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# CHINA DAILY

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Premier Li Qiang (right) visits the panda enclosure at Adelaide Zoo in Australia on Sunday, along with Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong (left) and Premier of the South Australia state Peter Malinauskas. ASANKA RATNA YAKE VIA REUTERS

## New pandas to bolster Sino-Australian bonds

Premier Li calls for shelving differences to deliver common progress

By CAO DESHENG in Adelaide, Australia caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

China will loan a new pair of giant pandas to Australia to continue with the cooperative research on the conservation of the globally loved animal, Premier Li Qiang said on Sunday, as he visited Adelaide Zoo in Adelaide, Australia.

Li arrived in Adelaide on Saturday, the first stop of his official visit to Australia. His announcement about continued cooperation on giant panda conservation is considered as a message for the two countries to further stabilize their relationship.

Adelaide Zoo has been home to Wang Wang and Fu Ni since 2009, when the giant pandas were relocated to the state of South Australia from Wolong National Nature Reserve in Southwest China's Sichuan province.

The pair — the only giant pandas in the Southern Hemisphere — were on loan for 10 years as part of a giant panda breeding program, but have not bred despite several attempts made by the zoo.

The initial 10-year loan was extended by five years in 2019 with funding from the government of South Australia. The extension is due to expire at the end of this year.

At the Panda Pavilion in Adelaide Zoo, Li heard the reports presented by both Chinese and Australian experts on the cooperative research on giant panda conservation between the two countries, as well as on the breeding and care of the pandas in Australia.

He said the Chinese government has taken a host of measures over the years to protect giant pandas and achieved remarkable progress, contributing to global endeavors in conservation of biodiversity and protection of endangered species.

Li said he is glad to see that although far away from home, Wang Wang and Fu Ni have been looked after well and are living a happy life in Australia. They have become envoys of friendship between China and Australia and a symbol of the profound friendship between the two peoples, he added.

"This story tells us that as long as both sides are committed to taking good care of China-Australia cooperative relations, they can transcend the vast distance of the Pacific Ocean and differences between us to deliver common progress and win-win outcomes," Li said.

Peter Malinauskas, premier of South Australia, told Li that the cute and cuddly giant pandas have captured the hearts of the people of the state and even the whole nation.

"When Wang Wang and Fu Ni first came to South Australia, it was a dramatic representation of a strong relationship between South Australia and the People's Republic of China. We have no doubt that the significant responsibility of privilege that you have bestowed upon us today will be yet another representation of a continually strengthened relationship between Australia and China," he said.

Australia is the second leg of Li's three-nation tour, following his official visit to New Zealand. He will next visit Malaysia.

During his stay in Australia, Li and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese will co-chair the ninth China-Australia Annual Leaders' Meeting in Canberra and jointly attend a China-Australia CEO Roundtable Meeting in Perth.

Upon his arrival on Saturday, Li said that history has proved that

respecting each other, seeking common ground while shelving differences, and carrying out mutually beneficial cooperation are valuable experiences in the development of China-Australia relations, and they need to be upheld and carried forward.

A more mature, stable and fruitful China-Australia comprehensive strategic partnership will be a shared asset for both peoples, he said.

China has been Australia's largest trading partner for 15 consecutive years. Bilateral relations were severely damaged due to the negative policies adopted toward China 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 advance cooperation in various fields. Over the past months, China has lifted trade curbs on Australian imports, including wine, barley, beef and timber.

In an article titled "Working productively with China will benefit everyone in the region", which was published by The Australian on Wednesday, Albanese wrote that Australia and China are two very different nations, with different systems of government and different ways of looking at the world.

"Points of contention are inevitable, what matters is how you manage them," he said in the article, adding, "I take the view that whatever our differences might be, it is always better when we can deal with each other directly, through dialogue."

Li said that history has proved that

## Economist: Growth target of around 5 percent feasible

By LIU ZHIHUA and OUYANG SHIJIA

The annual growth target of around 5 percent is a feasible goal, as China has the potential to take on more debt to boost economic growth while not inflicting inflation, a senior economist told China Daily in an exclusive interview.

Yao Yang, director of the China Center for Economic Research at Peking University, said his calculations show that China's potential economic growth rate is currently about 5 percent to 5.5 percent. Potential economic growth refers to the maximum rate at which the economy can expand without causing inflationary pressures, assuming full employment of resources.

With the actual growth rate not currently exceeding the potential growth rate, China therefore can boost the growth rate through taking on more debt, without worrying about inflation, Yao said.

His comments came as China is scheduled to release key economic data on Monday.

Data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed on Wednesday that the country's consumer price index, a main gauge of inflation, rose 0.3 percent year-on-year in May, a rise on par with that in April. The producer price index, which gauges factory-gate prices, dropped 1.4 percent year-on-year in May, narrowing from a 2.5 percent decline in April.

"The Chinese government probably needs to take a bigger step to

boost demand," he said, adding that the current bottlenecks in economic growth are mainly on the demand side, not the supply side.

In order to boost demand, consumption, which depends on people's expectations for future income, is just one aspect. The country needs to drive demand through increasing government spending, said Yao, who is also executive dean of the Institute of South-South Cooperation and Development at Peking University.

The Chinese government has done a lot to boost government spending, particularly government investment, and more work can be done, he said.

China has announced plans to issue ultralong-term special treasury bonds for several consecutive years starting this year.

The issuance of 1 trillion yuan (\$138 billion) in ultralong-term special sovereign bonds for this year began last month and will run until mid-November. In addition, the issuance of 1 trillion yuan of special treasury bonds was completed during the fourth quarter of last year.

Apart from such special sovereign bonds, Yao suggested that the country explore ways for local governments to raise debt in a regulated way, therefore expanding government investment and boosting demand.

See **Growth**, page 3

### WORLD WATCH

By Maarjiz Farooq

## China extends support for Pakistan's green energy leap

In recent years, the global environmental crisis has compelled nations to rethink their energy strategies, focusing more on sustainability and less on fossil fuels. At the forefront of this green transition is China, whose remarkable transformation into a renewable energy powerhouse is not just reshaping its own energy landscape, but also profoundly influencing other developing nations.

Among the beneficiaries of China's green expertise is Pakistan, a nation eagerly embracing a sustainable future through its collaboration with China under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, or CPEC, framework.

China's journey toward becoming a leader in renewable energy is a testament to its strategic policy frameworks and significant investment in green technology. Over the past decade, China has shifted its focus to becoming a global leader in renewable energy innovations. This transformation has been driven by the dual need to combat severe air

pollution and to transition to a more sustainable economic model. China is now the world's largest producer of solar panels, wind turbines and batteries — crucial components for the global renewable energy sector.

The magnitude of China's commitment to green transition can be seen in its ambitious renewable energy targets. By 2030, it aims to increase its consumption of non-fossil fuel to 25 percent from less than 20 percent at present, according to the National Development and Reform Commission. Such goals can not only reduce the cost of solar and wind energy globally, but also position China as the leader in exporting such technology and expertise required for green transition around the world.

See **Green**, page 3

## POWERED TRICYCLES ON THE FAST ROAD TO GLOBAL SUCCESS

Once the mainstay of rural communities, three-wheelers are now being exported to the world

**Editor's note:** In a series of reports titled "Claims to Fame", China Daily looks at how some regions have earned wealth and recognition through specific products to realize the goal of rural vitalization.

By ZHAO RUINAN, SHI BAOYIN and QI XIN in Luoyang, Henan

On a scorching day in May at 10 am, 72-year-old Han Dengbu and his wife were getting ready to head back home on their three-wheel vehicle.

Residents of Mangling town, Yanshi district in Luoyang, Henan province, they had begun spraying pesticides on some boxwood shrubs at 6 am.

The couple's three-wheeler, or



sanbengzi, was purchased almost a decade ago and is an essential part of their lives.

"When we bought it, it cost about 3,000 yuan (\$414). We used it to pick up the kids and for farming. Now, we use it to spray pesticides on saplings in the village," Han said.

The couple has even added a

canopy to the tricycle for shade and rain protection. "Just twist the handle, and it goes. It's convenient and safe," he said.

Today, the tricycle is still the couple's primary mode of transportation.

In Mangling, it's common for every household to own at least one tricycle. In just a few minutes, one can see dozens of tricycles whizzing by.

See **Sanbengzi**, page 2



Online See more by scanning the code.



## Festive blessings

Palestinians gather amid the rubble of buildings in Khan Younis, southern Gaza, for Eid al-Adha prayers on Sunday. Israel's military, meanwhile, announced that it would pause fighting throughout daytime hours along a route in southern Gaza to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid. ALI JADALLAH VIA GETTY IMAGES



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## PAGE TWO

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This is not surprising, as Yanshi is known as China's three-wheeler hub. One out of every three tricycles in China is made there, and all the parts required to assemble a tricycle can be gathered within 30 minutes.

The *sanbengzi* got its name from the action of the driver standing on the pedals of the tricycle to ride on bumpy roads, appearing as if they were jumping.

**Viral sensation**

The humble vehicle is now growing in popularity overseas. A Chinese video blogger in the United States called Bobo shipped an electric tricycle from China for her father-in-law.

The tricycle became a viral hit, with locals snapping photos and marveling at it. Some even offered to buy it.

But it's not just the US. The tricycles are popular in Africa, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and other regions.

The iconic "reverse, please be careful ..." warning sound has echoed on foreign streets, and content featuring the tricycles has taken short-video platforms by storm.

Even Hua Chunying, vice-minister of Foreign Ministry, and Xie Feng, China's ambassador to the US, have promoted them on social media.

The tricycles' popularity has quickly boosted upstream industries. This year, industrial regions like Wuxi and Xuzhou in Jiangsu province, Linyi in Shandong province, and Luoyang in Henan have all had their economies boosted by the vehicle.

In late April, the 11th China Three-wheeled Motorcycle Industry Development Summit in Yanshi saw contracts worth 500 million yuan (\$68 million) signed, a record amount, according to local government data.

"With the push from China's new energy market, foreign traders are eager to collaborate with Chinese manufacturers. Trade inquiries have increased significantly this year," said Yang Yanchang, deputy general manager of the international trade department of Luoyang Zhufeng Motor Tricycle Co. "This never happened before."

Yang credits the increasing popularity of tricycles to their cost-effectiveness. In international markets, the price of a three-wheeler ranges from \$800 to \$4,000.

"These affordable, high-quality, and eco-friendly vehicles are well-suited for farm work and goods transportation overseas," he said.

**Exports boosted**

Zhufeng, a leading manufacturer in Yanshi, was one of the first to begin exporting tricycles. They now export over 20,000 tricycles annually, with an export value exceeding \$30 million, reaching more than 50 countries and regions.

Yang still remembers their first foreign deal.

In 2011, upon hearing about the thriving two-wheeler export business in coastal areas like Guangzhou in Guangdong province, the company took its tricycles to the Canton Fair to try and enter the overseas market.

At the fair, there were only one or two three-wheeler manufacturers, but being an exclusive supplier helped them secure foreign buyers, Yang said.

The first order was shipped to Angola in Africa. It took two days to load the container because workers didn't know how to pack it.

Zhufeng then began organizing regular trips for foreign trade staff to coastal provinces like Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Guangdong to broaden their horizons and ideas.

Li Pengfei, director of the management center at Zhufeng, said that the first stop for many African customers in China is Guangzhou. In terms of foreign trade, Yanshi is at a disadvantage being in the central plains.

"To attract more buyers to the



# SANBENGZI:

## Global craze riding high



**Top:** The assembly line of manufacturer Zhufeng in Luoyang, Henan province. **Above left:** Entrepreneur introduces their products to dealers during the China Three-wheeled Motorcycle Industry Development Summit in Yanshi, Luoyang, in April. **Above right:** A buyer tries an electric tricycle at the Canton Fair in April in Guangzhou, Guangdong province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

CHEN JIMIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

inland factory, we subsidize travel and accommodation," he said.

The primary export destinations for Yanshi tricycles are developing countries where tricycles play a crucial role in the transportation of crops and passengers, and the operation of stalls. Li compares their use to "China 20 years ago".

Luoyang's first tricycle, arguably also China's first, was made 32 years ago. Zhang Guangdu, who then worked in Yanshi, headed the manufacturing of the innovative three-wheelers.

"During the wave of layoffs in the 1990s, my father noticed people making money by pulling pedal tricycles. This inspired him to buy a two-wheel motorcycle and modify it," said Zhang Jianwei, Zhang's son and now owner of Dahe Motorcycle.

Zhang senior cut off the rear wheel and installed a cargo box with two wheels, creating a motorized tricycle. "My father's innovation inspired many, leading to the establishment of numerous factories," Zhang Jianwei said.

Guo Qiuxiang, a standing committee member of the Yanshi District Party Committee, described the early market as a "blue ocean".

People thrived through hard work with three-wheelers, marking the start of the industry's growth in Yanshi, she said.

Within a 500-kilometer radius of Yanshi lies a mainly agricultural area covering seven provinces and with a population of 460 million. This mostly flat or gentle hill terrain generated large markets for the tricycles.

"When China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001, Yanshi's three-wheeler industry saw no direct change," Guo said. "The domestic market was vast enough that we weren't ready to expand overseas."

The peak for Yanshi's tricycles was in 2014 and 2015, with annual domestic sales reaching 1.1 million units.

However, in recent years tricycle demand has dropped due to market saturation and policies urging equipment upgrades. In 2023, domestic sales in Yanshi fell to 400,000, about a third of what it was a decade ago.

**Rapid growth**

This shift prompted local enterprises to look abroad.

Last year, the district's total three-wheeler production and sales



reached 400,000 units, with over 20 million parts sold, generating revenue of approximately 4.5 billion yuan.

In 2012, Yanshi's motorcycle and parts industry was recognized as a national foreign trade transformation and upgrading base, leading to rapid growth.

The base now houses over 380 motorcycle and parts manufacturing enterprises, employing over 20,000 people, according to Luoyang Municipal Bureau of Commerce data.

In the first quarter of this year, Luoyang's motorcycle exports exceeded 230 million yuan, up 48.4 percent year-on-year.

The government has encouraged enterprises to venture

abroad and engage in more exchanges with foreign dealers. In recent years, local governments have organized companies to participate in international fairs like the Canton Fair.

This year's focus is "going global", targeting new overseas markets, especially countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative.

"We are planning to organize local businesses for a trade fair in Uzbekistan in September. Two companies have already set up production lines there, and Central Asian nations have great market potential," Guo said.

Niu Gang, vice-mayor of Luoyang, said, "Since the Belt and Road Initiative was proposed in 2013, bilateral cooperation and infrastructure connectivity have brought tremendous opportunities for Luoyang manufacturing, including the three-wheeler industry."

Niu said that Luoyang's manufacturing products are more accessible to global markets, thanks to the China-Europe freight trains and railsea trains in Ningbo, Zhejiang province, and Qingdao, Shandong province.

Last year, 178 China-Europe

freight trains carried 25,000 containers of disassembled tricycles.

Yang from Zhufeng said that the export of tricycles differs from that of domestic sales.

"Domestic shipments are whole vehicles, but for exports, the cost of shipping whole units is too high, so we ship parts and assemble those three-wheelers after arrival."

Tricycle parts are usually shipped through Shandong's Qingdao port, reaching worldwide destinations in two to three months.

Container shipping gives Luoyang-made tricycles a delivery time advantage, which is recognized by foreign dealers.

Om Garg, an Indian automotive engineer, has been importing and exporting two- and three-wheelers with Chinese companies for 22 years. "One main advantage of Chinese tricycles is the quick production time. In India, production time could be double," he said.

In 2019, he began partnering with Luoyang Jiasi Trade Co, a startup tricycle exporter in Yanshi.

"We sell two-wheelers and three-wheelers from China to customers in Africa and South America," the engineer said. "We've imported 2,000 vehicles from Jiasi Trade Co annually and plan to increase the amount to 5,000 this year."

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted three-wheeler exports over the past three years, but since the second half of 2023, overseas demand has surged, said Yun Fubo, owner of Luoyang Jiasi Trade Co.

According to market research firm DIIResearch, the global electric tricycle market was worth 61.86 billion yuan last year and is expected to reach 149.89 billion yuan by 2030. The Asia-Pacific region is the largest market, with about 90 percent of the share in 2023, followed by Europe with around 5 percent.

**Electric evolution**

As environmental concerns rise, electric three-wheelers, offering energy-efficient and low-carbon transportation, have gradually gained in global popularity.

Luoyang North Enterprises Group, a leading state-owned motorcycle manufacturer in Yanshi, saw foreign trade orders for its two three-wheeler brands exceed 10,000 units in May, up 59 percent year-on-year and a record for the company.

Among these are electric passenger three-wheelers set for export to African countries. Unlike regular three-wheelers, these fully enclosed passenger vehicles are equipped with small fans and hand grips, and are akin to "taxis" in Africa, said Li Bin, the company's deputy marketing director.

"These customized electric three-wheelers are cost-effective and serve as off-grid new energy vehicles in Africa. After the power is exhausted, owners can replace the batteries at swap stations. They provide convenient transportation, and the locals welcome them," Li said.

Like many Yanshi companies, the group plans to establish overseas warehouses, processing plants, and direct-sale stores in the next three years.

Li believes the tricycles' international success is due to China's growing influence and the product's suitability for many developing regions.

He added that the increasing popularity of electric three-wheelers aligns with the global trend toward low-carbon development.

"Developing new products tailored to specific needs, optimizing existing ones, improving sales policies and services while deeply understanding target markets is essential for Chinese three-wheeler manufacturers to expand overseas successfully," he said.

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## Farming district jumps to rhythm of iconic three-wheelers



Reporter's log  
Zhao Ruinan

It was around 9 pm on May 14, three hours after completing two full days of interviews and I wandered near my hotel in Luoyang's Yanshi District like a character from *The Walking Dead* TV series.

This is my "me moment", the time to recharge before my brain and

spine give out. But I soon made an important discovery: the streets of Yanshi are teeming with *sanbengzi*, or three-wheelers.

A sense of curiosity hit me so I went to a side street to count them. In a narrow 200-meter stretch, there were 34 parked tricycles. Some were being used to sell fruit and barbecued food while others were equipped with makeshift canopies and used as transportation.

The number didn't include the two that roared past me. The scene of vibrant life revealed why "mentioning tricycles inevitably brings

up Yanshi". Beyond factories and international fame, these tricycles are integral to the locals' lives.

I recalled my interview in the countryside in the morning. An elderly couple, both in their 70s, drove an electric tricycle to treat saplings in fields. They worked from 6 am until nearly 10 am. Bought for 3,000 yuan (\$414) and in use for over a decade, the three-wheeler showed signs of wear, but they found it indispensable.

They didn't understand what an interview is and what a journalist

usually does, they just thought I was a talkative tourist. Their children worked in Zhengzhou, the capital city of Henan province, and they rarely interacted with outsiders, so they kindly invited me to eat lunch with them at their home.

I asked how I'd find their house in the village. The old lady, in her thick Henan accent, patted my shoulder and pointed to a bend in the field's path. "See that? Turn there, and you'll find the village. My name is Wang Sujuan. Just shout out my name at the entrance and you'll find the way to the home."

If I hadn't needed to rejoin my team, I might have impulsively accepted the offer.

That day, I spent the whole morning standing by the field. Many tricycles drove past me. Some carried sacks of seedlings, others had family members in the back.

There is no doubt that tricycles have many uses for the farmers in Mangling township. These moving vehicles helped me get a taste of local life in Yanshi.

But one thing for sure is that the people here can't live without them. Is traveling for work tiring?

Extremely. My body aches and begs for mercy. Is interviewing troublesome? Yes, it's often said that interviewing is thrilling but sorting through the material and structuring a decent story are some kind of torture.

Yet, these "me moments" and precious encounters offer glimpses into a broader, more vibrant life, a life riding on the flow of the *sanbengzi*. During these travels, I see myself as a conduit, sharing the relationships and stories I see, hear, and feel. It's enough to ease the toil of my travels.

## TOP NEWS

## Black coastline

Workers try to clear oil spill along Tanjong Beach in Sentosa, Singapore, on Sunday. The oil slick caused by a dredger boat hitting a stationary cargo tanker has blackened a part of Singapore's southern coastline, including the popular resort island of Sentosa, and sparked environmental concerns.

