

Diplomatic arts

Amid turbulent ties, artists seek to foster exchanges

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Turbine makers riding high on favorable winds

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Stylish comeback

Traditional Chinese skirt trends among young generations

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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 FRIDAY, JUNE 14, 2024

Ping-pong balls from China make their way to Olympics

By ZHONG NAN
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At a factory owned by Double Fish Sports Group, a Chinese sporting goods manufacturer based in Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong province, more than 20 boxes of table tennis balls were loaded into a shipping container destined for France.

Together with previous shipments, the company's table tennis balls have not only been used at schools and sports clubs in France, but they will also be used in matches during the upcoming Paris 2024 Olympic Games from July 26 to Aug 11.

"As an exclusive supplier of table tennis balls for the Olympic Games in Paris, we hope this grand event will boost interest in table tennis across the world and spur the dynamic growth of other sports products that have not yet captured significant market share," said Wang Xiaodong, the company's chairman.

With major sporting events such as 2024 UEFA European Championship from Friday to July 14 in Germany and the Paris Olympics igniting enthusiasm for sports across the world, the sports economy in many parts of China is experiencing a significant upswing. This surge is marked by a substantial increase in exports of sports equipment and Olympic-themed products.

For example, Double Fish Sports Group has exported more than 6 million yuan (\$827,000) worth of sporting goods to over 20 countries so far this year, up 15.2 percent year-on-year, according to statistics from Guangzhou Customs.

Yiwu, a manufacturing hub in Zhejiang province, saw its foreign trade value of sporting goods and equipment soar 44 percent year-on-year to more than 4 billion yuan in the first five months of 2024, according to data provided by local customs.

Wang Yongxia, a marketing manager at View Electronic Co, a television manufacturer based in Nantong, Jiangsu province, said these major sporting events have not only drawn global attention to Europe, but also have boosted his company's liquid crystal display TV exports. The company shipped 1.74 million yuan worth of TVs to Saudi Arabia earlier this month.

The cumulative value of the company's TV exports reached 140 million yuan between January and May, representing a 110 percent increase year-on-year. Its shipments of 85-inch (215.9 centimeters) large-screen TVs have grown threefold year-on-year, data from Nanjing Customs showed.

"We will continue to explore emerging markets such as South America and the Middle East," Wang said.

Quality and affordability have long been the hallmarks of Chinese products. During events such as the Olympics and major soccer matches, these products often showcase innovation and gain market favor, bolstering confidence in the thriving sports economy, said Zhang Yongjun, a researcher at the Beijing-based China Center for International Economic Exchanges.

Jiang Yiyi, deputy dean of the sports, leisure and tourism school of Beijing Sport University, said the Paris Olympics are poised to rekindle consumer enthusiasm for sports, as they will be the first Olympic Games since the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions. This resurgence is expected to invigorate the sporting goods market.

Eager to gain more market share in China, French sporting goods manufacturer and retailer Decathlon recently launched its professional road bike brand to tap the nation's huge cycling market.

The company has also expanded its product line to more than 80 sports in recent years to support people in different age groups and with different abilities.



A saleswoman calculates the price of soccer balls for a foreign buyer at a sports goods store in the Yiwu International Trade Market, Zhejiang province, on May 28. With the Paris 2024 Olympic Games approaching, the trade center is witnessing bulk orders for sports goods from both domestic and foreign buyers. HUXIAOFEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

JEWELRY COMPANIES LOOK TO CASH IN ON SURGING PRICE OF GOLD

Time-honored brands update products, marketing strategies to boost profits

By WANG YING in Shanghai
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Office worker Dai Qingxiang, 28, recently found herself facing a dilemma. She was considering buying gold accessories to add bling to her wardrobe, but the precious metal's soaring price was making her think twice.

Dai was finally persuaded by a close friend, Liu Nushi, to make the purchase, and on a sunny afternoon in May, she went to a jewelry store in Shanghai's southwestern Xuhui district to buy the accessories.

Her initial reticence was understandable, given the current global

In-depth

gold price surge. Due to healthy investment from the over-the-counter transactions market, ongoing central bank buying, and higher demand from Asian buyers, gold prices rose to a record quarterly average of \$2,070 per ounce in the first quarter, World Gold Council data showed. The amount is 10 percent higher year-on-year and 5 percent higher quarter-on-quarter.

