team's first members. He retired from the team last year at age 75. In a TV cabinet in his home, there is a photo of him with an image of a North China leopard. The picture sits beside a family photo.

"We cleared the traps people set to catch wild animals, and few traps have been detected in recent years, as people have an increasing awareness about protection (of wildlife)," he said.

Team members collect data from the infrared cameras every two months, and for their work they can receive up to 6,000 yuan per year.

Qi is still engaged in alliance activities, and was one of those who planted the shrubs. He also helps the alliance maintain a vegetable garden, which earns him a daily income of at least 150 yuan.

Without such programs run by the alliance, the villagers would hardly have any income, he said. Aside from farming, many villagers in the area also raise cattle for a living. However, it has been difficult for them to earn a decent income in recent years following sharp decreases in beef prices.

"The operations of the alliance bring us good income, and that also protects the animals," Qi noted.

He said the alliance has also issued megaphones to residents with recording and flashing light functions to help them frighten away wild boars that sometimes ravage crops. This way, the villagers don't need to resort to means that may hurt or even kill the animal, which is a common prey of the North China leopard.

Patrol teams

A team of over 100 members conducts patrols to add in the

conservation of the North China leopard, said Li Ruiping, director of the Tiejiao Mountain Provincial Nature Reserve. The group comprises Laobaozi team members, rangers from the reserve, and rangers hired by the local government.

Covering about 35,352 hectares, the reserve was officially established in 2010 with its priority being protection of the North China leopard. Leyi village is located within the reserve.

Recognizing the North China leopard's preference for habitats with abundant cover, the reserve has prioritized afforestation efforts, Li said. Over the past three years, approximately 66.7 hectares of trees have been planted to help restore the leopard's natural habitat.

Ten small ponds were dug along natural watercourses to improve access to water for the leopard's prey species.

Plans are also underway this year to enhance North China leopard monitoring using more advanced means, Li said.

Tracking collars will be used, and rangers will collect fecal samples for genetic analysis to assess reproductive connectivity between different North China leopard communities, he said.

The Tiejiao reserve, together with 11 reserves and forest administrations in Shanxi, will also conduct joint monitoring starting this year to learn about the species' level of reproductive exchanges, he said.

Huang said the alliance is in close communication with local authorities on the issue of North China leopard conservation.

"We meet with county heads at least three to four times a year," she said, adding they have more frequent interaction with lower-level officials.

Local authorities also turn to them sometimes for information about North China leopard conservation. This happened last year when the local government was applying for an interest-free loan from the World Bank to support the construction of ecological corridors in the reserve.

In a draft plan, Northeast Forestry University proposed building five such corridors. After considering the alliance's suggestion to build 11, the local government increased the number of corridors to eight, she said.

In 2022, the county government also accepted the alliance's advice to designate 782 sq km of land as core areas for North China leopard conservation where development is banned, Huang said.

Standing amid the Baoxiangtian project, Huang said she was optimistic the project would succeed on multiple levels.

The flowering shrubs attract insects that are natural predators of crop-eating pests, aiding insect control on the farmland, she explained. In addition, crops such as sesame will be grown to provide food sources for birds.

She said the alliance anticipates the ridges will be transformed into habitats suitable for lizards, snakes and small birds that may draw predatory raptors.

"This is a cafeteria for all forms of life," Huang said.

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Orthopedist digs deep into his pocket for conservation work, rescues

By HOU LIQIANG and ZHU XINGXIN in Heshun, Shanxi

If it were not for his father's interference, Yang Xiaodong would have pursued a major related to animals when he entered university in 1992.

However, he ended up majoring in medical science and became an orthopedist at the People's Hospital in Shanxi province's Heshun, his home county, after graduating.

Nevertheless, the 56-year-old's enthusiasm for animals has remained unwavering. Over the past two decades, he has dedicated a significant amount of his free time and personal funds to wildlife conservation.

He is both deputy head of the hospital and chairman of the Heshun Ecological Conservation Society, founded in 2018.

Yang's interest in animals began in his childhood. As the youngest of five siblings and the only male, he received plenty of affection and his family was remarkably tolerant of him keeping an array of pets.

When he visited Beijing for a study tour in the late 1990s, he heard about the Friends of Nature, an environmental NGO established in 1993, and one of the first organizations of its kind in China.

He soon visited the NGO and applied to become a member.

Upon returning to Heshun, he literally spread the word about wildlife conservation with the help of a motorbike provided by the organization. As the NGO expanded into other sectors, including environmental protection and climate change, Yang grew distant from it. "I only like wildlife conservation," he said.

In 1999, he founded a wildlife protection organization in the county, which nine years later evolved into the Heshun Ecological Conservation Society. The society devoted most of its energy and resources toward rescuing injured wild animals. Since its establishment, it has rescued more than 500 wild animals.

The rescue work has cost Yang a lot of time and money. "I couldn't figure out how much money I have spent," he said.

In 2022 Jinzhong city, where Heshun is located, allocated the society 100,000 yuan (\$13,790) to support its wildlife conservation efforts and then 50,000 yuan the next year. It was one of the few opportunities for the association to receive financial support.

"The money was not enough to make ends meet for the society (during the two years)," Yang said.

He also received 80,000 yuan from the Society of Entrepreneurs and Ecology, a Beijing-based NGO, to build a base for wildlife rescue in 2018. However, he ended up having to contribute 5,000 yuan from his own funds to complete the project.

Seven years ago, he managed to heal an injured great bustard after more than 10 days of treatment and care. After hearing from conservationist friends that a flock of the migratory birds was resting in Datong, a city about 450 kilometers away from Heshun in northern Shanxi, he drove to the location to release the big bird.

In 2018, he took a black stork with a broken wing into his care. In just six months, he spent over 6,000 yuan on food for the stork. He eventually persuaded a zoo in Taiyuan, Shanxi, to take in the bird, after finding it was too expensive to keep.

Yang is determined to continue his wildlife conservation work, despite it being costly. He said he leads a simple lifestyle and has modest requirements when it comes to clothing and food.

"Many people have criticized me for spending excessively on wildlife conservation. However, I believe that my quality of life has not been compromised as a result," he said.



Top: Huang Qiaowen, executive director of the Chinese Felid Conservation Alliance, stands in front of a mural of a North China leopard in Heshun county, Shanxi province. Middle: Huang checks an infrared camera, which captures the action of the leopards in Heshun. Above: Villagers plant trees on farm plots in the area of the Baoxiangtian project. PHOTOS BY ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY



An aerial view of the habitat for North China leopards in Heshun county, Shanxi province. XIAO SHIBAI / FOR CHINA DAILY AND ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

TOP NEWS

Apple's AR goggles seen as a booster for Chinese firms

By MA SI
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China's augmented reality industry is expected to usher in a new stage of growth, as Apple Inc announced on Monday that preorders for its Vision Pro AR goggles will begin on the Chinese mainland on Friday.

The move came as Apple attaches greater importance to China, which is not just a major market but also a vital link in its supply chains and a great source of innovation for the United States-based technological company, experts said.

But as Apple brings ChatGPT to iPhones in an artificial intelligence overhaul, it will see rising competition from Chinese rivals that are also doubling down on AI applications, they added.

Apple CEO Tim Cook said the Chinese mainland will be among the first group of countries and regions outside the US where consumers can buy Vision Pro locally, with it becoming available on June 28. Cook made the remarks on Monday as he opened Apple's Worldwide Developers Conference at its headquarters in Cupertino, California.

Cook said the device can enable users to work and collaborate with an infinite virtual canvas for apps, relive treasured memories in a three-dimensional format and watch TV shows and movies in a one-of-a-kind personal cinema.

This month, Chinese tech companies including Alibaba, Tencent, ByteDance, China Mobile and Sina are launching new apps for Vision Pro, such as Douyin VR Live, Taobao and Tencent Video, Apple said.

Pan Helin, a member of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology's Expert Committee for Information and Communication Economy, said, "As the world's largest market and manufacturing base for consumer electronics, China is of long-term, strategic importance to Apple."

Huaqin Securities said in a research note that the Chinese mainland and China's Taiwan region provide a combined 64 percent of components and assembling services for Vision Pro, highlighting Apple's reliance on China's efficient supply chains.

Cook said in an earlier interview with China Daily that "there's no supply chain in the world more critical to Apple than that of China".

Zhao Siqian, a senior analyst at market research company Interna-

As the world's largest market and manufacturing base for consumer electronics, China is of long-term, strategic importance to Apple."

Pan Helin, a member of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology's Expert Committee for Information and Communication Economy

tional Data Corp's China branch, said that with Vision Pro's official release in China, the nation's software developers will create more innovative applications for it, giving new vitality to the domestic AR industry.

Shipments of China's AR smart glasses jumped over 150 percent year-on-year in 2023 to 262,000 units, according to IDC.

At the event on Monday, Apple also announced that it is bringing OpenAI's ChatGPT to a wide range of its products and platforms, including the Siri virtual smart assistant. This is part of "Apple Intelligence", a new personalized AI system which aims to offer users a way to navigate Apple devices more easily.

Apple said that users of its products will be able to access ChatGPT's text-based answers as well as its image- and document-processing capabilities without the need to jump between tools. The English test version will become available in the autumn.

Ming-Chi Kuo, an analyst at TF International Securities, said the move showcases Apple's strengths in ecosystem integration, but investors want to see more.

Due to the need for regulatory approval, some of Apple's latest AI features may not be available in China for the moment. Meanwhile, Apple is expected to see mounting competition from Chinese smart-phone makers such as Huawei and Xiaomi in AI phones, experts said.

Wang Peng, a researcher at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, said, "Almost all big Chinese phone brands have developed their in-house rivals to ChatGPT and have showcased their progress in integrating AI into phones ahead of Apple."

Governance: Protecting sci-tech security stressed

From page 1

The meeting also noted the importance of cultivating an internationalized environment for research.

To this end, efforts should be made to address the practical concerns of and solve problems for researchers, to ensure that talented individuals are introduced, are willing to stay and are properly utilized so that they can continuously contribute their wisdom, it said.

The meeting also emphasized the

need to build a strong line of defense to protect scientific and technological security in an open environment by improving related systems and risk prevention mechanisms.

The meeting deliberated and approved guidelines on optimizing the modern corporate system with Chinese characteristics, safeguarding grain-growing farmers' incomes and improving compensation mechanisms in major grain-producing areas, and building a globally competitive open environment for scientific and technological innovation.

Promoting multilateralism



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi (fourth from left) poses for a group photo with foreign ministers and representatives of Brazil, Russia, India, South Africa, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates during the BRICS foreign ministers' meeting on Monday in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia. MAXIM SHEMETOV / REUTERS

Premier to visit three Asia-Pacific countries

Efforts made to bolster ties with New Zealand, Australia, Malaysia

By CAO DESHENG
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Premier Li Qiang will make official visits to New Zealand, Australia and Malaysia starting on Thursday, a significant diplomatic move that analysts said highlights China's efforts to further strengthen its relations with countries in the Asia-Pacific region amid rising economic and security challenges.

China hopes that the premier's visits, scheduled to run until June 20, will help enhance mutual understanding and trust and deepen pragmatic cooperation with the three countries, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said at a regular news conference on Tuesday in Beijing.

Lin said that during Li's visit to New Zealand, he will meet with Governor-General Dame Cindy Kiro and have talks with Prime Minister Christopher Luxon to exchange views on bilateral relations and international and regional issues of common concern.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the establishment of a comprehensive strategic partnership between China and New Zealand,

and Beijing considers Wellington to be an important partner, he said.

China is New Zealand's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade worth almost NZ\$38 billion (\$23.28 billion) last year. Luxon said in a statement on Monday that Premier Li's visit is a valuable opportunity for exchanges in areas of cooperation between New Zealand and China.

"New Zealand and China engage where we have shared interests, and we speak frankly and constructively with each other where we have differences. Our relationship is significant, complex and resilient," Luxon said.

"The challenging global outlook makes it vital that we are sharing perspectives and engaging China on key issues that matter to New Zealand."

While in Australia, Li will co-chair the ninth China-Australia Annual Leaders' Meeting with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese in Canberra, and engage with people from various sectors of the country, Lin said. They will also engage with Chinese and Australian business leaders at the seventh China-Australia CEO Roundtable, he added.

The spokesman expressed China's willingness to work with Aus-

tralia to jointly build a more mature, stable and productive comprehensive strategic partnership.

China has been Australia's largest trading partner for 15 consecutive years. In 2023, China bought A\$219 billion (\$144.35 billion) worth of Australian exports, accounting for 32.5 percent of Australia's total exports, according to statistics from Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Chinese investment in Australia reached almost A\$88 billion by the end of last year.

However, bilateral relations were severely damaged due to the negative policies toward China adopted by the previous Australian government. The two countries have broken the ice since Albanese assumed office in 2022.

Li's visit follows Albanese's visit to China in November, when leaders of the two countries agreed to resume key bilateral dialogues and further cooperation in various fields. Over the past months, China has lifted trade curbs on Australian imports including wine, barley, beef and timber.

Speaking at a news conference at Parliament House in Canberra on

Tuesday, Albanese said that Li's visit to Australia will be the first by a Chinese premier since 2017 and "represents another important step in stabilizing our relationship with China".

"Premier Li Qiang's visit to Australia is an important opportunity to engage directly on key issues for both our nations," he said. "Australia continues to pursue a stable and direct relationship with China, with dialogue at its core."

On China-Malaysia relations, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin said that China and Malaysia are traditional friendly neighbors across the sea.

Both of them are developing countries in Asia and emerging economies, and they actively advocate Asian values of peace, cooperation, inclusiveness and integration, making important contributions to regional peace, prosperity and stability, he said.

During his visit to Malaysia, Li will meet with the Southeast Asian country's King Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar and hold talks with Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, Lin said.

Li and Anwar will jointly attend the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Malaysia.

China looks forward to using this visit as an opportunity to enhance and expand cooperation in various fields with Malaysia, deepen the China-Malaysia community with a shared future, and work together to create a more brilliant bilateral relationship for the next 50 years, Lin added.

Isolated incident won't disrupt exchanges

By ZHOU JIN
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A preliminary investigation showed that the attack on four United States teachers in Northeast China's Jilin province was a random incident that will not disrupt the normal cultural and people-to-people exchanges between the two countries, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said on Tuesday.

The four teachers, who are from

Beihua University in the province's Jilin city, were attacked on Monday when touring the city's Beishan Park, Lin told a daily news conference in Beijing.

A Chinese tourist who tried to stop the stabbing was also injured, according to a statement released by local police.

The suspect, a 55-year-old man surnamed Cui, was arrested on Monday. Cui had collided with a foreign national while walking in the

park, and then he stabbed the foreigner and three other foreign companions, as well as a Chinese tourist who tried to stop him, the statement said.

Those who were injured received medical treatment, but none of them were in critical condition, it said.

An investigation is still underway, according to local police.

The four educators are from Cornell College in the US state of Iowa and were on a teaching

exchange program with Beihua University.

China is widely considered one of the safest countries in the world, said Lin, the spokesman, adding that Beijing has taken effective steps and will continue to take relevant measures to protect the safety of foreign nationals in the country.

Lin said the isolated incident will not disrupt normal people-to-people exchanges between China and the US.

Such exchanges serve the common interests of both countries and have been supported by both sides, he said.

Moon: Chang'e 6 also features intl endeavor

From page 1

The Chang'e 6 spacecraft landed on a carefully chosen spot on the lunar far side in the South Pole-Aitken Basin. Its primary mission? To replicate the previous amazing Chang'e 5 probe's success on the lunar near side and bring about 2 kg of moon rocks back to Earth.

Chang'e 6 was originally envisioned as a backup mission for Chang'e 5, if things went awry. The tremendous success of Chang'e 5 enabled the national space administration to instead re-scope this mission to the lunar far side.

Why does this mission matter? First, this is only the second time in history that any spacecraft has landed on the lunar far side, and it is also the second Chinese mission to achieve this, so double happiness. The lunar far side is never seen from Earth because the moon's rotational period matches the time it takes for the moon to orbit the Earth. The two are in a so-called "lockstep".

Second, this will be the first time in history that moon rocks from a

completely different lunar geological environment is transported back to Earth. As the latest Chinese lunar surface maps show, in their recently released excellent lunar atlas, the far side looks very different from the side we are all used to seeing. The far side has a far more battered terrain from massive bombardments of asteroids billions of years ago.

The first Chinese lunar sample return mission, the Chang'e 5, was a treasure trove of geological surprises. The returned samples revealed the material was far younger than those large Apollo samples and, indeed, even than the few hundred grams the Soviet Union managed to bring back from the moon in the 1970s.

This raises interesting questions about the geological history and active processes at work on the moon at far later time periods than previously thought. Our own University of Hong Kong research on a small sample of Chang'e 5 moon rocks will hopefully help shed light on this, too.

Back to Chang'e 6. The more rug-

ged terrain on the lunar far side makes landing a trickier prospect, so various new processes were employed to give the mission the best chance, including an autonomous obstacle avoidance system to automatically detect surface irregularities using a visible-light camera. This provided the data needed to select a safe landing area.

The lander-ascender combination then hovered about 100 meters above the safe landing area and used a laser 3D scanner to detect obstacles on the lunar surface to select the final landing site before a slow vertical descent. As the combination approached the lunar surface, it shut down the engine and touched down via free fall, protected by a cushioning system.

Shortly after successful landing, the Chang'e 6 lander's lunar rock sampling technologies were deployed to both scoop surface material with a robotic arm and collect subsurface material using a drill. This operation was a full success.

One important additional fact to

realize is that the Chang'e 6 lander is not just about the sample return mission, even if it is by far the most important. It is also an international endeavor, with science payloads on the lander from France, Italy and Sweden, and the iCube-Q CubeSat, designed by Pakistan for deployment in lunar orbit.

The international instruments on the lander include a radon-measuring instrument from France, a dedicated negative ion instrument developed by Sweden with support from the European Space Agency, and a passive laser retroreflector from Italy that can precisely measure distances between the lander and the lunar orbit.

So as the precious cargo comes home, I confess, I remain bemused by some commentators who talk about how such missions "could" be a pathway to China emerging as a dominant space power when the reality, as far as I see it, is that it already is, with much more to come.

The author is director of the University of Hong Kong's Laboratory for Space Research. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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

Vol. 38 - No. 1350

CHINA

Chinese team offers remote treatment

World first as intercontinental surgery broadcast live from meeting in Italy

By YAN DONGJIE

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A Chinese medical team at a conference in Italy used a robot to perform remote prostate cancer resection surgery on a patient in Beijing on Friday in the world's first live broadcast intercontinental operation.

More than 8,000 kilometers from the patient, a team led by Zhang Xu, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and director of the Department of Urology at the Third Medical Center of the Chinese PLA General Hospital, conducted the surgery at the Challenges in Laparoscopy & Robotics conference in Rome.

Zhang said the surgery utilized a domestically developed robot system with completely independent intellectual property rights in China, combined with China's 5G+ internet communication technology, achieving low latency, high precision and high stability.

"If experts, for example, in Beijing, and doctors on-site in other locations perform a surgery together with the system, it enables mutual consultation and real-time switching, just like bringing skilled doctors to the surgical site," Zhang said. "China is a vast country with uneven regional development. How to project the best medical resources and surgical techniques from major cities to remote areas is also a manifestation of respecting life."