SUHAIMI ABDULLAH / AP



## Straits Forum attendees denounce separatist acts

Participants call for opposing 'Taiwan independence' attempts

By ZHANG YI and HU MEIDONG in Xiamen, Fujian

China has the firm determination, sufficient confidence and strong capability to shatter separatist attempts for so-called "Taiwan independence", a senior official said over the weekend at a forum on boosting cross-strait exchanges.

Wang Huning, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, made the remark while addressing the main conference of the 16th Straits Forum in Xiamen, Fujian province, on Saturday.

Separatists seeking "Taiwan independence" undermine the peace and stability of the Taiwan Strait, harm the interests and well-being of people in Taiwan, and jeopardize national sovereignty and territorial integrity, Wang said, adding that their actions will push Taiwan to the brink of war and

bring disaster to people on the island.

He called for people on both sides of the Strait to shoulder their historical and national responsibilities, firmly oppose "Taiwan independence" separatism and foreign interference, and safeguard the common homeland of the Chinese nation.

Around 7,000 people from different walks of life in Taiwan participated this year in the forum, the largest cross-strait grassroots exchange activity. The event, which was jointly hosted by 86 organizations from both sides, gathered concerted efforts to promote cross-strait integrated development for the peaceful reunification of the country.

The forum came amid tense cross-strait relations after Taiwan's new leader, Lai Ching-te of the Democratic Progressive Party, promoted a "two-state" theory in his "inaugural speech" in May, which was followed by countermeasures from the mainland, including military drills in the Strait.

Sean Lien, also known as Lien Sheng-wen, vice-chair of the Chinese Kuomintang party, who led a

group to attend the forum, said, "I am here because I hope to have the opportunity to share the thoughts of Taiwanese people with friends from the mainland. In Taiwan, the majority of people do not support 'Taiwan independence'."

"A lot of people still want to communicate and engage with the mainland," he said, adding that Taiwan people generally hope for peace and mutual benefit across the Strait.

The KMT has always promoted cross-strait exchanges and cooperation, based on the common political foundation of upholding the 1992 Consensus and opposing "Taiwan independence", Lien said.

"I have proposed on multiple occasions to enhance youth exchanges between the two sides," he said, adding that it is hoped that young people can communicate face-to-face through opportunities like the forum.

For Lien himself, the forum was also a journey to return to his ancestral home in Fujian. About 300 years ago, the Lien family migrated from Zhangzhou, Fujian, to Tainan, Taiwan.

In the 1910s, Lien's great-grand-

father, the patriotic historian Lien Heng, wrote *General History of Taiwan*, which provides a comprehensive account of Taiwan's history, from the Sui Dynasty (581-618) to 1895. It presents substantial historical evidence supporting the notion that Taiwan is an integral part of China.

"As can be seen from the history of our ancestors, we are trueborn Taiwan residents, and also proud Chinese people," said Lien, whose remarks were met with thunderous applause.

"I have seen many young Taiwan people who have developed well and integrated into local life on the mainland," he said, adding that these real-life examples are sufficient to demonstrate that cross-strait integrated development is beneficial.

Lai Yueh-tchienn, a Taiwan news commentator, said at the forum that cross-strait integration can counteract "Taiwan independence" and separatism.

Lai condemned "pro-independence" politicians and commentators in Taiwan for spreading rumors about the mainland's development, such as falsely claiming that the mainland's high-speed trains lack backrests.

"The purpose of saying these things is to escalate conflicts and escalate tensions between the two sides. Hatred is the DPP's goal," he said.

By encouraging more Taiwan people to visit the mainland, make contacts and forge friendships, the influence of those absurd statements will naturally diminish, he added.

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## CNN smears Chinese journalists without providing evidence

## REPORTER'S LOG

By Meng Zhe and Xu-Pan Yiru

In a May 22 segment of the news program *Erin Burnett OutFront*, CNN accused Chinese State media of spreading disinformation through the use of deepfake technology. The allegation came as the United States intensified its propaganda campaign to portray China as the aggressor in the South China Sea.

CNN's main argument targeted China Daily's featured short-video program *Media Unlocked*, which has been hosted by us since 2019. The program focuses on explaining facts about China, often countering biased Western narratives.

In recent months, *Media Unlocked* has harnessed artificial intelligence to enhance efficiency and productivity, as newsrooms worldwide are experimenting with AI tools in news production and distribution.

However, CNN, without proper research, claimed that we used AI to alter faces and voices to "amplify the power of disinformation". They spliced deepfake videos with videos produced by China Daily to create the impression that the short-video program's content is deceitful, thereby reinforcing the US "China threat" narrative.

In response to our request for a correction, CNN reporter Will Ripley said in an email: "We believe the video and audio were manipulated by AI technology to increase efficiency in its delivery — even though the video was based on a real reporter and the script was provided by the China Daily team. (Basically, they used the reporter's face and voice, but generated fluent English audio without accent to make their English easier to understand.)"

Ripley said it was the response from his research team, who assisted him in compiling and verifying the videos they featured in his report. This response hardly addressed the concerns raised by us and, instead, further reinforced CNN's bias and double standards toward Chinese media.

At the third edition of the Global Media Innovation Forum held in Beijing on April 29, media executives, including those from The Associated Press and Reuters, acknowledged AI's role in increasing efficiency and shared their experiences on how AI implementation had brought significant changes. When Western media uses AI, it is

"strengthening" their functions and "bolstering their core news reports"; but when Chinese media does the same, it is labeled as manipulation.

We conducted a street survey and found that while people in general are cautious about AI applications in media, most believe that the use of AI tools would not affect their judgment as far as the veracity of news is concerned.

A further investigation into the CNN report revealed an alarming disinformation network. One of the "experts", whom CNN did not identify in the report, turned out to be a key figure in the US-funded disinformation campaign in the South China Sea.

Felipe Salvosa II is the editor of the Philippine news outlet PressOne and the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, which is part of the "Initiative for Media Freedom" campaign.

According to a document from the website of the US Agency for International Development, from July 2019 to July 2024, the initiative received \$77 million from the agency, with a stated goal of "countering disinformation". But, USAID is itself notorious for funding disinformation campaigns worldwide.

Since March, Salvosa has orchestrated a series of reports on PressOne, targeting the *Media Unlocked* program on TikTok. In the reports, he rallies Filipino social media users to report the TikTok account. His articles misrepresented the use of AI in the videos and labeled the videos' explanations on the history and facts related to the South China Sea issue as "disinformation".

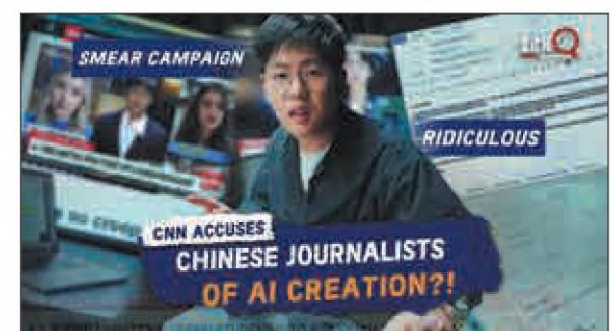
Unfortunately, the coordinated smear campaign by the US and the Philippines led to a ban on the *Media Unlocked* account on TikTok. The team tried to appeal against the ban, but hasn't received a reply till date.

A source told China Daily on the condition of anonymity that there is a specific set of restrictions targeting Chinese media presence on TikTok, which is possibly why the *Media Unlocked* account was arbitrarily banned.

The US-funded influence operations have reached such a manic level that real human beings are forced to prove they are not AI deepfakes. Labels such as "state media", "disinformation" and "AI manipulation" are thrown around to discredit content they disagree with.

What has been uncovered in the CNN's campaign against the *Media Unlocked* program is a complex web of US and Philippine operations designed to control the narrative and influence public perception of the South China Sea issue and beyond.

Contact the writers at mengzhe1@chinadaily.com.cn



A screenshot taken from a *Media Unlocked* video shows Meng Zhe, one of the program's hosts, countering CNN's claim that deepfake technology is being used by Chinese media to spread disinformation. CHINA DAILY

## Growth: Easing policy for housing called a right step

From page 1

Yao also said it is good that the country has stepped up efforts to curb the implicit commercial debt of local governments, which is borrowed through local government financing platforms on financial markets and has problems such as lack of transparency and effective supervision and monitoring.

He highlighted the need to foster new quality productive forces, saying the country is placing significant importance on innovation,

new technologies and emerging sectors that are key for China's high-quality growth.

Citing the successful experience of developed countries such as the United States, he said that more efforts should be made to build the rule of law to protect innovation and intellectual property rights, develop a vibrant financial market and open up further to the outside world.

When it comes to the country's recently announced easing policy package for housing, Yao said that China is heading in the right

direction with regard to ending property woes.

Yao also said that the 300 billion yuan relending quota may still fall short of the amount needed to lower the scale of housing inventories to a desirable level, but it is sending a key signal to stabilize the crisis-hit property sector.

The senior economist said it is advisable to issue 2 trillion yuan in local government special-purpose bonds to buy housing inventories.

On May 17, while easing mortgage rules, the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank,

announced that it would establish a 300 billion yuan relending facility to provide funding for State-owned enterprises to buy completed commercial properties for repurposed affordable housing.

The PBOC held a meeting on Wednesday calling for efforts to ensure effective implementation of the affordable housing relending facility and accelerate the destocking of housing inventories.

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## Green: Projects to improve Pakistan's productivity, economic stability

From page 1

The CPEC, as a cornerstone of the Belt and Road Initiative, has been a conduit for transferring China's green technology and expertise to Pakistan. While the CPEC initially focused on alleviating Pakistan's chronic energy shortages through the development of different means, the focus has significantly shifted toward renewable energy projects in recent years. This is a response to global criticism regarding the environmental impact of these projects and an alignment with Pakistan's own renewable energy ambitions.

Among the noteworthy projects under the CPEC framework is the

Quaid-e-Azam Solar Park in Punjab province, one of the largest solar farms in the world, which epitomizes the shift toward harnessing solar energy.

In addition, wind energy projects in Sindh province and hydroelectric projects in the country's north are notable efforts toward diversifying Pakistan's energy matrix. These projects not only aim to reduce dependence on imported fuels, they also support Pakistan's National Electric Power Regulatory Authority in its vision to increase the share of renewables in the energy mix to 30 percent by 2030.

The economic benefits of these green projects are manifold. First, they promise to address the peren-

nial issue of power shortages in Pakistan, thereby improving industrial productivity and economic stability. Second, the shift toward renewable energy is expected to reduce the country's carbon footprint, aligning with global climate commitments and potentially unlocking international climate finance.

Strategically, these projects deepen the Sino-Pakistani partnership, providing Pakistan with technological aid and helping it build local capacity in renewable energy sectors. This transfer of technology and expertise is crucial for Pakistan's long-term economic and environmental sustainability.

China's emergence as a leader in

green transition has implications far beyond its borders. By proactively pursuing renewable energy projects and exporting technologies worldwide, China is setting new standards for global energy production and consumption. It also plays a critical role in shaping the global policy landscape on climate change, advocating developing nations in international forums.

Despite these advancements, the road ahead is not without challenges. For Pakistan, integrating renewable energy into the national grid, managing intermittency and funding these ambitious projects are significant hurdles. For China, balancing its domestic environmental ambitions with its global

economic interests remains a delicate task.

The collaboration under CPEC presents a unique opportunity for Pakistan to transform its energy sector and catalyze broader socio-economic benefits. As both nations continue to navigate the complexities of their partnership, the focus on sustainability could serve as a model for other countries in the Global South.

The green energy initiatives under the CPEC framework are more than just infrastructure projects — they are a beacon of sustainable development and a testament to the robust partnership between Pakistan and China.

As the world moves toward a

greener future, the collaboration between these two nations offers valuable lessons on leveraging international cooperation to address the pressing challenges of our time.

The success of these projects will not only redefine Pakistan's energy landscape, but also solidify China's status as a leader in the global green transition, charting a sustainable path forward for other developing nations.

This evolving partnership also underscores the pivotal role of international collaboration in achieving large-scale environmental and economic transformation.

The author is deputy editor-in-chief at Pakistan Economic Net and Daily Ittehad Media Group. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## CHINA

## HK high-speed sleeper service praised on debut

By WU KUNLING in Beijing and  
ATLAS SHAO in Hong Kong

Passengers traveling on the first overnight high-speed trains linking Hong Kong with Beijing and Shanghai praised the services, describing the rides as convenient and comfortable.

The sleeper trains, which began operations on Saturday, provide passengers with more time and energy to enjoy their destinations, whether for family reunions, meeting friends, visiting tourist attractions, or conducting business.

The first high-speed sleeper trains, whether northbound or southbound, all departed on Saturday evening, arriving at their destinations on Sunday morning. The services will operate from Friday to Monday each week.

Ordinary-class sleeper carriages accommodate four passengers each, while premium-class carriages on the Hong Kong-Shanghai route accommodate two passengers each. The cabins are clean and well-lit, equipped with tables, reading lights, charging sockets, slippers, clothes hangers and cushions. Each cabin allows independent adjustment of lighting and temperature, and a dining car offers meals priced from 15 to 68 yuan (\$2.07 to \$9.37).

Passengers gathered in groups on the lower berths to chat and enjoy food and snacks, while others played card games.

A 60-year-old traveler surnamed Low, who left Hong Kong on the first sleeper train to Beijing, said comfort was the most important reason for choosing the service. For elderly passengers, being able to lie down during the journey is much more comfortable than sitting up on a high-speed train or airplane. Low and her husband joined a tour group on an eight-day trip to Beijing, planning to visit landmarks

such as the Summer Palace and Lama Temple.

Richard Wang, a Beijing native who has lived in Hong Kong for two years, said the sleeper train service offers a better choice for visiting his family in the capital. He booked a ticket for the first train to Beijing immediately after the service was announced.

Bullet trains between Hong Kong and Beijing previously operated only daytime services. With the overnight sleeper train, Wang can leave Hong Kong on Friday night and return on Monday morning, giving him more time with his family.

A railroad photography enthusiast surnamed Wong, who has taken pictures of various types of high-speed trains, booked a ticket to experience and document the new service. He found the sleeper carriages spacious but noted that the upper berth is a bit cramped, suggesting further improvements to enhance passenger comfort.

Many passengers from the Chinese mainland also took the inaugural overnight sleeper trains to Hong Kong.

A passenger from Shanghai, surnamed Wang, took advantage of Father's Day to visit Hong Kong with his father. He said the new service saves the cost of an overnight stay in Hong Kong and provides extra time for sightseeing.

Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Secretary for Transport and Logistics Lam Sai-hung took the first sleeper train to Beijing. He said the SAR government will closely monitor the service's operations. If demand rises, it will collaborate with mainland railway authorities to explore the possibility of adding more trips or introducing sleeper train services to more destinations.

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Passengers on the D907 Shanghai-Hong Kong high-speed sleeper train await departure from Shanghai Hongqiao Railway Station on Saturday. YIN LIQIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

## 'Premium first-class' seats offered on bullet trains

By LUO WANGSHU  
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China's high-speed rail network is offering a new luxury option for passengers on the bustling Beijing-Shanghai route, with "premium first-class" seats at a price point between business class and standard first class.

Twenty-four of the shell-shaped electric seats, in six rows in a dedicated carriage, allow for independent adjustments of the backrest and leg angles. Passengers can also enjoy amenities such as foldable tables, power outlets, adjustable reading lights and increased spacing between rows, enhancing comfort and convenience during their journey.

A unique feature of the seats is their ability to rotate 180 degrees, allowing passengers in adjacent rows to face each other. The layout is particularly beneficial for business travelers looking to conduct meetings onboard or for friends traveling together who wish to engage in face-to-face conversations or enjoy a game of cards.

Unlike business class seats, the new seats do not recline fully flat. Passengers holding premium first-class seat tickets can avail themselves of standard first-class services and access exclusive boarding areas at stations.

Priced at approximately 2.2 times the cost of a second-class ticket, the premium first-class seat offers a premium experience at a competitive

rate. Tickets range from 1,215 yuan (\$168) to 1,422 yuan on services between Beijing and Shanghai. In comparison, business class tickets are priced at 2,318 yuan, while first-class tickets are around 1,035 yuan.

According to the 12306 ticket booking system, 12 services from Beijing to Shanghai and seven services from Shanghai to Beijing offer the premium first-class seat option every day.

China State Railway Group, the national railway operator, introduced the new seats on the latest upgrade of the Fuxing smart bullet train, which made its debut along the Beijing-Shanghai High-Speed Railway on Saturday.

In addition to the premium seats, the upgraded trains feature increased seating capacity in second-class, as well as expanded passenger and luggage spaces, enhancing the overall travel experiences for passengers.

The new train includes two formations: one with eight carriages and the other with 17 carriages. The 17-carriage train offers premium first-class seats.

The eight-carriage train can accommodate up to 619 passengers, including an additional 38 second-class seats, representing a capacity increase of about 7.5 percent. Meanwhile, the 17-carriage train has a capacity of 1,347 passengers, with an additional 61 second-class seats, marking a 5 percent increase in capacity.

## Pulling out the stops



A Russian accordion player performs for onlookers during the second China-Russia Cultural and Art Season in Harbin, Heilongjiang province, on Saturday. The event, organized by the Heilongjiang Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism, will run for two months and aims to promote cultural exchange between China and Russia, showcasing the unique cultural charms of both countries.

ZHANG SHU / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Kinship kindles cross-Strait connections and reunions

More help for Taiwan residents paying respects to ancestors on mainland

By HU MEIDONG  
and ZHANG YI in Xiamen, Fujian

The tradition of tracing one's origins runs deep in Chinese culture, transcending geographical barriers, and people from Taiwan are continuing to connect with their roots on the Chinese mainland, regardless of the ebbs and flows in cross-Strait relations.

In Fujian, the closest mainland province to Taiwan, which actively promotes integrated cross-Strait development, more families from both sides are rediscovering their shared heritage.

In April last year, Lin Hsiao-jung and her father from Pingtung, Taiwan, found their mainland relatives in Guilin village in Quanzhou, Fujian. A ceremony was held to celebrate their reunion.

"Since I was young, my father always instructed me to remember our roots and origins," Lin said. "Since I came to start my business on the mainland, the wish to find our family's roots has always been an aspiration."

With the support of the extensive Lin family on the mainland, she now feels more confident in pursuing her dreams there.

Their journey of tracing roots is guided by a genealogy passed down through generations, detailing their origins and ancestors. Most

families possess physical versions of these genealogical records, usually updated by elder family members.

Such family documents have become important tools for Taiwan people searching for their ancestral roots on the mainland, especially in Fujian, the source of several large groups of people who migrated to the island.

During the Straits Forum, the largest grassroots cross-Strait exchange platform, which was held in Xiamen, Fujian, on Saturday, one focus was helping Taiwan residents returning to the mainland to pay respects to their ancestors.

Over 10,000 family genealogies have been matched and compiled by families from both sides over the years. Each family record holds a tapestry of memories and stories of reunions.

In 1993, Chou Huang-shun from Changhua, Taiwan, embarked on his first journey to the mainland to trace his roots. Thirty years later, with the assistance of an online root-tracing platform, he finally connected his family tree with one on the mainland, finding his ancestral roots in Weitou village in Jinjiang, a county-level city in Quanzhou.

Chou and his family visited Quanzhou and paid respects in their ancestral hall. He said he was

“With a shared history and culture between the two sides, utilizing this platform to pass down family genealogies is a profoundly meaningful endeavor for me.”

Shangguan Mengping, member of a digital root-tracing platform project team from Taiwan

surprised when the villagers held a grand ceremony to welcome them, and he invited them to visit Taiwan.

Weitou is the closest point on the mainland to Kinmen, an island administered by Taiwan that is close to the mainland coast. In recent years, the village has witnessed numerous heartwarming reunions.

"Each time families separated on both sides are reconnected, it is a complete family reunion," said Hong Shuiping, the village's Party chief. He added that more young people from Taiwan are being welcomed to explore opportunities on the mainland.

Various means have been devel-

oped to facilitate such connections, including a digital root-tracing platform developed by young people from both sides that consolidates a vast amount of genealogical information.

Shangguan Mengping, a member of the project team from Taiwan, said, "With a shared history and culture between the two sides, utilizing this platform to pass down family genealogies is a profoundly meaningful endeavor for me."