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Premier Li Qiang (center) is received on Thursday by New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon (left) and Government House Kaumatua Joe Harawira (second from right) during a traditional Maori welcoming ceremony at Government House in Wellington. Premier Li is on a three-day official visit to New Zealand, which started on Thursday. MARTY MELVILLE / AFP

Beijing, Wellington to negotiate on service trade negative list

Leaders vow to view, handle ties from strategic, long-term perspective

By CAO DESHENG in Wellington
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China and New Zealand agreed on Thursday to commence trade in services negotiations based on a negative list approach, as part of efforts to enhance their comprehensive strategic partnership.

The decision was made when Premier Li Qiang held talks with New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon in Wellington, following his arrival in the country's capital for an official visit.

The agreement on the trade in services negotiations is part of the

Protocol to Upgrade the China-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement, which took effect on April 7, 2022.

Under the negative list approach, parties involved commit to provide market access except in those areas where restrictions are listed in services schedules.

Both leaders witnessed the signing of a number of documents that will support closer cooperation in areas of shared interest, such as trade facilitation, business environment optimization, exports of agricultural products to China, science and technology, patent examination and migratory birds protection. They also jointly met the media.

A joint statement on the outcomes

of the China-New Zealand leaders' meeting was issued on Thursday.

During their talks, Li and Luxon expressed their satisfaction with the achievements in the development of China-New Zealand relations.

They pledged to view and handle bilateral relations from a strategic and long-term perspective, expand bilateral trade and investment cooperation, deepen people-to-people exchanges, and jointly uphold multilateralism and free trade, in order to promote the continuous, healthy and stable development of China-New Zealand relations.

Li said the development of China and New Zealand presents opportunities, rather than challenges, for each other.

He underscored the need for both countries to continue to work as partners who adhere to mutual respect, mutual trust, mutual benefit, mutual learning, unity and cooperation.

China is ready to expand trade with New Zealand, explore cooperation potential in areas such as the digital economy, the green economy, new energy vehicles and creative industries, and jointly promote regional economic cooperation.

He called for efforts to eliminate noneconomic factors that disrupt economic and trade relations between the two countries, and provide a stable, predictable and favorable business environment for enterprises.

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SCO is a pillar of stability, prosperity in a complex world

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization has emerged as a pivotal force in shaping regional stability and global cooperation, with China playing a central role in fostering its development and goals. The SCO's evolution underscores a commitment to enhancing peace, security and mutual prosperity among its member states and beyond.

Established in 2001, the group has grown from six members into a robust platform involving nine member states, three observer states and 14 dialogue partners. Its primary objectives focus on bolstering security cooperation, combating extremism, enhancing economic ties and promoting cultural exchanges. Over the years, the SCO has become instrumental in addressing common challenges faced by its members, ranging from terrorism to economic development.

Central to the SCO's evolution is China's steadfast commitment to promoting the building of a

WORLD WATCH

By Gulnar Shaimergenova

community with a shared future. China, as the second-largest economy in the world and a staunch advocate for multilateralism, has played a leading role in shaping the SCO's agenda and fostering cooperation among member states. China's vision emphasizes mutual respect, inclusiveness and win-win cooperation — a departure from traditional power politics as it prioritizes collective prosperity over individual gain.

Moreover, China's commitment to dialogue and diplomacy within the SCO has been pivotal. By championing a collaborative approach to security challenges, including counterterrorism and cybersecurity, China has reinforced the SCO's role as a linchpin in the regional security architecture.

China has also contributed significantly in advancing economic cooperation within the SCO framework. Initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative have achieved synergy with the SCO's agenda, facilitating infrastructure development, trade and investment across Eurasia. This integration has not only spurred economic growth, but also enhanced connectivity and stability in the region.

China's leadership within the SCO extends beyond economic initiatives. The country has championed cultural exchanges, people-to-people diplomacy and environmental cooperation within the organization, emphasizing the importance of soft power in building lasting relationships among diverse nations. By promoting dialogue and understanding, China seeks to forge a cohesive regional community that transcends geopolitical rivalries and fosters mutual trust.

At its core, the SCO has been

instrumental in enhancing regional security and stability. The organization represents a diverse yet cohesive coalition committed to addressing common security challenges. The SCO's efforts in counterterrorism, intelligence-sharing and joint military exercises have contributed significantly to combating extremism and ensuring the security of its members.