"In the world, there are many underdeveloped regions involved in the Belt and Road Initiative that also need this technology."

"We connect the world into a village, a hospital or an operating room."

Zhang Xu, academician who led the surgical team

We connect the world into a village, a hospital or an operating room."

The Challenges in Laparoscopy & Robotics conference is dedicated to exploring advanced surgical techniques to treat patients with challenging conditions.

Zhang's team has been invited to the conference for 15 years in a row to perform difficult surgical demonstrations.

"For me, it's really a historical experience, historical moment," said Vito Ansadoro, president of the conference. "We were emotional looking at what was happening."

He said radical prostatectomy is a highly difficult urological surgery, with complex surgical techniques and high risks, and the remote surgery by the Chinese team addressed challenging issues such as network latency and data compression.

As pioneers in remote surgery, Zhang and his team have assisted domestic and foreign experts in completing more than 60 cases of remote surgical exploration in fields such as urology, gynecology and general surgery, and have completed multiple clinical trials with a 100 percent success rate.

Lesson from legend



A performer portraying Sun Wukong, also known as the Monkey King, guides students through traditional Dian Opera movements during the 11th Kunming Dian Opera Art Week in Kunming, Yunnan province, on Tuesday. The activity helped students learn more about the opera and experience the charm of traditional Chinese culture. LIU RANYANG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Four detained following death at construction site

By DU JUAN

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Beijing authorities have detained four people involved in a collapse at a construction site in January that led to the death of a worker, police said on Tuesday.

An investigative report on the collapse, which occurred at a power project for Beijing Subway Line 3 in the capital's Chaoyang district, was released in the middle of last month.

It said the worker suffocated after being buried under sand and concluded that the accident

was the result of unauthorized operations by construction personnel and inadequate safety management.

Beijing Xingyuan Fuyuan Power Equipment Installation Co, a specialized subcontractor, and Beijing Longxiang Hongtai Construction Engineering Co, a labor subcontractor, were identified as having primary management responsibilities for the incident, with administrative penalties recommended.

The four people detained are from the two companies and were directly linked to the accident, police said.

Kelp carriers



Barges tow sampans loaded with kelp harvested from a seaweed farm to a fishing pier in Rongcheng, Shandong province, on Tuesday. Rongcheng is the largest kelp producing area in China, and June is the busiest harvesting period each year. LI XINJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

HK sees surge in visitors during three-day holiday

By LI XIAOYUN in Hong Kong

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412,800 visitors

from around the world were recorded during the three-day Dragon Boat Festival holiday in Hong Kong.

pong, chairman of the Hong Kong Travel Profession Union.

A 10-minute drone performance took to the skies above the harbor front in Wan Chai on Monday evening. Around 1,000 drones formed patterns such as flying dragons, dragon boats and *zongzi* — a traditional rice dumpling wrapped in bamboo leaves.

Mainland visitor Fang Jiarui arrived at the harbor front an hour early to secure a prime viewing spot.

"The display was great, as it blended centuries-old cultural elements with cutting-edge technology," she said.

Fang, who spent the holiday exploring Hong Kong, said she was impressed by the city's ability to marry traditional culture with modernity and innovation.

"From the food and accommoda-

tion to transport, Hong Kong has its own way of combining the old and the new," she said.

Her itinerary was mainly based on social media recommendations.

Lo said there are millions of posts about traveling in Hong Kong on Xiaohongshu, an Instagram-like mainland social media platform, stimulating the interest of potential visitors.

"Since the Hong Kong government proposed leveraging mega events to attract tourists last year, my travel agency has seen about a 20 percent uptick in inquiries," he said.

Lo urged the government to release details of the events two or three months in advance to allow his peers enough time to design itineraries.

The dragon boat races in some Hong Kong districts were another attraction, with the largest competition taking place in Stanley, in the city's southern district. More than 150 teams, comprising 5,000 local and international paddlers, took part in the races.

The races displayed Hong Kong's folk culture among fishermen,

making them unique and attractive for tourists, said Timothy Chui Ting-ping, executive director of the Hong Kong Tourism Association.

The city will host the nearly 50-year-old Hong Kong International Dragon Boat Races at the Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade on Saturday and Sunday. More than 170 teams from 12 countries and regions are set to compete.

Chui said hotels in Hong Kong could consider providing shuttle services to enhance the experience for spectators.

On Tuesday, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu unveiled a series of initiatives to benefit both residents and visitors during the July 1 holiday that will celebrate the 27th anniversary of the city's return to the motherland.

Among the highlights, popular museums will offer free admission on July 1, and over 1,000 restaurants across the city will roll out various dining discounts. From June 29 to July 1, the Ocean Park theme park will slash ticket prices by up to 30 percent.

Guangzhou to host international dragon boat race

By QIU QUANLIN in Guangzhou

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An international dragon boat invitation tournament is scheduled to open in Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong province, on Sunday, showcasing the rich cultural tradition of Dragon Boat Festival with the participation of dozens of international racing teams, according to the organizers.

The tournament, to be held on a section of the Pearl River, which runs through the city, will include 111 boat racing teams. Nineteen will be from countries and regions including the United States, Canada, Malaysia, Kazakhstan, the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions and over-

seas business organizations.

Six teams — from the cities of Foshan, Huizhou, Dongguan and Zhaoqing in Guangdong, and Qingyuan and Longyan in neighboring Fujian province — will also participate, according to the organizers.

To promote the tournament and the traditional Dragon Boat Festival atmosphere, the organizers have planned a series of pre-competition activities at campuses and in local communities.

"Through learning and experiencing the dragon boat culture, young people can better understand and feel the unique charm of boat racing culture in Guangdong," said Lin Yanfen, deputy director of the tournament's orga-

nizing committee.

Lin said this year's races will include 600-meter straight-line sprints for dragon boats with 22 crew in four categories: men's open, women's open, men's international and university.

The competition will also feature a colorful dragon competition, with rankings determined by on-site scoring. Traditional dragon boat and lion dance performances will also be held to showcase the unique traditional culture of Guangdong.

Boat races and other traditional cultural activities were widely held in Guangdong on Monday, the day of the traditional Dragon Boat Festival, which falls on the fifth day of the fifth month of the

Chinese lunar calendar.

In the waterside township of Shatian in Dongguan, one dragon boat crew consisted of mothers ranging in age from 28 to 62.

"The younger generations should pass on the tradition as the spirit of teamwork and striving for excellence, as demonstrated in the dragon boat race, is something that we still need in our daily lives," said crew member Guo Yanting, 38.

Guo joined the Shatian team in 2019 and traveled to the US to participate in an international dragon boat race. After a long selection process, she became a member of the Guangdong provincial dragon boat team in 2021 and is now preparing for China's 15th National Games next year.

Post-exam consumption drives summer spending

By ZHAO YIMENG

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China's grueling national college entrance exam, the *gaokao*, has concluded, ushering in a period of well-deserved relaxation for newly minted high school graduates and a surge in their spending.

With 13.42 million students having completed the *gaokao* and entered a lengthy summer break, businesses in the tourism, beauty and education sectors are experiencing a boom.

Many graduates, including Beijing student Chen Yan, are using this time to unwind and explore their options.

Chen said he felt good about his performance in the exam and will apply for a place at Beihang University to study aerospace engineering.

"I will first take a break during the summer vacation and plan a graduation trip with my friends to bid farewell to my life in high school," Chen said.

To gain a better understanding of his preferred field of study, Chen said he plans to join aerospace-related clubs or internship programs to accumulate some practical experience.

"I will obtain some knowledge related to aerospace science and technology during the vacation and preview the fundamental courses to better adapt to university life," he said.

Like many high school graduates, Chen said he plans to take advantage of the long holiday to obtain a driver's license.

Driving schools said many students had made reservations for

driving lessons in recent days, or even before the exam, enorth.com, a media outlet based in Tianjin, reported.

The intense exam period often sees students neglect their physical well-being and personal appearance.

Zhuang Xin, who took the exam in Jiangsu province, said she plans to work out and lose some weight during the vacation. Aiming for a place in an art school, Zhuang said she would like to learn photography during the gap months and participate in charity activities.

The number of students asking for hair perming or dyeing surges after the *gaokao* each year, said Fan Haichao, a hairdresser at a Beijing branch of fashion chain Oriental Stylist.

Fan said girls often have their

hair dyed for the first time during the vacation after the exam, hoping to find their own style and release the pressure.

"A young girl picked a trendy gray color that is similar to a Japanese cartoon character," Fan said on Tuesday. "Her mother accompanied her and asked me privately not to make the color too strange."

Many young graduates upgraded their electronic devices, including smartphones and personal computers, the night they finished the exam.

A salesperson at a Huawei store in Xiamen, Fujian province, said that compared with normal peak seasons, sales of smartphones at the store increased by 20 percent during *gaokao* season, with more than 50 smartphones being sold on Sunday, Xiamen Daily reported.

POLICY REVIEW

Policies spur overseas volunteerism

Guidelines encourage more Chinese youth to give time to aid other nations

By ZHOU JIN
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On the streets and in alleyways in Vientiane, capital of Laos, the impact and influence of Chinese culture is evident.

Signs written in Chinese are a common sight, many restaurants and taxis in the city play Chinese songs, and many Lao youth can speak some phrases in Mandarin.

Laotians' acceptance of the Chinese language and their enthusiasm for Chinese culture have made Yao Shun, a volunteer teacher from China, more confident in his mission.

At the end of December, Yao and four other volunteers selected by the Communist Youth League of China Shanghai Committee arrived in Laos, where they are set to spend a year providing medical assistance in local hospitals, teaching Chinese and computer skills for Laotian government officials, and other services.

Yao, who is in his mid-30s, said that as economic and cultural exchanges between China and Laos increase, they have fueled Laotians' interest in learning Chinese.

"I hope to introduce China's culture and history, as well as the country's current development, to Lao people," he said.

Laos is just one of many destinations served by China's international voluntary service, which was created in 2002 under the government-sponsored China Youth Volunteers Overseas Service Program launched by the CYLC.

In 2005, the program was formally integrated into the government's policy on foreign aid. Since then, hundreds of Chinese volunteers have been dispatched to serve in about two dozen countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The association and the United Nations Volunteers launched a cooperation program in 2019. That collaboration has led dozens of young Chinese volunteers to be dispatched to work for UN agencies across the world.

Improving the system

In April, the general offices of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council, China's Cabinet, have jointly released a set of guidelines aimed at improving the country's voluntary service system. They are the first documents to be issued by central authorities that lay out systematic plans for voluntary work in the new era.

One of the guidelines' focuses is to advance Chinese volunteering services overseas. The guidelines urge efforts to advance voluntary service for countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative, and encourage partnerships with foreign volunteer service organizations and international agencies to expand its influence.

Yang Yegong, head of the overseas service program with the Chinese Young Volunteers Association, said that the guidelines have set the tone for China's volunteerism based on the country's diplomatic exchanges.

They also outline requirements to promote international voluntary

service and cooperation, spread Chinese culture and project China's image on the global stage objectively, he said.

The Chinese Youth Volunteer Overseas Service Program has made positive contributions to the economic and social development of recipient countries and enhanced friendships with people from those countries, he said.

Further efforts will be made to encourage youth volunteers to participate in a broader range of areas, especially in environmental protection, poverty reduction and other fields in line with the UN's sustainable development goals, he added.

Huang Lizhi, a lecturer from the School of African Studies at Beijing Foreign Studies University, said that China's approach to overseas volunteerism not only serves as an efficient method for foreign aid, but also plays a crucial role in shaping a generation of globally minded Chinese youth.

Such service offers substantial support to recipient countries, Huang said, adding that overseas programs also foster cultural exchanges and mutual understanding.

As a relatively new participant in international volunteerism, China does not need to follow the narratives established by earlier Western programs, she said.

Instead, China is creating a unique path for its young volunteers, she said, adding that these programs are imbued with Chinese cultural elements, reflecting China's diplomatic approaches and the country's understanding of the countries receiving aid.

China should have more confidence in its overseas volunteer programs, and further meticulously design and implement programs to meet the needs of such countries, Huang said.

By doing so, China can ensure that its volunteers are not only well-prepared, but also highly effective in their roles.

What matters most is the reputation of China's volunteer service in those countries, a legacy that will be passed down through generations, she said.

Bilateral friendship

Yao, the volunteer in Laos, said that overseas volunteer service is a way to practice people-to-people diplomacy.

"While projects like the China-Laos Railway under the BRI boost local socioeconomic development, understanding each other's languages and cultures plays a crucial role in fostering emotional connections and strengthening bilateral friendship," he said.

"With increasing exchanges between Chinese and Laotian youth, overcoming language barriers is important, making Mandarin teaching a vital bridge."

The students taking Yao's Chinese class are mainly Laotian government workers.

Despite their busy working schedules, they are highly motivated to learn Chinese and are eager for opportunities to study in China through government-sponsored programs, according to Yao.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

They are also deeply interested in Chinese culture and wish to explore it further through language learning, he added.

Through daily interactions, Yao has observed gradual improvements in their pronunciation and confidence.

"They have become more willing to have conversations with me," he said.

As for him, Yao said that he has gained a sense of confidence and composure as a representative of Chinese youth serving in another country. He believes that volunteer service embodies the spirit of Chinese youth — being dedicated, loving and supportive.

Huang, the lecturer, said she has found through previous research that volunteers who immerse themselves in local communities often form deep, lasting connections with the people they serve.

"These interactions, while not having an immediate effect, were often cherished and remembered across generations," she said, adding that their experiences presented a true image of China as a country worthy of friendship.

Global engagement

By participating in these volunteer programs, young Chinese volunteers not only broaden their own horizons but also effectively share China's stories with other nations, Huang said.

Peng Bo, a student majoring in food science and engineering at Haide College of the Ocean University of China in Qingdao, Shandong province, took up a new role in February as a monitoring and evaluation assistant at the Bolivia Country Office of the United Nations World Food Programme. He will serve as a volunteer at the office for six months.

Peng, 21, is involved in a major food assistance project in western Bolivia's Oruro province, one of the country's poorest regions that is currently grappling with a food shortage and relies on external assistance.

His office distributes vouchers to people that they can exchange for food. He said that the program has benefited over 10,000 impoverished households.

Peng also participated in a national effort to identify over 10,000 recipients. It was a huge task due to

Bolivia's complicated ID system, he said.

With his knowledge of Python, a computer programming language, he designed a program to efficiently collect and categorize information about Bolivian citizens, which improved the efficiency of aid distribution.

He said the program has the potential to be implemented in similar institutions in neighboring countries, making it one of his most satisfying achievements.

For Peng, volunteering for the WFP has been a valuable experience. "My first time going abroad is to engage in something meaningful in a distant country, which is exciting and significant," he said.

This volunteer experience has allowed Peng to embrace an unfamiliar culture and learn about how an international organization functions, he said, adding that this experience has also increased his interest in pursuing a career within UN agencies.

As a member of the post-2000 generation, Peng said he is encouraged by and proud to see Chinese youth actively engaging in multilateral institutions and international affairs.

Policy Digest

Detailed carbon target set for cement industry

Chinese authorities have set specific carbon emission reduction targets for the cement industry as the country moves toward a low-carbon economy.

From 2024 to 2025, China plans to cut carbon dioxide emissions by around 13 million metric tons through industrial renovation and equipment renewal in cement production, according to an action plan released by government departments including the National Development and Reform Commission, the country's top economic planner.

During this period, China also aims to save energy equivalent to 5 million tons of standard coal in cement production, according to the plan.

By the end of 2030, it is expected that the overall energy efficiency of China's cement industry will reach a world-class level and its energy consumption pattern will be further optimized, the plan said.

In a plan released earlier this year, China stated that half of the cement clinker production capacity in its key regions for air pollution control should complete ultralow emission transformation by the end of 2025. By 2028, 80 percent of China's overall cement clinker production capacity will have finished this transformation.

The country has announced that it will peak carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060.

Police to crack down harder on street racing

Chinese police will further crackdown on street racing to ensure residents can enjoy safe, quiet nights, the Ministry of Public Security said on June 3.

Street racing, which usually takes place at night to avoid police detection, not only threatens traffic safety, but is also noisy and disturbs people's rest — particularly when students are preparing for high school and college entrance exams, the ministry said in a news release.

The ministry said a nationwide operation against street racing has been carried out since the beginning of this year and has achieved notable progress.

To raise awareness about the issue, the ministry published 10 instances of street racing that were stopped by police. It called on the public to report such illegal activities.

Ministries approve groups to join ICV pilot projects

The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, together with three other ministries, has approved nine consortiums consisting of automobile manufacturers and enterprises who purchase them to join pilot projects for the approval and on-road operation of intelligent connected vehicles.

ICVs are vehicles equipped with internet access that allows them to share data with devices both inside and outside the car.

The projects, to be conducted in seven cities including Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou in Guangdong province, will cover passenger vehicles, buses and trucks. The move marks the country's latest efforts to promote the high-quality development of ICVs.

According to a notice issued on June 4, during the pilot phase, systematic product testing and safety evaluations will be conducted to explore the improvement of management systems in ICVs and the vehicles' impact on road safety.

The latest data shows that by the end of April, China had opened over 29,000 kilometers of test roads for ICVs, issued more than 6,800 test demonstration licenses and accumulated a total test mileage of over 88 million km.

CHINA DAILY—XINHUA

Young woman inspired by work with UN office

By ZHOU JIN
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For Guo Shuo, over four years of volunteer service at the Office of the United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth (OSGEY) not only enhanced her expertise but also introduced her to a group of people with genuine passion, commitment and dedication. Her work at the office has become a steppingstone for her career on the global stage.

The 30-year-old was one of the first group of volunteers dispatched to work for UN agencies across the world in January 2020.

After her service ended a year later under the China Youth Volunteers Overseas Service Program, the office hired her as a specialist volunteer. Guo managed multiple social media accounts, including X, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok, for OSGEY.



Guo Shuo

last year and integrated the office's activities.

"The resolution's adoption was largely attributed to the efforts of OSGEY," Guo said. "It feels like we are witnessing the birth of a child of the office. We feel honored and proud."

The youth office aims to strengthen engagement and advocacy to advance youth issues across the UN, and to support and amplify the representation, voices and actions of young people in creating

solutions to global challenges.

During her first year with OSGEY, Guo was a novice when it came to managing Western social media platforms. She described herself as a "learner" who was devoted to completing the tasks assigned to her.

As she gradually became more proficient, she actively engaged in the strategizing of campaign ideas.

Moreover, she is responsible for visual branding, drawing on her background in architectural design.

Guo expressed pride in the significant increase in the number of followers of OSGEY's social media accounts during her management of them.

Over the past four years, the number of followers of the office's X account has increased by nearly 150 percent; by 162 percent on Facebook; and by 285 percent on Instagram.

In her role, Guo focused on coming up with innovative ways to promote UN youth events such as by using photo booths and designing photo frames to attract more youth participation.

During the COP28 UN Climate Change Conference in Dubai last year, Guo and her partners initiated an activity called "Heart to Heart", inviting UN officials and youth representatives from various institutions to exchange views on climate change.

Guo's experience at the UN has equipped her with valuable skills for future job opportunities with international organizations.

She said she will continue to work as a consultant to produce digital content for the UN Girls' Education Initiative, a global partnership hosted by the UN International Children's Emergency Fund.