Zhong Farong, deputy secretary-general of the Fujian Surname and Origin Research Association, said it is important to engage young people in Taiwan through methods that arouse their interest, hoping to spark a root-tracing trend on the island through the online app.

Wang Chang-ping, deputy chairwoman of Taiwan's Labor Party, emphasized that the family name culture is a vital component of Chinese culture, serving as a spiritual link that binds compatriots on both sides. She said the bond of kinship across the Strait is unbreakable.

During the Straits Forum, both sides initiated the collaborative compilation of a book on ancestral halls in Fujian and Taiwan. It will include details of ancestral hall architecture, genealogical records, rituals, inscriptions and couplets.

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## Qingdao playing big role in international transport

A truck operating under an international customs transit system known as TIR recently traveled from the customs area of the China-Shanghai Cooperation Organization Local Economic and Trade Cooperation Demonstration Area in Qingdao, Shandong province, to Moscow, Russia, completing the trip in just seven days.

TIR, which stands for Transports Internationaux Routiers, or International Road Transports, is designed to help save time and money for transport operators and customs authorities as goods are shipped across borders.

Over 60 trips have been completed since the inception of the TIR route between the demonstration area in Qingdao and Moscow last year, according to SCODA's administrative committee.

The rapid growth of TIR high-

lights the significant role SCODA plays in the development of international logistics corridors and promoting interconnection among countries that are members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

"Six years on, SCODA has leveraged its prominent transportation advantage and has become a gateway for the Asia-Pacific region, linking Japan and South Korea to the east, Eurasian areas to the west, Mongolia and Russia to the north and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to the south," Chen Wansheng, deputy secretary-general of Qingdao's city government, said at a news conference on Friday.

SCODA has been recognized as a national-level logistics hub for commerce and trade services, Chen said.

It has 32 railway services operated by China-Europe freight

trains, connecting 54 cities across 23 countries that are SCO members or are involved in the Belt and Road Initiative.

"The China-Europe freight trains have made over 3,200 trips, making Qingdao one of the top 10 cities in terms of this freight service," Chen said.

SCODA's global transportation role is further enhanced by its proximity to Qingdao Jiaodong International Airport, which connects to 146 domestic and international cities, and Qingdao Port, which serves SCO-related countries via 42 shipping routes.

Besides its increasing role as a logistics hub, SCODA has substantially contributed to trade, international investment and cultural exchanges. Official data shows that the total value of its imports and exports over the past six years stands at 21.34 billion yuan (\$2.93 billion).

"Focusing on key areas such as the industrial internet and high-end equipment, SCODA has enhanced industrial cooperation with SCO and BRI countries," Chen said.

SCODA has helped companies in Qingdao invest a total of \$3.52 billion to fund 232 projects in countries such as Russia and Kazakhstan, according to official data.

Han Xingang, deputy director of the reform office of the Communist Party of China Qingdao committee, said that to pursue the high-quality development of SCODA, Qingdao "will make more efforts on reform and innovation and introduce institutional systems to coordinate international economic and trade rules and common appeals from SCO countries".

CHINA DAILY

## CHINA

## Changsha's rise as a favorite for Hong Kong explorers

By ZOU SHUO in Changsha  
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Suppose one spots someone in Changsha, Hunan province, speaking Mandarin with a Cantonese accent and a touch of English and paying in cash. In that case, they are likely from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

More Hong Kong residents have flocked to Changsha to travel as they have been captivated by its delicious and cheap food and the convenience of the high-speed train, which has reduced travel time to 3 hours and 10 minutes. They are also lured by the city's wide range of recreational activities with budget-friendly options.

Hong Kong residents have flooded the social media platform Xiaohongshu with travel guide posts about Changsha.

The restart of the high-speed trains that connect Hong Kong to Beijing, Changsha, Hangzhou, Shanghai, Wuhan and other cities on April 1, 2023, allows Hong Kong residents to travel to mainland cities more conveniently.

Hong Kong tourists come for the renowned Hunan cuisine snacks, such as stinky tofu, known for its spicy and robust flavors, and the local milk tea brand Chayan Yuese.

The city also boasts a vibrant nightlife, with bars, street food and live houses that are attractive to Hong Kong travelers.

Apart from Hong Kong travelers, Changsha has been a popular travel destination for people across the country.

According to big data analysis, during the three-day Dragon Boat Festival from June 8 to 10, the city received more than 3.91 million tourists, with tourism revenue reaching more than 3.2 billion yuan (\$441 million).

Chow Ki-yan, 26, has traveled to Changsha three times. She has visited all the famous tourist attractions, such as the Yuelu Mountain and Orange Isle, and eaten all kinds of local food, such as little crawfish and stinky tofu.

"I love Changsha very much as it is a very vibrant city with all kinds of nightlife, perfect for young people," she said.

"You can still find things to do and food to eat at 3 am and you can also slow down and just enjoy the beautiful views of the city."

She said she spotted numerous Hong Kong residents while queuing up for the stinky tofu.

Ou Hao-lin, 38, also traveled to Changsha for a business trip in March and found the city young and lively. He was impressed by the stylish decorations of the city's shopping centers, which are perfect for social media posts.

He was also impressed by the city's spicy food, which was readily available on the high-speed train.



Li Zhaoma walks on one of his regular patrol routes at the Qilian Mountains National Nature Reserve in Gansu province. JIAO FANGNING / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Devoted ranger not ready to hang up shoes

Nearing retirement, Li Zhaoma still heads out on patrol regularly to protect Qilian Mountains nature reserve

By MA JINGNA in Lanzhou  
and PENG CHAO

Over the past 33 years, Li Zhaoma has worn out countless rubber shoes patrolling the forest around the Gucheng nature protection station.

The 59-year-old is a forest ranger at the station in the Qilian Mountains National Nature Reserve, an important ecological safety barrier straddling the provinces of Gansu and Qinghai in Northwest China.

With less than one month to go before his retirement, Li has been seizing every opportunity to patrol the forest with other rangers, even though he has been assigned a logistics management position by the station's leadership for his convenience.

Li became a forest ranger at age 27, three years after retiring from the military, at a State-owned forest farm that later became part of the Qilian Mountains National Nature Reserve.

"I remember when I first arrived, there were seven forest ranger stations at the farm, each with two or three rangers," he recalled. "But sometimes, when my colleagues needed to exchange shifts or asked for leave, I would end up being the only one on duty at the station."

In the deep mountains where human presence is rare, Li was accompanied only by the rustling sound of the wind blowing through the woods all night. "The conditions at the forest ranger stations used to be extremely harsh," said Sun Guoping, director of the Gucheng station. "A mud-brick house served as both the dormitory, kitchen and office, not to mention the high mountains, strong winds, humidity and inconvenient transportation we endured."

He said few newcomers could handle the loneliness, and many of them would quit in less than six months, but Li stayed.

As a forest ranger, Li's duties include preventing forest fires, stopping illegal logging and hunting, con-

ducting ecological resource surveys, and ensuring pest control and ecological conservation.

He spent approximately 200 days a year patrolling the forest, unwilling to miss a day unless there was heavy rain or snow.

"In the winter, I patrolled for at least six hours a day, while in the summer, I worked for at least eight hours a day. On average, I walked over 15 kilometers each day," he said.

Although his position may not seem very important, Li believes it comes with great responsibility. He knows exactly where forest fires are prone to occur, which part of the forest is susceptible to pests and diseases and where the outsiders are likely to trespass. His knowledge and experience have earned him the nickname "the living map" among the younger rangers.

In the past 33 years, not a single forest fire has occurred in the area he protects.

One day during the winter, as snowflakes fell outside the station, Li, who was on duty alone, received a radio call from the farm office. "Someone is illegally logging trees!"

At that moment, it was impossible for him to call for immediate backup, due to the long distance between stations and the lack of advanced communication devices. Nevertheless, Li quickly put on his rubber shoes and ran all the way to the logging area, where he confronted two axe-wielding illegal loggers.

After several unsuccessful attempts to persuade the burly loggers to stop, Li, drawing on his experience as a soldier, rushed forward and subdued them bare-handed.

When forest police officers arrived at the scene, they expressed their concerns about Li and warned him that his actions had been too reckless.

"It is my duty to safeguard the forest. As long as I am here, not a single seedling shall be harmed," he said.

Thanks to the efforts of the forest

rangers, the ecological environment in the reserve has seen notable improvement, resulting in a thriving population of wildlife. "During our patrols, we frequently encounter rare and endangered wild animal species such as alpine musk deer, elk, blue sheep, blue-eared pheasants, Tibetan snowcocks, white-eared pheasants and vultures — especially the elk and blue-eared pheasants, they are like old friends to us," he said.

The nature of forest rangers' work makes it difficult for them to take good care of their families. While regarded as a dependable man by his colleagues, Li's wife once thought of him as an irresponsible husband, and his daughter viewed him as an unqualified father.

But Li said his family developed a newfound respect for him after his daughter discovered something about his past. While cleaning his room one day, she found an old wooden box hidden under the bed. Driven by curiosity, she opened the box and discovered rows of military medals and certificates of honor that she had never known about.

"Dad, why have you never told me the stories behind these things in your box?" she said during a phone call with him, her eyes tearing up.

"Defending the country as a soldier and protecting the forests as a ranger are just ordinary jobs. There is nothing to brag about," Li replied.

Years of patrolling in the damp, chilly forest led Li to develop rheumatoid arthritis, and an old war injury has resurfaced, causing him to walk with a slight limp. "Guarding this forest for half my life has been worth it," Li said, as he gazed out at the snowy mountains in the distance embraced by the dense forest.

Jiao Fangning contributed to this story.

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## Old industrial town becomes tourist magnet

CHONGQING — Once a bustling industrial town, the Dawo residential community has endured the impact of environmental degradation and factory closures in recent decades.

Today, this residential community nestled in the towering mountains in Fengjie county, Chongqing, has morphed into a countryside tourist attraction thanks to its scenic beauty and industrial heritage.

The transformation began in 2015 when officials of the residential community, confronted with desolate land and a dwindling population, decided that pursuing a sustainable industry was the right direction.

The community used to be the seat of a State-owned sulfur factory founded in 1951, with a peak annual output of over 7,000 metric tons. The factory's affiliated schools, hospital and cinema had once created a prosperous, self-sufficient town.

In 1998, the sulfur factory was transformed into a coal mine, extracting a total of 1.7 million tons of coal before being shut down in 2015, marking the end of Dawo's industrial glory.

Following the closure of the factory, many workers who had lost their jobs moved out of the sluggish community to seek employment. Meanwhile, signs of environmental devastation due to years of excessive mining were evident everywhere. The land was acidified by sulfur, the core area of the factory turned barren, and farmlands were deserted.

"When it rained, water streamed down the slope with mud, sometimes flowing into houses," said Luo Yifu, a former employee of the sulfur factory, recounting the magnitude of water erosion.

It took a decade for Dawo to reforest the land. About 266.67 hectares of cypress and larch have been planted in barren mountains. Leveraging its high-altitude location and ample sunshine, the community has cultivated about 166 hectares of soft-seeded pomegranates and crisp plums. These efforts have raised the forest coverage rate to about 90 percent.

Recognizing Dawo's tourism potential with its canyons, caves and nostalgia-inducing industrial heritage from the old sulfur factory, local officials and residents have developed a tourist

## 200 jobs

The number of work opportunities created by the tourism industry in Dawo

attraction featuring scenic spots, an industrial-themed cultural zone and opportunities for extreme sports.

The entire tourist area, covering 17.6 square kilometers, can receive up to 300,000 tourists annually.

As visitors step onto Dawo community square, they'll be greeted with decorations evoking the area's industrial heritage, such as a giant "love" logo crafted from a retired coal-transporting railway track, streetlamps mounted on abandoned coal stoves and other scenes. In the distance, out-of-use workshops, office buildings and blast furnaces add to the nostalgic atmosphere.

"We've repurposed the dilapidated factories and abandoned facilities into tourism attractions, preserving the memories of generations of mine employees while also drawing visitors," said Wen Jinping, the Party secretary of Dawo who also worked at the sulfur factory.

Dawo's tourism industry has created over 200 jobs, generating an annual revenue exceeding 7 million yuan (\$985,000).

The burgeoning tourism sector has improved the living standards of residents. Song Guangxun, 55, a former employee at the sulfur factory, has been running a grocery store in the community since the factory closure. The influx of tourists in recent years has boosted Song's business and afforded him extra income to renovate his house and support his child financially throughout college.

Luo Liangshun, a long-haul truck driver, returned to the community and started a farm-stay business that receives up to over 400 diners daily in the peak season. Last year, his venture yielded a revenue of over 720,000 yuan.

The transformation of Dawo is a microcosm of the green development of Fengjie county, where the eco-economy accounts for over 70 percent of the county's total GDP.

XINHUA



The Dawo community in Fengjie county, Chongqing, draws visitors with natural scenery and old buildings. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## After escaping war, Iraqi vlogger makes splash on Chinese social media

CHENGDU — With camera in hand, Ahmed Jabar has kept busy chronicling his life in China since he moved here a decade ago.

Usually dressed in a sharp suit with curly hair and a beard, the Iraq native speaks Mandarin as he vlogs about his culinary experiences.

On Chinese social media, Jabar, whose Chinese name is Wang Lixuan, operates the immensely popular food vlogger account "Lao Wang in China", which has amassed over 15 million followers. His bio reads, "Having faced life's most painful trials, I cherish the stability and peace I've found in China. I adore the cuisine here, and the scenery is breathtaking."

Born in Iraq in 1994, his childhood is a tapestry woven with the sorrows of war and displacement. From Iraq to Syria, Jabar and his family braved the devastation of conflict.

"I mistook (the booming sounds) for fireworks at first, but soon realized it was the sound of falling missiles," Jabar recalled.

In 2014, with the aid of relatives, they finally reached China.

Upon his arrival, Jabar took up a role as an Arabic teaching intern at an international school in Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui autonomous region, where he taught Arabic while diligently learning Chinese.

"The people around me were incredibly patient," he said. "Although I couldn't comprehend their words initially, their eyes spoke volumes of their genuine affection and desire to assist me."

With unwavering determination, he seized every opportunity to master the language, achieving fluent communication within a year.

Over time, Jabar has embraced various roles: Arabic teacher, international student counselor,

"I deeply feel that China is warmly helping Iraq move forward. ... I love the peaceful life and the peaceful people."

Ahmed Jabar, Iraqi vlogger living in China

model, actor and livestream host. Each transition has allowed him to further acclimate to life in China and rediscover a sense of security.

In 2018, he enrolled in a short video training course. This experience taught him basic editing skills and how to navigate social media and short video platforms

such as Bilibili and Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok.

During one trip, he recorded a video of himself eating and commenting on the food, which he edited and posted online to considerable acclaim.

Motivated by this success, Jabar continued to produce food exploration videos. With his love for Chinese food and a command of the language, he began to gain recognition among an ever-growing audience.

Within six months, his fame skyrocketed, and his follower count on Douyin and Bilibili surged from a few thousand to over 15 million. Through his videos, viewers can explore a variety of Chinese cuisines from the comfort of their homes. "Lao Wang in China" offers a unique perspective on food from a foreigner's viewpoint, featuring heartwarming interactions with restaurant own-

ers and diners, infusing each video with laughter and warmth.

"Heartbreaking" is a word frequently found in the comments of "Lao Wang in China" videos. During this year's Chinese Lunar New Year, while filming in Zhengzhou, Henan, he was startled by the sudden sound of firecrackers while eating alone at a barbecue stall. His eyes welled with fear as he froze for a few seconds, a moment captured by the camera.

"I thought it was the sound of a bomb explosion," he said.

This scene moved countless viewers, who left comments like, "Don't be afraid, you're in China," and "His startled reaction shows he's protecting himself, but lowering his head with a smile shows his trust in China."

In March, Jabar returned to his homeland after nearly 20 years, reuniting with family members after many years. During his brief

six-day stay in Iraq, he witnessed the gradual recovery of his country. To his delight, there are now Chinese restaurants in Baghdad, and schools, hospitals, bridges and railways are being built with aid from China.

"I deeply feel that China is warmly helping Iraq move forward," Jabar remarked. "I'm a foreigner, but not an outsider. I love the peaceful life and the peaceful people."

From Iraq to Syria and then to China, Jabar has spent 10 years finding the security he longed for and his direction in life.

Looking ahead, Jabar hopes to expand his videos to include Chinese tourism, tea culture, clothing, customs and ethnic groups, aiming to create more quality content to help the world better understand China.

XINHUA

**Editor's note:** As protection of the planet's flora, fauna and resources becomes increasingly important, China Daily is publishing a series of stories to illustrate the country's commitment to safeguarding the natural world.



A herd of Tibetan antelopes wanders under a railway bridge in Hoh Xil, Qinghai province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

# Cameras capture hidden lives of rare animals

Images provide insight for conservationists to aid wildlife protection efforts



By CHEN ZIYAN  
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Cameras positioned in the remote habitats of some of China's rarest wildlife have not only provided insight into the lives of endangered species, but also fascinated many online who've reacted in awe at the extraordinary scenes captured.

The cameras, tripped by movement, have caught such moments as marmots fighting and a pair of snow leopard cubs following their mother, and have provoked a strong reaction among netizens in China, raising awareness of wildlife conservation.

The videos, which were posted on the streaming platform Bilibili by Eco-Bridge Continental, a nongovernment organization devoted to the conservation of nature in China, have garnered views in their millions.

"Felines such as snow leopards, lynxes and Pallas's cats are the viewers' favorite," said Gao Chen, executive communications director of the NGO. "The cameras capture a sense of liberation and joy of those creatures living in the wild," he said.

Gao's colleagues, who are tasked with field surveys, typically spend one to three months observing and detecting wild animals in their natural habitats. They divide the survey areas into several grids and place one or two cameras in each to capture the wild animals' movements.

The images and videos captured by the cameras are retrieved every three to six months and released later on the internet after selection and editing.

"The time when the footage is captured and the time when we see it can be separated by a long period, but you still feel a kind of interaction across time and space."

Gao Chen, executive communications director of Eco-Bridge Continental

"The time when the footage is captured and the time when we see it can be separated by a long period, but you still feel a kind of interaction across time and space," Gao said.

Snow leopards, lynxes, brown bears and red deer are often spotted in regions such as the Tianshan Mountains in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region and the Mount Qomolangma area.

Asian elephants have been captured by their cameras in Yunnan province and leopard cats, palm civets and gibbons have been recorded in Hainan province. During their surveys in Hoh Xil, the cameras even captured Tibetan antelopes.

Snow leopards shot by infrared cameras are a particular favorite online.

As a flagship species for the conservation of alpine ecosystems, the

population of snow leopards is an indicator of ecological health in high-altitude ecosystems. Alpine ecosystems also play a crucial role in water conservation and climate regulation, Gao said.

In 2021, the NGO used satellite tracking for the first time in China to show where snow leopards range. Through the analysis of a large number of infrared photos and other field survey data, they identified key distribution areas of the animal in the country, as well as its population in these areas.

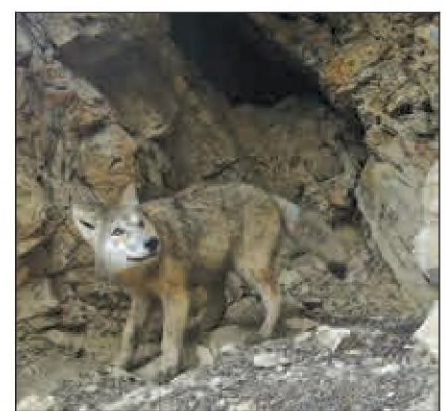
In a project carried out in the Tianshan Mountains in Xinjiang last year, infrared cameras caught an interesting scene around the carcass of a red deer. There were not only scavenging birds that are commonly seen, but also wild boars, red foxes, wolves and even magpies, all of whom had their sights set on a slice of the carcass.

"That's why we engage in biodiversity conservation work. It is not just about the protection of species diversity but also about the safeguarding of the normal functioning of the ecosystem," Gao said. "Learning about biodiversity helps us gain more specific insight into the world we live in, and better understand the relationship between nature and ourselves."

Wang Jing and Wang Danning contributed to this story.



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Top: Workers install an infrared camera at the Mt Qomolangma National Nature Reserve in the Xizang autonomous region. Above: A wolf leaves its cave in the Qomolangma reserve in October last year.