Beyond security, the SCO has become a driving force for economic integration and development. Member states have leveraged the organization's strengths to deepen trade ties, enhance connectivity and unlock new investment opportunities. The SCO's support for initiatives such as the BRI has catalyzed infrastructure development and economic growth across Eurasia, benefiting not only its members but also neighboring countries and regions.

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PAGE TWO



Customers select gold jewelries at a Lao Feng Xiang outlet in Shanghai. LUO BIN / CHINA DAILY

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Domestic gold demand saw a 3 percent year-on-year growth in the first quarter, noticeably higher than the average of the past decade, the World Gold Council said.

As young Chinese consumers shun traditional investments in favor of gold products, local Shanghai jewelry brands are trying their best to cash in on the rising demand with innovations in craftsmanship and consumer products.

Adapting to demand

Shanghai Jinchenghuang is a time-honored brand established in Shanghai in 1934, and the privately owned company has preserved gold jewelry-making techniques for four generations.

Lin Zechao, general manager of Shanghai Jinchenghuang Industrial Group Co, said to maintain its market strength, his company has conducted surveys to better understand consumers' needs, upgraded its craftsmanship and carried out targeted marketing.

Lin believes that adapting to new trends while upholding quality standards is key for jewelry brands to remain attractive to Chinese consumers, regardless of their age, interests or background.

With East China as its core market, the jewelry chain currently operates 300 retail outlets across the country.

It differentiates between target markets, with Jinchenghuang now paying more attention to meeting the daily fashion needs of women aged 25 to 50.

"Our products are usually developed after systematic research of a targeted consumer group's preferences on style and design elements," Lin said.

After examining the survey results, the company discovered that smaller and hard gold accessories can withstand market changes to remain popular with consumers.

Lin added their gold bar sales saw 30 percent year-on-year growth in 2023, and he is confident these sales will further pick up this year.

"We've made investments in innovation, research and development on an annual basis, including developing and launching products in accordance with the latest consumer preferences," Lin said.

Whether it is 3D hard gold, heritage gold, or other innovative products, consumers are paying more attention to unique designs



An artwork depicting a cabbage with a gold grasshopper resting on it. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Gold: Fusion of innovation and tradition



A gold divine bird from ancient Chinese legend designed by Zhang Xinyi. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

MASTER CRAFTSMAN DEDICATES LIFE TO REVITALIZING SKILL

Shen Guoxing is the sixth generation of Shanghai jewelry company Lao Feng Xiang to carry on its gold and silver-processing craft, and has spent more than half his life revitalizing the special skill.

Revitalizing one of the country's intangible cultural heritages means not only handing down skills from generation to generation, but also letting more people have the opportunity to experience and enjoy the technique, said the 56-year-old master craftsman.

To carry out the special skills, Shen founded a work studio in July

1996 with 12 artisans. The studio can produce one or two works of the finest quality every year.

"The 100 percent handmade works are of the highest standards, with an extremely complicated process used. For example, it takes our team two-and-a-half years to make a golden caldron from scratch," Shen said.

In order to make the best pieces, Shen and his team also design and produce their own tools to meet various manufacturing requirements.

"Every tool is unique to its owner," said Shen, who has crafted more than 300 tools of various sizes and

functions used for making works of gold and silver.

According to Shen, while his team does extremely delicate handmade works, new technologies are also being used in the production process.

"The introduction of 3D modeling to make gold bowls has halved our production time, allowing us to produce larger numbers of items for personal use or for collections," he said.

Shen said the studio also caters to the younger generation's design and style preferences to create innovative market-oriented products.

The gold- and silver-processing craftsmanship of Lao Feng Xiang, a time-honored brand with a history dating back 176 years, is one of China's intangible cultural heritages.

Shen started studying gold and silver ornamentation at vocational school in 1985. Two years later, he was handpicked as one of the apprentices of Zhang Xinyi, the fifth successor of Lao Feng Xiang's gold- and silver-processing craft, for his outstanding performances and comprehensive mastery of the skill.

WANG YING

and crafting technologies.

Thanks to innovative designs using gemstones and diamonds, hard-gold and heritage-gold jewelry had outstanding sales in the first quarter in comparison with other categories of accessories, said Wang Lixin, regional CEO with the World Gold Council of China.

Consumers tend to prefer lighter, lower-priced products, Wang added.

Past meets present

Lao Feng Xiang is one of China's oldest jewelry brands and its history can be traced back to 1848 in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). However, it is acutely aware that to continue prospering it must cater to the needs of a younger generation while keeping its older customers happy.