Recalling her stay in the previous

office, Guo said that she "was inspired and motivated by a group of brilliant people striving to address global challenges and making positive change".

She believes that engaging in international volunteer service offers young people a unique learning experience, broadening their views and enhancing their skills while contributing to sustainable development.

Youth volunteers also bring fresh perspectives, innovation and a passion for change to international organizations, she added.

Guo said she was impressed by the prowess of the Chinese youth representatives who attended the Economic and Social Council Youth Forum in April, where they displayed their dedication to tackling global problems and demonstrated good English communication skills.

The participation of Chinese youth on the international stage has become more extensive and profound, Guo said.

CHINA



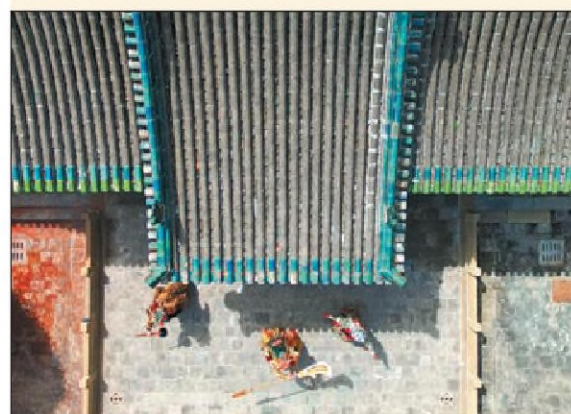
Shanxi Opera actor Cheng Liheng performs at the temple on April 22.

SPIRIT OF SUPERHERO ENDURES ON STAGE

Opera star Wu Lingyun is renowned for his longtime portrayal of icon Guan Yu



Shanxi Opera actor Wang Shengjun performs at the temple on April 22.



Wu Lingyun (middle) and his colleagues stage a performance at Grand Guan Di Temple in Taiyuan, Shanxi province, on April 22. PHOTOS BY ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY



Wu (right) plays Guan Yu in a performance staged at the temple on April 22.



Wu, dressed as Guan Yu, interacts with students while promoting Shanxi Opera at Taiyuan Experimental Primary School in Taiyuan on May 27.



Guan Yu played by Wu Lingyun.



Wu (left) teaches movements to a student from the United States at the temple on April 22.

By ZHU XINGXIN in Taiyuan and CHEN LIANG

In Chinese folklore, Guan Yu, a general from the late Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220) also known as "Guan Gong" or "Guan Di", stands as a revered figure. The "God of War" is perceived as a superhero in the eyes of the Chinese people.

For over 40 years, Wu Lingyun, a Shanxi Opera (or *jinju*) performer and a renowned inheritor of the intangible cultural heritage, has played Guan on stage, further popularizing the art with his portrayals of the iconic figure.

As China celebrated Cultural and Natural Heritage Day on Saturday, Wu, who is also vice-president of the Jinju Art Research Institute in Taiyuan, Shanxi province, told China Daily that he is proud to be able to perform as the general. "Guan Yu, renowned for his loyalty, righteousness, benevolence and valor, symbolizes the spirit of the Chinese nation and is beloved by people worldwide," he said.

Originating from the central areas of Shanxi, *jinju* boasts a rich vocal style and melodious tunes that have evolved over time to create a unique art. In 2006, it was recognized as one of the first national intangible cultural heritages.

Wu began his theatrical journey at age 8 and joined a troupe when he was 12, following in the footsteps of his parents, Wu Zhong and Yan Huizhen, both esteemed *jinju* artists. In 1982, his parents brought Guan's story to the *jinju* stage, with his mother becoming the first female performer to portray the general in the history of Chinese opera.

"The presence of Guan Yu in *jinju* originated from my parents," Wu said.

"I am the second generation of Guan Yu performers in our family. My father always emphasized emulating Guan Yu's virtues, to be the person that he was, in order to embody his spirit on the stage."

Wu began portraying Guan in 1985, when he was 20 years old. His performances gained acclaim, leading him to win the 17th China Drama Plum Blossom Award in 1999.

"I began portraying Guan Yu at age 20 and now, at the age of 60, I am retiring," he said. "When I embody the general now, even my eyebrows naturally raise, striving to capture every detail in pursuit of his spirit. Sometimes, I find myself unable to sleep and begin reciting lines," he said.

There are over 30,000 temples and guilds honoring Guan worldwide, with the legendary general's cultural influence spanning 168 countries and regions.

In Wu's eyes, Guan's defining characteristics are loyalty and integrity.

To portray Guan authentically, Wu visited thousands of temples, observed and recorded the details of statues depicting the general and incorporated the depictions into his performances.

He also read history books about the general and watched portrayals of him by older opera artists, drawing inspiration from them.

During a performance in Southeast Asia, Wu, performing as Guan, made a heart gesture to the audience during a curtain call.

A short video showing the gesture went viral online.

"Audiences overseas come from diverse backgrounds with different languages and cultures. So I thought of using the universal language of the heart gesture to show a different face of Guan Yu in the modern era," Wu said.

"I am an active Guan Yu on the stage. My greatest responsibility now is to pass on and promote the artistic charm of traditional *jinju* through various means. This is my mission and my driving force," he added.

Contact the writers at zhuxingxin@chinadaily.com.cn



From left: Wu plays Guan Yu in a performance at the primary school on May 27. Wu paints the mask of Guan Yu at the primary school on May 27.

WORLD US

Hunter Biden guilty of 3 felonies in gun trial

US president's son, 54, is convicted of lying on a federal firearms application

By AI HEPING in New York
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A jury on Tuesday found Hunter Biden, the son of President Joe Biden, guilty of three felony counts of lying on a federal firearms application in 2018 tied to a handgun purchase.

The verdict was a quick one, coming after just more than three hours of deliberations split between Monday and Tuesday.

Three jurors who spoke to CNN said Tuesday that they believed they had no choice but to find Hunter Biden guilty, but one said the case "seemed like a waste of taxpayer dollars".

In a phone interview with CNN, a male juror who identified himself only as juror No. 10 told the network that the jury was divided 6-6 on all three counts after taking a quick vote by hand Monday evening after deliberations began.

On Tuesday, as the group reviewed evidence, however, those who favored acquittal changed their minds relatively quickly, said the juror, a 68-year-old man who declined to give his name.

"We were not thinking of the sentencing. I really don't think Hunter belongs in jail," the juror told CNN, which didn't show the juror's face or name out of concern for his safety.

He also said it was "bad mistake" for the defense to put Naomi Biden,



Hunter Biden, son of President Joe Biden, is accompanied by first lady Jill Biden (left), and his wife, Melissa Cohen Biden, as they walk out of federal court after hearing the guilty verdict on Tuesday, in Wilmington, Delaware. Hunter Biden was convicted of all three felony charges in the federal gun trial.
MATT ROURKE / AP

Hunter's eldest daughter, on the stand.

"President Biden never really came into play for me," the juror said. "His name was only brought up once in the trial. You kind of put that out of your mind."

A member of the jury told ABC News that "politics never came into

play" in deliberations and that "the verdict absolutely was not politically motivated".

The juror said evidence that placed Hunter Biden at a 7/11 convenience store — a place where he repeatedly said in his memoir and in text messages that he purchased drugs — days prior to his gun purchase tipped the

jury over the top.

Biden, 54, became the first child of a sitting president to be convicted of a crime. With arms crossed, he looked at the 12-person jury as the verdict was read in a federal courthouse in Wilmington, Delaware, the president's hometown.

After the verdict was delivered, he

didn't talk to reporters as he left the courthouse, but later issued a statement: "I am more grateful today for the love and support I experienced this last week from Melissa, my family, my friends and my community than I am disappointed by the outcome."

Abbe Lowell, Biden's defense attorney, had argued that his client believed at the time he purchased the gun that he was in recovery and not addicted to or actively using drugs.

President Biden said in a statement after the verdict that he and first lady Jill Biden will always be there for their son with "our love and support".

Biden said he will accept the outcome and continue to respect the judicial process as his son considers an appeal.

Later on Tuesday, hours after his son had been convicted on federal gun charges, Biden heralded the steps his administration has taken to strengthen gun laws in the United States and enhance the penalties for those who violate them.

Speaking at an Everytown for Gun Safety event in Washington, the president didn't reference Hunter Biden's conviction.

Biden was to depart for Wilmington where his son is after the event. He wasn't originally scheduled to go there, but the White House updated his schedule after Hunter Biden's conviction.

Hunter Biden could face up to 25 years in prison, but first-time offenders who didn't use their weapons to commit a violent crime typically receive no jail time.

Judge Maryellen Noreika didn't schedule a date for his sentencing but told him it typically takes place within

120 days of the verdict, which could put it days before the Nov 5 election in which Biden will face former president Donald Trump, the presumptive GOP nominee.

The Trump campaign sent a statement to CNN that the trial was "nothing more than a distraction from the real crimes of the Biden Crime Family".

During their second presidential debate four years ago, Trump sought to connect candidate Joe Biden with Hunter's alleged misdeeds.

Republican critics have focused on Hunter Biden's business dealings, particularly with foreign companies, but have produced no evidence that Joe Biden was involved in or benefited from them.

The verdict brought to an end the trial that started last week and extensive testimony about his struggle with drugs from several of the women in his life — three former romantic partners, including the widow of his brother, Beau Biden — and some of his closest relatives.

Biden didn't testify in his own defense.

First lady Jill Biden arrived at the courthouse after the verdict was read. She and other members of the Biden family had been attending the trial, often sitting in the front row.

Hunter Biden was indicted on three felony gun charges after a proposed plea deal with federal prosecutors unraveled.

He is also facing a September trial on charges in California of failing to pay \$1.4 million in federal income taxes.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Israel urged to honor Gaza cease-fire call

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong
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With the United Nations Security Council adopting a resolution on Monday for a comprehensive cease-fire in Gaza, the international community is calling on Israel to urgently implement the consensus and halt the military campaign that is causing untold suffering to millions of besieged Palestinians.

According to a statement published by Wafa news agency, the Palestinian presidency welcomed the adoption of Resolution 2735 by the UN Security Council, calling for an immediate and complete cease-fire in the Gaza Strip, as "a step in the right direction to stop the ongoing war of genocide against the Palestinian people".

It also reiterated its call for the implementation of the two-state solution. Palestinian Ambassador to the UN Riyad Mansour, who spoke to the media after the vote in New York, said Palestine is "determined with our friends to make a long-lasting, permanent cease-fire".

Meanwhile, Hamas said it was ready to cooperate with negotiators, but was only willing to accept a deal that would end the fighting in Gaza, Reuters reported.

Belal Alakhras, a political analyst and Palestinian researcher at the University of Malaya in Malaysia, told China Daily that the resolution endorsing a cease-fire in Gaza reflects the international consensus that "continuing the genocidal war is illegitimate and that restoring

stability in the region is urgently needed".

It has been widely reported that the United States' now-adopted text, which has reportedly been accepted by Israel, urged Hamas to accept a cease-fire proposal that was announced by US President Joe Biden on May 31.

US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield said the fighting could "stop today if Hamas agrees to the deal now endorsed by the Security Council".

But Reut Shapir Ben-Naftaly, political coordinator of the Israeli mission to the UN, said her country's goals have been "very clear" since Oct 7, namely to bring all Israeli hostages home and dismantle Hamas and its capabilities, ensuring that Gaza "does not pose a threat to Israel in the future".

She also said Israel "will not engage in meaningless and endless negotiations which can be exploited by Hamas as a means to stall for time".

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Saturday following the rescue of four Israeli hostages that Israel would not relent "until we complete the mission and return all our hostages home, both the living and the deceased".

Last week, Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir and Finance Minister Bezale Smotrich issued calls to "expand the war in Gaza" and to invade southern Lebanon.

Turkiye welcomed the UNSC resolution as "an important step toward

putting an end to the massacre", and lauded Hamas' "constructive and positive approach" to the cease-fire plan. "It is imperative that Israel announces its commitment to the implementation of a permanent cease-fire and fully implements all elements of the resolution," the Turkish foreign ministry said in a statement.

Alakhras noted that the US vetoed three cease-fire proposals while enabling Israel's conflict in Gaza for more than eight months, leading to unprecedented killing and destruction that impacted the entire region and swayed the US' and international public opinion.

"This inconsistency highlights the world's dire need for a system not confined to one major power that can rapidly reverse course on matters of self-inflicted consequence. The priority now is implementing this resolution, though Palestinians seek guarantees that the war will truly end, while Israeli leaders publicly want to achieve all objectives of their total war," he said.

Further, he said emerging powers on the Security Council "should take the initiative to promote stability proactively, not just react after massive lives and interests are impacted".

In a social media post, Francesca Albanese, UN special rapporteur on the human rights situation in the West Bank and Gaza, welcomed the cease-fire resolution, but shared what she called "some critical observations".

She said the UNSC "cannot infringe people's right to self-determination" as it lacked the authority to determine who will or should rule over Gaza and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory, and underscored that only Palestinians will have to choose via "free and democratic elections", "not piloted, controlled or vetoed by outsiders".

Weather disasters drive surge in US home insurance rates

By MINLU ZHANG in New York
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Millions of Americans are losing their homes in a record number of weather catastrophes, and insurance companies are raising premiums to record levels in many states while some are simply going out of business.

Insurers are bleeding cash from weather-related events like wildfires, tornadoes, hailstorms, heavy rain and flooding. The list goes on and on, and has been attributed to climate change. For 2023, US storm insurance claims hit a record \$63 billion, according to a recent report.

To cover their losses, insurers are raising rates, restricting coverage or pulling out of some areas "because they're concerned about having to pay out so much as more of these weather-related catastrophes occur", Dave Jones, director of the Climate Risk Initiative at UC-Berkeley's Center for Law, Energy and the Environment, told China Daily.

Insurers are losing money on homeowners coverage in 18 states, more than a third of the country. That is an increase from 12 states five years ago and eight states in 2013, according to The New York Times.

"Home insurers in the US had their worst underwriting performance since 2011 last year," Mark Friedlander, director of corporate communications for the Insurance Information Institute, told China Daily. For every dollar they collected in home premiums last year, insurance companies paid an average of \$1.11 in claims and expenses, he said.

Insurance rates jumped by double digits in 25 states last year, with the biggest increases in Texas, Arizona and Utah, according to S&P Global. In some places, like Florida, rates have risen over 40 percent in the past five years. Rates in Arizona have skyrocketed more than 62 percent over the past five years.

Cindy N., who declined to provide her last name, and her husband, who are from Massachusetts, bought a condo in Florida 10 years ago. They used it during the winter months and found they could rent it when not there.

It worked out so well for them, they said, that they purchased two more condos in the same building and leased them. But then came Hurricane Idalia in August 2023.

It caused extensive damage to the building, so extensive that she and her husband said they couldn't afford the 100 percent increase in their homeowners insurance for the

condominiums, so they sold two of them at a great loss and may sell the first one they purchased.

"We made money renting, but not with these high insurance rates," she told China Daily. "It's not worth it, and we're safer in Massachusetts."

In 2023, there were a record 28 weather and climate disasters, according to The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), with a total cost of at least \$92.9 billion. In comparison, the annual average for such events between 1980 and 2023 was 8.5.

More than 14.5 million homes in the United States were hit by natural disasters in 2021, causing an estimated \$56.92 billion in property damage, according to a 2022 report by CoreLogic. That means about 1 in every 10 homes in the US was affected.

Insurers react to their losses by raising prices based on actuarial data, said Friedlander. "They do a very comprehensive analysis of risk modeling, and then they price the coverage based on actuarially sound data. And when insurers have such a poor underwriting result, that means that they were not collecting enough premiums last year. So what happens is that they will continue to drive higher premiums in most markets across the country this year," Friedlander said.

The rising frequency and severity of natural disasters made it increasingly important for homeowners to have proper insurance. However, increased premiums and recent economic factors have affected their insurance choices. Cancellation notices have left them rushing to find new coverage to protect their houses.

Twelve percent of US homeowners don't have house insurance, according to a study conducted by the Insurance Information Institute in the spring of 2023. That is more than double the pre-pandemic rate. In 2019, before the pandemic, it was only 5 percent, Friedlander said.

In the US, you can't buy a house without a mortgage — unless you are paying for the house entirely in cash — and you can't get a mortgage without insurance. That is a provision of a mortgage agreement.

If insurance isn't purchased, two things could happen. The mortgage loan could default, leading to the loss of the home. More commonly, force-placed insurance could be applied, where the mortgage company insures the home itself, Friedlander said.

Force-placed insurance is "typically a lesser-quality insurance policy. You might pay up to five times more, and it doesn't provide the same level of

coverage. So you never want to be in that situation," he said.

State Farm, the largest homeowners insurance company in the US, will stop covering more than 72,000 homes and apartments in California this summer. The company said the decision is due to soaring costs, increasing wildfire risks and outdated regulations. The Orange County Register reported.

More than 90 percent of companies in the California insurance market are either not offering new property insurance or have significant restrictions, KQED public radio station in San Francisco reported.

Marsha G., who requested her last name not be used, is nearly 70 years old and has lived in the Riverside, California, area for about 20 years. It is one of the highest-risk areas in the state for wildfires, but she said her house has been spared the flames.

But now, she told China Daily, her insurance company is excluding damage from wildfires in her policy, and she has decided to move far from the wildfires, maybe to another state. "How can I stay here? Without insurance, no way," she said.

A recent report by the First Street Foundation, a nonprofit focused on climate risk research, says that nearly 4.4 million properties in the US are at risk of increased insurance rates and reduced coverage due to wildfires. Additionally, 23.9 million properties are at risk due to wind, and 12 million due to flooding.

Meanwhile, states started to regulate insurance markets, holding the power to approve or reject rate increases, determine coverage extent, and enforce consumer protections.

California is forcing insurance companies to offer discounts to homeowners who take steps to protect their homes from a wildfire, such as installing fire-resistant roofs.

Minnesota is requiring insurers to provide discounts if homeowners are building their homes with climate-resilient materials. Kentucky and Georgia recently passed similar legislation, according to the Times.

Louisiana and Washington have sped up the process for insurance companies to raise their premiums, with the objective of attracting more insurance companies, and increased competition would ultimately keep premiums lower for residents. Arkansas recently allowed insurers to impose higher deductibles on people whose homes are damaged by hail or wind.

Agencies contributed to this story.

China urges permanent peace in Gaza

China's envoy to the United Nations has emphasized the urgent need for an immediate, permanent cease-fire and highlighted the country's support in stopping the killings and alleviating the humanitarian disaster in Gaza.

The UN Security Council adopted its first resolution on Monday aimed at ending the conflict in Gaza.

Fu Cong, China's permanent representative to the UN, said it would be more prudent for the parties to reach an agreement first and then for the Security Council to approve the resolution. However, if the Security Council's actions help promote an agreement and achieve

an immediate and permanent cease-fire, such actions are still significant.

China and the Security Council have strongly called for a cease-fire for several months. The urgent expectation is shared by the suffering of people in Gaza, Fu said.

"Based on the urgent need to stop more killings and alleviate the humanitarian disaster, China voted in favor of the draft resolution," he said.

Fu noted that the emergency sessions of the UN General Assembly and Security Council have repeatedly demanded an immediate, unconditional and lasting cease-fire; the release of all hostages and detained Palestinians;

guaranteed, timely humanitarian aid to Gaza; protection of civilians; and accountability for violations of international humanitarian law in Gaza.