Left: Two grey marmots engage in a tussle in Bortala, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, in October. Right: A lynx comes out of its cave in eastern Xizang autonomous region in February last year.

## WORLD

# Cities link up in climate change fight

China-US urban partnerships prove to be potent antidote to threat of division

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco  
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Despite strained national relations, US and Chinese cities are forging strong partnerships in the fight against climate change, highlighting inspiring instances of joint work at the subnational level.

Momentum for such cooperative efforts has been given a fillip through high-profile exchanges such as that of a visit to China by the Governor of California Gavin Newsom in October.

This opened the door for further collaboration. Cities such as Rochester, Minnesota, followed suit, with its Mayor Kim Norton returning with a renewed commitment to clean energy.

"We came back as a city which made a pledge to be 100 percent renewable by 2030, and Rochester City Council has agreed to that," said Norton, inspired by China's dedication to electric vehicles.

She talked of her experience in China late last year at a recent forum in Berkeley, California, at which local officials from both countries talked about best practices and lessons learned.

"Because we learned from another city, at the subnational level we came home with the energy to tackle these issues."

Not only her own community but also other US cities could also benefit from such exchanges, she said.

During her visit, she was particularly struck by China's aggressive pursuit of electrification.

"In Nanjing, 87 percent of the fleet is electric. We have two electric buses in my city, and two more ready for delivery. We wanted to purchase 10 more but are unable to get them."

This stark contrast reminded US cities of "setting a goal for doing better in this country" by adopting similar strategies, she said.

Electric vehicles were not the only thing Norton learned about. She pointed to China's innovative approaches to battery leasing and cooperative procurement as strategies that could help US cities.

Another crucial area for learning, Norton said, was the management of heating, cooling and wastewater, areas in which Chinese cities

have developed innovative, large-scale solutions that could inform US practices.

## Infrastructure development

The infrastructure development she witnessed in China also stood out to Norton as a potential area for further bilateral collaboration. This sentiment was echoed by Jin Xiaohu, deputy secretary-general of Suzhou, Jiangsu province, who detailed the city's progress in using clean energy, green manufacturing and data-driven energy management.

"We invite experts and colleagues from the United States to Suzhou," Jin said, highlighting the potential for collaboration to achieve carbon peak and neutrality goals.

On the US side, Mayor of Blytheville, Arkansas, Melissa Logan, recognizing the similarities between the Mississippi and Yangtze rivers, extended an invitation to Chinese counterparts to help in efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change in the Mississippi Delta.

Since 2005 it has suffered significant economic losses as a result of flooding and droughts exacerbated by climate change, said Logan, who said working with China is crucial to mitigating these problems.

She is calling for Chinese participation in the Mississippi River Cities and Towns initiative to foster mutual understanding and collaboration in managing river systems in the face of climate change.

In a conference in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in September, some guests from the Yangtze River region will come to talk about their experience with best practice, Logan said.

"We have a great relationship with China, and we want to keep that relationship, and we want to build upon it and grow it."

This subnational collaboration is expected to yield tangible results this year. The collaborative efforts are scheduled for showcasing at events such as Climate Week NYC in September and COP29 in Azerbaijan in November, the California-China Climate Institute said.

Partnerships are also expanding, as seen in the fourth China-Oregon Climate Change and Sustainability Forum, to be co-hosted by Oregon, the city of Tianjin and Fujian province this year.



Protesters take part in a protest against the far right in Paris on Saturday. FIRAS ABDULLAH VIA NEWSCOM

## French protesters stand up to far right

PARIS — Anti-racism groups joined French unions and a new left-wing coalition in protests in Paris and across France on Saturday against the surging far right, with campaigning underway for snap parliamentary elections.

France's former president Francois Hollande on Saturday said he would stand for parliament again.

The French Interior Ministry said 250,000 people turned out to protest, 75,000 of them in Paris. Despite rainy and windy weather, those who fear that the elections will produce France's first far-right government since World War II gathered at Place de la Republique before marching through eastern Paris. Up to 21,000 police and gendarmes were deployed.

The protesters held placards reading "Liberty for all, Equality for all and Fraternity with all" and "Let's break frontiers, documents for all, no to the immigration bill".

In the French Riviera city of Nice, protesters marched down Jean Medecin Avenue, chanting against the National Rally, its leader Jordan Bardella as well as against Presi-

dent Emmanuel Macron. Local police said 2,500 people took part.

Hollande, France's president from 2012 to 2017, left office with record levels of unpopularity. He is hated by parts of the radical left, and even the Socialist leadership regards him with suspicion.

He said he would stand as an MP for the southwestern Correze department for the New Popular Front, a left-wing grouping formed for the elections that includes the Socialists and Greens.

"An exceptional decision for an exceptional situation," Hollande told reporters in the department's Tulle town, explaining his comeback.

Hollande has already backed the new broad left-wing alliance, saying that we "must all do everything to make sure the far right does not come to power in France".

Crowds have been gathering daily since the anti-immigration National Rally made historic gains in the European Parliament elections recently, crushing President Emmanuel Macron's pro-business moderates and prompting him to dissolve the National Assembly.

New elections for the lower house of parliament were set in two rounds, for June 30 and July 7.

Macron remains president until 2027 and is in charge of foreign policy and defense, but his presidency would be weakened if the National Rally wins and takes power of the government and domestic policy.

"We need a democratic and social upsurge — if not the extreme right will take power," French unions said in a statement on Friday. "Our Republic and our democracy are in danger."

Opinion polls suggest the National Rally will be ahead in the first round of the parliamentary elections. The party came out on top in the European elections, garnering more than 30 percent of the vote cast in France, almost twice as many votes as Macron's party Renaissance.

In the remaining three years of Macron's term in office, he would retain control over foreign affairs and defense regardless of the result of the French parliamentary elections.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## Sheinbaum entourage involved in fatal crash

MEXICO CITY — The logistics and advance team of Mexican president-elect Claudia Sheinbaum were involved in a fatal crash on a highway in the northern state of Coahuila on Friday, local authorities said.

One person was dead and several others were injured in the accident, authorities said.

Sheinbaum was in another vehicle, and "stopped to learn about the situation of people already being treated" by emergency teams at the scene said, the authorities.

Mario Alberto Davila, the mayor of Monclova, confirmed to the media that the deceased was a woman.

According to preliminary reports, the accident was a head-on collision between a vehicle of the entourage and a van, whose driver died.

The accident happened near the city of Monclova, Coahuila, close to where Sheinbaum was due to accompany President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador on her first tour after the elections, observing efforts to recover the remains of 63 miners killed in a coal mine accident in 2006.

Mexican authorities said last week they had found the remains of some miners at the Pasta de Conchos mine, about 140 kilometers north of Monclova.

Sheinbaum and Lopez Obrador later arrived and spoke at a meeting near the old mine where the recovery efforts were being carried out.

Sheinbaum was elected the country's first female president in the election.

Lopez Obrador's term in office concludes at the end of September.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

## G7 actions urged to end Israeli atrocities in Gaza

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong  
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The Group of Seven nations is being urged to do more to end Israeli atrocities in Gaza as Tel Aviv has yet to publicly accept a US-backed United Nations Security Council resolution despite the bloc's claim that it welcomes Israel's acceptance of the proposal.

The Islamic Relief group urged the G7 countries Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States to end arms sales to states in which there "are serious risks of international law being violated, such as Israel's actions in Gaza".

Military spending was at "record levels" while humanitarian aid to help people affected by wars and disasters had been cut, even as more than 1 million Palestinians are starving, it said.

Israel's continued offensives are reported to have killed at least 37,337 Gazans, in response to Hamas' attack on Israel in October, in which about 1,200 people were killed.

Eight Israeli soldiers were killed in a blast in southern Gaza on Saturday, the military said.

In Rafah, witnesses reported clashes between militants and Israeli troops in the city's west and artillery fire toward a refugee camp in the city center.

Abdalfatah Asqool, an international law lecturer at the University of Palestine, told China Daily: "They



A young Palestinian transports water past a destroyed mosque in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip on Friday. EYAD BABA / AFP

announce a deal, which is originally an Israeli deal, and they ask Hamas only to say yes to the deal without any comments. This proves that the US is acting as a representative of Israel. They announced that Israel accepted the deal, but we did not hear it from the Israelis themselves.

"So it is better for the US to stop playing the two faces role, because this will make them keep losing on both the local and international level."

Abdul Wahed Jalal Nori, an analyst and lecturer in the Department of Fundamental and Inter-Disciplinary Studies at the International Islamic University Malaysia, told China Daily that what the G7 said at its summit was "insufficient and overly cau-

Though demanding an increase in humanitarian aid flow, the G7 said it wanted "Israel's security interests and safety for Palestinian civilians in Gaza assured".

However, the government of Israel has yet to publicly acknowledge or accept the proposals even though the US has given assurances that Tel Aviv has accepted the conditions.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "faces significant pressure from various domestic political factions", Abdul Wahed said, and acknowledging international calls for a cease-fire or concessions to Hamas "might be seen as a sign of weakness or a betrayal of national security interests".

"This could erode political support within right-wing and conservative segments of the Israeli electorate, who favor a hard-line stance against Hamas and other Palestinian factions."

Though G7 leaders in their communique reiterated a commitment to a two-state solution, the outcomes "expressly show the double standards of the international community in dealing with the issues", said Asqool of the University of Palestine.

The G7 agreed on the right of Ukraine to resist but ignored the Palestinian right to defense against occupying forces and did little for the thousands of innocent Palestinian civilians killed after the Hamas attack in October, Asqool said.

Agencies contributed to this story.

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## Biden holds LA fundraiser as Trump courts Michigan

LOS ANGELES — US President Joe Biden brushed aside jet lag on Saturday, flying to Los Angeles after an overseas trip, to attend a star-studded fundraiser set to bring millions of dollars for his election fight against Donald Trump in November.

Trump, making an unprecedented bid to win back the White House while running as a convicted felon, was also on the campaign trail, boasting in Detroit, Michigan, that his own fundraising is "the highest in the history of politics".

Michigan is a must-win state for Biden in the electoral mathematics.

Aiming to eat into Biden's key electoral support from African Americans there, Trump visited a black church in Detroit and told hundreds of voters that "crooked Joe Biden has done nothing for you except talk".

Trump then headed to a starkly different venue: a convention of high-profile hard-right Republicans and supporters of his attempt to overturn the 2020 election.

At the Turning Point USA conven-

tion, Trump railed against Biden's climate protection measures, and renewed his rhetoric about what he branded the "Biden migrant invasion", saying he said he will stop it with the biggest deportation operation in US history.

In a rambling 80-minute speech frequently interrupted by loud cheering, Trump claimed that help for migrants leaves US war veterans "lying in the streets" and veered into everything from extended complaints about modern showers to repeating

his lie that the 2020 election was rigged and victory stolen from him.

"We have a rigged country. We have rigged elections, we have open borders," he said.

Biden was hoping to inject star power and hard cash into his battle.

The Hollywood stars George Clooney and Julia Roberts were to join former president Barack Obama for the gala evening that Biden's campaign said has already raised \$28 million, a Democratic Party record.

His turn with the stars meant Bid-

en skipping a huge international peace conference for Ukraine on Saturday in Switzerland, with Vice President Kamala Harris attending instead.

However, Biden's team said the fundraiser was a "show of force with leaders across the entertainment industry sending a clear signal: they are united and enthusiastic about reelecting President Biden and Vice President Harris."

Polls show Biden and Trump largely neck-and-neck, with many voters turned off by a rematch between the nation's oldest president and a 78-year-old convicted felon.

They have been in a fundraising

battle, too, with Biden raking in more for months but Trump doing better recently as supporters rally over the guilty verdict in his porn star hush money trial.

The two are also gearing up for the first blockbuster debate of the campaign on June 27.

Biden is expected to head to the presidential Camp David retreat soon to start preparing for the debate.

Their last debates, in 2020, were tension-filled affairs, with Biden at one point snapping "will you shut up, man?" as Trump repeatedly talked over him.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## BUSINESS

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Employees work at a factory of Chinese new energy vehicle manufacturer Nio in Hungary. ZHANG FAN / XINHUA

# Chinese carmakers zoom ahead abroad

Growing demand, customer supply concerns, local benefits spark big investments

By LIU YUKUN

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Chinese carmakers and auto parts manufacturers are increasingly diversifying their overseas production bases to meet growing global demand and address heightened supply chain security concerns, with Central European countries and Mexico becoming hot spots, experts and business executives said.

Their growing international presence shows they are keen to meet the rising demand from foreign clients who need quick responses and deliveries on time from parts suppliers, amid deglobalization and geopolitical tensions, the experts said.

Their remarks came after trade frictions intensified recently, including increased US tariffs on imports of Chinese products like electric vehicles, and the European Commission's decision on June 12 to impose extra duties of up to 38.1 percent on imported Chinese electric cars from July.

"Against the backdrop of deglobalization, foreign clients are shifting their focus from minimizing costs to supply chain security, thus favoring suppliers capable of producing parts near their sites. Central European countries and Mexico are popular destinations for investment due to their strategic location, favorable policies and proactive efforts to attract Chinese manufacturers," said Chen Shihua, deputy secretary-general of the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

"The two regions also boast good industrial bases with established names that have already set up operations and need good-quality auto parts and systems, attracting Chinese automotive industry players and niche companies," Chen said.

From July, Serbia will implement a free trade agreement with China that will result in over 90 percent of trade between the two countries being tariff-free. Sectors such as automotive, lithium-ion batteries and photovoltaics will benefit first.

In Hungary, low corporate tax rate, the establishment of German vehicle production bases, as well as stable and favorable policies to welcome foreign investment also make it a hot spot for Chinese automotive and parts manufacturers.

"Several Central European countries, including Poland, Slovakia and Hungary, have been the main destinations for Chinese companies seeking to set up sites overseas," said Wang Binlian, director of overseas projects at Zhejiang Shuanghuan Driveline Co Ltd.

The Shenzhen-listed auto transmission producer invested 122 million euros for the first phase of a project in Hungary. It is also expected to sign a long-term investment coop-



A BYD new energy vehicle on display at a showroom in Budapest, Hungary. XINHUA

eration agreement with the local government in the coming months.

Wang said: "For us, Poland has an advantage in logistics over Hungary because our clients (automakers) are mainly located in Germany, Sweden and Belgium. This makes it convenient for us to transport our products via land from Poland.

"However, we chose Hungary because of its friendliness toward Chinese companies. Our foremost priority is a stable investment environment, even if it results in marginally higher logistics costs. In addition, Hungary's cultural similarities to China enable us to adopt Chinese management systems effectively.

"Moreover, Hungary serves as a central hub for the eastward relocation of European manufacturing, with major firms like Audi and BMW setting up factories. The Hungarian government is also actively encouraging the development of its automotive manufacturing sector."

Zhang Taixin, director of Halm Hungary KFT, Zhejiang Huashuo Technology Co Ltd's overseas branch, added. Huashuo produces various forms of auto parts. Its Hungary site began construction in April 2022 and commenced production in March 2023.

Zhang highlighted the recent energy upgrade in Debrecen, Hungary, where Halm is based. The move was reportedly aimed at supporting auto and auto parts manufacturers and securing reliable energy supplies for them, alongside the local government incentives and subsidies to attract foreign investment.

"We envision a strong R&D center at the headquarters, complemented

by powerful global production and manufacturing facilities. We leverage our global production capacity to address regional market imbalances, thus avoiding market fragmentation that does not serve manufacturers or consumers," Zhang said.

Beyond Central Europe, Mexico has become a prime destination for Chinese automakers and parts suppliers. Local media outlets have reported that China's BYD, also the world's largest new energy vehicle manufacturer, is scouting locations in Mexico for a new factory.

Listed companies in the "Tesla supply chain", including auto parts makers Ningbo Huaxiang Group, Ningbo Tuopu Group and Xusheng Group, have already begun or accelerated plans to establish factories in Mexico, following Tesla's plan to set up a manufacturing plant of its own in Mexico.

Xusheng Group said the purpose is to quickly respond to technical and after-sales service needs of local customers, and achieve rapid product delivery.

Chinese auto brands have already started making their mark in Mexico. Latest data from the Mexican Association of Automobile Distributors showed sales of Chinese brands such as BYD, JAC and Geely in Mexico reached 129,329 units last year, up 63 percent year-on-year. Their market share in Mexico grew to 19.5 percent, up from 6.4 percent in 2019.

"Global consumers prefer Chinese NEVs because they meet supply gaps in certain regions, driven purely by market demand. China's NEV development offers technical support and policy references for

"Digging deep into the industrial development of new energy fields, major economies, including the United States and the European Union, have offered subsidies to the industry to support its development," Lin said.

He said the EU's anti-subsidy move is a political maneuver to curb the development of Chinese industries because they are worried that China's EV industry will quickly dominate the global market, leaving little space for them.

The China-EU cooperation can yield win-win results, as the two sides provided market space for each other. In 2022, the market share of Chinese brands in the EU's EV sales increased to 3.7 percent, up from just 0.4 percent three years ago.

Meanwhile, the share of European new energy vehicles in the Chinese market also grew, rising from 2.4 percent in 2019 to 6.1 percent in 2022, reported BJNews, citing the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association and the China Passenger Car Association.

Companies recognize this trade benefit. European automakers, particularly German manufacturers with a strong presence in the Chinese market, have expressed strong opposition before EU tariffs were announced on EVs made in China, saying that such a move could backfire.

Top executives at BMW and Volkswagen warned in May that imposing EU import duties could upend the bloc's Green Deal plan and harm automakers that import cars made in China.

Norbert Wiest, general manager of SW China, the Chinese branch of German machine tool maker SW Group, said: "It is logical for China's car industry to go global. In industrial history, every rapidly growing and significant economy has gone global.

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

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

On the accusation that Chinese companies accept government subsidies, Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University, said the competition in China's EV market is extremely fierce and is not sustained or protected by subsidies.

## Free trade win-win for all, say auto execs

REPORTER'S LOG

By Liu Yukun

During a recent meeting with Zhang Taixin, director of Zhejiang Huashuo Technology's Hungary branch, he adeptly switched between languages to communicate with his diverse team of Hungarian, German and Chinese staff. Despite their diverse cultural backgrounds, the team works harmoniously, epitomizing globalization within the automotive supply chain.

Ideally, businesses across different supply chain segments collaborate to advance the industry, enhancing technology, business models and application scenarios. However, ongoing trade frictions — often claimed to be protective measures for domestic enterprises — disrupt the global trade order.

Lin Boqiang, a professor at Xiamen University, attributes these measures to fears that strong Chinese companies might outcompete local businesses. However, even some industry leaders argue against such measures, saying they don't need such "protections".

BMW CEO Oliver Zipse and Volkswagen Chief Operating Officer Thomas Schafer have publicly opposed tariffs on Chinese electric vehicle imports, with the latter warning that such measures would backfire. Mercedes-Benz also voiced such concerns, with CEO Ola Kallenius publicly standing against trade restrictions.

The call is for Sino-European cooperation to create "win-win" outcomes.

Indeed, "win-win" is often cited in describing cooperation between Chinese and European suppliers. In a recent interview, SW Group's managing director Stefan Weber highlighted how their factories in Hungary and Mexico, established alongside Chinese enterprises, saw good performance.

Zhejiang Huashuo is one of SW's customers. "We leverage our global production capacity to address regional market imbalances, thus avoiding market fragmentation that does not serve manufacturers or consumers," Zhang said.

All businesses I interviewed agreed: profit drives their decisions. Whether through exports or international expansion, they follow customer demand.

Talking about the exact reasons why Zhejiang Huashuo established a factory in Hungary, Zhang further explained that "European clients prefer local manufacturing processes, prompting companies like us to engage in local research and development for quicker adaptation and collaborative design under European production standards. Establishing a European branch would help with efficient communication and local R&D, thus significantly enhance client collaboration."

He added: "Transporting large components like battery casings also poses logistical challenges. New energy vehicle makers want their suppliers to be close to their production sites to reduce logistics costs, improve efficiency and avoid uncertainties brought by trade conflicts."

Through this process, Chinese NEV parts makers have also introduced advanced technology and expertise globally.

"Our factory in Hungary has driven local industrial upgrades. Meeting our large demand helps local suppliers reduce production costs and foster local supply systems. Chinese manufacturers bring new experiences and capabilities to Europe, benefiting local businesses," Zhang said.