"Young people prefer products with meaning," said Lu Jing, marketing manager with Shanghai Lao-fengxiang Co. "They care about flowers, love and life, while the older generation cares more about blessings, safety, health and wealth."

As a time-honored brand with a long history, Lao Feng Xiang knows that the secret to staying competitive is maintaining the quality of traditional craftsmanship and culture while introducing innovative products and techniques, Lu said.

In Chinese culture, *feng*, the phoenix, is the king of all flying creatures, and *xiang* means auspicious. The brand's name denotes good luck and it is a fitting emblem for a brand perched at the top of the domestic jewelry market.

According to Lu, as the gold market has expanded across the world, gold-making techniques have undergone development and innovation, and have offered new opportunities for retailers to explore.

Lao Feng Xiang has developed two new store concepts to add to its traditional jewelry shops.

One is Cang Bao Jin, or gold treasure, and the other is Feng Xiang Xi Shi, which celebrates a variety of life events.

Cang Bao Jin stores are decorated

in a more traditional and elegant way with a focus on Chinese elements, a concept which is reflected in the products on sale.

"In our Cang Bao Jin-themed stores, the interior decorations are in the colors of black and yellow, which immediately sets them apart from our regular stores," said Cao Cong, a manager at Lao Feng Xiang Jewelry in Shanghai's Xuhui district.

Gold consumers are usually older people, but since the launch of the Cang Bao Jin products many young people, including women aged in their 20s, are buying gold fashion accessories, Cao said.

The Feng Xiang Xi Shi stores are based on special consumption scenarios, Lu said.

Launched last year, when the brand celebrated its 175th anniversary, the Feng Xiang Xi Shi-themed stores look to tap into young generations' need to celebrate important life moments including marriages, childbirths, promotions, housewarmings, birthdays and family

reunions, with something "meaningful and memorable".

Lao Feng Xiang can have three stores in a single shopping center that cater to different consumer tastes, Lu said.

"Consumers, especially the young generations are fond of traditional Chinese culture. Therefore, from our perspective, we try to impress them with tradition and culture," Lu said.

Thanks to sticking to both inheritance and innovation, the company has seen its sales revenue snowball from 710 million in 2001 to 71.4 billion yuan (\$9.85 billion) last year.

"For more than two decades we have maintained double-digit annual revenue growth, coupled with our store numbers soaring from about 230 branches in 2001 to up to 6,000 worldwide," Lu said.

Unfaded luster

In April, 2013, Chinese consumers spent 100 billion yuan to buy 300 metric tons of gold over 10 days

when gold prices plunged. Their big buying was a key factor in stabilizing gold prices that year.

Overall gold sales and investment demand are expected to remain at a healthy level in the coming quarters, said Wang from the World Gold Council of China.

However, there are growing concerns about a slowing in the sales of gold accessories due to seasonal factors and consumer uncertainty over global gold prices.

Wang, citing a council report, said: "The weak demand is likely to extend into the second quarter. As consumers' wait-and-see attitude carries on, gold jewelry sales will be under pressure in the second quarter, which is also a traditionally slow season in jewelry consumption."

"Such a situation, together with the fierce market competition, has put Chinese gold retailers under mounting pressure to stay profitable," Wang added.

Lu from Lao Feng Xiang said, "entering March and April, the market stagnancy spread as more people became hesitant about gold consumption".

Lin Zechao, general manager of Shanghai Jinchenghuang Industrial Group Co, said due to soaring raw material prices and uncertainties in the gold market, many consumers are postponing their purchases.

However, Wang said hard gold products are projected to continue to have a better-than-average performance, because they are lighter, priced lower and are more suitable for wearing in summer.

"Against the slip in jewelry demand volume, the combined values of the gold accessories purchased across China saw a 9 percent year-on-year increase to about 90 billion yuan, which is the second highest quarterly demand only after the second quarter of 2013," said Wang.

Liu, the close friend of Dai, believes the right time to buy gold jewelry is when prices are rising, not when they are falling.

"I used to buy gold accessories for our family members. The choices differed according to their taste," said Liu as she looked at butterfly and flower-shaped accessories in a Shanghai store.

"For my mother, I usually choose something simple and reserved, but for myself I focus on the better-looking ones."

Luo Bin in Shanghai contributed to this story.