Fu noted that while the draft resolution has been amended based on the Security Council members' opinions, many ambiguities remain.

He reiterated that all Security Council resolutions are legally binding. The resolution adopted on Monday has the same binding force as resolutions 2712, 2720 and 2728 and should be fully and effectively implemented, he said.

— MINLU ZHANG

BUSINESS

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A technician checks a 5G facility in Chongqing. QIU HONGBIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

5G stations continue to mushroom

By LIU YUKUN
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China leads the world in 5G base stations, users and penetration rates, significantly boosting its digital economy, said experts and officials, who also emphasized the potential of integrating 5G terminals with AI technology for further growth.

Looking ahead, 5G development will require further efforts to innovate technologies and applications in intelligent 5G, 5G broadband, 5G RedCap or reduced capability, and proactive adaptation, they said.

China had built a total of 3.748 million 5G base stations, with more than 26 stations per 10,000 people, by the end of April, said the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology. Over 30,000 5G private networks for industries have been established, it said.

"The continuous evolution and advanced status of new digital infrastructure are crucial for driving the digital and intelligent transformation and upgrade of the economy

and society, leading to high-quality development," said Su Shaolin, head of the Beijing Communications Administration.

The China Academy of Information and Communications Technology (CAICT) estimated that over the past five years, 5G commercialization in China has directly generated approximately 5.6 trillion yuan (\$772 billion) in economic output and indirectly driven around 14 trillion yuan in output, significantly contributing to high-quality economic and social development.

Su said that the added value of Beijing's digital economy reached 1.87 trillion yuan last year, accounting for 42.9 percent of the city's GDP and playing a significant role in driving overall economic development.

Hu Jianbo, deputy head of the CAICT, said that 5G has boosted the development of various industries. Hu highlighted that 5G has penetrated 74 of the 97 major sectors of the national economy, with an industry penetration rate exceeding 76 percent.

He also mentioned that Chinese companies have maintained a leading position in the global 5G base station equipment market for five consecutive years, with a global market share of 55 percent and sales in over 75 countries and regions. China's shipments of 5G phones accounted for 50 percent of the global total by April.

Wu Hequan, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering, emphasized the importance of innovation in the future development of 5G, with focused efforts on intelligent 5G, 5G broadband, 5G RedCap or reduced capability, and proactive adaptation.

Wu pointed to the significant potential in integrating 5G terminals with AI technology. The AI integration of 5G terminals, including smartphones, personal computers, virtual reality devices and industrial modules, is progressing toward embedding large models.

One example is Apple's partnership with OpenAI's ChatGPT, announced this week, to boost its voice assistance and operating system.

Realty sector looking up on policy moves

Expert says that worst time for home transactions has passed, sales rebound

By WANG YING in Shanghai
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The latest local housing fine-tuning policies are taking effect with improved market activity in major Chinese cities, leading to expectations of more innovative solutions to better digest inventory and stabilize the property market, said industry experts on Tuesday.

"In the new home market, about 1,302 apartments were traded on average per day among the key 13 cities, soaring 172.54 percent (or 478 units per day) from that seen during the May Day holiday," said the Zhuge Real Estate Data Research Center.

"The significant increase comes after the epic supportive measures at the State level on May 17 and various local level fine-tuning moves, indicating that policies were effective in driving buying demand and promoting transactions," said Guan Rongxue, a senior analyst at the Zhuge Real Estate Data Research Center.

During the three-day-long Dragon Boat Festival that ended on Monday, Shanghai's residential property sector saw upbeat sentiment among potential buyers as both daily inquiries and visits made for existing homes rose 30 percent from the days before May 27, when a nine-item policy was released by the local municipal government, said the Shanghai Lianjia Research Institute.

"Since Shanghai announced measures to further free up the housing market in late May, our workload grew 40 to 50 percent due to soaring inquiries and visits

But now, more people want to apply for loans as mortgage rates and down payments have been downward adjusted."

Yang Chen,
agent with Sinyi Realty
in Shanghai

from potential clients, and the trend continued during Dragon Boat Festival," said Yang Chen, an agent with Sinyi Realty in Shanghai's Jing'an district.

Yang said he also discovered an evident increase in buying budgets, showing their optimism toward market prospects.

"Before the new policies, many clients preferred to buy homes without applying for mortgages, as they did not want to sacrifice their living standards. But now, more people want to apply for loans as mortgage rates and down payments have been downward adjusted," Yang added.

"These new measures have precisely targeted rational home buying demand in the market, including inelastic demand and reasonable requirements for changing to better homes," said Lu Wenxi, a market analyst at Centaline Shanghai.

Shanghai expressed its strong support for the local housing market on May 27 by announcing measures to scrap some purchase restrictions, optimize credit poli-

cies, encourage trade-in activities and improve land and housing supplies. These measures are in response to the letter and spirit of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee meeting on April 30.

Lu expects Shanghai to see double-digit transaction improvements in June from the previous month, and transaction volume in the second half will be better off than the first.

"The worst time for home transactions has passed," said Lu.

In the five key cities Zhuge Real Estate monitored, a total of 933 pre-owned flats were traded during the Dragon Boat Festival period, up 40.72 percent from a year ago, and surging 232.98 percent per day in comparison with the May Day holiday, said Guan.

"The executive meeting of the State Council — the country's Cabinet — was held on Friday, which further raised market expectations for more innovative measures to digest inventories, boost market confidence recovery and activate transactions in June," Guan added.

By identifying the significance of the property market toward people's overall sentiment, the meeting called to fully understand the new situation of supply and demand, follow the expectations of the public for high-quality housing, promote the implementation of supportive policies, and continue to introduce new measures to destock and stabilize the market.

The goal is to accelerate the formation of a new property development model, improve the housing supply system, and promote the steady and healthy development of the real estate market, the meeting said.

Quant trading rules to boost confidence

By SHI JING in Shanghai
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Chinese regulators' prompt supervision of quantitative trading will help narrow the gap between programs and individual investors in terms of technology, access to information and speed, thereby boosting the confidence of A-share investors and sustaining the stability of the market in the long run, according to market mavens.

The mainland's three major stock exchanges in Shanghai, Shenzhen and Beijing released on Friday rules on quant trading, or program trading, and solicited public feedback till June 14.

The rules cover six major areas — the management over reporting, trading activities, information systems, high-frequency trading, quant trading via the stock connect program linking the Shanghai, Shenzhen and Hong Kong bourses, as well as supervision.

These rules have addressed the trial regulation on quant trading released by the China Securities Regulatory Commission on May 15.

Scheduled to take effect on Oct 8, the regulation promulgated by China's top securities watchdog included stricter requirements on supervision, technical systems, trading units, as well as reporting information on accounts, capital, trading and software when it

comes to quant trading.

Experts from Shanghai DeepWin Private Equity Management said that the rules clearly define high-frequency trading and abnormal stock trading that might undermine system safety or normal trading of the exchanges.

Rules regarding "abnormal instantaneous declaration rates" will help prevent the problem of system overload caused by the influx of a large number of orders in a very short period of time. This will ensure the stability and security of the trading system. The restrictions on frequent and instantaneous order cancellations can also effectively reduce market noise, hence maintaining the fairness and transparency of the market, said the experts.

A stricter supervision over the "frequent rise or suppression of stock prices" will prevent misleading messages by certain investors via small-scale price manipulations.

The rules also touch upon management of a large amount of trading within a short period of time. This will prevent drastic market volatility and ensure the stability of indexes, they added.

Experts from Wenbo Fund, a Shanghai-based PE fund specializing in quant trading, said the rules on high-frequency trading will limit the room for such methods. Investors who used to favor such trading will focus more on long-term invest-

ment, which is conducive to the stability of the Chinese capital markets, they said.

During a news conference in April, Zhang Wangjun, an official of the CSRC, said that program trading accounts for over 50 percent of the total trading value in some mature markets. Due to its rapid development in China over the past few years, program trading forms about 29 percent of the trading value of the entire A-share market now.

Program trading has boosted market activity, enhanced trading efficiency and improved liquidity to some extent. However, since individuals form the majority of stock market investors in China, it is necessary to take a tighter grip over program trading, especially high-frequency trading, as it is superior to retail investors in terms of technology and speed, Zhang said.

Strict supervision over quant trading is seen across major mature markets, given the fact that quant trading companies may adopt the same strategies during certain periods, aggravating market volatility, he added.

Chinese regulators have stepped up supervision over quant trading lately. On Feb 20, both the Shanghai and Shenzhen exchanges announced a three-day trading ban on leading quant fund Lingjun Investment for abnormal selloffs a day earlier.



Pivotal link

China Railway No 4 Engineering Group Co Ltd has completed digging 10 kilometers of the 16.27-kilometer Xujiaping Tunnel on the Tianshui-Longnan Railway, which links the two prefecture-level cities in Gansu province. The 208.2-km railway, which began construction in 2020, will be a pivotal interconnection in the province between the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Yangtze River Economic Belt.

WANG HUI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Briefly

Investment in rail construction up 10.8%

China has scaled up investment in railway construction since the beginning of the year, data from the country's railway operator showed on Tuesday. During the January-May period, fixed-asset investment in the country's railway sector reached 228.47 billion yuan (\$32.12 billion), marking a 10.8-percent increase from the

same period last year, according to China State Railway Group. The investment volume expanded from 184.9 billion yuan in the first four months of this year.

Renminbi weakens to 7.1135 against dollar

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, weakened 29 pips to 7.1135 against the US dollar on Tuesday,

according to 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 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

China to see robust growth in AI PC shipments

By FAN FEIFEI
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Shipments of artificial intelligence-powered personal computers are expected to grow rapidly in China over the next few years, driven mainly by the rapid evolution of large language models and quick deployment of generative AI technology in hardware devices, said industry experts.

AI PCs, which refer to computers that integrate AI into their processors and are capable of independently running LLMs and applications, mark a significant turning point in the PC industry and will trigger a new product

replacement cycle, they added.

According to a report released by market research company International Data Corp, China's PC market will likely maintain steady growth momentum in the next five years, with AI-powered PCs estimated to take up 85 percent of the overall PC market share in China in 2027.

Data from IDC show that global shipments of AI PCs will grow from nearly 50 million units this year to more than 167 million in 2027, while AI PCs will account for nearly 60 percent of all PC shipments worldwide by the end of 2027.

The consultancy believes that AI PC shipments have started to ramp up in 2024, and over the next few

years, it expects the technology to move from niche to a majority.

Many of these AI PCs will be sold to commercial buyers, but consumers will have much to look forward to in the coming AI PC age, including potential improvements in PC gaming and digital content creation, IDC added.

Wang Jiping, vice-president of IDC China, said AI PCs will bring about disruptive changes to the PC industry, and major Chinese PC manufacturers have released AI-related terminal products.

Wang added that the next two or three years will be key in bolstering the application of AI technology into electronic devices.

According to industry research firm Canalys, China's PC market will rebound to 3 percent growth in 2024 and 10 percent growth in 2025, primarily fueled by refreshed demand from the commercial sector. The shipment of PCs in the Chinese market declined by 9 percent year-on-year in the fourth quarter of 2023, with 11.3 million PC units shipped.

Emma Xu, an analyst from Canalys, said 2024 is expected to bring modest relief to a struggling PC market in China, as the PC sector is set to witness significant opportunities from this commercial push, especially as it coincides with the upcoming device refreshment cycle and the

emergence of AI-capable PCs.

Canalys estimates that 48 million AI PCs will be shipped worldwide in 2024, which represents 18 percent of total PC shipments. But this is just the start of a major market transition, with AI-capable PC shipments projected to surpass 100 million in 2025, forming 40 percent of all PC shipments.

The forecast underscores the massive potential and wide-ranging impact AI-capable PCs will have on the industry over the next five years and beyond. PC vendors that can deliver innovative, differentiated AI-accelerated experiences stand to gain as this disruptive new category goes mainstream, experts said.

"PCs with dedicated on-device AI capabilities will enable new and improved user experiences, driving productivity gains and personalizing

devices at scale while offering better power efficiency, stronger security and reduced costs associated with running AI workloads," said Ishan Dutt, principal analyst at Canalys.

This emerging PC category opens new frontiers for both software developers and hardware vendors to innovate and deliver compelling use cases to customers across consumer, commercial and education scenarios, Dutt added.

Xiang Ligang, director-general of telecom industry association Information Consumption Alliance, said, "We are currently in a transition stage in the application of generative AI." The IT industry will feel the impact of AI more than any other industry, as every company races to introduce AI-enhanced products or services and to assist their customers with AI implementation, he added.

BUSINESS

HSBC China completes key acquisition deal

Lender acquires Citi's retail wealth biz to further tap Chinese mainland market

By LIU ZIZHENG and LIU ZHIHUA

HSBC China has completed the acquisition of Citi's retail wealth management portfolio in the Chinese mainland, HSBC said on Tuesday.

The portfolio of investment assets and deposits, and associated wealth management customers — covering 11 major Chinese cities — has been integrated into HSBC China's Wealth and Personal Banking operations. Over 300 employees have also joined HSBC.

Experts said the move indicates HSBC's intense focus on the promising prospects of the asset management business in China, as well as foreign investors' strengthening confidence in China's real economy.

Zhou Maohua, a researcher at China Everbright Bank, said foreign institutions see great potential in China's financial market because its economy is expected to grow steadily over the long run, and the country has continuously advanced high-standard opening-up in its financial sector.

Zhou said that in recent years, China has accelerated the improvement of its legal system and regulatory requirements, aimed at fostering a world-class business environment.

There also exists ample room for foreign investors to carry out more cross-border investment and financing services, Zhou added.

Dong Ximiao, chief researcher at Merchants Union Consumer Finance, said China has further optimized the allocation of its financial market resources, which has injected impetus into the sector's sustainable development.

In addition, as household incomes in China continue to increase, more opportunities have emerged in the country's wealth management market and foreign financial institutions have been pro-

vided with broader space for further development, said Dong.

Mark Wang, president and CEO of HSBC China, said the lender has confidence in the growth potential of the China market and has been making substantial investments in the country — particularly into the fast-growing wealth management sector.

"Completion of this deal enabled us to further strengthen our competitive edge among foreign banks providing wealth services in the country. Going forward, we will keep supporting our clients both at home and abroad to seize opportunities from connecting China and the world economy, fully leveraging our capabilities in cross-border financial services," Wang said.

Zhou said greater engagement by foreign institutions in the Chinese market could help meet Chinese consumers' diversified needs for financial services.

Zhou added that amid both cooperation and competition with foreign institutions, Chinese financial institutions could also accelerate the enhancement of their operational capacity and efficiency, thus better serving the real economy.

HSBC China and Citi first announced the deal in October, and the latter plans to exit consumer banking businesses across 14 markets, including Asia, Europe and Mexico, as part of its strategic refresh.

Citi has now closed sales in nine of those markets including Australia, India, Indonesia and Malaysia.

Citi's institutional businesses in China are excluded from the sale. Citi said it remains focused on serving institutional clients in China locally, regionally and globally.

As part of a previously signed agreement, Citi will also transfer its remaining credit card portfolio in China to Fubon Bank China later this year.

Contact the writers at liuzizheng@chinadaily.com.cn



Visitors gather at HSBC's booth during the sixth China International Import Expo in Shanghai in November. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Cargo being exported to France is loaded onto an aircraft at Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport in Sichuan province on June 2. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

'Panda capital' building itself into prime example of nation's opening-up

By ZHUANG QIANG and PANG BO

Chengdu, the Sichuan provincial capital — also dubbed the "panda capital of the world" — is deepening international exchanges and bolstering its opening-up.

On May 25, the first Chengdu-Europe Express — part of the China-Europe Railway Express leaving for Russia via Alashankou Port — departed from Chengdu International Railway Port bearing the carriage name of "Chengdu-Russia" and carrying 55 freight cars of goods such as color TV sets, spare parts, shoes and clothing.

Up to now, Chengdu has operated nearly 30,000 international trains, connecting 112 cities outside the country, and the cumulative number of China-Europe Railway Express trains departing Chengdu and Chongqing ranks first in the country.

TCL Optoelectronic Technology (Chengdu) Co Ltd was the first local enterprise to use Chengdu's China-Europe Railway Express, and the first processing trade enterprise in the Comprehensive Bonded Zone of Chengdu International Railway Port.

"Chengdu's China-Europe Railway Express has offered high punctuality and stability, helping us expand into the European market," said Chen Hezhi, general manager of the company, adding that by May 27, TCL had shipped 26,400 containers via the express, with an export value of some 21.76 billion yuan (\$3.04 billion). Of these, 2,033 containers were shipped this year, with a value of 1.22 billion yuan.

With a history of over 4,500 years and now acting as a semi-provincial level city administering 12 districts, five county-level cities and three counties, Chengdu is making better use of its convenient air, highway and railway travel network links.

Chengdu's China-Europe Railway Express has offered high punctuality and stability, helping us expand into the European market."

Chen Hezhi, general manager of TCL Optoelectronic Technology (Chengdu) Co Ltd

A key meeting of the Communist Party of China Chengdu Municipal Committee on June 5 passed a decision on speeding up the construction of an international gateway hub city and promoting high-quality development through high-standard opening-up for Chengdu, which now has 21.4 million residents.

For air travel, Chengdu's international and regional regular direct flights have expanded to 71, including 49 passenger routes and 22 freight routes, and forming a network of intercontinental routes reaching Europe, Asia, the United States, Australia and Africa.

As services trade is an important part of international commerce, Chengdu has issued a series of support policies in recent years, encouraging services trade enterprises to expand globally.

SystImmune, a wholly owned subsidiary of Chengdu-based Sichuan Biokin Pharmaceuticals Co Ltd, and US-based Bristol-Myers Squibb Co reached a global strategic cooperation agreement on Dec 11 on the development and commercialization rights of BL-B01D1 (EGFR×HER3 bispecific antibody-drug conjugate) in the United States. It had a potential total transaction value of up to \$8.4 billion, breaking the record

for Chinese-made innovative drugs going global.

In the first quarter, the firm received the first batch of authorized license transactions of \$800 million, it said, adding that Chengdu's favorable policies encouraging pharmaceutical companies to increase R&D efforts, go global and expand exports, have injected vital momentum into its development.

In the first quarter, the total import and export value of Chengdu's services trade jumped by 84.3 percent year-on-year, making it a vital force in promoting the city's high-quality development of foreign trade.

Meanwhile, Chengdu is also deepening economic and trade exchanges with the outside world through other means.

Regarding cultural and sporting exhibition sectors, the city has made full use of domestic and international resources, and sped up the clustering of manufacturing, capital and talent in the metropolis.

On May 18, the 2024 Investment Conference kicked off in the city, showcasing 232 projects to attract targeted investment exceeding 840 billion yuan.

Relevant data show that Chengdu has set up economic and trade ties with 235 countries and regions around the world, with an average of two foreign-funded enterprises emerging in the city every day, with 315 of the Fortune Global 500 enterprises having a presence there.

"We started our going-global layout in 2022, and now we have established cooperation with partners in Uzbekistan," said Liu Yong, chief of the market development department of Chengdu Shiny Technology Co Ltd, adding that they will bring Uzbek businesses to Chengdu while helping more local enterprises to explore the international market.