## BUSINESS



Visitors check out products at SW Group's booth during an expo in Shanghai. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## SW Group to boost machine tool biz in Hungary, Mexico

Move driven by Chinese customers' international investment strategy

By LIU YUKUN  
liuyukun@chinadaily.com.cn

German machine tool maker SW Group has unveiled plans to expand its facilities in Hungary and Mexico, following its Chinese clients which are setting up production bases in the two regions.

Stefan Weber, managing director of SW Group, said China is the company's most critical market and will remain so even in the future.

This has led to significant investments in local production plants, with an aim to manufacture all machines locally.

"Our approach mirrors what we did with our German customers when they expanded overseas. We leverage our existing global setup with subsidiaries in many countries and actively started new facilities. For example, our expansion in Hungary was driven by Chinese customers' investment plans. We established a subsidiary there to be close to the local market, supporting production and maintenance departments, while maintaining strong connections to our Chinese headquarters," Weber said.

"This collaboration creates a win-win situation, as successful Chinese customers help us secure more business and customers. We grow together with

our customers," he said.

On Hungary as an investment hot spot, Weber said the country has a mature automotive supply chain, supported by major German original equipment manufacturers and European suppliers. The Hungarian government actively promotes new technologies and fosters good relations with China, making it an attractive destination for Chinese companies.

According to China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the bilateral trade volume between China and Hungary amounted to \$3.53 billion from January to March. China's exports were valued at \$2.47 billion, while imports stood at \$1.06 billion.

The trade mainly consisted of high-value-added electromechanical and high-tech products, with four major sectors — electrical machinery and equipment and parts, boilers and mechanical appliances and parts, vehicles and parts, and optical, photographic, and medical equipment and parts — accounting for over 80 percent of the total trade volume.

"Mexico is also growing significantly. In the USA, labor is expensive and qualified employees are hard to find, whereas in Mexico, there is a motivated and well-educated workforce. This creates a

strong foundation for expanding the supply chain. Many European and Chinese companies have established subsidiaries in Mexico over the past decade, driven by political reasons and the desire to supply the American automotive market," Weber said.

"We believe that Mexico will evolve from a trusted manufacturing base to a hub for engineering and development. This belief drives our decision to increase our capabilities and build a new factory in Mexico, focusing not only on sales and service, but also on applications, automation systems, and providing better local services," he added.

Weber said that the German automotive market, once one of the largest, is shrinking, making companies resort to desperately seeking new projects.

"In Europe, particularly in Germany, capital investments are focused on new technology and models. However, the market demand in Europe is insufficient, and the lack of infrastructure is a significant handicap. This hesitation among consumers to buy electric cars creates a challenging situation for manufacturers who have invested heavily in new models and technologies," he explained.

"We established a research and development department in China because we recognize that many technological advancements in the

machine tools sector are driven by Chinese customers. We want to be close to them to effectively communicate, gather their information and demands, and deliver products and services at the speed expected in China," he said.

SW's Chinese business has grown substantially in the past few years. Entering the Chinese mainland market in 2010 with fewer than a dozen employees, it now has over 400 employees and more than 100 customers in China. Last year, about 40 percent of SW's global income came from China.

"Our next steps will involve increasing our capabilities in producing parts for our machines. This will include investments in our Chongqing branch's production technology, potential new buildings, and the expansion of our Suzhou plants. Additionally, we recently opened an office in Ningbo to be closer to our customers, enhancing our regional investment in China to better support sales and service," he said.

SW has factories in Suzhou and Chongqing, as well as offices in Beijing and Ningbo.

"We are very pleased with the investment conditions in China. Compared to Germany, the process is significantly faster. For example, building new facilities is much more efficient due to the excellent infrastructure and strong support from local governments," Weber said.

## Nation eyes capital mkts to fund productivity

BEIJING — As innovation becomes ever more crucial to China's high-quality development, the country's securities regulator has voiced stronger support for new quality productive forces by facilitating their access to financing.

In a move to foster strategic emerging industries and technological innovation, "new quality productive forces" has developed into a buzz phrase in the country's policy-making to denote advanced productivity through revolutionary technology breakthroughs, innovative allocation of production factors and deepened industrial upgrading.

### Stronger policy support

The latest move came last month, when an official of the country's securities watchdog elaborated on policy support for the development of new quality productive forces at a financial forum held in Beijing, pledging to prioritize financing firms that are breaking through foreign stranglehold in core technologies.

Efforts will be made to further improve the multitiered capital market system, and create synergies among the equity, bond and futures markets to reinforce the new quality productive forces, said Zhou Xiaozhou, an official with the China Securities Regulatory Commission.

"The capital market has a natural advantage in sharing risks of innovation, mobilizing capital for innovation, and optimizing the allocation of innovation resources," said Zhou. "Hence, it has great potential to serve the development of new quality productive forces."

Zhou's remarks came in the wake of an array of measures that were unveiled by the commission on April 19, which aimed to drive more investment to tech firms through initial public offerings, mergers and acquisitions, bond issuances and private equity investment.

The commission has proposed, for instance, a "green channel" to finance tech firms who are striving to break foreign dominance in key technologies, and encouraged State-backed as well as market institutions to provide credit enhancement for private sci-tech firms in their issuance of corporate bonds.

Amid the country's efforts to boost liquidity for sci-tech firms, a relending program worth 500 billion yuan (\$68.9 billion) was established in early April by the central bank, to support sci-tech innovation, technical transformation and equipment renewal.

Analysts believe such moves, focusing on providing innovative firms with better access to diversified financing alternatives, are crucial to invigorating China's high-quality growth.

In recent years, strategic emerging industries have received growing support from direct financing in the capital market.

As of May 23, the amount of funds

raised by the IPOs on three bourses primarily serving innovation-oriented firms — China's Nasdaq-style sci-tech innovation board, the tech-heavy ChiNext, and the Beijing Stock Exchange — accounted for 55.49 percent of China's total IPO funds raised in its A-share market.

Given the large research and development investment, high risks and strong dependence on talent as inherent nature to innovative firms, the capital market and stock exchanges can play an irreplaceable role in guiding resources toward sci-tech innovation, by solving their capital supply, price discovery and talent incentive mechanism, said BSE General Manager Sui Qiang.

### Patient capital valued

At a recent high-level meeting, China's policymakers highlighted the need to develop patient capital, a term of rare occurrence at such meetings, which is used to describe long-term investment eyeing sustainable growth.

Efforts will be made to bolster new quality productive forces and emerging industries, while actively developing venture capital and patient capital, according to the meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee on April 30.

Long-term funding is vital for developing new quality productive forces, as innovative activities are generally risky and entail substantial R&D investment, analysts say, suggesting that expanding patient capital supply will effectively boost the country's productivity via cultivating more globally competitive frontier firms.

Simultaneously, private equity and venture capital funds are also enhancing support for China's innovation drive. Since the registration-based IPO system was adopted, nearly 90 percent of firms listed on the sci-tech innovation board and 60 percent of firms listed on the ChiNext board have received support from private equity funds.

Fueled by effective investment, the country has seen accelerated progress in developing new quality productive forces and embracing cutting-edge technologies.

The high-tech manufacturing sector registered growth of 7.5 percent in the first quarter of this year, accelerating by 2.6 percentage points from the fourth quarter of 2023, while investment in high-tech industries expanded 11.4 percent from the previous year. In particular, investment in high-tech manufacturing expanded by 10.8 percent.

During the same period, the production of smart and green products such as 3D printing equipment, service robots and new energy vehicles increased by 40.6 percent, 26.7 percent and 29.2 percent year-on-year, respectively.

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WILDAID

## BUSINESSINSIGHT

## EAGLE EYE

By Justin Yifu Lin and Wang Yan

## Patient capital more essential and appropriate for China

The nation's top leadership vowed to "actively develop venture capital investment and strengthen patient capital" at a meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee on April 30. The financial term "patient capital", or capital that focuses on long-term investment, has attracted widespread attention.

Compared with short-term speculative capital, this type of capital pursues long-term returns and usually involves start-ups, infrastructure projects or projects that take a longer time to generate benefits. We were the first economists in the country to introduce and advocate this concept, raising it in a 2017 article.

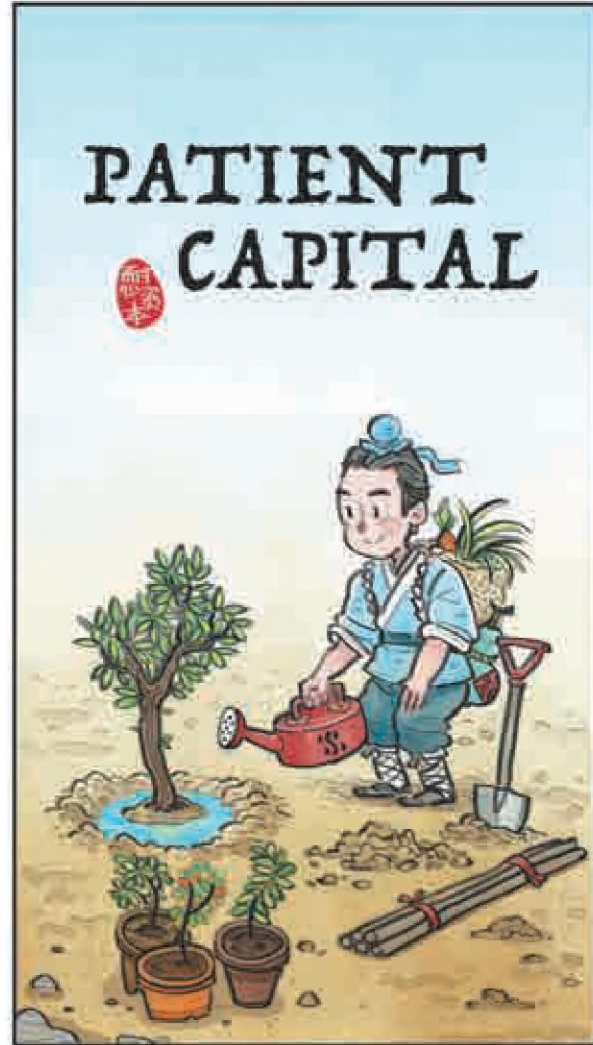
From the perspective of new structural economics, our article pointed out that long-term patient capital investment in infrastructure that addresses and eases growth bottlenecks can increase investment demand over the short term and cope with economic downturns, and can improve the potential and quality of economic growth over the long term. Such investment is akin to "killing two birds with one stone", and is conducive to stabilizing the economy and employment in the short term, and facilitating long-term high-quality development down the road.

In the article, we also pointed out that compared with other countries, China has a relatively high savings rate, a cultural tradition of long-term thinking and abundant sources of patient capital. It will become one of China's comparative advantages to make good use of this patient capital based on our cultural heritage.

Our idea of using patient capital to invest in infrastructure that eliminates bottlenecks in economic growth as a response to the economic downturn caused by crisis shocks is a summary of China's approach and experience in responding to the Asian Financial Crisis in 1998. Affected by the crisis over a quarter century ago, China's exports, investment, economic growth and employment plummeted. The Chinese government had put forward the goal of "guaranteeing an 8-percent GDP growth", issued construction bonds and made large-scale investment in construction of highways at the time to stabilize growth.

As a result, the total length of China's highways increased from 4,800 kilometers in 1997 to 25,100 km in 2002. The country's economic growth quickly recovered to north of 8 percent, and achieved an average annual high-speed growth of 11 percent from 2002 to 2008. As infrastructure bottlenecks were eliminated, the increase in retail prices of goods over the same period remained at a low level of 1.8 percent.

At that time, the mainstream international macroeconomics community was influenced by the "Ricardian Equivalence Theory" and generally opposed "Keynesian"



CAI MENG / CHINA DAILY

infrastructure construction as a response to the economic crisis. They believed that although infrastructure construction increases employment, it also increases government debt, with the public expecting the government to increase taxes in the future to pay off debts; to maintain the same level of consumption in the future, the public would increase savings while reducing consumption.

As a result, the government's investment demand would increase, and public consumption demand would decrease, and aggregate demand would fail to increase. The Ricardian Equivalence Theory advocates, therefore, believe that infrastructure construction, as a countercyclical fiscal policy measure, while increasing government debt, will not help the economy emerge from the crisis.

However, the theory of Ricardian equivalence is based on the implicit premise that the government's active fiscal policy is based on infra-

structure construction featuring "digging holes before filling them", which cannot improve productivity.

What China has done is to build infrastructure to eliminate growth bottlenecks. Such investment can not only stabilize growth and employment, but also boost the economy and fiscal revenue, allowing the government to use the increased tax revenue in the future to repay the debt that was incurred during the infrastructure construction.

Such methods can overcome Ricardian equivalence.

When the financial crisis hit in 2008, Justin Yifu Lin, as the chief economist of the World Bank, advocated the use of infrastructure investment as a measure to cope with the recession caused by the crisis. We are delighted to see that the idea is increasingly gaining support in the global development community. The International Monetary Fund included the chapter — "Is It Time for an Infrastructure Push? The Macroeconomic

Effects of Public Investment" — in its World Economic Outlook, published in October 2014, to recommend the use of infrastructure investment during economic downturns.

Infrastructure projects are characterized by large scale and long cycles, being capital intensive with high sunk costs, which take a long time to complete and generate benefits. The dwindling supply of long-term capital since the 2008 crisis has had profound adverse effects on infrastructure financing, economic growth and financial stability.

In a paper published in Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development in 2017, based on the perspective of new structural economics, we criticized the prevailing neoliberalism for not distinguishing between long-term investment capital and short-term arbitrage capital, which treated capital as homogeneous. The perspective regards long-term development financing of patient capital as capital that is conducive to

national stability and long-term development.

We believe that just as labor is heterogeneous due to different levels of human capital, capital is also heterogeneous, and we propose a distinction between "patient capital" and "non-patient capital". Lenders of patient capital are not interested in short-term arbitrage and are willing to see borrowers achieve higher development in the future, thereby obtaining favorable returns over the long term.

Examples of this thinking include parents investing in their children's education, venture capital investing in innovative projects with potential, entrepreneurs in the real economy making entrepreneurial investments, and capital owners injecting capital into unlisted equity of companies/projects.

Rather than focusing on short-term returns, these investors seek to reap long-term future benefits as their investment projects develop or scale up. Owners of patient capital are similar to equity investors, with

a strong willingness to take risks. They are willing to invest money in the real economy, innovative projects, infrastructure and unlisted companies or unlisted projects for long-term gains.

In this definition, a "patient" period refers to 10 years or more. Who are the providers of patient capital? We consider them to include direct investors (foreign and domestic), entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, State pension funds, sovereign wealth funds (such as the Silk Road Fund), multilateral development banks (such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and New Development Bank), some national development banks, green funds, private infrastructure funds and buyers of long-term government bonds.

When facing a global economic crisis, China has been effective at mobilizing the comparative advantages of patient capital to release infrastructure bottlenecks to achieve a win-win situation. The country has also provided a large number of overseas loans through the Export-Import Bank of China and the China Development Bank to support infrastructure construction in countries and regions involved in the Belt and Road Initiative, and those in Africa and Latin America. These projects can help capital-scarce countries build public assets that address infrastructure bottlenecks. They include industrial parks, environmental protection, green energy and resource development projects, and promote economic growth, increase exports and create jobs.

The new multilateral or regional development banks and funds that emerged after 2015, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the New Development Bank, the Silk Road Fund and other unlisted infrastructure or sovereign wealth funds, are very encouraging, and have injected positive energy and momentum into the global economy.

In recent years, China has attached great importance to new multilateralism and shared Chinese wisdom, Chinese experience and Chinese solutions with other countries around the world, contributing to the global economy. Amid major changes "unseen in a century", only through cooperation can we work together to promote sustainable development and world peace.

The top leadership's advocacy of "strengthening patient capital" is also conducive to leveraging China's cultural endowment of long-term orientation, providing funds for the research and development of both emerging and future industries, the appearance of new quality productive forces, and the rise of green and sustainable development projects, thus contributing to the country's high-quality development.

Justin Yifu Lin is a former chief economist of the World Bank, honorary dean of the National School of Development at Peking University and dean of the Institute of New Structural Economics, PKU. Wang Yan is a senior academic researcher at the Boston University Global Development Policy Center, and a former World Bank senior economist.

The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## A nation supporting renewables, green transition should be commended

## MAIN STREET

By Lei Hou

Since April, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Secretary of State Antony Blinken have during their visits to China emphasized the issue of "overcapacity", with the latter also addressing "overcapacity" and "unfair trade practices" in China's renewable energy industry.

China's subsidy policies in this sector have garnered widespread attention. Over the past decade, there has been significant debate even within the Chinese economic community regarding this issue.

Viewed purely from a climate change mitigation perspective, the development of the renewable energy industry has positive externalities and therefore requires policy intervention.

Furthermore, China's industrial

policies have accelerated the development of the renewable energy sector and inspired other countries to enhance their renewable energy policies. In this sense, China should be commended rather than criticized.

Without China's development in the renewable energy sector, the global progress on climate change would be much slower and more costly.

For example, Europe aims to have EVs make up 80 percent of new vehicle sales by 2030 to meet climate change policy goals, yet in 2023 this figure was only 17 percent, compared to over 30 percent in China.

China's new energy vehicle sales rose 33.5 percent year-on-year in April 2024, far outpacing the overall increase in vehicle sales, and the market share of NEVs reached 36 percent.

From a long-term perspective on climate change mitigation, there is far from an overcapacity in renewable energy. In 2023, BYD accounted for just 5 percent of sales among the world's top 10 auto manufacturers,

less than 30 percent of Toyota's sales.

According to the International Renewable Energy Agency, to meet temperature control targets, the world needs to increase 1,000 gigawatts of new renewable power annually, yet the total increase in 2022 was only 300 GW.

Setting aside the moral banner of addressing climate change, are China's subsidies for the renewable energy industry economically sound?

First, China's industrial policy does not provide special treatment to State-owned enterprises; it focuses on rewarding the best performers. Companies like Tesla, BMW, Volkswagen, as well as private firms such as BYD and Nio, have all received support. The entry of EV brands into the European market is not limited to BYD; Tesla, SAICMG, and Dongfeng Yijiete are all foreign companies.

Furthermore, China began to change its subsidy policies 10 years ago. In 2013 and 2018, it shifted from production-based subsidies to consumer-oriented subsidies for

photovoltaic and EV companies, and the intensity of these subsidies has also decreased. After the reduction in subsidies, the competitiveness of Chinese companies continued to rise rapidly. In the photovoltaic sector, the proportion of global patent applications filed by Chinese companies increased from 45 percent in 2011 to over 90 percent in 2023.

China's industrial policy in the renewable energy sector also includes promoting infrastructure development.

By the end of 2023, China had built a total of 8.6 million charging facilities, ranking first in the world, and gradually forming a virtuous cycle in which electric vehicles and charging infrastructure promote each other.

The central government has set a target to build a charging facility network to meet the needs of over 20 million electric vehicles by 2025. At the provincial and city level, various policies have also been introduced. In recent years, China's investment in charging infrastruc-

ture has reached tens of billions of yuan. Additionally, the government has promoted the establishment of a standardized charging interface.

China has a large market. Roughly 85 percent of China's new energy vehicles were sold domestically in the first quarter of 2024. Clearly, China's industrial policy has effectively utilized economies of scale, stimulated technological innovation by enterprises, and led to more intense market competition.

According to the International Renewable Energy Agency, China has the lowest average cost of photovoltaic power generation globally. Moreover, Chinese companies have not exploited their cost advantage; for example, BYD's Atto3 is sold in Europe for between 38,000 euros (\$40,724) and 39,000 euros, far higher than its domestic price.

From the perspective of creative destruction, traditional automakers need greater courage for self-transformation, while emerging EV companies are the drivers of this change.

If not for the disruption caused by China's EV companies, would the

auto industry's greening process be faster than it is today? The answer is no.

Globally, the renewable energy industry still has vast room for development and a long-term substantial demand gap remains. If countries strengthen the protection of their own industries and fragment the global renewable energy supply chain, a race to the bottom will ensue. We should aim for a race to the top, jointly accelerating the process of addressing climate change.