Left and right: Members of Shen Guoxing's work team process gold and silver at their studio in Shanghai on May 22. Middle: Shen Guoxing, the sixth successor of Lao Feng Xiang's gold and silver craftsmanship, creates a gold wine cup. PHOTOS BY GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

TOP NEWS

Macron can still stabilize situation, analysts say

By CHEN YINGQUN
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With less than three weeks to go before the first round of election to the National Assembly, the lower house of the French Parliament, President Emmanuel Macron's centrist Renaissance party and Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally are both urgently rallying electoral allies.

Many anticipate that France's political chaos will intensify after the legislative elections, but some say the president still has a chance to stabilize the situation.

On Wednesday, Macron urged rivals to join his electoral alliance against Le Pen's party in the legislative elections, which will take place in two rounds on June 30 and July 7. He called on "compatriots and political leaders who do not recognize themselves in the extremist fever" to build a coalition to govern.

Macron dissolved the National Assembly and announced the snap election as his party was handed a humbling defeat by the far-right National Rally in the European parliamentary elections on Sunday. The National Rally secured 31.8 percent of the vote, more than double the share of the Renaissance party's 15.2 percent.

Many political analysts see Macron's snap election move as a "huge gamble".

He Yun, an associate professor at Hunan University's School of Public Administration, said that Macron will focus on people's fear of a far-right "extremist" government to mobilize his party's campaign, but the extent of this strategy's success remains uncertain because public opinion is shifting to the right, as evidenced by the recent big gains made by the National Rally.

A Harris Interactive-Toluna poll released on Monday also indicates that only 19 percent of the people would support Macron, compared with 34 percent support for Le Pen's party, in the forthcoming ballot.

He Yun noted that a snap election usually creates a period of political uncertainty. If the National Rally succeeds, there will be a significant shift away from Macron's centrist policies, potentially leading to a more polarized and divided French Parliament.

"Given the fragmented nature of French politics, forming a stable coalition could be challenging and it may result in a weaker and less effective government, if no party secures an outright majority," she said.

A new parliamentary configuration may lead to changes in policy priorities, with the potential of previously planned reforms being scaled back, altered or entirely abandoned. This is especially true

for domestic issues, which will fall under the purview of the new prime minister, she said.

Overall, Macron's strategy to highlight the dangers of a far-right government may resonate with some voters, but the rising popularity of the National Rally and the public's rightward shift present significant challenges for his party.

"The election outcomes will be crucial in determining the future trajectory of French politics and governance," He Yun added.

Zhao Yongsheng, director of the French Economic Studies Center at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, said that Macron is taking a proactive step that he believes will help his party to continue governing France for long.

"For a long time, the European Parliament elections have been viewed by French voters as a protest vote against the sitting president, but that is different from choosing who will govern the country," he said.

While issues such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict, immigration policy and economic development are important to the European elections, in domestic elections, voters would like to focus on different issues, Zhao said.

For instance, while immigration is a significant topic at the European Union level, it does not greatly affect France, he pointed out.

Moreover, the European parliamentary elections are held in a single round, while the French National Assembly elections have two rounds. In the European elections, voters' emotional outbursts end after one round, but in legislative elections, even if there is an emotional outburst after the first round, voters often return to rationality during the second round, he said.

Macron's government has implemented long-term policy planning during his term and has strived to make reforms in various sectors, but the downside is that the people cannot see immediate effects, Zhao said.

"There are more than two weeks before the first round of voting and over three weeks before the second. The French people want to see immediate results, and Macron needs to quickly deploy his policy tools," Zhao said.

However, if the National Rally wins the election, there is a possibility that Macron might have to "co-govern" with a far-right prime minister, which could be one of France's biggest political upheavals after World War II, and his policies would be more challenging to implement. Nonetheless, Zhao said he believes that the possibility of this happening is slim.

Agencies contributed to this story.



Prize catch

Fishermen unload sardines caught in a net on Wednesday during the annual "Sardine Run", or the global migration of massive shoals of the herring species, in Scottburgh, South Africa. The annual migration occurs along the southeastern coast of South Africa, typically from May to July.
ROGAN WARD / REUTERS

EU urged to rectify protectionist practices

Tariff plan on Chinese EVs could bring retaliatory steps, experts say

By WANG KEJU
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China, in response to the European Union's decision to impose additional tariffs on Chinese-made battery electric vehicles, will take all necessary actions to safeguard the legitimate rights of Chinese companies, the Ministry of Commerce said on Thursday, which has led analysts to believe that retaliatory measures are possible.