Contact the writers at zhuangqiang@chinadaily.com.cn

Victoria's Secret beefs up marketing strategy

By ZHU WENQIAN zhuwenqian@chinadaily.com.cn

Victoria's Secret, a leading US-based lingerie retailer that has been facing business as well as branding challenges in recent years, is strengthening its marketing efforts in China, betting on the country's promising market.

The company plans to close 38-42 existing stores in the United States and open 14 new outlets in the country, which is its largest market, this year. As of the beginning of 2024, the company operated 808 stores in the US, according to its latest quarterly report.

A former top player in the lingerie market with its own iconic fashion show, the company has been facing operational pressure and continued store closures in the international market, industry observers said.

In China, its second-largest market, a change in brand endorsers from renowned models to actresses reflects the company's adjustment of its marketing strategy. Its Chinese endorsers include actresses Yang Mi and Tian Xiwei, as the company aims to attract more consumers with diversified endorsers.

"The diversification of consumer aesthetics and an emphasis on comfort-wear have been important factors in the decline of Victoria's Secret's business performance," said An Miao, an analyst at market research provider LeadLeo Research Institute.

"Modern female consumers prefer products that meet their own demands and comfort, rather than pursuing brand effects. Besides, the shortcomings of Victoria's Secret in product design and innovation, deviation in market positioning, and singularity in marketing strategies are also challenges it faces," An said.

Victoria's Secret opened its first store in China in Shanghai in 2015. Currently, it operates some 70 stores in the country. In the past few years, the company has strengthened marketing efforts and e-commerce sales, coupled with price cuts of about 20 percent, but sales have not improved significantly in the country.

China's female underwear market has faced fierce competition as more brands have joined the fray.

With a low entry threshold and good growth momentum, the sector is fragmented and the industry may see a reshuffle of players in the near future with more emerging brands joining in, according to LeadLeo.

By 2026, China's underwear market is expected to hit 320 billion yuan (\$44.1 billion), and the compound annual growth rate between 2010 and 2026 is pegged at 7 percent, according to market research firm Euromonitor International.

In the first quarter, Victoria's Secret suffered a loss of \$3.64 million, and its net income declined by 59 percent year-on-year. The company expects a single-digit decline in sales in the second quarter, Chief Executive Martin Waters said in an earnings call after the first-quarter results announcement.

In fiscal year 2024, sales are expected to reach \$6 billion, a single-digit decline from fiscal year 2023.

The company's share price has plummeted by more than 30 percent since mid-February this year.

The viewing rate of Victoria's Secret fashion show reached a historic low in 2018, and in 2019, it was discontinued.

The company, however, said the show will be back this fall.

Tasty bite! How consumers hit a sweet spot with durian

By WANG KEJU wangkeju@chinadaily.com.cn

Durians, once considered a niche fruit due to its high price and limited availability, is gradually making its way into the mainstream market in China, due to the rising purchasing power of consumers and increasing affordability of the tropical fruit.

Recognizing the immense potential of the Chinese market, Southeast Asian nations are actively scaling up durian production to meet soaring demand from China. Moreover, the China-Laos railway has improved transportation efficiency, allowing for faster and more cost-effective delivery, analysts said.

In Zhejiang province's Jiaxing fruit market, the largest of its kind in East China, durian sales have touched new highs in recent weeks, with 300-plus containers available daily, resulting in transactions worth over 150 million yuan (\$20.68

million), said Ying Jianjun, manager of the market management department.

As sales continue to surge, the average price of durians imported from Thailand has, however, plummeted from 85.8 yuan per kilogram in late February to 45.6 yuan per kg in late May, Ying said, adding that the recent decline in durian prices is a boon for consumers.

Chinese consumers' love for durians has garnered attention worldwide. According to a report released by HSBC Bank in 2023, global durian demand has skyrocketed by 400 percent in the past two years. Notably, China accounted for 91 percent of the global demand.

Consumer awareness and willingness to embrace durians have played a pivotal role in their remarkable sales growth, said Xu Hongcai, deputy director of the China Association of Policy Science's Economic Policy Committee.

Meanwhile, consumers' higher purchasing power has created a

favorable environment for durians among the Chinese population, both in first-tier cities and in smaller ones, Xu added.

According to the Big Data Research Institute of popular Chinese short video platform Kuaishou, third-, fourth- and fifth-tier cities accounted for 61.7 percent of the durian consumer base in April this year.

Unlike most other fruits, the majority of durians consumed in China are currently imported. According to data from the General Administration of Customs of China, China's fresh durian imports stood at a mere 28,200 metric tons in 2002, but by 2019, the figure had risen to 605,000 tons.

The passion for durians among Chinese consumers shows no signs of waning. As of 2023, fresh durian imports skyrocketed to some 1.43 million tons, with an import value of \$6.7 billion, the administration added.

Considering that a durian typi-

cally weighs around 5-6 kilograms, calculations reveal that Chinese consumers devoured about 500 million durians in the past year alone.

The allure of durians has not only captivated Chinese taste buds but has also presented significant opportunities for durian-producing nations around the world. Recognizing China's insatiable appetite for this tropical delicacy, countries such as Thailand and Vietnam have expanded their durian cultivation and production capabilities to meet the escalating demand.

Thailand can produce 900,000 tons of durians annually, with domestic consumption at 300,000 tons and nearly all of the remaining produce being exported to China, said Chai Wacharonke, Prime Minister's Office spokesman, at a Cabinet meeting on April 9.

Statistics from the Ministry of Commerce of Thailand showed that durian exports to China from

January to April this year have already reached 225,204 tons.

Consumption of durians in the Chinese market is trending upward, with expectations of an increase of over 1 million tons in demand this year alone, Wacharonke added.

As China's appetite for fresh durians continues to grow, an increasing number of Southeast Asian countries are strategically targeting this lucrative market.

Statistics from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Vietnam showed that the area devoted to growing durians in Vietnam was estimated to have reached 110,000 hectares in 2023, an increase of 24 percent compared to the previous year.

Moreover, through the cold chain train services on the China-Laos Railway, the delivery of fruits including durians has become more affordable and quicker.

Previously, shipping durians from Thailand to Kunming in Yunnan province took approximately seven days by sea and around five days by road. However, with the China-Laos Railway, the transit time has been reduced to just three days.

BUSINESSFOCUS

Shein, Temu back seamless sales overseas

Chinese cross-border e-commerce platforms helping factories go global

By FAN FEIFEI
fanfeifei@chinadaily.com.cn

Zhang Min has taken over his parents' eyeglasses factory, which was founded more than a decade ago in Taizhou, Zhejiang province. The factory mainly received foreign trade orders and supplied various types of glasses for offline brand owners and dealers in the United States in its early stages of development.

However, its orders fell dramatically due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Looking to expand sales channels and reach more overseas consumers, Zhang decided to shift tactics by using cross-border e-commerce platforms. To bring about this result, Zhang registered with fast-fashion online retailer Shein.

"Consumer preferences vary in different countries, and we should dare to develop new products and open up new overseas markets," Zhang said, adding that her company usually determines whether to increase production in line with the latest sales and market trends, instead of manufacturing new products or stocking up goods blindly.

Zhang said the biggest takeaway since she opened an online store on Shein is that glasses are an important fashion accessory, while young consumers exhibit strong demand for glasses in different scenarios, such as shopping, parties and tourism.

Currently, sales from Shein's online marketplaces have accounted for nearly half of Zhang's total revenue, with its turnover reaching nearly 10 million yuan (\$1.38 million) each month.

Zhang is among millions of young Chinese entrepreneurs whose parents run factories that have survived operational difficulties by capitalizing on the emerging cross-border e-commerce platforms and digital technologies to secure new orders from international markets and rev up sales.

Experts said the unique advantage of Shein lies in its "small orders, quick response" model, which refers to using real-time market demand to regulate production.

Based on real-time analysis and tracking of fashion trends, the model involves starting with very small orders. If the sales trend is positive, sellers will ramp up production. However, if the sales fall short of expectations, production will be reduced or halted.

The on-demand production approach not only meets the diversified demand from consumers and bolsters sales, but also minimizes inventory and waste, improves operational efficiency and reduces

costs, thus making the production process more agile and flexible and enhancing the competitiveness of products, industry insiders said.

Founded in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, and known for its low prices and large selection of fashionable clothing and accessories, Shein is ratcheting up resources to help Chinese manufacturers and brands expand their presence in overseas markets, and give a strong boost to the transformation of traditional industries by making use of its digital and flexible supply chains.

The company announced plans to extend its outreach to industrial belts in 500 cities in China in September. It hopes to facilitate the digital upgrade of more industrial chains, thereby helping them achieve on-demand supply in terms of production. Shein has covered more than 300 industrial belts across the nation since 2021.

For sellers who are good at designing and producing products, but have no overseas sales and operation experience, Shein said it will provide one-stop services including commodity operations, warehousing, logistics, customer service and after-sales, to help sellers make forays offshore.

In addition, Shein is accelerating steps to build a supply chain project in Guangzhou covering operations, warehousing, stocking, order-picking, distribution, logistics and delivery. The project is expected to create 100,000 jobs and provide support for goods sold overseas.

"As a new form of foreign trade, cross-border e-commerce has become an important driving force for bolstering the steady growth of foreign trade, as well as promoting the transformation and upgrading of manufacturing and global expansion of Chinese-made products," said Zhang Zhouping, a senior analyst tracking business-to-business and cross-border activities at the Internet Economy Institute, a domestic consultancy.

Zhang said an increasing number of Chinese sellers and manufacturing enterprises are leveraging cross-border e-commerce channels that feature innovative and flexible on-demand production models to expand their global footprint, enrich product variety and build up new brands.

By constantly monitoring market changes and collecting consumers' real-time feedback, these platforms can make accurate predictions, while the flexible supply chain model is conducive to upgrading entire industrial chain, ranging from



Above: Visitors gather at fast-fashion online retailer Shein's booth during a commerce expo in Zhengzhou, Henan province, in October.

Left: Workers transport export-bound cargo at a logistics center in Shanghai in January.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

design and development to production, warehousing and logistics, Zhang added.

Data from the Ministry of Commerce showed that the import and export scale of the country's cross-border e-commerce transactions reached 577.6 billion yuan in the first quarter, up 9.6 percent year-on-year. E-commerce exports stood at 448 billion yuan, up 14 percent on a yearly basis.

Other Chinese cross-border online retailers are speeding up their globalization push. Temu, the cross-border e-commerce platform launched by Chinese online discounter PDD Holdings, has gained popularity among consumers overseas as it offers a wide selection of merchandise, including apparel, consumer electronics, jewelry, shoes, bags, cosmetics and baby products at competitive prices.

First launched in the US in September 2022, Temu has entered more than 50 countries in North America, Europe, Asia and Oceania. Experts said Temu's business model removes middlemen from the equation, allow-

ing Chinese suppliers to sell directly to US consumers and ship directly from China, instead of building a network of US warehouses.

PDD announced plans to help China's manufacturing enterprises widen their global reach in September 2022. Currently, Temu has covered more than 100 manufacturing industrial belts in Zhejiang, Guangdong, Shandong and Anhui provinces.

The platform provides one-stop services including cross-border logistics, operations, promotional activities, after-sales services and legal affairs, while manufacturing enterprises just need to produce and ensure the quality of products.

Chen Lei, chairman and co-CEO of PDD Holdings, said the company hopes to leverage the supply chain capacities it has accumulated over the past years to create a new channel that enables consumers from different countries and regions to directly purchase products from factories, providing more flexible and personalized supply chains and more cost-effective shopping experiences.

The company has continued to

invest in areas such as agricultural and supply chain technology, and core research and development capabilities, Chen said. PDD reported that its total revenue rose a whopping 131 percent year-on-year to 86.81 billion yuan in the first quarter.

Li Mingtao, head of the research institute at the China International Electronic Commerce Center, said Chinese cross-border e-commerce platforms can help establish a direct and definitive connection between manufacturers and consumers by applying advanced digital technologies such as big data, cloud computing and artificial intelligence.

"Many Chinese traditional manufacturers have gained an upper hand in production and quality control, but lack experience and capabilities in sales and operations, making it difficult for them to enter overseas markets," Li said.

He added that manufacturers should better learn about and grasp the needs of consumers via these platforms, adjust production in a timely manner and reduce invento-

ry, which will be conducive to improving the competitiveness of Chinese manufacturing enterprises on the global stage.

Cindy Tai, vice-president of Amazon and head of Amazon Global Selling Asia, said Chinese sellers who sell products abroad through Amazon's overseas marketplaces have maintained steady growth in the past year, adding the company will ramp up efforts to help Chinese merchants build brands, simplify global operations, optimize global supply chain services, expand their global footprint as well as scale up localization inputs this year.

Data from Amazon showed that the number of Chinese sellers on Amazon's global sites, each with sales exceeding \$1 million, increased by more than 25 percent year-on-year from October 2022 to September 2023.

"Price, quality and service are the most important factors consumers consider when buying products, and cost-effective goods have shown some obvious advantages amid global economic downward pressure," said Chen Tao, an analyst at internet consultancy Analysys in Beijing.

Looking ahead, the competition among cross-border e-commerce platforms will be focused on the supply chains. "For Shein and Temu, one of their core competitiveness factors lies in products with competitive prices and fast delivery, which are highly dependent on the establishment of supply chains," Chen said.

"Chinese manufacturers should make full use of cross-border e-commerce platforms to quickly capture demand in overseas markets, learn more about relevant laws, regulations and quality standards in these countries, and adjust supply chains to make products that meet local requirements," said Cui Lili, director of Shanghai University of Finance and Economics' Institute of E-commerce.

Young shoppers favoring imports, foreign brands

By FAN FEIFEI

Chinese consumers have exhibited strong purchasing power for imported and foreign-branded products, which has become a key driver for upgraded consumption fueled by preferential policies such as lower tariffs and an expanded list of imported goods, alongside a gradual improvement in cross-border logistics, experts said.

Data from e-commerce giant JD showed that transaction volume of more than 180 brands on JD Worldwide, its cross-border platform, surged more than 100 percent year-on-year in the first four hours of its June 18 shopping carnival, which kicked off at 8 pm on May 31.

Sales of imported alcohol like Penfolds and Remy Martin increased fourfold year-on-year during the period, while turnover of foreign luxury brands like Loewe and Tiffany skyrocketed over 250 percent and 100 percent, respectively, JD said.

Generation Z consumers — those born between the mid-1990s and the early 2000s — emerged as a

major driving force in the consumption of imported beauty and skincare products, it added.

According to Tmall Global, the cross-border e-commerce site of Alibaba Group Holding Ltd, turnover of 1,497 foreign brands, including 342 newcomers, doubled in the first four hours of its mid-year shopping extravaganza, which started at 8 pm on May 20.

It said foreign-branded wines, digital cameras, cycling equipment, outdoor sporting goods and healthcare items witnessed robust growth during the promotional campaign.

Zhang Zhouping, a senior analyst on business-to-business and cross-border activities at the Internet Economy Institute, a domestic consultancy, said Chinese shoppers have demonstrated rising demand for diversified, personalized and niche overseas products that represent new lifestyles, and are paying more attention to the value of the products they buy.

Cross-border e-commerce has played a significant role in enriching product supply and bolstering the recovery of consumption, Zhang

said, and called for greater efforts to further optimize the list of imported retail goods for cross-border online purchases.

Market consultancy iiMedia Research said China's further opening-up, gradual improvement in logistics and deliveries and rising demand for imported goods will provide a big boost to consumption upgrade.

"The penetration rate of cross-border e-commerce in smaller cities and townships has been increasing in the past few years," said Chen Tao, an analyst with internet consultancy Analysys in Beijing, adding that tapping into the consumption potential and upgrading channels and services in lower-tier cities and rural areas are key measures needed to fuel the recovery of consumption in China.

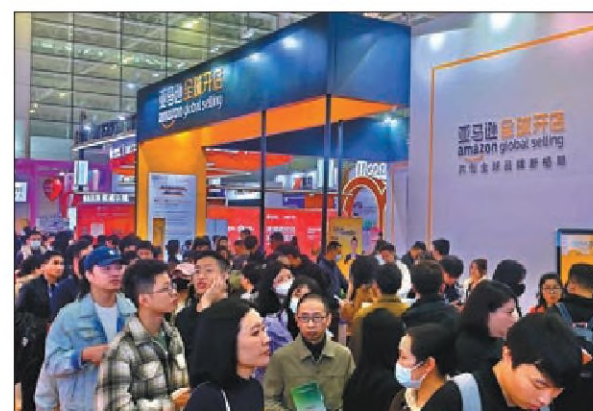
Cross-border online shopping via livestreaming videos — a quick way for domestic consumers to find detailed information on overseas products — has become popular among the post-1980s and post-1990s generations of shoppers, he said.

Li Yanchuan, head of Amazon China Global Store and Prime, said young Chinese consumers, especially Gen Z, think and judge independently while choosing brands, and prefer to pursue niche lifestyles and personalized products.

Li said sales of fishing, skiing, camping and other outdoor sporting equipment have witnessed rapid growth, while virtual reality equipment, hand-drip coffee products, tableware and kitchen utensils with unique designs have been favored by Chinese shoppers in recent years.

Orders of online cross-border shopping are still mainly being placed in the biggest cities, but residents in second and third-tier cities have shown rapidly growing purchasing power. Amazon will further enrich cross-border shopping scenarios based on consumers who share similar interests and hobbies, Li added.

Amazon China Global Store announced in November the launch of its first in-land bonded warehouse at the cross-border e-commerce comprehensive pilot area in



The booth of Amazon Global Selling is seen during a cross-border e-commerce expo in Fuzhou, Fujian province, in March.

WANG DONGMING / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Ningbo, Zhejiang province, to provide a more convenient delivery experience for Chinese consumers.

Li said the new bonded warehouse will be connected to Amazon's global fulfillment centers and offer millions of selections at faster delivery speeds. It is expected to save up to 10 days compared to direct international shipments, with the shortest

delivery time being two days.

"With the expansion of domestic demand and advances in emerging retail technologies, China has introduced preferential policies, such as lowering import taxes and expanding the range of goods allowed to be imported," said Zhang Tianbing, head of the Deloitte Asia-Pacific consumer products and retail industry.

COMMENT

Editorials

Washington, unsated by the suffering it has caused, seeks another bloody hellscape

It seems that the United States cannot resist continuing to up the ante in its meddling in the Taiwan question and that it will keep sending wrong signals to the "pro-independence" forces on the Chinese island.

If the Chinese mainland "invades" Taiwan, the United States will "turn the Taiwan Strait into an unmanned hellscape using a number of classified capabilities", Admiral Samuel Paparo, the new head of US "Indo-Pacific" Command, was quoted as saying by The Washington Post in an opinion piece published on Monday.

Having washed their hands of the domestic problems in the US, which require more than a sound bite and badge of blame pinned on those of the other political stripe to fix, the members of the political establishment in Washington have obviously been drumming their fingers in idleness for too long — which has been an invitation for the devil to give them something to do.

Despite having already created "unmanned hellscape" in Ukraine and Gaza, that has clearly not been enough for someone with the work ethic of Lucifer who is unwilling to let the Washington do-gooders rest on their blood-soaked laurels.

According to Paparo, the US' plan is to use a large, lethal drone force to buy the US time "for the rest of everything" in its "Hellscape strategy". Such rhetoric is obviously meant to boast of the US' military capabilities in the region while shoring up the confidence of Taiwan's new regional radical separatist leader Lai Ching-te that he enjoys the US' support.