A paper published by Helveston et al (2022) in Nature shows that international cooperation just in the photovoltaic industry chain alone would save the United States \$24 billion, Germany \$7 billion, and China \$36 billion, compared to a decoupling scenario. To tackle the challenges of climate change, nations should enhance their cooperation.

The writer is deputy head of the international development division at the Institute of World Economics and Politics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## West's attempts to smear Beijing as Moscow's accomplice smell fishy

The fighting between Russian and Ukrainian forces has been grueling, and increasingly so, for both belligerents. A complete victory on the battlefield is no doubt the desired outcome of both. But achieving it will be taxing, as it is a remote possibility. More devastating punishment is the more likely outcome for both as the fighting drags on.

As many have bluntly said, a Russian defeat on the battlefield would probably erase it permanently from the roster of world powers; while a defeat for Ukraine might risk the country being abandoned by the West. As a sense of uncertainty grows in Moscow and Kyiv as well as among international stakeholders, it is only natural for both sides to accept that a negotiated end is in their best interests. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky both see it.

Zelensky personally proposed the global peace conference that just concluded in Switzerland this past weekend. While Putin again expressed his readiness to negotiate an end to the conflict ahead of the scores of participating world leaders meeting in Geneva.

Yet their respective conditions seem too divergent for any meaningful progress toward peace. As the Russian leader stated on Friday, his include Kyiv ceding territories including Crimea and those under Russian control now, staying nonnuclear and restricting its military, and forsaking its NATO ambitions. But those demands are obviously too much from Kyiv's perspective. Zelensky's demands are that Moscow withdraw its troops and return the territories it now controls, including Crimea, and compensate Ukraine for the damages it has suffered as a result of Russia's "special military operation".

But for all the Western criticism Beijing has endured so far regarding its unwaveringly principled approach to the conflict, Beijing is correct in holding firm to the position that any peace initiative that excludes Moscow will get nowhere. This was apparent at the just-concluded peace conference in Geneva. Beyond talk about such common concerns as nuclear safety, humanitarian aid and food security, little was accomplished regarding ending the hostilities.

For its proposal that it is necessary for Moscow to be included in the process, Beijing has been a regular target of Western attacks. Beijing has repeatedly underscored the impossibility of a negotiated end to the conflict without the latter's meaningful participation. That was precisely why the meeting in Geneva turned out to be more symbolic than substantive.

But in addition to excluding Russia, major Western countries have sought to incriminate China as an accomplice of what they decry as Russian aggression. Without providing a shred of evidence, both US President Joe Biden and the G7 leaders' statement accused Beijing of supporting Russia, even as all the while they are providing military assistance to Ukraine.

While reiterating their support for Ukraine for as long as it takes, and their shared commitment to tighten the screw on Russia, they pledged to penalize China for its alleged role in propping up Russia's military behind the scenes. "China does not supply weapons, but the ability to produce those weapons and the technology available to do it," Biden alleged on Thursday. "So it is, in fact, helping Russia." And the G7 statement vowed measures "against actors in China and third countries that materially support Russia's war machine..."

Such allegations contraindicate their working in good faith with Beijing to secure a settlement to the crisis. But then it is questionable whether they truly seek an end to the crisis rather than imposing their long-desired vision of Russia's position and role in the European order on Moscow. Excluded from being an accepted autonomous member of post-Soviet European economic integration except as a begrudged energy supplier, what is on the table now is essentially that Russia become a vassal state of the United States.

A meaningful peace process, as Beijing has repeatedly pointed out, must be centered on constructive engagement with Moscow and its security needs. But that is not music to Western ears preoccupied with bringing Moscow to its knees rather than ending the bloodshed as soon as possible.

## Canberra taking steps in the right direction

Premier Li Qiang's ongoing visit to Australia, which started on Saturday following his successful visit to New Zealand, looks set to further strengthen Beijing and the Anthony Albanese government's consensus that maintaining the healthy development of bilateral ties serves the two countries' common interests.

In 2014, the two countries established a comprehensive strategic partnership, and mutually beneficial and win-win cooperation became the general theme of bilateral relations after that until the previous Scott Morrison government, under the sway of Washington, took a confrontational approach to relations. Australian Prime Minister Albanese's successful visit to China last year helped return bilateral ties to the right track, and practical cooperation is again the focus of China-Australia relations.

The face-to-face exchanges between Li, who is making the first visit by a Chinese premier to Australia since 2017, and Australian political and business leaders and representatives from different sectors of the Australian society over issues of common concern provide a good opportunity for the two sides to deepen their mutual understanding and explore ways to tap the full potential of their economic and trade cooperation.

The fast recovering curve of Sino-Australian ties over the past two years should prompt both Beijing and Canberra to foster a more mature, stable and fruitful partnership that is resistant to outside interference. Canberra has already demonstrated that it is not willing to unreservedly follow Washington's lead having expressed critical views on the US' tariff attack on Chinese goods and export restrictions targeting Chinese technology development.

If Canberra and Beijing can build greater mutual trust and treat each other's concerns with respect, there is no reason why they can't overcome misconceptions and misperceptions about each other's actions and intentions.

The op-ed by Albanese, "Working productively with China will benefit everyone in the region", published by The Australian three days prior to Li's visit, shows clearly Canberra's willingness to meet Beijing halfway in that direction.

In the article, the Australian leader said Li's visit represents "another step forward in the patient, calibrated and deliberate efforts of our Government to rebuild dialogue with China and stabilise the relationship between our nations".

Although he said that "Australia's approach has been consistent and clear: co-operate with China where we can, disagree where we must and engage in our national interest", which sounds familiar to Beijing as Washington has said a similar thing, it should be noted that the Albanese government has replaced competition and confrontation with disagreement and engagement.

That is similar to China's equally "consistent and clear" principle in handling relations with all countries, including Australia and the US, of seeking common ground while reserving differences.

The confidence the Australian leader has displayed in the article that Canberra can balance relations with Beijing and Washington, and the progress his government has made in this regard should serve as an example to others that it doesn't have to be an either-or choice as Washington proposes. There is always broad space for countries to develop ties with both China and the US.

Upholding strategic autonomy and focusing on common interests while managing differences, as Australia is doing, is the best way for countries to protect their own interests and get along with others. In the process, it is always better to work on differences by dealing with each other directly through dialogue. As Albanese observed in his article: "In a world of increasing complexity, the true measure of foreign policy strength is the ability to effectively manage differences, not manufacture confrontations. That's why as well as reminding ourselves of the benefits we have been able to secure through dialogue we must always remember the potentially devastating cost of the alternative."

Issuing threats and ultimatums, as the Australian leader indicated, is an easy road to take, but it doesn't go very far. It is better to take the road that goes the farthest, even if that does require more effort.

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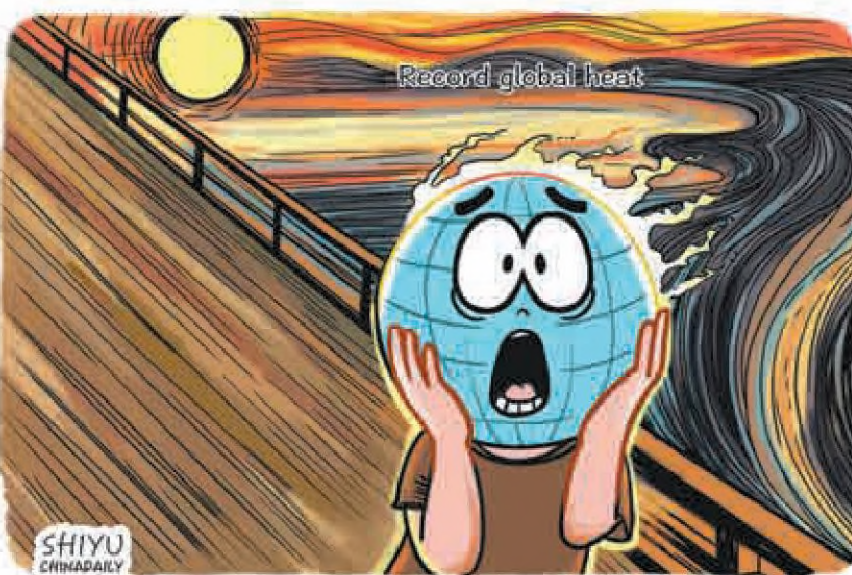
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Shi Yu



## Opinion Line

## 'People's Forum' golden signboard for inevitability of reunification

On Saturday, the 16th Straits Forum, with the theme of "Expanding Civil Exchanges, Deepening Integrated Development", convened in Xiamen, Fujian province. People from all walks of life across the Taiwan Strait gathered in the city to discuss integration.

Each year the forum reflects the hot topics in cross-strait exchanges and cooperation and considers the practical needs of Taiwan compatriots, which help it to uphold its brand as the "People's Forum".

For example, the forum has facilitated the implementation of a batch of cross-strait integrated development projects, promoting the development of integrated cross-strait development demonstration zones to a deeper level. It has also introduced a series of measures such as opening a convenient service area for Taiwan compatriots, supporting Taiwan compatriots and enterprises in investing and starting businesses on the mainland. The forum has also created job opportunities on

the mainland for Taiwan youths.

These policies and measures aimed at facilitating exchanges, promoting integration, and enhancing well-being have yielded fruitful results for the Straits Forum over the past 16 years. Regardless of how the situation across the Taiwan Strait changes, the mainland has always been steadfast in promoting people-to-people exchanges and cooperation across the Strait.

Despite the dangerous signals of seeking Taiwan "independence" released by the Lai Ching-te authorities and their intensified obstruction and restrictions on cross-strait exchanges, about 7,000 representatives of Taiwan political parties, industry representatives, community leaders, and guests from all sectors actively responded and participated in this year's forum, unanimously expressing that "only through exchanges can there be peace and development". This shows that the belief that "a good cross-strait relationship benefits Taiwan" has already taken

root in people's hearts.

More and more Taiwan compatriots realize that only through exchanges, cooperation, and mutual understanding can tensions be eased, and they hope to continue to use the Straits Forum to gain a deeper understanding of the mainland, seize opportunities to pursue and realize their dreams on the mainland, and jointly promote cross-strait integrated development. The strong public opinion foundation will surely drive a more comprehensive and extensive wave of cross-strait exchanges and cooperation, and any obstruction will be futile.

It is believed that with the continuous deepening of exchanges and integration, more Taiwan compatriots will join mainland compatriots in firmly defending the common home of the Chinese nation. With the concerted efforts of compatriots across the Strait, the reunification of the island with the motherland will surely be achieved.

— CHINA MEDIA GROUP

## Universities' admission procedures must be followed

Jiang Ping, a 17-year-old girl hailing from the lesser-known Lianshui Secondary Vocational School in Jiangsu province, has emerged as the sole vocational school student among 801 participants worldwide to make it to the finals of the 2024 Alibaba Global Math Competition, securing 12th position.

In an interview, Jiang's math teacher revealed that her dream is to enroll in Zhejiang University, which has sparked discussions on social media networks about whether the university will consider admitting her.

Despite the positive public sentiment favoring Jiang's admission,

universities have their own regulations and procedures for admitting students through exceptional means. Such admissions are considered professional educational affairs and are contingent on the students with exceptional abilities meeting certain criteria for special admissions.

The competition Jiang participated in, though an influential one organized by an enterprise, is not among the five nationally recognized academic competitions that are clearly set as criteria for university admission.

Nonetheless, this competition has undoubtedly showcased Jiang's math-

ematical talent, raising the question of how such exceptional talents like her can be better nurtured.

Jiang is interested in maths. Thus Jiang can leverage her interest to decide whether to pursue mathematics as a career path — if she aims to further her studies at Zhejiang University or other prestigious institution, she should ensure she can meet their admissions criteria. Jiang can consider other colleges that have already shown their interest in issuing an offer to her where she can prepare for further education in her dream university in the future.

— BEIJING NEWS

## What They Say

## Latest advance energizes nuclear fusion efforts

Scientists at China's large-scale tokamak facility for controlled nuclear fusion, Huanliu-3, have made a significant breakthrough with the development of an advanced magnetic field structure, according to the China National Nuclear Corporation.

The magnetic field structure marks an important advance in the operational capabilities of magnetic confinement nuclear fusion devices. It requires a temperature of 100 million degrees Centigrade or higher to realize nuclear fusion, at which temperature the materials have all become plasma and all known physical containers melt. So only a strong magnetic field can be used to contain the plasma. The HL-3 tokamak is currently the nation's largest facility with the highest design parameters.

The magnetic field structure achieved a successful high-con-

finement operation under a plasma current of 1 million amperes last August. Now, 10 months after that milestone, the research teams at China Huanliu-3 have made further achievements in the same technological direction, which not only pushes China's technology further ahead, but also means progress for the whole of humankind considering that the team signed an agreement with the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor based in Cadarache, France in December 2023, opening the facility to the whole world and inviting global experts to cooperate for a joint solution to the world's energy problem.

In a fusion process, two or more atomic nuclei combine to form fewer heavier ones, while releasing energy. Fusion reactors generally use heavy hydrogen isotopes such as deuterium. Thanks to the high coefficient, it would need only a few

hundred kilograms of deuterium to generate enough power for the whole of mankind's use. The Earth has so rich a deuterium reserve that it can only be shown in scientific notation.

As early as the 1950s when mankind's first H-bomb exploded, there were predictions that it would take 50 years for nuclear fusion, which is the main reaction in the H-bomb explosion process, to be controllable for civilian use providing an ultimate solution to mankind's need for energy.

Now, more than 70 years have passed and some scientists predict it might need to take another 50 years, which is the famous "50-year dilemma" in the nuclear power sector.

With the incessant efforts of Chinese scientists and their cooperation with global counterparts, the dilemma will hopefully be realized well before that 50-year deadline.

— ZHANG ZHOXIANG, CHINA DAILY

## COMMENT



China and the World Roundtable | China's Regional Development

Editor's note: China has successfully implemented its coordinated regional development strategy, in order to boost sustainable economic growth and high-quality development. Three experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

Jiang Yongmu

## Western region seeks quality growth

China's western region has high potential to realize high-quality development despite facing challenges in achieving Chinese-style modernization. At a symposium in Chongqing on how to boost the development of the western region in the new era on April 23, the top leader outlined a new development blueprint for the western region with "six adherences".

To form a new pattern of high-quality development, it is imperative to understand three factors — new pattern of high-quality development, new momentum of greater protection and openness, and new focus on regional coordinated development — and implement targeted measures in key areas.



The author is professor and dean of the School of Economics at Sichuan University.

As the western region advances toward achieving high-quality development, it seeks to forge a path of green, innovation-driven development. This approach is different from the previous one, which emphasized growth indicators, in that it prioritizes sustainable

production activities, improvement of the natural environment and betterment of people's livelihoods.

Its centerpiece is to cultivate and develop industries that leverage the unique features of western China and establish an organic link between traditional and emerging industries. Within the strategic framework, the principle of coordinated development and security has been elevated to a new level, particularly in the development policy for the energy sector.

The new development policy will not only better conserve the ecology but also improve internal and external connectivity. By striking the right balance between economic development and ecological conservation, the western region has embarked on a distinctive path of high-quality development, facilitated by high-quality opening-up.

The essence of regional coordinated development is not to require regions to move forward at the same pace, but to advance together while balancing development and environmental protection.

As such, the western region should reinforce infrastructure construction, improve connectivity among cities in the region, and strive to form city clusters with strong competitiveness. There is also a need to foster coordinated development among the eastern, central and western regions by establishing a complementary regional development pattern through multi-dimensional and multilevel interactive cooperation.

The central and western regions, on their part, should deepen their partnership and build stronger regional cooperation mechanisms, so as to share the market, technological and information resources, and achieve common development. Promoting new quality productive forces keeping in mind the local conditions is key to unleashing the regional development potential and building advantageous industrial clusters.

The western region faces various challenges — it has a relatively weak economic foundation and a not-so-advanced industrial structure. So it should focus on utilizing local resources and advantages, use innovation to transform traditional industries, and chart a new high-quality development path based on regional features,

instead of blindly pursuing fast-paced development of high-tech sectors.

For example, the Sichuan-Chongqing region can take advantage of its economic and natural resources, and talents to develop high-growth industries such as equipment manufacturing, new energy, new materials and biomedicine, and leverage the geographical advantages of the Chengdu-Chongqing economic circle to build a science and technology corridor, boost science and technology exchanges, and realize industrial upgrading.

The Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, on the other hand, can capitalize on its abundant natural resources and unique geographical location to develop industries such as modern agriculture, clean energy and cultural tourism. By adopting such a development model, different areas of the western region can leverage their own advantages and form a new regional development pattern marked by complementary advantages.

The new development principle based on innovation, coordination, openness and sharing should serve as a guide for the western region's development. In fact, by promoting greater protection and openness, the new policy highlights the importance of

green development.

As a provider of national ecological security, the western region must prioritize environmental protection and ecological conservation, and work out construction plans in a way that causes minimum damage to the environment and ecology. A series of policy and measures, such as the construction of a park city in Chengdu, Sichuan province, the development of clean energy in Qinghai province, and the natural ecology conservation plan in Gansu province, indicates the western region is exploring an innovation-driven green development path.

The open development concept requires the western region to leverage its geographical advantages brought about by the Belt and Road Initiative to promote high-quality opening-up, and further integrate with the global economic and trade networks.

Against this backdrop, the emergence of inland open frontiers, such as the Xi'an International Port Area and Lanzhou New Area Comprehensive Bonded Zone, marks the gradual transformation of the western region into a crucial bridge connecting the internal and external markets, and redefines the inland region's important role in global competition and cooperation.

Moreover, the construction of railway corridors, such as the China-Europe Railway Express which departs from Chengdu and Lanzhou, has established a vital trade artery connecting Asia and Europe. These corridors have also opened up new markets for traditional industries in the western region, including steel, cement and coal.

The success of the western region's development policy in the new era depends on two factors: government policy support and reform and innovation. An efficient policy support system is urgently needed to further improve connectivity and smoothen operations throughout the process, from top-level planning to local implementation. And while specific actions need to be taken to optimize the western region's business environment, boost market vitality and stimulate social creativity, efforts must be made to provide adequate funding and tax incentives for the development of advantageous industries in the region.

The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Mei Xinyu

## Northeast China eyeing economic renaissance

In the intricate tapestry of global geopolitics and economic development, Northeast China emerges as a region poised to capitalize on its third major development opportunity in modern times. Weathering waves of changes, northeastern China has shown both resilience and adaptability, with each of its transition creating new prospects for advancement.

But unlike in the past, this current moment holds distinct promise, underpinned by two pivotal shifts: China's escalated stature in the global economic and political landscape and its ascendancy as a champion of free trade across the world.

Northeast China's historical trajectory has been marked by transformative waves of development. The first wave began with the comprehensive opening up of the region during the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), culminating in the region's formal demarcation into provinces in 1907. This era propelled the northeastern region's initial ascent under China's economic and political framework, fostering advancements across various sectors. And the second wave unfolded with the founding of the People's Republic of China and its ambitious industrialization drive, exemplified by concentrated industrial projects during the "First Five-Year Plan (1953-57)".

But the two waves emerged against the backdrop of China's peripheral status in the global economic hierarchy, constraining the region's growth potential.

Today, Northeast China stands on the brink of a new epoch, fueled by China's meteoric rise to global prominence. The third wave of development is characterized



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by China's role as a linchpin of the global economy, reshaping regional growth dynamics and opportunities. Although Northeast China's economic status may have been lowered somewhat, China's ascension in the global arena presents the region with an unprecedented opportunity to transform itself and advance with the times. This paradigm shift offers the northeastern region a unique opportunity to leverage its resources, expertise and strategic positioning to facilitate its economic revitalization.

Central to the northeast region's prospects is China's evolving role as a champion of free trade on the global stage. In an era where Western powers have resorted to protectionism and isolationism, China has emerged as a beacon of openness and cooperation, advocating global economic integration.

China's economic philosophy not only distinguishes it from its Western counterparts but also positions the northeastern region at the forefront of a burgeoning era of international trade and investment. By aligning regional strategies with China's commitment to open up markets and deepen collaboration, the northeastern region can unlock the full potential of this transformative moment, fostering economic dynamism and prosperity.

The impact of China's ascent as a global economic power extends far beyond the northeastern region. As China assumes a central role in shaping the global economy, it presents neighboring countries with unparalleled opportunities for collaboration and growth. This reorientation of economic ties underscores the northeast region's strategic significance as a gateway to the vast and booming Chinese market. By forging closer economic partnerships and leveraging its unique advantages, the northeastern region can position itself as an important hub for trade, investment and innovation in the wider Northeast Asian region.