Beijing may choose to impose

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retaliatory duties targeting EU-produced large-engine vehicles, brandy and dairy products, they said. Moreover, there is a possibility of further tariff increases on EVs imported by China from the EU, they said, adding that any countermeasures would aim to send a clear message and urge the EU to reconsider its decision regarding Chinese EVs.

Less than a month after Washington announced plans to quadruple the duties on Chinese EVs to 100 percent, Brussels said it would also impose additional tariffs on such products, ranging from 17.4 percent for BYD to 38.1 percent for SAIC, on top of the standard 10 percent car duty.

That takes the highest overall

rate to nearly 50 percent. The ruling will take effect on July 4, unless Beijing agrees to "an effective solution" to so-called subsidies that the EU claims are distorting its markets.

He Yadong, a spokesman for the Commerce Ministry, said on Thursday at a news conference that the EU's recent actions are a breach of World Trade Organization rules and blatant examples of trade protectionism, and China will reserve the right to seek recourse through the WTO.

Meanwhile, China has urged the EU to promptly rectify its erroneous practices, the spokesman said, emphasizing the importance of dialogue and negotiations to effectively address trade disputes, expand cooperation and achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.

According to the German think tank Kiel Institute, while the decrease in imports could be partially mitigated by increased production within the EU, it would likely result in higher prices for consumers. This is because production within the EU is significantly more expensive than in China due to higher energy and material prices, and labor costs are also much higher.

In addition, of all the electric cars built in China and sold across the

EU last year, half came from Western carmakers. The United States EV maker Tesla accounted for 28 percent of all Chinese-made EVs imported by Europe, while French carmaker Renault's Dacia Spring added an additional 20 percent, according to a study in late March by European think tank Transport and Environment.

All other companies producing EVs in China that had cooperated with the commission's probe but were not sampled, including Renault, would face an average duty of 21 percent, while Tesla could face an individually calculated duty rate.

Oliver Zipse, CEO of BMW, which established a production base in Northeast China's Liaoning province, said in a statement on Wednesday that the additional tariffs imposed by the EU could hinder the development of European automotive companies and ultimately harm Europe's own interests.

The adoption of protectionist measures, such as tariffs, could trigger a cycle of retaliation, leading to a breakdown of cooperative trade relations, he added.

Liu Chunsheng, an associate professor at Central University of Finance and Economics, said the increased tariffs on Chinese-produced EVs entering the EU are

expected to translate into higher production costs and affect their pricing, ultimately pointing to reduced competitiveness and market share.

However, Europe's plan to phase out Chinese EVs might not be an easy feat. BYD, for instance, has ample space to adjust pricing due to its relatively high EU premium, according to a report by New York-based Rhodium Group.

Nonetheless, the economic losses faced by Chinese enterprises without justifiable cause mean that China will by no means make concessions that could compromise the interests of its companies, Liu added.

Relevant authorities, in accordance with WTO rules and Chinese regulations, will initiate investigations to address concerns of Chinese industries related to subsidies or dumping practices of EU dairy products and pork to safeguard fair market competition and protect the Chinese industries' legitimate rights, said Ministry of Commerce spokesman He.

Meanwhile, the products targeted for possible retaliatory tariffs, such as EU-produced large-engine vehicles and brandy, might be chosen to exert pressure on sectors that could significantly affect the EU's economy, said Xu Hongcai, deputy director of the China Association of Policy Science's Economic Policy Committee.

Moreover, China now imposes a 15 percent tariff on EVs imported from the EU and has not ruled out the possibility of further increasing the tariffs, should the situation escalate, Xu said, adding that China leans more toward dialogue and negotiations with the EU to prevent a scenario in which both parties suffer adverse consequences.

Visit: China to extend visa-free policy to New Zealand

From page 1

China will include New Zealand on the list of countries eligible for visa-free entry, the premier said, adding that Beijing hopes Wellington will provide greater convenience for Chinese citizens visiting New Zealand.

Noting that both countries are staunch supporters of multilateralism, and both advocate free trade and the building of an open world economy, Li emphasized the need for both countries to strengthen

communication and coordination within a multilateral framework to promote win-win cooperation among all parties.

Luxon acknowledged the robust growth of economic and trade relations and close people-to-people exchanges between New Zealand and China over the past 10 years, since they established a comprehensive strategic partnership, emphasizing the benefits to both peoples.