Last month, Lai filled his inauguration speech with "Taiwan independence" fallacies and hostile rhetoric toward the mainland, shamelessly claiming that Taiwan is a de facto "sovereign" nation parallel with the mainland.

Much of Lai's audacity in voicing such hokum in violation of the legal status of the island comes from such overt expressions of support the island's separatists have been offered by the US and its allies, which have emboldened the island's "pro-independence" forces to walk ever more boldly and recklessly along the dangerous road of splitting the island from the motherland in recent years.

But Lai and his "pro-independence" Democratic Progressive Party cohorts should know even in the worst-case scenario of a cross-strait "hellscape" the US will not be able to materialize their pipe dream. In such a scenario, they will simply bring untold suffering on the Taiwan people as a whole, who will pay a dear price for the island being sold to Washington as part of a devil's bargain.

The US should fully recognize the sensitivity of the Taiwan question and the dangerous ambition of the "Taiwan independence" separatists, which poses the biggest risk to cross-strait peace and stability as well as a major challenge to China-US relations.

High-ranking figures in the US military have been voicing such fire-and-brimstone warnings like Paparo's with increasing frequency now that the Joe Biden administration has unlocked the gates to hell in Europe and the Middle East. Not only is the US trying to impress upon the outside world that the US military is well-prepared for a conflict over Taiwan but it is straining at the leash to get into the fray again, having nursed the wounds suffered in the ill-conceived war on terror.

No matter what the US says or does it will not deter the People's Liberation Army from doing its duty should the need arise. The PLA has already demonstrated its capability to effectively seal off the island. The US should fully abide by the one-China principle, honor its commitment of not supporting "Taiwan independence" and stop sending any wrong signal to pro-independence forces in Taiwan in any form. The intensified PLA patrols and exercises around Taiwan are not only meant to deter the separatists in Taiwan but also meant to send an unmistakable message to any outside forces that they should not underestimate Beijing's resolve to safeguard the nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Onus on US to deliver peace pie it's baked

Eight months after the outbreak of the bloody war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza that has claimed tens of thousands of lives, the United Nations Security Council on Monday finally approved a resolution endorsing a cease-fire plan aimed at ending it.

Fourteen of the 15 UN Security Council members voted in favor of the resolution and Russia abstained. The resolution calls for an immediate, full and complete cease-fire and calls on both sides to fully implement the terms of the proposal "without delay and without condition".

It sets out a three-phase approach to ensure a lasting and comprehensive end to the fighting, beginning with the release of all women, children and wounded being held hostage and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the "populated areas" of Gaza. All hostages are then to be released in exchange for a full withdrawal of all Israeli forces, leading to the multiyear reconstruction of the Palestinian enclave.

Although the US claimed in the UN Security Council that Israel had "accepted" the deal, that has not been confirmed by Tel Aviv, and it remains to be seen whether that was a bid to put pressure on Hamas. "My message to governments throughout the region ... if you want a cease-fire, press Hamas to say 'yes'", US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said upon his arrival in Cairo on Monday, one of the ports of call on his eighth visit to the Middle East since the Oct 7 Hamas attack on Israel.

Given the US-backed Israel has the upper hand in the conflict, it is misleading for the top US diplomat to try to put international pressure on Hamas to accept the cease-fire proposal, while allowing Tel Aviv to openly say that its goal of eliminating Hamas from the Palestinian enclave remains unchanged. Blinken apparently tried his best to press Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to accept the plan in a face-to-face meeting in Tel Aviv on Monday. But the latter remains skeptical of the deal, saying that Israel is still committed to destroying Hamas.

Representative of Israel to the UN Reut Shapir Ben Naftaly stressed that "Israel will not engage in meaningless and endless negotiations which can be exploited by Hamas as a means to stall for time".

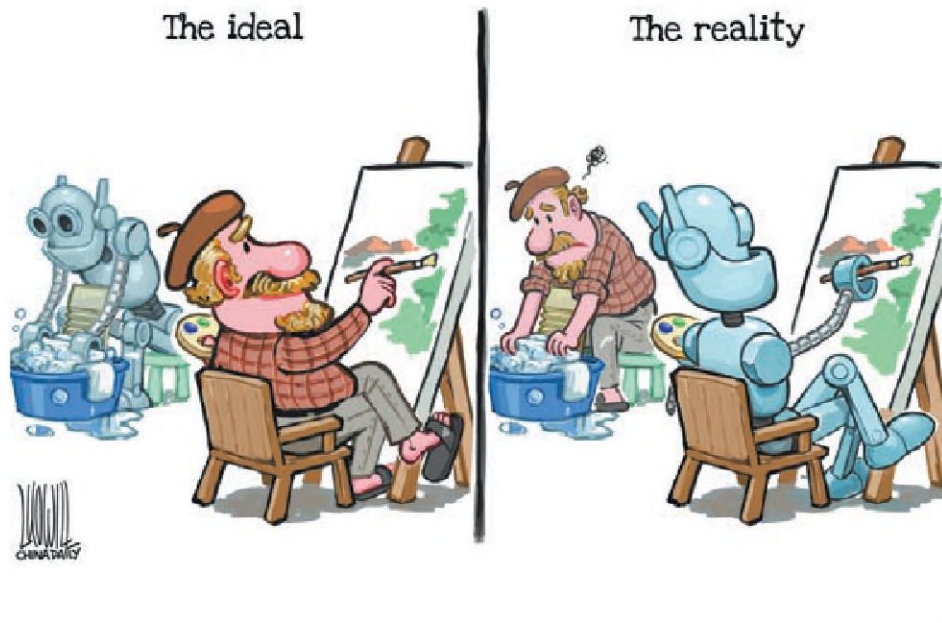
Hamas has said it welcomes the adoption of the resolution and was ready to work with mediators in indirect negotiations with Israel to implement it, showing its openness to the plan. Its stressing that it would continue its struggle against Israeli occupation of Palestinian land and work on setting up a "fully sovereign" Palestinian state should not be regarded as excessive given the international consensus that a two-state solution is essential for any cessation of hostilities to be durable.

That being said, with Israel still resisting the two-state solution and refusing to accept a sovereign Palestinian state, the gap between the two sides has not been narrowed by the resolution. It was thus misdirection for US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield to say that "the fighting could stop today" if Hamas would accept the deal, without mentioning at all the distance between Israel's stance and the two-state solution.

According to the resolution, even if the first phase of negotiations exceeds six weeks, the cease-fire will continue as long as the negotiations are still ongoing, and the relevant parties are working hard to ensure that the negotiations proceed until an agreement is reached. That means that once the cease-fire is achieved, the war will not be restarted. That is a major reason China voted in support of the resolution.

All UN Security Council resolutions are legally binding and should be fully and effectively implemented. It is to be hoped the US now makes sincere efforts to promote an immediate and permanent cease-fire by bringing Israel to the negotiation table under the framework of the resolution.

Luo Jie



Opinion Line

Global governance needs reform for full recovery of world trade

Despite improvements in the recovery of global trade in recent months, a slew of factors, including uncertain growth prospects in developed economies such as the United States, rising unilateralism and protectionism, and disruptions to international supply chains, are still posing challenges to global trade prospects.

Data from the World Trade Organization show that global trade in goods declined by 1.2 percent in 2023, mainly because of declining imports from major markets such as Europe and North America. However, with the weakening of global inflationary pressure and news coming in that major developed economies will cut interest rates, the outlook for global trade has begun to improve and the trade growth rate began picking up in the first quarter of 2024.

However, this does not change the fact that challenges to global trade growth remain.

First, weak growth in some advanced

economies such as the US may affect the recovery of global demand. A series of data released in May showed that the US is seeing dampened consumption, weak manufacturing activity and a cooling labor market, which, coupled with the negative impact of high interest rates, is bringing the US economy onto a downward trajectory. Europe is expected to achieve moderate economic growth, but the strategic autonomy of the European economy is relatively limited, and its recovery always faces insufficient backup momentum. Japan's economy has been mired in stagnation for some time, and the recent fraud in its auto sector will further cast a shadow on its economic prospects.

Second, unilateralism and protectionism that undermine the recovery of global trade have recently intensified.

Concocting China's "production overcapacity" theory, the US has decided to impose new tariffs on products imported from China. It has also gone all out to

persuade other economies to join the containment of China's exports, especially exports of its new energy products. Washington's politicization and securitization of economic and trade issues have not only increased the risk of global trade fragmentation, but also hindered the free flow of production factors in many areas, bringing downside risks to global trade growth.

Geopolitical tensions are also an important factor affecting global trade trends. The crisis in the Red Sea and tensions in the Middle East could disrupt shipping routes, pushing up shipping costs, prolonging voyages and breaking supply chains.

It should be noted that as a representative of the developed economies, the US should have shouldered the responsibility of promoting global trade, but it has instead posed the biggest challenge to it. This justifies the urgent need for reforming and reconstructing global governance.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

Long-distance operators sign of the times

A successful prostate removal surgery on a patient in Beijing carried out by robotic arms remotely controlled by a doctor in Rome on June 7 is an example of the reach of technology in the medical sector.

Compared with on-site surgery, the success of the remotely controlled surgery by Zhang Xu from the PLA General Hospital hinged largely on the smooth transfer of data. The distance between Beijing and Rome is over 8,000 kilometers, while the bidirectional communication range for the doctor to receive immediate images from the patient and send orders back to the robotic arms is over 20,000 kms. It takes 66.67 millise-

conds for signals to travel back and forth at the approximate speed of light.

A lot depends on the clarity of images transferred in this manner to the doctor 8,000 kms away. The images need to be of high resolution and yet small in size, so they are transmitted smoothly without delay.

The robotic arms must be able to faithfully execute what the doctor sitting 8,000 kms away instructs them to do. According to reports, in the aforementioned surgery, the robotic arms had seven dimensions of movement while the robotic waist could rotate 540 degrees, or do one full rotation and a half, to perform the movements

Zhang ordered remotely.

The surgery's success can be attributed to technological advancement and coordination among the teams in Rome and Beijing. Modern medicine is clearly dependent on an amalgamation of life sciences, chemistry, telecommunications and organizational science.

But as the operation shows that would certainly not make the role of doctors any less significant. In fact, with the nation's progress in these sectors, Chinese doctors are expected to get more support. It is even possible, transcending national boundaries, that some of the most advanced surgeries might soon become the norm.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

European Commission puts brake on green transition

Despite the strong opposition of the Chinese side, the European Commission is expected to levy provisional duties on made-in-China electric vehicles from July 4, EU officials told Chinese automakers on Monday, without disclosing the tariff rate.

After July 4, the European Commission will spend four months negotiating with member states to turn the provisional duties into permanent tariffs, with the final rate to be determined in November.

It is worth noting that some European countries have introduced incentives to attract Chinese EV makers to invest and build factories at the same time.

Chinese EV makers face higher labor and energy prices in Northern and Western European countries. In comparison, Southern European coun-

tries, such as Italy and Spain, which have lower labor costs but relatively high production standards, are better choices for Chinese EV makers setting up plants in Europe. Other attractive locations include Eastern European countries and Turkey whose exports enjoy low tariffs in the European market.

The European Commission announced last October that it was launching an anti-subsidy investigation into electric vehicles imported from China to decide whether to impose antidumping tariffs. But there are huge differences among the EU members on this. The German auto industry has close ties with the Chinese market, and the German government has repeatedly voiced its opposition to target Chinese EVs as doing so restricts market competition.

The EU's imposition of additional anti-subsidy tariffs on Chinese EVs deviate from the concept of green development, and violate market economy principles and World Trade Organization rules.

These tariffs will only harm the interests of EU consumers, reduce the competitiveness of EU companies, and affect global efforts to transform and address climate change.

The restrictive measures can be attributed to the EU surrendering its strategic autonomy to the United States as the latter has been trying to persuade the EU to follow its lead in levying punitive tariffs on Chinese EVs, citing unfounded subsidy charges as the justification.

China is determined to follow the path of green and low-carbon development, and has always encouraged and supported various industries to transform and upgrade toward green and low-carbon development. The de facto protectionist measures of the EU and the US targeting Chinese EVs will only serve to spur the Chinese EV makers to further increase their input in research and development to enhance their products' competitiveness in the world market.

— GUANCHANG

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COMMENT

Jasna Plevnik

'Taiwan independence' extremely risky for US

The United States, by continuously selling arms to Taiwan, is giving the world one more grave reason to be worried about the future of global peace and stability. The US seems desperate to use all means possible to contain China, prolong the Russia-Ukraine conflict and expand NATO eastward, turning the transatlantic treaty from a defense treaty into an offensive military alliance, leaving many wondering where the next conflict will break out.

The US' actions suggest it is preparing Taiwan for a conflict on the pretext that the Chinese mainland appears ready to use force to reunify Taiwan with the motherland. The Western mainstream media for years have been setting imaginary deadlines for the mainland's offensive against the island, but all those deadlines have passed without any incidents. They have now extended the deadline to 2027.

The US ignores the simple logic that China cannot wage a war against itself, because launching an assault on the island would amount to exactly that. Also, the US deliberately ignores the fact that there is only one China and Taiwan is an integral part of China — and almost all countries in the world recognize this universal truth.

The US knows Beijing wants to achieve the peaceful reunification of Taiwan with the motherland but refuses to rule out the use of force to realize that goal given the attempts of separatist forces on the island to claim "Taiwan independence" with the not-so-tacit support of the US.

According to the Three Joint Communiqués, which the US has signed and claims to adhere to, Taiwan is an inalienable part of China. In fact, for more than four decades since the establishment of Sino-US diplomatic relations, the US administrations acknowledged that Taiwan is part of China. Even the Joe Biden administration has been reiterating that Washington's relations with Beijing are based on the one-China principle.

Yet the US has been selling huge caches of weapons and military equipment to Taiwan in violation of the one-China principle, while supporting the separatist forces on the island. As a result, the separatist forces have intensified their pro-independence activities.

Washington claims it is committed to helping Taiwan "safeguard" its security under the "1979 Taiwan Relations Act" by, among other things, supplying it weapons. But by militarizing Taiwan, the US is going back on the commitments it made in the Three Joint Communiqués and violating UN General Assembly Resolution 2758.

The US should not interfere in the Taiwan question because it is the internal affair of China. But, given its double-faced policy on the Taiwan question, the US seems hell-bent on undermining China's economic and technological development, in order to maintain its global hegemony. To weaken China on the technology front, the US has banned some



More important, the island authorities should not overlook the fact that more and more countries are looking up to China to restore peace and stability in volatile regions.

Chinese telecom companies and Chinese-made apps, such as TikTok. It also wants to establish total dominance in the Asia-Pacific region by using the Chinese island of Taiwan as a pawn in its geopolitical game.

However, the US' failure to weaken Russia by instigating the conflict in Ukraine and continuously supplying weapons and military equipment to the latter has made the world realize the US is losing its superpower position — although there is no reason to assume it is in terminal decline and will stop using the Taiwan question to target Beijing.

But the US should not mistake Taiwan for Ukraine. While Ukraine is a sovereign country, Taiwan is an integral part of China. More importantly, Ukraine has realized, through its painful experience, how costly it is to be in the US' geostrategic orbit.

True, Taiwan island is known for its prosperity and as a global leader in manufacturing sophisticated semiconductors, but if the political elites and separatist forces on the island believe the US' default story on "Taiwan independence", they will only bring disaster to the island, for the US is nobody's friend.

Therefore, the Taiwan authorities should not allow the US to lead them by their nose toward disaster, especially

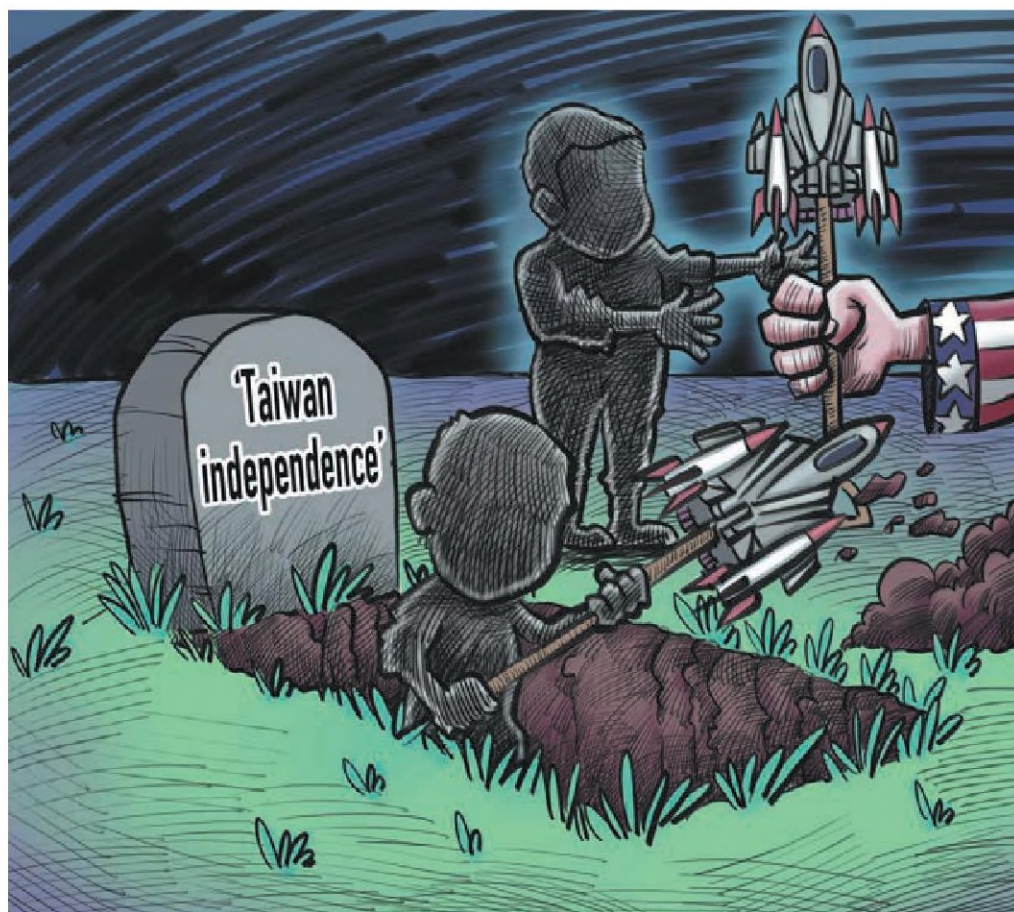
because the US will use them as a pawn in its geopolitical games and abandon them as soon as it smells threat to its own interests.

More important, the island authorities should not overlook the fact that more and more countries are looking up to China to restore peace and stability in volatile regions.

Despite the US' provocative moves, China remains committed to promoting peace and development across regions, and improving international relations.

A healthy Sino-US relationship is critical to global economic and strategic stability. But while China is dedicated to promoting global harmony, the US is desperate to maintain its global hegemony. But despite Washington's evil design, a conflict among the two sides is not inevitable, because there are many convergence points for them to build a more balanced world.

The author is president of the Geoeconomic Forum, Croatia. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Zhou Xuezi

How to navigate financial turbulence in East Asia

Several East and Southeast Asian economies have faced significant financial market turbulence, with pronounced currency fluctuations, this year. But unlike the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the situation in East Asia today is markedly different. While the likelihood of systemic financial risks in the region remains low, the situation of certain economies warrants caution while increasing the appeal of Chinese assets.