Crucial to Northeast China's success in seizing this development opportunity is a strategic approach to economic development and openness. As China adheres to its promise of high-level opening-up, the northeastern region must capitalize on this momentum. By promoting innovations, fostering entrepreneurship, and improving connectivity with global markets, the northeastern region can open up new avenues to sustainable growth and prosperity.

Moreover, by leveraging its strengths in key industries such as manufacturing, agriculture and technology, Northeast China can carve a niche as a leading engine of economic development in the region. At the heart of Northeast China's transformation lies a commitment to inclusive growth and shared prosperity. Prioritizing policies that promote social equity, environmental sustainability, and inclusive development will ensure that the benefits of economic growth are distributed equitably across society.

Furthermore, by fostering collaboration with local communities, civil society organizations and international partners can build a resilient and inclusive economy that allows everyone to thrive in the new era of opportunity.

In short, Northeast China stands at a historic crossroad, ready to seize the third wave of development opportunity. As China grows as a global economic leader and advocate for free trade, the northeastern region must rise to the occasion by harnessing its resources, talents and ingenuity to foster a future of prosperity and progress.

By embracing openness, promoting innovations, and following an inclusive development policy, China's northeastern region can chart a course toward a brighter tomorrow, when economic development would serve as a catalyst for social advancement, environmental stewardship and regional cooperation. Together, let us embark on this journey of transformation and renewal, by helping unlock the full potential of Northeast China as a growth center in the new era of opportunity.

The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Ouyang Hongbing

## The heartland poised for a historic leap

The approval of the "Policy and Measures for Accelerating the Rise of the Central Region in the New Era" by the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee on May 27 was a critical strategic move to ensure balanced high-quality development. The approval came in the wake of President Xi Jinping's address in March in Changsha, Hunan province, in which he underscored the need to intensify the high-quality development of the central region.

The new policy and measures not only embrace the essence of Xi's directive but also chart a new course for the central region's development, in order to increase the socioeconomic opportunities in China's six central provinces. The central region has a distinctive advantage due to its geographical location. With a large population and immense market potential, coupled with a robust scientific and technological foundation, the region is a vital corridor for integrated inland and maritime development, and is thus poised to become a powerhouse of new industrialization, urbanization, informatization and agricultural modernization.

Apart from being essential to expanding domestic demand and facilitating high-quality reform and opening-up, the central region plays a strategic role in smoothing domestic economic circulation and enhancing China's new economic development landscape.

The central region is not only strategically located along the Yangtze River Economic Belt and the Yellow River Ecological Corridor but also serves as the backbone of the Yangtze River Eco-



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nomie Belt. Accelerating the collaborative development of the six central provinces and strengthening the Yangtze River Economic Belt are essential for the coordinated growth of the entire region.

Additionally, the central region's connectivity with the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region to the north, the Yangtze River Delta region to the east and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area to the south allows it to absorb the technological, industrial and financial spillovers from these economic hubs. That in turn will boost its overall strength and competitiveness, creating a synergistic effect that aligns regional development strategies with national priorities.

The policy and measures are part of the government's development strategy for the central region, which will facilitate the rise of the region. The measures emphasize the importance of tailoring the new quality productive forces to local conditions, accelerating modern industrial systems, and strengthening the real economy. These will help the central region to leverage its industrial, technological and human resource advantages to foster high-quality productivity.

As for the policy, it highlights the need to build a modern industrial system supported by advanced manufacturing, driven by technological

innovation and underpinned by sustainable development.

Strengthening basic research in technology is a key part of the measures; and it will help Central China become a leader in industrial innovation through scientific advancement. The region is well-positioned to contribute significantly to China's realization of self-reliance in high-tech by addressing key and urgent frontier issues and exploring inter-provincial research cooperation. By consolidating the research efforts of different regions and making technological breakthroughs, the central region can help apply scientific achievements to industry so as to develop new quality productive forces and fuel high-quality development.

The policy also emphasizes the importance of ecological protection, and green, low-carbon development, which is integral to building a "beautiful central region". It involves harmonizing human and natural coexistence, a critical element of the region's strategic implementation. Improving the environmental landscape and embracing a green development model are not only strategic priorities but also necessary to ensure a sustainable future for the region.

The policy and measures will help create a wealth of opportunities for Central China. By leveraging its manufacturing prowess and realizing its new productivity potential, the region can expedite its digital transformation and bolster its core competitiveness. Industries such as equipment manufacturing, materials industry, optoelectronics, new energy and smart vehicles and green low-carbon technologies stand to benefit immensely from the

development of the region. More importantly, the region's strong technological base in fields such as intelligent manufacturing, AI, supercomputing, quantum computing, new materials and biopharmaceuticals should be leveraged to foster innovation-driven growth.

Besides, the central region's commitment to ecological protection and green development will help create beautiful cities and an ecologically balanced countryside, serving as a national model for river and lake protection.

The top leader's strategic vision for the development of Central China and the newly introduced policy and measures will steer the region toward long-term prosperity. Judging by the pace of its development, the central region is set to outpace national average growth, capitalizing on its industrial and technological advantages to create exemplars of new quality productive forces. This will facilitate the establishment of a modern industrial system led by advanced manufacturing, strengthen the unified domestic market, and drive domestic circulation.

Cities such as Zhengzhou, Wuhan, Changsha and Hefei are expected to enter the ranks of new first-tier cities, attracting significant investment and talents, and creating more opportunities. Through continuous reform and opening-up, the central region will transform itself into a vibrant socioeconomic hub, laying the foundation for China's modernization and high-quality development, and emerging as a pillar of the country's high-quality economic growth.

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## GLOBAL VIEWS

GRZEGORZ W. KOLODKO

## BRIdging a divide

Instead of taking sides in the conflict between China and the US or engaging in a trade war, Poland should try and mediate between the West and the East

The China-Europe freight rail service, backed by the Belt and Road Initiative, recently reached a significant milestone by completing its 90,000th trip. This accomplishment highlights its vital role in stabilizing global supply chains and promoting economic growth along its route.

Over the past decade, the BRI has gone beyond expectations. It has attracted participation from more than 150 countries and over 30 international organizations. The initiative has driven nearly 1 trillion dollars in investments,

led to cooperative projects, created job opportunities in partner countries, and significantly contributed to lifting thousands of people out of poverty.

Now, the BRI is not only the largest infrastructure investment project in the world, but also a tool for enhancing China's international standing and influence, particularly in the Global South.

I have always believed that the BRI is never purely an act of charity. However, it often aids development in the countries where China invests by offering soft loans. There are elements of China's development assistance that support countries that are lagging behind, such as Bangladesh and Tanzania.

Notably, the BRI, with its emphasis on connectivity, poverty reduction and job creation, has been contributing significantly to several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The BRI and other global initiatives such as the Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative and Global Civilization Initiative should be recognized as China's contributions toward meeting global development goals. If all nations were as responsible and accountable as China, we could have achieved the SDGs set by the United Nations from 2015 onward. Unfortunately, none of the 17 UN goals have been fully met. For example, one goal is to eradicate extreme poverty, which China has already achieved.

Some Western countries are becoming increasingly nervous about China's expanding influence, prompting them to compete more aggressively. This competition has led to initiatives such as the Biden administration's infrastructure development projects under the framework of the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment and the European Union's "Global Gateway" project. These efforts are not acts of charity, nor are they forms of imperialistic exploitation; rather, they are driven by political and

economic considerations.

Undoubtedly, there is competition between the BRI and other projects. This competition is a beneficial side effect. It has already occurred, is ongoing, and will likely continue in the future. In my view, this is a positive development, as it fosters progress in lagging countries and helps

many people escape poverty.

To some extent, EU leaders and Brussels' bureaucrats lack a deep understanding of the true nature of the BRI. Rather than fostering Sino-skepticism or discouraging Eastern European countries from accepting Chinese loans and investments, the EU and Beijing should consider establishing a joint

working commission. This body could integrate potential Chinese investments under the BRI framework with EU co-financed infrastructure projects. Instead of making hostile competitions, I would suggest pragmatic cooperation: you are from Beijing, we are from the EU, let us discuss what we can do together for the sake of infrastructure

development. China says, I would like to build this railroad. The EU says OK, but do not touch this airport, because that is what we want to invest in. Such an approach will result in two investments instead of one. Currently, there is a lack of such coordination, which is an area where the BRI should strive to improve in the future.

Therefore, the next step of the BRI should involve coordinating with other initiatives, such as those of the United States, the EU and smaller programs of countries such as Japan or Australia. This marks a new chapter for the BRI, where competition and cooperation intersect. Understanding the intentions of other initiatives and striving for compatibility rather than competition is crucial, with a focus on benefiting the people in the countries involved.

Another aspect of improving the BRI can be in the arena of social and environmental by-effects of the Chinese co-financed projects. This includes considerations such as inclusivity, addressing income inequality, and protecting the natural environment. China should not provide lending for any projects if there is no sound guarantee that the countries will be able to serve the debt in a sensible, sustainable way.

Poland should play a bigger role in mediating between the West and the East. Rather than viewing the world as being divided between opposing factions led by the US and China/Russia, I believe in a more nuanced perspective. I see the world as consisting of two interconnected parts: the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian regions, with the EU belonging to both. Poland, as a member of the EU and NATO, with its rich culture, history, and security concerns, is an integral part of the Euro-Atlantic community. Simultaneously, Poland also shares ties with Eurasia.

Hence, Poland should refrain from taking sides in the conflict between China and the US or engaging in the trade war. Instead, Poland should adopt a more proactive approach diplomatically and politically to foster moderation and pragmatism in relations between the West and the East.

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WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

JAMES LAURENCESON

## Best foot forward

Stabilization of Australia-China relations has already shown its resilience and latent strength

There is a prominent view in the Australian commentariat that bilateral ties between Australia and China are fragile. Or put more dimly, the differences in political systems and strategic preferences between Canberra and Beijing mean that "stabilization" is simply "not possible".

According to this view, the bilateral relationship's dysfunction of 2020-22 was not an aberration. Rather, it is now the "new normal".

Yet it's worth remembering that while the state of official ties has experienced ups and downs since the diplomatic relationship was established in 1972, never had it sank as low as it did during the last two years of the Scott Morrison government.

Under the Anthony Albanese government, Australia-China relations have been on a positive trajectory, albeit a cautious one, for more than two years now.

On Sunday, Chinese Premier Li Qiang arrived in Australia. His visit is a reciprocal one, following Prime Minister Albanese's trip to China last November.

Both are the first leaders to visit in more than seven years.

These visits point to a future in which both sides continue to recognize their differences but agree to manage them with calm and professional diplomacy so that the benefits from cooperation in areas of mutual interest can continue.

Since Prime Minister Albanese extended an invitation for a Chinese leadership visit, neither side would pretend that bilateral relations have been smooth sailing.

Last November, for example, the Australian government described actions by the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy in the East China Sea as "unsafe and unprofessional". The same words were used after an Australian Navy helicopter encounter with a PLA Air Force fighter plane over the Yellow Sea last month.

The Chinese government sharply rejected these comments, warning Canberra against making "rude and irresponsible accusations".

Yet beyond plainly stating their differing positions, in none of these incidents have Canberra or Beijing sought to escalate their responses or use them to prosecute a domestic political agenda.

Following confirmation that Premier Li would have stops in Canberra, Adelaide and Perth, Prime Minister Albanese described the visit as "another important step in stabilizing our relationship with China".

Defence Minister Richard Marles said that Premier Li's visit was "very much welcome".

Peter Dutton, the leader of the Opposition, remarked that he, too, would "very much welcome" Premier Li's visit, adding that his intention was to "build the relationship with China" and that this would be "a very important part of the manifesto that we (the Opposition) will take to the next election".

Asked whether he was "pro-panda" like Albanese, Dutton responded that he was "pro-China and the relationship that we have with them".

All of this is not to say, of course, that a new rupture in the relationship is impossible, or that Australia's elites and general public are unwaveringly upbeat about ties with China.

With the two countries' militaries regularly rubbing up against each other, it is not difficult to imagine a scenario, perhaps sparked by an accidental incident, that might quickly become difficult to contain.

Still, what the balance of evidence points to is that the "new normal" both sides are settling into is not, in fact, without some resilience.

Looking ahead, Canberra and Beijing will have their own challenges to manage.

The Albanese government faces domestic interest groups opposed to its current policy course.

Since winning the May 2022 election, a coalition of "national security cowboys" have become increasingly vocal, berating the government's goal of "stabilization" as a "fraud or at least a furphy" and of being "deeply damaging to our national interests".

The key political point for the government to grasp is that, while noisy, the views of Australia's China hawks do not represent the mainstream of public opinion.

Polling released last week by the Australia-China Relations Institute at the University of Technology Sydney shows that nearly two-thirds of Australians express concerns about the relationship with China. But nearly the same proportion contend that Australia should try to build strong ties with China, assessing that the relationship also delivers significant benefits and that areas of differences are best managed through deepening engagement.

Only a small minority (12 percent) believed that Australia could not enjoy a good relationship with both China and the United States at the same time.

The Albanese government also received a net positive approval rating for its management of China relations, a reversal of the Morrison government's performance in 2021 and 2022.

Beijing can play a constructive role, too. The more consistently restrained its foreign policy behavior, and the quicker that all the trade restrictions imposed in 2020 are removed, the more inclined the Australian public will be to look positively on bilateral ties.

And both sides have an ongoing responsibility to rebut lazy analysis, or at the very least not promote it.

It would be useful, for example, if Beijing made clear to the Chinese public that Canberra does not always just follow Washington in its foreign policy decisions.

For example, when the Donald Trump administration unilaterally imposed additional tariffs on Chinese goods in 2018, Australia's then Trade Minister Simon



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

Birmingham immediately put on the record that Canberra did not support the move.

In a similar vein, when the Joe Biden administration imposed export controls restricting China's access to advanced semiconductors in 2022, Trade Minister Don Farrell described them as "draconian".

Meanwhile, over the past year Australia and China have resolved three of their trade disputes under the auspices of the World Trade Organization.

The Albanese government has also reiterated that it has no plans to follow the US in forcing the sale of TikTok, owned by Chinese software company ByteDance.

The second half of 2024 contains two

important 10-year anniversaries: the signing of the China-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and the successful conclusion of negotiations for the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement.

If the diplomatic approach of the past two years is maintained, there is no reason why these anniversaries cannot be celebrated, and the bilateral relationship put on an even firmer footing than it is today.

The author is director of the Australia-China Relations Institute at the University of Technology Sydney. The author contributed this article to China Daily, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## LIFE

# The art of magic made from leftovers

Shanghai show is largest exhibition of legendary Brazilian designers' work in Asia, **He Qi** reports.



An installation on display at the *Impermanence — 40 Years of Estudio Campana* exhibition in Shanghai from June 8 to Sept 8. **HE QI / CHINA DAILY**

From a chair pieced together out of countless dolls that has been bought by many fashion celebrities; to a chair made of broken wood blocks which inspired the design of the Brazil Pavilion at the 2010 Shanghai World Expo; to another chair made by twining 500 meters of red thread around its frame which is part of the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, behind all these eye-catching pieces are the legendary design duo from Brazil — brothers Humberto and Fernando Campana.

Founded in 1984, Estudio Campana has achieved international recognition for its intriguing furniture design.

In collaboration with the power station of DESIGN at the Power Station of Art, the studio is presenting *Impermanence — 40 Years of Estudio Campana* in Shanghai from June 8 to Sept 8, its first large-scale exhibition in Asia.

Fifty pieces take visitors into the duo's fantasy world, tracing the history of their ideas and creations.

"This is our first large-scale exhibition in Asia, and it is a new challenge for us, as well as a new process of exploring our inner world and inner universe," says Humberto Campana, who designed the exhibition's scenography.

Marco Sammiceli, co-curator of the exhibition and the curator for Design, Fashion, Crafts at the Triennale Milano, says that Estudio Campana has demon-

strated the possibility of connecting decoration and value, function and fiction, culture and nature over its 40-year career.

"The work of the Campana brothers has transformed contemporary design. They were the first to intuit the richness of hybridizing creativity by giving dignity to scraps, waste and less noble materials so that the objects could portray and attest to desires: the ethics of recycling, the dignity of artisan work, the forgotten aesthetics of rural and indigenous Brazil, the madness of colors and shapes in the domestic landscape, the hybridization between production systems and environmental awareness," he adds.

Deeply rooted in Brazilian culture and tradition, the studio's work, which ranges from furniture to architecture, landscaping, fashion, and scenography, carries universal values at its core, such as freedom and human dignity, creating their identity through life experiences.

The pieces have been taken from the permanent collections of cultural institutions such as the Centre Pompidou and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, and MoMA in New York.

After Fernando passed away at the age of 61 in 2022, Humberto was determined to honor his brother's legacy and the projects they undertook together and committed to continuing with plans for the expansion of the activities of the Instituto Campana, and the Estudio Campana.



Humberto Campana

"My relationship with Fernando has always been and continues to be transcendental. Our connection from the moment of his birth until his departure only reinforces the fact that his physical presence was just a brief meeting of souls on this planet, and it is my mission to continue telling our stories and proposing new ways of living life," Humberto Campana says.

To take visitors on their creative journey from childhood to the early stages of their careers, a *Cabinet of Curiosities* contains never-before-displayed personal objects, original drawings, and prototypes.

To provide a nest for the curators' vision, Humberto Campana has designed an alluring structure of artificial stalactites and stalagmites, a reference to Plato's "Allegory of the Cave," where visitors can roam freely and discover the pieces as they materialize from behind organically shaped columns, like a game of hide-and-seek.

"I wanted to combine the curators' work with a child-like experience, which for me is the most accurate way of explaining how my brother and I trailblazed through life: by taking steps into dark, unknown territories, and shedding light on our explorations and findings. Plato's classic allegory is something we can all relate to, at any age or from any background," Humberto Campana says.

"I like to think we are all born curious, and this scenography is an invitation to embrace estrangement, to step away from your comfort zone, and be rewarded by the courage to let imagination run free in an adventurous search for joy," he adds.

Archival footage is also being shown, including contemporary ballet productions and TV specials, such as the story of *Vermelha*, the ground-breaking duo's first created in 1993 that became the duo's most recognized and best-selling piece.

In parallel, Estudio Campana was commissioned to produce two new pieces: an installation for the museum's atrium, entitled *Astro*, a 12-meter-high hanging tulle sculpture inspired by the images generated by the Hubble Space Telescope.

*Pyro*, another installation made to inaugurate PSA's Sky Garden and created in collaboration with Chinese garden designer Yuan Zheng, is an oversized cluster of bamboo and steel structures fully integrated with graceful landscape design, which resemble star bursts and dot the space that looks onto Shanghai's skyline.

The 2,000-square-meter rooftop was opened at the same time as the exhibition.

"I am honored to have the opportunity to design this installation for the city of Shanghai. I wanted to create a space for celebration and joy with sculptures resembling fireworks, with the beautiful skyline as the backdrop. It is a nod to nature and architecture as being integral to our future on this planet," says Humberto Campana.

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Left: Cangaco Cabinet.  
Right: Cartoon banquet chair.  
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



## If You Go

*Impermanence — 40 Years of Estudio Campana*

June 8 - Sept 8, 2024  
Tuesday-Sunday, 11 am-7 pm (last admission at 6 pm)

Power Station of Art,  
678 Miaojiang Road,  
Huangpu district,  
Shanghai.

## Tackling blindness with focus on vision

"I never expected to not only have my eyes saved, but also continue to save lives in the operating room," said an anesthesiologist surnamed Cheng in Chongqing municipality. After being diagnosed with ocular melanoma, Cheng feared that he would lose his eyes.

The removal of eyeballs is a common method for treating intraocular tumors. However, Wei Wenbin, from the Beijing Tongren Hospital, broke the tradition by pioneering the use of partial excision and radiotherapy in China.

When Wei informed Cheng that both his life and eyes could be saved, he realized that his fate could be altered.

As a leading unit of the national technical guidance group for blindness prevention and a World Health Organization collaboration center for the prevention of blindness, the Beijing Tongren Hospital has made a series of breakthroughs in recent years.