He reaffirmed New Zealand's adherence to the one-China policy and expressed willingness to

enhance communication and dialogue with China at all levels.

New Zealand is committed to strengthening law enforcement cooperation with China and coordinating in multilateral frameworks, including the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, to address global challenges such as climate change.

Before the talks, Luxon held a grand welcoming ceremony for Li at Government House in Wellington. The ceremony began with a traditional Maori welcome for the Chinese premier, followed by a military

band performance of the Chinese national anthem and a 19-gun salute. Li inspected the guard of honor on the parade ground.

On Thursday, Li also met with New Zealand's Governor-General Dame Cindy Kiro, and both of them pledged to enhance traditional friendship and pragmatic cooperation between the two countries.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said on Tuesday that the premier will make official visits to New Zealand, Australia and Malaysia from Thursday to June 20.



French President Emmanuel Macron briefs journalists on the priorities of his Renaissance party ahead of the snap legislative elections at a news conference in Paris, France, on Wednesday.
STEPHANE MAHE / REUTERS

Cooperation: SCO has helped Kazakhstan address security challenges

From page 1

The SCO has had a profound impact on Kazakhstan, both in terms of regional security and economic development. As one of the founding members of the SCO, Kazakhstan has actively engaged with the organization to promote stability, cooperation and shared prosperity across Central Asia and beyond. Kazakhstan is chairing the SCO from July 2023 to July 2024, and the upcoming SCO summit will be hosted in its capital Astana in July.

In terms of regional security, the SCO has provided Kazakhstan with

a vital platform for addressing common security challenges, particularly those related to terrorism, extremism and transnational crime. Through the SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure, Kazakhstan has been able to enhance intelligence-sharing and operational coordination with other member states, leading to more effective counter-terrorism efforts in the region.

Kazakhstan has also embraced the SCO as a vehicle for economic diversification and regional cooperation. As a key transit hub and resource-rich economy, it has leveraged its SCO membership to attract

foreign investment and promote cross-border trade. The organization's emphasis on connectivity aligns with Kazakhstan's vision of becoming a logistics and financial center in Central Asia, underscoring the SCO's transformative impact on common prosperity.

According to the Ministry of Trade and Integration of the Republic of Kazakhstan, trade turnover between Kazakhstan and the SCO countries in 2023 amounted to \$66.0 billion, which is 6.8 percent more compared with the previous year's \$61.8 billion.

Over the past 5 years, mutual

trade between the SCO countries increased 1.5-fold — from \$336 billion in 2019 to \$490 billion in 2023. The main trading partners in the region are China with 64.6 percent of all mutual trade and Russia with 26.2 percent. Kazakhstan's share is 3.3 percent.

Despite its successes, the SCO faces a myriad of challenges, including geopolitical tensions, diverging interests among member states and external pressures. Navigating these complexities requires sustained commitment to dialogue, cooperation and adherence to the organization's founding principles.

Also, as the global landscape evolves, the SCO must adapt to emerging threats and seize new opportunities to promote stability and prosperity.

Looking ahead, the SCO has the potential to play an even greater role in shaping global governance and fostering a more inclusive international order. By deepening cooperation in areas such as cybersecurity, public health and sustainable development, the organization can address pressing global challenges and contribute to a world defined by peace and prosperity.

In conclusion, the SCO represents

a beacon of hope and cooperation in an increasingly interconnected yet unpredictable world. With China's leadership and the collective efforts of its member states, the SCO is poised to continue making significant contributions to global peace and stability, setting an example for multilateral cooperation and diplomacy in the years to come.

The results of the upcoming SCO summit in Astana will contribute to further development of the organization, ensuring long-term peace, stability and economic prosperity in the region.

The author is director of the China Studies Center in Kazakhstan. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CHINA

High-speed rail travel enhanced

Revamped railway schedule to feature Yangtze loop, faster trains

By LUO WANGSHU

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China will unveil a revamped national railway schedule on Saturday, introducing a host of enhancements aimed at bolstering the country's strategic interests and propelling regional socioeconomic progress.

A notable addition to the new schedule is the inauguration of a high-speed railway loop linking Shanghai with the provinces of Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Anhui. Spanning more than 1,200 kilometers, it will start from Shanghai Railway Station in the heart of the city and then connect with key urban centers including Suzhou, Nanjing, Hangzhou and Huangshan Mountain before returning to Shanghai Hongqiao Railway Station.