Since the beginning of 2024, the stock and financial markets in East and Southeast Asian economies have been volatile. In particular, in mid-April, major stock indices in Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam as well as more developed markets like Japan and South Korea, saw significant declines — from 4 percent to 9 percent. Additionally, some East and Southeast Asian economies' currencies have depreciated significantly against the US dollar, averaging a 5 percent drop as of mid-May, with the Japanese yen declining by about 10 percent.

Despite these fluctuations, the situation is different from that during the 1997 Asian financial crisis. First, before the 1997 financial crisis, a substantial influx of hot money into East Asia inflated property and stock prices. And when this capital rapidly exited the East Asian markets, asset prices and currencies plummeted. This time, the depreciation of East Asian economies' currencies has been marked by a high-interest rate period for the US dollar, without the influx of hot money. Second, many East Asian economies

So government departments need to maintain market stability by preventing the changes in the policies of the Fed and the European Central Bank from impacting the Chinese economy.

had rigid exchange rate regimes before the 1997 financial crisis, which while superficially eliminating the risk of exchange rate volatility made them vulnerable to collapse when risks accumulated. Today, however, most East Asian economies have more flexible exchange rate systems, where currency depreciation can both signal and reduce risks.

And third, after the 1997 financial crisis, the East Asian economies began accumulating foreign exchange reserves. These reserves are now relatively sufficient, providing a buffer against risks.

East Asian economies' currencies have depreciated this year due to both external and internal factors. Externally, the frequently changing US Federal Reserve's interest rate policy has played a key role in the depreciation of East Asian economies' currencies. After the fourth quarter of 2023, global commodity prices surged, and although markets initially expected the Fed to cut rates in 2024, rising inflation reduced these expectations. Addi-

tionally, the rising yield of the US' 10-year Treasury bonds strengthened the dollar, causing East Asian economies' currencies to depreciate.

Internally, the insufficient economic resilience of some East Asian economies has been a contributing factor to currency depreciation. For example, although the Bank of Japan abandoned its policy of negative interest rates in March, the move did not exceed market expectations. Combined with rising US Treasury yields, this led to the further depreciation of the yen. The limited tightening by the Bank of Japan reflects Japan's relatively weak domestic economy, which has prevented the country from taking more aggressive measures to improve the situation.

Similarly, Vietnam's economic performance has been underwhelming, with the country's economy weighed down by the real estate sector, which has even begun affecting the banking industry, further dragging down the Vietnamese dong.

Despite these factors, the risks are controllable. As the United States' economic indicators weaken and inflationary pressure subsides, US Treasury yields are likely to decline, potentially easing the depreciation pressure on East Asian economies' currencies.

The Chinese yuan, too, has depreciated against the US dollar this year, but by only 1.53 percent till mid-May. This is much less than those of other East Asian economies' currencies, which highlights the yuan's relative stability. Unlike the stock markets in many East Asian econo-

mies, which have mirrored US market volatility, the Chinese stock market has performed relatively well, especially after bottoming out in February, with its gains exceeding 10 percent. And the growing investment value of Chinese assets is likely to support a stable yuan.

The trajectory of China's stock market and currency might progress independently, with little influence of the US market and dollar movements. As real estate and local debt risks gradually subside, the robust fundamentals of China's economy will help mitigate the external shocks, too.

Nevertheless, in an increasingly interconnected global economy, fluctuations in East Asian and global financial markets will impact China's financial market. So government departments need to maintain market stability by preventing the changes in the policies of the Fed and the European Central Bank from impacting the Chinese economy.

Besides, investors should carefully monitor the economic trends in the US and the European Union, especially the policy shifts of the Fed and the European Central Bank. Additionally, understanding the economic dynamics and potential risks in the East Asian economies is crucial for making informed investment decisions.

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Kang Bing

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Sensitive handling of complaints can end bullying on school campus

Central government departments have taken some strict measures to better protect minors after some recent media reports highlighted a number of bullying cases in schools. While we fully support these measures, we know a lot more needs to be done to make our children safe and worry free on school campuses.

Late last month, the Supreme People's Court released a number of cases involving minors, including a provincial court ruling on a knife attack by a frequently bullied student as "justifiable self-defense". A Hunan court ruled that the student was not criminally liable for injuring three of his classmates who used to bully him. On the other hand, the court punished those students who used to bully the boy.

The Supreme People's Court issued a guideline mandating courts at lower levels to declare bullying an offense in other child-related cases and promptly advise schools and training institutes to intervene in such cases, so as to end bullying on campus.

Besides, the Ministry of Education has issued a notice, requiring educational institutions to more effectively deal with campus violence, including bullying. The notice requires all schools to set up special commissions to identify campus bullying and punish those who bully others, as well as open hotlines and install complaint boxes to make it easy for students to report bullying cases.

The notice also requires all schools to install close circuit TV cameras in all corridors and platforms in order to better monitor students' behaviors, and hold class discussions and lectures to dissuade students from bullying their schoolmates.

People's intolerance toward campus bullying today shows enhanced public awareness about human rights protection, especially about the protection of minors' rights.

These measures were taken after some serious campus bullying cases came to light last month. According to a media report, on May 15, outside the gate of a school in Baoji, Shaanxi province, a desperate father was heard shouting: "Where can I find justice when the school is doing nothing to prevent my son from being bullied on the campus?"

After learning that the school didn't take any action to protect his son from bullying, the father, who worked in a place more than 1,000 kilometers away, drove all the way back to the school to protest. The case drew wide public attention, prompting the local education bureau to step in and order a thorough investigation.

Moreover, on May 21, it was reported that a group of boys poured hot water on a student in a boarding school in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region after he refused to help them wash their dirty clothes. The victim suffered severe burns.

While the Supreme People's Court and the Ministry of Education were busy working out counter-bullying measures, a court in Henan province passed a ruling in a case about a school girl being stripped naked and beaten by some of her schoolmates — all minors — on May 30.

As school-going children, we rarely, if ever, complained about being bullied to our teachers or parents either because we took it as part of our school life or we felt ashamed to say that we could not stand up to a bully, or because we were afraid that the bully would exact revenge for being reported against.

People's intolerance toward campus bullying today shows enhanced public awareness about human rights protection, especially about the protection of minors' rights. Bullying demands serious attention of the school authorities because it harms not only the physical health but also the mental health of minors.

While welcoming the government's strict measures to prevent bullying in schools, we, as members of society, have the responsibility of doing our bit to end bullying and make those who bully others as objects of condemnation. Parents should tell their children to stand up to bullies or complain against them to their teachers. And teachers, on their part, should take the complaints against bullying seriously and punish the bullies.

Only when parents teach their children to not hesitate to complain against bullying to their teachers, and the teachers take strict action against the bullies can campus bullying end. The children should be taught that it is not a shame to protect oneself.

GLOBAL VIEWS

YU HONG

Two tigers of digital age

Singapore and China will use the BRI to advance high-quality and forward-looking cooperation, especially in new technology, green transformation and third-party cooperation

Despite being a small country, Singapore has invested significantly in strengthening ties with China. In addition to its embassy in Beijing, Singapore has six consulates general in China and is deeply involved in China's reform and



opening-up process and the development of local provinces and cities in China. In addition, the two countries have carried out a number of local cooperation projects.

China is a big country with regional dynamics. It is important for Singapore to participate in regional development, to feel the pulse of different provinces and cities, and to understand the development priorities of different places. To date, Singapore has undertaken four national-level bilateral cooperation projects with China, namely the Suzhou Industrial Park, the Tianjin Eco-City, the China-Singapore (Chongqing) Strategic Connectivity Demonstration Project and the Guangzhou Knowledge City.

In April 2023, Singapore and China established a comprehensive, high-quality, forward-looking partnership. China is Singapore's largest commodity trading partner, and Singapore is China's largest foreign investor. This is a testament to the close economic and trade ties between Singapore and China. By the end of 2023, the cumulative investment of Singaporean enterprises in China reached US\$141.2 billion.

Singapore has no domestic market, so it must treat the world as a market. It strives to maintain and expand its foreign trade network, and to participate in and develop regional free trade mechanisms (such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement). The regional economic and trade network will not only help attract more multinational companies to invest in Singapore, but also bring new jobs and development opportunities for Singaporeans. Moreover, it is conducive for Singaporean enterprises to better enter overseas markets and seek business opportunities.

Since joining the World Trade Organization in 2001, China has registered rapid economic growth and gradually integrated into the world economy. Singapore's economic development is inseparable from

the Chinese market. Many Singaporean companies have already entered China. Singaporean companies' development strategy in China is to operate for the long term.

Singapore is the first Southeast Asian country to sign a bilateral free trade agreement with China. Economic and trade cooperation between the two countries has expanded from traditional trade and investment to high-tech fields such as artificial intelligence, big data, electric vehicles, biotechnology and aerospace. In addition, since the early 1990s, Singapore and China have also carried out fruitful cooperation in the field of cadre training. About 55,000 Chinese officials at all levels and in various industries have participated in various training programs in Singapore.

Singapore was one of the first countries to support and participate in the Belt and Road Initiative and is a founding member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. From Singapore's perspective, Southeast Asia needs to improve infrastructure, and infrastructure needs funding. China has the capacity to build large-scale infrastructure projects and provide financial support, while also developing trade and economic ties with countries in the region. The BRI has helped China to boost infrastructure financing and project development in the Asia-Pacific region, and will serve as an important platform for China to integrate into regional networks of cooperation.

Singapore is one of the important destinations for China's outward foreign direct investment. According to official Chinese data, China's accumulated direct investment in Singapore had reached \$89.6 billion by the end of 2023. Thanks to Singapore's well-established and convenient infrastructure, high-level inter-regional connectivity, transparent governance, and its status as a major global financial center and transshipment hub, Singapore has become the regional operational headquarters and financing center for many Chinese enterprises entering Southeast Asia. Chinese companies also seek to expand internationally by leveraging Singapore's global trade network and experience.

Under the BRI, Chinese and Singaporean enterprises have successfully joined forces to carry out market cooperation in third-party countries, especially in Southeast Asian countries. In tandem with global trade flows and the restructuring of regional supply chains, Singapore

can help China strengthen its ties with regional economies.

People-to-people exchanges are essential to deepen relations between the two countries, and tourism is a key area. China is one of Singapore's largest sources of foreign tourists as Singapore is one of the popular outbound destinations for Chinese nationals. On Feb 2, 2024, the Agreement between the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of the Republic of Singapore on Mutual Visa Exemption for Holders of Ordinary Passports entered into force. Singapore is the first developed country to sign a bilateral visa waiver agreement with China.

The mutual visa exemption policy is conducive for the development of the tourism industry of the two countries. The implementation of the mutual visa-free measures will help promote people-to-people exchanges, which is of great significance for deepening the relationship between the two countries and promoting people-to-people bonds.

Singapore is a highly open island economy that is susceptible to changes in external factors. Amid the changes in the global geopolitical situation and the intensification of the great power competition, Singapore does not rely on any major power and will not choose sides between China and the United States. In seeking to create a favorable external environment for its development, Singapore has always strived to maintain and strengthen friendly relations with major countries.

Looking ahead, Singapore and China will advance high-quality and forward-looking cooperation, especially in the areas of digital economy, green transformation and third-party cooperation.

The digital economy is becoming one of the new highlights of bilateral cooperation and it is an important growth area and development opportunity for both Singapore and China. China has officially applied to join DEPA. China's accession to DEPA will create new opportunities for the two countries to strengthen cooperation in the digital industry, provided that the standards are met and remain in place.

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LUO ZIYUE / FOR CHINA DAILY

CHEN XIN

Obstacles and opportunities

Although there has been some domestic opposition to New Zealand's participation in the BRI, it has benefited the country in tangible and intangible ways

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the China-New Zealand comprehensive strategic partnership. Over the past decade, both countries have cooperated in numerous key areas, including infrastructure construction, trade, and people-to-people exchanges, achieving significant milestones,



especially under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative. In 2022, New Zealand's cooperation agreement with China on the BRI was automatically renewed, extending New Zealand's BRI cooperation with China for another five years.

China and New Zealand have created many "firsts", enhancing their bilateral ties. Notably, New Zealand was the first developed Western country to support China's accession to the World Trade Organization in 1997 and recognize China as a market economy in 2004. These actions were meaningful for China, facilitating its integration into the global economic framework. Moreover, New Zealand was the first developed Western country to sign and implement a bilateral Free Trade Agreement with China in 2008, the first to renew this agreement, and the first to join the China-initiated Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank as a founding member. In 2017, New Zealand became the first developed Western country to sign a BRI cooperation agreement with China.

Regarding their cooperation under the BRI framework, it is noteworthy that New Zealand, like any country, requires infrastructure improvement. This need has become a prime concern for its central government and is frequently discussed by New Zealanders, especially during almost every local election. Improving infrastructure not only brings convenience and enhances the quality of life but also positively impacts the production system and supply chain. However, undertaking new infrastructure construction or upgrading existing structures are labor-intensive projects that require considerable investment

of time and capital.

Nevertheless, China-New Zealand cooperation under the BRI framework transcends infrastructure construction. Considerable progress has been made in many other fields. For example, following the approval of China's Ministry of Education in 2017, seven Pacific island countries' languages, including Maori, have been taught at Beijing Foreign Studies University since 2020 as part of China-New Zealand BRI cooperation. The revitalization and promotion of the Maori language have been a topic of intense debate continued public discussions in New Zealand. The New Zealand government and Maori communities across the country appreciate China's efforts to preserve help reinforce the Maori language and culture. By encouraging the learning of the indigenous language and culture of New Zealand and other Pacific island countries, China helps promote mutual understanding among civilizations and enhances people-to-people and cultural exchanges between China and New Zealand under the BRI framework. This also aligns with the BRI principles of mutual respect, inclusiveness, and mutual benefits. Thus, it would be unfair to say that no progress has been made under the BRI.

New Zealand is a country that embraces pragmatism. Like China, its government prioritizes its people's needs and is therefore willing to cooperate with China to further its national development. While it is impossible to eliminate the misconceptions held by certain groups of people, as differing voices will always exist, it remains essential for China and New Zealand to expand their existing cooperation and actively search for future collaboration opportunities under the BRI. For example, with New Zealand's central bank exploring a digital currency and digital payment systems, there is potential for China and New Zealand to consider expanding cooperation in the e-commerce and digital economy sectors. Given that China has taken the lead globally in building a cashless society, its experience can significantly help may be of use to New Zealand unlock in unlocking its digital

potential. Particularly, both countries could collaborate to improve access to digital economic services for digitally marginalized social groups. A case in point is the New Zealand China Council, established by the New Zealand government in 2012, which has been assisting the Maori people in New Zealand to adapt to the digital economic transformation and integrate fully into the system. China's experience in making digital transactions easier and more accessible for senior citizens and remote rural communities with poor internet connectivity can provide valuable insights for New Zealand.

The BRI is a constantly evolving and upgrading initiative that continually adjusts to effectively meet the changing needs of China and other BRI participating countries. Although the BRI has faced intense criticism from many quarters for making little progress in constructing and completing large-scale infrastructure projects in New Zealand, it is important to recognize that some Pacific island countries, including New Zealand, may prefer projects that are "small but beautiful" as well as being practical. Moreover, with the BRI in place for years, it has effectively promoted cultural and people-to-people exchanges between China and New Zealand, which, in a sense, has enhanced mutual understanding and opened up more opportunities for cooperation between the two countries.

Looking ahead, the future of China-New Zealand cooperation under the multidimensional BRI appears promising. To create more mutually beneficial outcomes, it is essential for China and New Zealand to join hands and continue working together on areas of practical concern for both countries' peoples.

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MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

LIFE

All about Gen Z

Z
WEEKLY

Social Media Digest

Urban dining escape

"Wildcat" has recently become a popular lifestyle trend among young people in China. This term has garnered over 9,000 posts on the Chinese lifestyle-sharing platform Xiaohongshu, and videos with the tag have amassed 1.65 million views on Douyin, China's version of TikTok.

As the name implies, wildcat involves dining outdoors, but it differs from a traditional picnic — the focus is on the "wild" rather than "eat". It's about enjoying a basic meal while embracing the wildness of the surroundings, providing a sense of freedom and relaxation. This can involve making hotpot outdoors or bringing portable food to a nearby park.

Whether it's the previously popular "citywalk", which refers to wandering in a city, or the current trend of wildcat, young people use these coined terms to express their desire to temporarily escape urban life and embrace nature.

"In the past, people might have pursued a more refined lifestyle, adding many elements to their lives to find happiness. Now, it's quite the opposite. They are more focused on making life simpler, freer, and more relaxed," psychologist Xu Chengwei told Zhejiang Online.



Young people in China turn to "wildcat" to escape urban life and embrace nature. vcg

Paws in the air

Are you concerned about traveling by plane with your dog? A new airline designed specifically for dogs might be the solution you need.

Bark Air, initiated by Bark — a brand specializing in dog food and toys — in collaboration with a jet charter service company, completed its inaugural flight on May 23. The flight, which traveled from New York to Los Angeles, carried six dogs and 11 people, including passengers and crew.

On the website of Bark Air, the company emphasizes that the airline "is focused solely on the comfort and happiness of the dog first, and human second".

To ensure ample space for the dogs, it would not book the plane to full capacity. Additionally, the aircraft will feature calming aids for these VIPs (very important pups). Onboard, the dogs can enjoy a variety of beverages, including water and bone broth.

"No dog should fly in a crate," the company said on its website.

Of course, this journey comes at a cost. According to NPR, a flight between New York and Los Angeles for one human and one dog (or one human and two dogs collectively under 50 pounds) costs \$6,000, while a regular one-way flight from New York to London is priced at \$8,000.

"We have pretty clear ways of bringing those prices down if the demand is there, and that's what we aim to do," co-founder and CEO Matt Meeker told NPR. "We want to make this affordable and accessible for as many dogs as possible."

MENG WENJIE



Dogs are now able to travel on planes while sitting with their owners, thanks to Bark Air. vcg

Play sparks debate
on education

In the play *Principle* by The Nine, a high school grapples with a clash between strict new rules and traditional values.

By GUI QIAN
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How can we educate someone to become a true individual? This is the ultimate question posed by the play *Principle*, which depicts a battle of principles among its characters.

The story is set in a high school named Aequitas Academy where the new principal, Yang Zhi, arrives with the mission of improving the school's academic performance. She introduces a series of new rules, particularly insisting that students wear sports uniforms when playing on the playground.

This decision stirs discontent among both teachers and students. Vice Principal Chen Xian, supported by the head of the teaching department, Cai Lin, steps forward in opposition to preserve the school's long-standing traditions. The outspoken student council president, Fu Mingzhen, and the thoughtful school newspaper editor, Liang Jiawen, also get involved. However, the new principal remains unwavering and strictly adheres to her principles. As a storm brews on campus, it leaves teachers and students in a dilemma.

This play is the first adapted work by the theater group The Nine, renowned for its popularity among Chinese young people. They have transformed the original Cantonese play — penned by Ivan Kwok, a playwright from the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre — into a Mandarin version, relocating the story from a Hong Kong school to one on the Chinese mainland. Premiering in Beijing on May 10, the play will tour over eight cities across the country.

The Nine initially began as a non-professional university theater club. After emerging from Peking University, they achieved great commercial success, critical acclaim, and a large fan base with their original five-part series focusing on the intellectuals during China's Republican period (1912-1949).