These include offering an easier and more widely applicable treatment for ocular melanoma and advocating for the establishment of an infectious eye disease diagnosis and treatment center in Beijing to address eye diseases in patients with liver disease, HIV/AIDS, and other infectious diseases. It also pioneered the establishment of a diagnosis and treatment platform for intraocular tumors, and a screening center for pediatric eye tumors.

These breakthroughs at the hospital represent China's efforts to prevent and treat blindness on a larger scale.

Since the 1980s, the country has implemented plans for blindness prevention and treatment.

In 2014, it successfully eliminated blinding trachoma, which used to be the leading cause of blindness in the country. After years of efforts, some medical institutions have reached the same level in vision restoration cataract surgery as developed countries.

By the end of 2020, China had achieved a standardized age-specific prevalence of blindness lower than the global average and had made significant progress in eliminating avoidable blindness.

However, it is still among the countries that face the highest number of blind and visually impaired patients. The issue of inadequate and uneven distribution of quality medical resources in ophthalmology persists.

Xu Xun, director of the National Clinical Research Center for Ocular Diseases, highlighted the changing spectrum of eye diseases in China.

There is an increasing severity of eye problems caused by metabolic diseases such as age-related macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, and hypertensive retinopathy, Xu said.

In 2022, retinal fundus diseases were included as key focus diseases in the national eye health plan for the first time. Xu emphasized that a comprehensive and systematic focus on retinal fundus diseases plays a crucial role in raising public awareness and enhancing China's capacity to prevent and treat such diseases.

At present, the number of retinal fundus disease patients in the country is estimated to exceed 40 million, and there are only around 5,000 specialized doctors to cater to their needs.

While the absolute number of specialized doctors in retinal fundus diseases is not insignificant, it remains relatively small compared to the increasing demand from patients, Xu said.

To address the problem, the National Clinical Research Center for Ocular Diseases and related associations have established standardized retinal fundus disease diagnosis and treatment processes and scientific management models for chronic retinal diseases in over 1,000 medical institutions nationwide.

"We need to further promote innovation in retinal fundus disease diagnosis and treatment management models, conduct precise early screening, and enhance comprehensive disease management," Xu said.

XINHUA

## LIFE

## Shining a light on history's heroes

Stage adaptation of novel about unknown wartime revolutionaries to mark CPC's 103rd anniversary, **Chen Nan** reports.

A stage adaptation of Hai Fei's award-winning novel, *The Unknown Heroes*, will make its debut at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing between June 28 and July 1 with four shows in honor of the 103rd anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China, which falls on July 1.

Set against the backdrop of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45), the play follows young revolutionaries in Shanghai fighting for the nation. Liu Zhiyang from the Beijing People's Art Theatre plays the lead role as Xiang Jinxi, a cook who is born into a wealthy family and who secretly works for the CPC. He dreams of going to Yan'an in Shaanxi province, where the CPC Central Committee was based at the time. His life undergoes a series of changes after his family falls apart due to the war, his friends turn against each other, and his romance fails.

Produced by the Shanghai Oriental Art Center and directed by Li Bonan, the play premiered in Shanghai between May 27 and 31, marking the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Shanghai, which fell on May 27.

"I still remember vividly that when I wrote *The Unknown Heroes*, I was writing a script for a TV drama, which was also a spy thriller. Though the stories were quite different, they shared one thing in common, their portrayal of a group of young people who, with determination and ambition, fought for the nation," Hai Fei said at the NCPA on Wednesday. "The scenes I included in both works were inspired by many articles I read about China during the 1930s. During wartime, hundreds of thousands of young people went to Yan'an, the revolutionary base, to fulfill their revolutionary dream. Their faith deeply touches me. For them, Yan'an was more than just the name of a place, it represented their belief."

Working with the Shanghai Oriental Art Center, the writer adapted his award-winning novel, which was released in 2011, into a three-hour play. It not only portrays Shanghai's pivotal role in history but also celebrates the virtues of courage, sacrifice, and the young people's undying pursuit of their dreams.



Creative team members of *The Unknown Heroes* pose during a news conference on Wednesday at the NCPA in Beijing. The group includes director Li Bonan (third from right) and scriptwriter Hai Fei (fourth from left). PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Scenes from the play *The Unknown Heroes*, which follows young revolutionaries in Shanghai fighting for the nation during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45).

For Li, who is known for his stage productions, especially romantic comedies such as *How Can We Fool With Love* and *Mr and Mrs Single*, this was his first time directing a spy thriller.

"I was intrigued by the novel, and when we turned it into a play, we lent the production some of the artistic expression of cinema, in the hopes of attracting a younger audience," Li says.

He says that in recent years, there has been a notable resurgence in patriotic spirit among the youth, characterized by a growing young audience for movies, TV dramas and plays themed around the CPC, such as *The Age of Awakening*, a phenomenal hit in 2021, which depicts pioneering intellectuals and young people in the early 20th century striving to save the nation, and reviews the bumpy

road they traversed to establish the CPC in 1921.

"Unlike those revolutionary martyrs who are portrayed vividly in the TV drama (*The Age of Awakening*), we show ordinary young people who also had courage and determination, and even sacrificed their lives for the country," says the director.

According to Lei Wen, the general manager of the Shanghai Ori-

ental Art Center, the company has produced several plays with revolutionary themes, such as *The Road to Victory*, which was also staged at the NCPA with four sold-out shows in July last year.

With a lineup of young star actors and actresses, such as Selena Li from Hong Kong and Xu Kai-cheng, Lei says that *The Unknown Heroes* also attracted many fans during its Shanghai premiere.

"My grandmother is from Shanghai and lived there since 1937. My mother was also born in Shanghai. My grandmother passed away when I was in elementary school, and I miss her a lot," says Selena Li, who was born in Hong Kong in 1981, and who rose to fame by appearing in Hong Kong TV dramas, such as *The Queen of News*.

Growing up by speaking Cantonese and English, she also learned to speak Mandarin and the Shanghai dialect for her role in *The Unknown Heroes* as a teacher who works as a secret agent for the CPC.

"Drama can bring people closer together. Through the script, the rehearsals, and the performances, it feels like I can travel through time and see my grandmother in Shanghai during that period, experiencing her life firsthand," she says, adding that because of the play, she discovered that her mother could speak the Shanghai dialect.

"One day, I called her and spoke to her in the Shanghai dialect, and she understood what I said, which was a big surprise."

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## Sculptor's work takes Chinese culture to the world

Two bronze sculptures of the great Chinese philosophers Confucius and Lao Tzu were recently unveiled at Batlle Park in Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay.

The artwork, *In Search of Wisdom — Confucius Asking Lao Tzu About the Tao*, consists of two figures standing 7.8 meters tall and weighing 6.6 tons. It is a masterpiece by renowned sculptor Wu Weishan, who is the curator of the National Art Museum of China.

"The sculptures are the tallest and farthest-traveled pieces of all my works abroad," Wu says, emphasizing that the great sages of Chinese history transcend national boundaries, belonging not only to China but also to the world. "I want the world to see more Chinese figures standing tall."

The base of the artwork bears inscriptions narrating the story behind the sculptures in both Chinese and Spanish. The sculptures show Confucius asking Lao Tzu about the Tao, a central idea in Taoism. Both men lived more than two millennia ago.

The Tao represents the fundamental nature and source of the universe, and encompasses the underlying order and flow of all life.

During her visit to China in 2018, then vice-president of Uruguay Lucia Topolansky made a special trip to Wu's studio. Immediately captivated by the sculptures, she told Wu that she hoped his pieces would find a home in Uruguay in the hope of exposing future generations to the historic dialogue between these two momentous figures.

Six years later, the sculptures crossed the ocean and were placed among the trees in Batlle Park.



Left: Montevideo mayor Mauricio Zunino speaks at the unveiling of Wu Weishan's bronze artwork *In Search of Wisdom* on May 29, at the city's Batlle Park. XINHUA Right: Wu's sculptures, standing at 7.8 meters, show Confucius asking Lao Tzu about the Tao. CHEN XI / XINHUA

When they were slowly lowered from a giant crane and finally touched the ground, Wu, who was watching the proceedings remotely, was extremely excited.

"The two sages have left their homeland, but they are not alone. They have kindred spirits all over the world who enjoy hearing them speak about benevolence, the Tao, and virtue," he says.

Over the last 2,000 years, the teachings of Confucius have spread to East Asia, Europe, and the Americas, leaving their mark on the world over.

In the 16th century, Italian missionary Matteo Ricci translated the Confucian classics, known collectively as *The Four Books*, into Latin, and introduced them to Europe, sparking a wave of "Confucianism fever" and providing intellectual support for the European Enlightenment.

Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching* is one of the most widely translated Chinese classics. According to American Sinologist Misha Tadd, it has been translated into 97 languages, and

appeared in 2,052 versions.

"The sculptures tell the story of Confucius and Lao Tzu seeking and sharing wisdom. In reality, this is also the relationship between China and the world," Wu says.

The sculptor explains that China first seeks wisdom from the world, saying that he aspires to demonstrate the Chinese people's modesty and curiosity through his work.

"At the same time, I hope to make Chinese culture known to the rest of the world, helping it expand and integrate with other cultures. This process itself is also sharing wisdom," Wu says.

Montevideo Mayor Mauricio Zunino says the sculptures showcase China's profound cultural heritage, and embody great wisdom and value.

The two sages from 2,500 years ago have become a new feature in 300-year-old Montevideo, introducing a new cultural experience to visitors, he says, adding that it will strengthen cultural exchange between China and Uruguay, making the two countries intimate friends.

In the 1990s, while touring museums and antique markets in Western countries, Wu noticed that many of the depictions of Chinese people in art were outdated, rigid, and even deliberately caricatured. The stereotypes deeply saddened him.

Since then, he has been determined to create sculptures depicting outstanding figures from Chinese history, and to introduce these images to a global audience, showing the indomitable spirit and enterprising energy of the Chinese people.

To date, Wu has created over 600 sculptures of prominent figures in the fields of art, culture and science, more than 60 of which have been installed in 30 countries and regions worldwide.

His work includes ancient sages like Confucius, Lao Tzu, and Tang Dynasty (618-907) poet Li Bai, as well as pioneers of cultural exchange such as the monk Jianzhen, and Zen Master Yinyuan Longqi.

"There should be dignified Chinese figures standing tall in the world,"

says Wu. "These sculptures do not speak, but their images serve as a silent language and are symbols of Chinese culture."

In July 2022, Wu's bronze statue of Jianzhen, who is known as Ganjin in Japan, was unveiled at Shinobazu Pond in Tokyo's Ueno Park. The sculpture depicts the monk, who made six journeys to Japan to spread Buddhist teachings and Tang Dynasty culture, and who lost his sight during a stormy voyage.

According to Japanese seal carver Myohseki Shimura, the sculpture powerfully conveys the spirit of the blind monk, whose heart sees clearly. "It deeply moves everyone who sees it."

Wu voices confidence that sculptures depicting the inner virtues of Chinese culture are appreciated by everyone. "Seeing more of my dignified Chinese sculptures overseas fills me with joy. It's not only recognition of my work but also a testament to China's greatness."

Nikos Kazantzakis, the late giant of modern Greek literature who visited China twice, once said that "Confucius and Socrates were two masks that covered the same face of human logic."

More than 2,000 years ago, many philosophical and literary giants emerged during the golden age of ancient Greece. Among them was Socrates, who was often seen at the Agora in Athens, then a marketplace at the foot of the Acropolis, debating with thinkers, writers and politicians and communicating his ideas.

Roughly at the same time in China, far on the other side of the Eurasian continent, the period of ideological flourishing among the Hundred

Schools of Thought — most notably Confucianism — was underway.

Wu's artwork, *Divine Encounter — Dialogue between Confucius and Socrates*, which now stands in the remains of the ancient Agora, has brought the Chinese sage to the Greek philosopher's hometown.

The statues of the two great philosophers from the East and the West stand side by side as if they have crossed the boundaries of geography and time and are having an exchange of ideas.

"Their intellectual worlds are connected. One emphasized the world of great harmony and advocated the idea that within the four seas, all men are brothers, while the other discussed the ideal form of state and sought to establish a just and orderly society," Wu says.

"This 'dialogue' between them symbolizes a new stage and a new model of cultural exchange and integration between the East and the West," he adds.

Apart from dialogue between philosophers from different cultures, there is also dialogue between artists.

Another artwork of Wu's, depicting Leonardo da Vinci in dialogue with Qi Baishi, is on display in Vinci, the town in the Italian province of Florence, which was the Renaissance master's birthplace.

"Mutual understanding among people comes from the dialogue of ideas," Wu says, adding that through dialogue between civilizations, different countries and ethnic groups can communicate thoughts, share emotions, enhance understanding, and seek common development.

XINHUA

## CULTURE



Above: Middle school students compete in the 2024 U-series floorball matches at Shanghai Opark on April 21. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## A goal of healthy fun

Sports educator helps lead hockey-like game to greater heights, Hou Chenchen reports.

Eight months remain until the 9th Asian Winter Games in Harbin, capital of Northeast China's Heilongjiang province, yet in May, most parts of China were in the midst of spring, with natural ice surfaces rare sight.

Because of this, an "alternative ice sport" from Europe is gaining popularity in China. The story began in 2002, physical education teacher Chen Xin, then 27, stepped into a Swedish sports club in Shanghai.

The Shanghai International Studies University (SISU) teacher had felt there was a significant decline in student enthusiasm for sports and wanted to find out about activities that might appeal to young people.

At the club, Chen witnessed a spirited game amid towering Swedish athletes, a petite girl held her own, moving about her competitors with fervor and determination and using her stature swiftly and effectively in defense and offense.

It was Chen's first encounter with floorball, and she found it exhilarating, engaging and, crucially, safe and easy to grasp.

"That's the sport I'd been searching for," Chen recalled.

Floorball, also known as indoor bandy, is a type of floor hockey with each team consisting of five players and a goalkeeper wielding blade-topped sticks to hit a plastic ball. The game was invented in Sweden in the late 1960s and quickly became popular for its minimal equipment and space needed. By the 1970s, formalized rules were established, signaling the advent of floorball as a competitive sport and ensuring it was increasingly played across the world.

On top of a growing number of fans like sports teacher Chen, floorball is also offering a way for many athletes to focus on an activity that can allow them to train during spring and summer.

Compared to hockey, floorball is designed to be safer with its lightweight sticks made primarily of carbon material together with hollow plastic balls perforated with holes to reduce injury risks. The sport requires speed, agility and teamwork.

Convinced of its potential, Chen resolved to introduce and popularize it within the university. The first step was to garner interest among her students.

"Since nobody knew about this sport, I wanted to draw students in by associating it with something more familiar. This sport bears similarities to ice hockey, but without skates," Chen said.

"Thus, 'land-based ice hockey' (*landi bingqiu* in Chinese) became its name in China."

In February 2018, China unveiled the Olympic Education Programme for Primary and Secondary Schools in preparation for the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics, including plans to introduce non-ice variations of winter sports in select southern cities. The move aimed to cultivate the interest of young people in winter sports and facilitate a gradual transition to traditional ice-based activities.

In February 2019, the General Administration of Sport of China officially recognized floorball as one of the promotional projects for winter sports leading up to the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.

## Lifelong pursuit

With a swift swing, the ball sailed through the air in a graceful arc toward the goal. The goalkeeper sprang into action, successfully deflecting the ball. As the final whistle blew, cheers erupted and players embraced in triumphant celebration.

This marked the inaugural trial game at the SISU campus in 2008, orchestrated by Chen Xin. Gathering about 200 female students, she aimed to ignite their interest in floorball through direct involvement. As the match concluded, the passion of the competition reverberated through the



Chen Xin coaches her 5-year-old daughter in floorball in Songjiang, Shanghai, in 2013.

arena, moving spectators to tears, including Chen herself.

As a pioneer of floorball promotion in China, Chen embarked on a journey from scratch in 2002. Initiating partnerships with sports equipment suppliers, she also extended invitations to foreigners in Shanghai to join floorball games.

"I hosted barbecue dinners with beers for them after their matches on our campus. Their participation progressively enriched the floorball community here," she said.

Years of dedication began to bear fruit in 2008 when Chen secured a sponsorship deal with a Swedish company in Gothenburg, providing necessary gear for students in five universities in China.

In a pivotal development in September 2008, floorball became an elective course in physical education at SISU and Chen encouraged more students to try the sport.

"The game was a resounding success. It showcased strong team spirit and a vibrant atmosphere of unity," she said. From this first game in 2008 at the SISU campus, floorball gained popularity in Shanghai, culminating in a university floorball group venturing abroad to

Singapore in 2014 for the 6th World University Championships for Floorball.

"It's a pity that university players often lose interest in floorball after graduation," Chen said. "I believe health is as important as academic and career achievements. My mission is to engage more people in sports activities and empower them for healthy growth, a commitment I'll fulfill lifelong."

## On the ground

In 2013, driven by the desire to instill a lifelong love for sports in the younger generation, Chen established the China Floorball Development Center. That same year, armed with 20 floorball sticks sponsored by a Shanghai nonprofit group, she began on a journey to Bangzhai Primary School, nestled amid the mountains in Qingzhen in Southwest China's Guizhou province.

"The teachers' average age was above 45 and there was no professional sports teacher or playground," Chen said, referring to the dearth of sports personnel and facilities experienced by many rural schools.

"Some pupils even have to walk to school for as long as an hour, and although they get exercise, some principals don't see the need to introduce new sports," she said.

A trial game was held in front of Bangzhai's school principal surnamed Liu, who was deeply moved by the enthusiasm and joy he saw on the rural children's faces. The young players used their sticks to chase a small plastic ball, transforming the earthen school grounds into a makeshift court, with two flowerpots serving as goalposts.

Bangzhai became the first primary school of its kind to embrace floorball in rural China. In 2016, Chen made a bold decision to depart from SISU after 16 years and start the Vikings Floorball Club, with a focus on training young people and coaches in the basics of the sport.

"Many thought I was crazy for leaving a stable teaching job," she said. "But I wanted to do more. We've been exploring ways to engage Chinese children in physical activity, especially within limited spaces. Floorball fits the bill as it's suitable for all ages and can be played anywhere, including rural China."

Fu Chuguo, a floorball coach at Kangshengzhuang Center Primary School in Lingqing, East China's Shandong province, said: "Floorball is interesting, fast-paced with less physical confrontation, and requires minimal equipment, making it very suitable for pupils as a preparation to ice hockey."

Hu Shengyi, a former student of the school, skilled in both winger and defender positions, was once the star player of the floorball team. She attested to the significant improvement in her stamina since joining the sport. Hu has even traveled with her team to Shanghai for U-Series floorball games, competing with youth teams from major cities.

Many rural students now regularly participate in the U-Series floorball matches in Shanghai, providing them with valuable sports training and exposure to competition in larger cities.

During the past decades, Chen has dedicated herself to promoting floorball in China. According to data from the Shanghai Floorball Association, Chen and her team have conducted training sessions in almost 200 universities and 2,000 primary schools across at least 28 provinces and municipalities, with many of these primary schools located in rural areas.

"I am also from a rural area. Sports completely transformed my life," Chen said.

As a child, Chen had battled severe asthma and was often confined to her bed. Driven into a corner, her parents sent her to soccer school, hoping that sports could keep her healthy. Most children growing up in Xiapu in East China's Fujian province were enrolled in soccer, a popular sport in the area.

"It was painful at first and I cried a lot in the training base, which was far away from my home," Chen said. "Sports can give not only good health but also build a brave heart, to face challenges and news things in life."

Chen then went on to become vice-captain of the Fujian women's soccer team in the 7th National Games in 1993, after which she tried a new sport, taekwondo, and ranked third in an inaugural national-level championship in 1995.

Her luminous career in sports now includes the high point of introducing floorball to students in thousands of schools nationwide.

Time flies, Chen's identities turned from a young girl playing soccer to strengthen her weak constitution, to a professional athlete, to a university teacher using physical education to help improve others, and now to a promoter of floorball. "One day, sports will give back to you and tell you everything is possible," she said.

Wu Qiling and Jiang Duo contributed to this story.

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Left: Chen Xin studies floorball within a Finnish club in Helsinki, Finland in 2012.



Right: Chen Xin encourages a young floorball player to express himself after his side won a U-series match in Shanghai in 2022.