This time, collaborating with another theater group and adapting Kwok's work represent The Nine's attempt to "open up new possibilities", as stated by the show's producer, Jiang Xinwen.

"In addition to our original productions, we hope to introduce some excellent external works, providing our teams with the opportunity to experience different perspectives. At the same time, we want to show the industry that we are an open-minded theater group," Jiang said.

Zhu Hongxuan, the director of the show and founder of The Nine, explained that she chose to adapt this play because she was moved by the dialectical nature of the script.

"The script presents various viewpoints thoroughly. Rather than taking a definitive stance, Guo showcases the collision of different perspectives within a short time and a relatively simple space," she explained.

According to Zhu, the play serves as both an "allegory" and a "microcosm". Through the topic of school regulations and the diverse attitudes of both teachers and students, it explores different views on humanity and the world.

Although distinct from The Nine's previous dramas, this play maintains the core theme of "telling stories about noble spirits and the people and events that uphold these spirits", said Zhu. And many audiences summarize this spirit as idealism.

"Idealism is reflected in the fact that no character is portrayed as a complete antagonist; each person has a commendable aspect," said Zhu.

She took Vice Principal Chen and Principal Yang as examples. Chen has complex thoughts and independent pursuits. He hopes students can grow and make choices on their own, becoming true individuals rather than objects or machines. While Yang may seem unlikable, standing in opposition to students and teachers, she has a stable core and emotions, willing to pay the price for her stance.

"She is someone who can withstand storms, a female character rarely seen in our current literary and theatrical works," Zhu said.

As for the two student characters, they complement each other, representing different aspects of youth: Fu is bold and daring, while Liang is meticulous and gentle.

Zhu feels a closer connection to Liang, yet she is intrigued by Fu, whom she describes as "constantly leaping like a flame", someone very different from herself.

Growing up in a traditional educational setting in a small town in Ganzhou, East China's Jiangxi province, Zhu excelled academically in high school. She was admitted to Peking University in 2007 as the top scorer in liberal arts in Jiangxi.

However, she recalled her high school days as "lifeless".

"Everyone was so well-behaved. No one dared to question the teachers, even when the rules seemed unfair," Zhu said. "This is why encountering a character like Fu was really eye-opening for me, and I believe Fu embodies the true spirit of youth."

A unique change in this play compared to the Cantonese version is its more diverse cast. Four young actors — Xu Wenxin, Wen Ziqi, Ren Zhenhui, and Luo Qiyue — take turns playing Fu and Liang, with gender and roles interchangeable, each combination bringing new dynamics.

Xu found it a rare opportunity to portray two almost completely opposite characters in the same play, a task that was both enriching and demanding. "During rehearsals, just as I started getting familiar with one character, I had to switch to the other one," she said. "At one point, I felt distant from both characters, unable to grasp either."

Wen, on the other hand, discovered a distinctive gesture to distinguish the personalities of Fu and Liang. In one of the scenes, while both characters point at Principal Yang, Fu does so directly and boldly to express dissatisfaction, whereas Liang hesitates before slowly raising a hand, and then quickly turns it into a head-scratching gesture to soften the aggressiveness, adding an element of awkwardness and humor.

For Ren, the challenge was to immerse herself in the high school environment, given her lack of experience with typical high school life — she went straight from an art middle school to university at 16 and graduated at 19. So, after landing the roles, she interviewed friends, watched related TV dramas, and even visited a traditional high school.

"Reflecting on my own school years, I'm grateful to have encountered a great teacher like Vice Principal Chen, who respected students' opinions and helped me a lot," she recalled.

Luo was a top student in high school. He was enrolled in China Foreign Affairs University, and even took the exam for China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs before ultimately entering the theater industry out of a love for drama.

Having always been interested in writing, Luo crafted some works during his school days. He even wrote detailed character biographies for Fu and Liang in the play.

Alongside his acting career, Luo aspires to become a playwright and director in the future. "I hope that with more life experiences and reflections on reality, I can one day create and produce engaging plays," he said.

Zhang Yuying contributed to this story.

The play *Principle* by the theater group The Nine is adapted from the original Cantonese play of the same name by the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre.

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LIFE



I would ask my family to review my drafts. If they struggle to understand the legal topics I'm explaining, I will revise them until they are easily comprehensible."

Huang Juan, a lawyer



Society must offer proper guidance and a positive environment. I also believe it's a citizen's duty to take the initiative to familiarize themselves with the law."

Liao Liangyu, a high school student



If we are unfamiliar with the law, we may feel wronged or hurt when encountering illegal actions without even realizing that these behaviors are unlawful."

Shen Hang, an HR professional

Shaping young minds about the law

Education and awareness about the law, particularly among young people in China, are crucial for empowering them with the knowledge and tools to protect their rights.

By LI XINRAN
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Shen Hang, 27, works as an HR professional in Beijing. One of her favorite TV shows is *Who's the Murderer*, produced by Mango TV, an internet video platform affiliated with Hunan Satellite TV.

First aired in 2016, the show aims to raise public awareness of the law by solving murder mysteries. Starting from season seven, the program introduced a special segment at the end, one that featured judges from the Supreme People's Court discussing the legal aspects of each case, analyzing their causes and lessons.

Shen recalled one of the most memorable episodes for her, the seventh story of the season titled *The Sin Under the Rose*, in which the victim committed suicide after facing injustices such as privacy violations, defamation, illegal detention, and workplace bullying.

"If we are unfamiliar with the law, we may feel wronged or hurt when encountering illegal actions without even realizing that these behaviors are unlawful," said Shen. "With knowledge provided by the show, we can use legal tools to protect ourselves."

Law is deeply intertwined in our daily lives, yet many individuals, especially young people, seem to not be familiar enough with it.

According to a report released on May 31 by the Supreme People's Procuratorate, the number of individuals arrested for crimes against minors increased by 35.3 percent in 2023 compared to the previous year, and the number of juvenile offenders arrested increased by 73.7 percent.

The report suggests that legal knowledge should be promoted more frequently and with greater emphasis through school activities and TV programs.

According to Huang Juan, a 32-year-old lawyer in Beijing, a lawyer's responsibilities can be divided

into three parts: before, during, and after legal disputes. The "before" phase involves providing clients with advice and drafting contracts to prevent disputes; the "during" phase includes mediating disputes; and the "after" phase pertains to the litigation process. Educating the public, especially young people, falls under the "before" phase.

"The sooner young people learn about specific legal provisions, such as the three-year statute of limitations for civil law litigation, the better equipped they will be to protect their rights in the future," she said.

For young people, how legal knowledge is delivered is also important because they must first understand it, and then learn and remember it.

Meng Zixuan, 15, is a student at Beijing No 4 High School International Campus. Her favorite TV program is *Legal Report*, a legal column that has been airing on CCTV since 1999. She finds the program's captivating narrative full of suspense and twists. Through it, she has gained insights into criminal investigations, the legal process, and laws and regulations in daily life.

"I've learned that if there are no specified signs indicating 'compensation is required for damage', the seller cannot force you to compensate," she said.

Shen enjoys watching videos and reading posts by legal professionals like Luo Xiang, a professor at the School of Criminal Justice of China University of Political Science and Law, and Qin Ming, an author and medical examiner. Shen believes that these resources not only provide valuable learning opportunities but also enhance her critical thinking and analytical skills.

"They're both seasoned experts in their fields, so their opinions are professional and convincing. Gradually, I've been able to establish my own judgments while keeping up with social news and discussions," she

said. "They're also humorous and good at telling stories, making complex and dry legal concepts engaging and easy to understand."

Huang also posts videos on her personal accounts on social media platforms like Xiaohongshu and Douyin (the Chinese version of TikTok), promoting legal knowledge related to the public's lives, such as marriage, property, and inheritance. She emphasizes how easily her audience can grasp the concepts she discusses.

"I would ask my family to review my drafts. If they struggle to understand the legal topics I'm explaining, I will revise them until they are easily comprehensible," she said.

However, Yang Dan, a 34-year-old lawyer in Beijing, cautioned that online legal information is not always reliable.

"As a lawyer, it's crucial to be fair and just, ensuring the best possible outcome for the client you represent. Unfortunately, some lawyers make extreme statements or provide misleading advice for online exposure, which could have irreversible consequences for individuals who trust their guidance," said Yang.

While young people are learning many aspects of the law online, much of their foundational legal knowledge still comes from home and school.

Liao Liangyu, a 16-year-old high school student from Chongqing in Southwest China, shared that his grandfather's background working in the court system nurtured his legal awareness from a young age.

"I was taught basic concepts like theft being a crime when I was in kindergarten," Liao said. "During my second year of middle school, I studied legal provisions in the political science class for almost an entire semester."

Yang said that the integration of legal knowledge into textbooks and student life has greatly improved over the past decade. However, there's still a long way to go in terms

of depth and nationwide coverage. For example, Huang pointed out that there's a common misconception that seeking a lawyer's assistance is equivalent to filing a lawsuit.

Meng, as a high school student, recognizes that the importance of legal knowledge varies in different life stages. "Currently, understanding laws that protect minors is crucial, while labor laws may be more prioritized in my life after I enter the workforce."

Liao believes that both society and individual citizens share the responsibility of acquiring legal knowledge and fostering legal awareness.

"China operates based on the rule of law. Society must offer proper guidance and a positive environment. I also believe it's a citizen's duty to take the initiative to familiarize themselves with the law. The foundation of law enforcement lies with the people, regardless of their age or background," said Liao.

Tips for legal assistance

If you're unsure about what to do or whether to hire a lawyer, Yang recommends calling 12368, the number for the National Court System's Public Welfare Service.

If you decide to seek legal help, Huang advises verifying the lawyer's credentials to avoid deception and potential harm. On Alipay, under the citizen center's judicial services, there is a link for legal service personnel inquiry where you can look up a lawyer's name.

"There are many so-called legal service companies and legal consulting firms, and their lawyers are not licensed to practice law," Huang said.

LIFE

Unleashing financial freedom for young women

Chen Xue's podcast "Rich-Minded Girl" aims to empower young women to pursue financial independence, encouraging a mindset of exploration and action.

By GUI QIAN
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Living in an era brimming with opportunities and challenges, an increasing number of young individuals are striving for financial independence through their own efforts.

Last year, a podcast named "Rich-Minded Girl" emerged as a true "electronic energy boost" for many of these youths. Over the course of about a year, this show, featuring interviews with around 60 young women, garnered a following of over 600,000 subscribers online, including more than 230,000 followers on the Chinese podcast platform Xiaoyuzhou.

Among the two hosts of the podcast is Chen Xue, a "rich-minded girl" herself and the driving force behind the podcast's inspiration. At 30 years old, she not only diligently pursues financial success herself, but also shares stories of hardworking women and unveils wealth-building strategies that ordinary people can learn from.

Originally from a modest county in Lu'an, East China's Anhui province, Chen began her wealth-building journey during her university days in Shijiazhuang, the capital of North China's Hebei province.

She made her first significant earnings by leveraging information gaps in her work as a purchasing agent. Progressing to organizing campus events, she transitioned from a mere executor to a team leader, gradually gaining expertise and income through collaborative efforts.

Upon graduation, Chen joined a prestigious advertising firm as a staff member. However, the monotonous routine left her feeling lost without a clear sense of purpose in life. So, in 2019, she bravely resigned from her job without a backup plan. Since then, she has explored various avenues of generating income, including roles as a sneaker vendor, community manager, and provider of paid online courses.

After three years of freelancing, Chen earned her first million yuan.

At the invitation of her friend Xiaohui, she recorded a podcast episode to share her wealth-building stories, which deeply resonated with the audience. In March 2023, the two decided to evolve "Rich-Minded Girl" into a stand-alone podcast.

Reflecting on the podcast's Chinese title, which translates to "moneymaking girls", Chen said that the



The "Rich-Minded Girl" podcast hosts an audience meetup in Shanghai on Aug 26, 2023. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

term "moneymaking" once carried a stigma and was considered tacky. People preferred expressions like entrepreneurship, business models, and financing. However, as she pointed out, with growing societal acceptance, people have begun to understand that making money isn't pejorative.

"It's about taking actions, not just the outcome, which gives it power," she said.

But why the focus on women? Over the past decade, Chen has witnessed the increasing influence of women, observing them carve out spaces in various fields. Drawing from the motivation she received from watching women's talk shows and participating in women's support groups early in her career, she solidified her determination to spotlight women.

"There have always been remarkable women passing the torch, inspiring others like a spark. I was



There have always been remarkable women passing the torch, inspiring others like a spark. I was ignited by these individuals, and now I want to ignite more."

Chen Xue, a podcast host and producer

ignited by these individuals, and now I want to ignite more," she said.

The "moneymaking" girls Chen has interviewed come from varied professions, age groups, and social backgrounds. They range from entrepreneurs, students, and office professionals to factory workers and stay-at-home mothers. Chen aims to showcase a diverse array of examples and positive energy, demonstrating the many possibilities available to young women.

Chen even interviewed three guests born after 2000. Xiao'e, an AI artist, takes orders on the lifestyle app Xiaohongshu to create avatars and illustrations for clients. Ningning uses memes to attract traffic on social media and collaborates with businesses to monetize the traffic. Huya, driven by her passion for fandom, ventured into moneymaking through WeChat shops and online premium courses.

"I've noticed distinct traits among

the moneymaking girls born after 2000: they are more daring and less constrained," Chen observed.

Chen recognizes that while some may see her as highly active and agile, she still maintains a disciplined approach, which might stem from her upbringing. The older generation taught her the importance of securing a stable, respectable job and proving herself to others. "However, the post-2000 generation seems less obsessed with finding a traditional job, displaying a greater sense of freedom and ease," she added.

Regardless of age, Chen has noticed some common characteristics among all the moneymaking girls she interviewed. "They share a restlessness, a bias toward action, and a refusal to waste time on internal conflicts," she explained.

Reflecting on her own journey, Chen realized she had engaged in many activities and experimented with various projects. Likewise, her

interviewees also achieved their current success after going through a series of endeavors and preparations. "Therefore, I believe in the value of exploration. This is the advice I consistently give: stop doubting yourself, take the leap first, and evaluate the results afterward," she said.

"We often hear people say, 'I noticed this opportunity before but hesitated to act. Now, seeing others seize it, I feel envious and regretful. If only I had taken action at that moment, things might have been different.'"

According to Chen, being proactive means seizing opportunities promptly, and during the process, developing transferable abilities like communication and sales skills. "The essence of making money boils down to selling, whether it's oneself or a tangible product," said Chen. She explains that selling oneself involves personal branding, like becoming an influencer on social media, while selling products leads to e-commerce. Selling knowledge translates to offering paid content. "Various business models can be broken down in this way," she added.

During the process, particularly when faced with challenges or setbacks, individuals often fall into self-doubt — getting stuck in emotions or overthinking. "How will others think of me if I do this? What if I don't do it well? Even after completing a task, self-blame may arise, focusing on areas where one could have done better," Chen explained.

"This significantly affects one's ability to take action — just like a computer slowing down or freezing when running multiple programs. Therefore, I consciously avoid self-doubt and channel my energy into the task at hand."

After a year of dedicated effort on the podcast, "Rich-Minded Girl" stands out as a defining accomplishment for Chen, serving as her "calling card and signature work", as she describes it.

However, much like these ambitious young women she introduces to her audience, this latest venture represents just a phase in Chen's exploratory journey. She has decided to entrust the program to her co-host Xiaohui and embark on an exciting new chapter.

Chen has personally pledged to "support 1,000 'rich-minded girls' in their growth and help them find their value and places in the business world". She will still be committed to fulfilling this promise, as her essential goal in life is to "make a mark on herself and the world".

The voice behind 600 silent success stories

By LIU KUN in Wuhan
and LI XINRAN

Many people believe that special education teachers for hearing-impaired children primarily teach sign language. Meet Li Hongjia, 33, who works at Xiaokuihua Rehabilitation Center in Wuhan, Central China's Hubei province, specializing in hearing recovery and language acquisition. She doesn't know sign language.

Having dedicated over 15 years to assisting hearing-impaired children, Li has helped more than 600 of them learn to speak.

According to her, although many adults with hearing impairments use sign language, for people who don't know sign language, communicating with them can be challenging. This is why Li's been dedicated to teaching listening-impaired children to speak. "Most listening-impaired children have healthy vocal cords," she said. "And with technological advancements and proper and early intervention, they can speak and have various options for their future."

Li points out that with the use of hearing aids and cochlear implants,

most children will regain their hearing, except those who have auditory nerve disease or severe cochlear malformations. "Hearing sounds is just the first step, they need to learn to identify and understand these sounds," she said.

Li stresses that the golden period for listening-impaired children's language acquisition is 2 to 6 years old, which is also the common age range for her students.

"In many facilities, they tend to follow hearing recovery with language acquisition, but I usually do them simultaneously. I want to make sure even if they have severe conditions that may not allow them to hear as well as others, they can still speak," she said.

To help children identify and understand sounds, Li uses various methods, such as having them touch her throat while she speaks, using instruments like triangle irons and drums for sound recognition, and asking them to hand her objects in the room, such as a cup.

Li highlighted that imitation is crucial in language acquisition, listening-impaired or not.

"If they don't have the basic ability

to imitate, we cannot begin speech training," said Li. "I've had students with developmental delays, and I would start by asking them to imitate my movements while ensuring they maintain attentiveness and eye contact."

For the speaking part, Li initially encourages laughter. "The vocal cords are most relaxed when we cry or laugh," she said. "When a child laughs, I would praise them and tell them 'Yes, you've just made a sound!'"

Nowadays, Li's schedule is packed with classes from 7 am to 8 pm with a half-hour lunch break in between. Most of the recovery classes are one-on-one sessions lasting 50 minutes, with Li leading for 30 minutes and her assistant teacher staying for the rest. This is how she could help 24 children in one day.

Li faced countless challenges, especially in the first few years. There were moments when she cried and suspected that the students were failing on purpose in her most fragile times. Once, she had to repeat the process of getting a cup 200 times before the child finally got it right. Another time, she had a stu-

dent with facioplegia, requiring her to massage the child's face repeatedly with hot and cold water.

Li shared a touching story about a student with congenital underdeveloped cochlea, who doesn't have any cochlea at all, making her unable to receive an implant. The little girl hails from South China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. Being far from home, she would cry and cling to Li when it was time for Li to get off work.

"I took care of her both at school and at home for a year and a half," Li said. "It took her six months to identify the sound of the triangle iron and I felt close to a mental breakdown. However, the moment she handed me the lollipop I asked for, I realized that we shouldn't give up on any child."

Despite her experience and expertise, Li still tears up and gets sentimental every time a child utters their first words. The sense of fulfillment never gets old for her.

"My nickname is Rongrong, and the children affectionately call me Rongrong Mama," said Li.

Reflecting on the past, Li noted that there were no specialized



Li Hongjia (right) teaches a hearing-impaired boy how to pronounce the "z" sound while holding a mirror so the boy can see himself as he practises. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

majors in special education when she first started. "Now, more and more Gen Zers are pursuing careers in special education," Li said. "I hope more will join us because helping one child recover means healing an entire family."

Regarding what others can do, Li suggested maintaining an open

mind and exercising patience.

"When you see one of these children, please don't act surprised or point. While talking to them, be patient and repeat your words when necessary," she said.

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