The loop line, served by bullet train G8388, will depart from Shanghai around 10:30 am and arrive at Shanghai Hongqiao by approximately 6:30 pm. It encompasses 21 stations and traverses several popular tourist cities in the Yangtze River Delta Region.

China Railway Shanghai Group, the operator of the line, said the loop links up with seven high-speed railways in the region. It will also connect remote towns with major cities. The adjusted schedule aims to facilitate seamless travel and tourism experiences in the Yangtze River Delta Region and enhance travel options to Hong Kong from Beijing and Shanghai.

Another standout feature of the new schedule is the introduction of swifter high-speed trains connecting Beijing with South China's Guangdong province and neighboring Hong Kong.

Bullet trains will race along the Beijing-Guangzhou High-Speed Railway at a speed of 350 kilometers per hour, reducing the travel time between the two cities to 7 hours and 16 minutes, 22 minutes faster than before.

In 2022, bullet trains resumed operating at 350 km/h between Beijing and Wuhan, Hubei province, along the Beijing-Guangzhou High-Speed Railway. But they maintained a speed of 300 km/h between Wuhan and Guangzhou.

Faster sleeper trains to Hong Kong are also poised to commence operations from Beijing and Shanghai, promising a

refined travel experience for cross-border passengers and streamlining the journey between Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland.

The introduction of the faster sleeper trains will see travel times between Beijing and Hong Kong halved to 12 and a half hours, while the journey between Shanghai and Hong Kong will be trimmed to approximately 11 hours from over 19 and a half hours. Both sleeper trains will depart in the evening and reach the destinations by morning.

China's railway sector usually adjusts the train schedule every quarter to meet passengers' needs.

John Lin, a 40-year-old resident of Hong Kong, said high-speed trains are a preferred mode of travel for families with infants, who may find air travel less accommodating.

Lin welcomed the faster Beijing-Hong Kong daytime service's convenient departure and arrival times, noting that the journey's duration will allow for a relaxing break onboard.

"The departure and arrival time for the high-speed train is very friendly. Departing at 10 am is not too early, and arriving at 6 pm is not too late," he said. "It is OK to take a break at noon on board. As long as the train is clean, eight hours travel by train is acceptable."

He said his home is close to Hong Kong's West Kowloon Railway Station, which makes long-distance train travel more convenient.

Despite the slightly higher cost of train tickets compared with discounted flights during off-peak periods, Lin said eight hours on a clean train made for a comfortable journey.

Zhang Rulin, a Beijing native studying in Hong Kong who has spent 10 hours traveling on a train between the two cities, said that taking along her own entertainment helped pass the time.

"It was 10 hours, and it is better to prepare some films or books to kill time onboard," she said.

With West Kowloon Railway Station conveniently allowing her to transfer to the subway for her university, Zhang said she planned to opt for train travel again.

"As long as I can keep myself busy onboard, it is a good choice to take the train," she said.

Yangtze River Delta regional high-speed railway loop



Medical mission

Doctors transfer medical supplies to a drone in Chongqing on Thursday ahead of the municipality's first delivery of such items by a drone. The low-altitude logistics drone ferried the supplies from the Da'an branch of the Affiliated Yongchuan Hospital of Chongqing Medical University to its Xuanhua branch, several kilometers away.

CHEN SHICHUAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

HK uni chief espouses 'heroes of different colors'

By OASIS HU in Hong Kong
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City University of Hong Kong President Freddy Boey Yin Chiang is fostering a new era of innovation at the university, aiming to cultivate "heroes of different colors" — future leaders across various fields.

Boey, a Singaporean scholar with extensive experience in academia and entrepreneurship, took the helm at CityUHK in May last year. He said he sees immense potential in Hong Kong and the university's role in shaping the future.

"My confidence in Hong Kong is unshakable," Boey said in an interview with China Daily, citing the city's strong reputation for higher education and its unique trilingual environment. "Hong Kong has the potential to run faster in innovation despite having started late."

It was this belief that prompted Boey to leave the Lion City and take the helm at CityUHK. He's confident his experiences align with those of the university, and allow him to contribute to the institution and assist young people in their development.

Born in 1956, Boey is an expert in biomaterials engineering, with his work having graced the pages of more than 300 academic journals.



Freddy Boey Yin Chiang

His research places a strong emphasis on practical values.

In Singapore, he spearheaded the application of biomaterials in medical devices. He also holds over 120 original patents and has founded multiple spinoff companies.

With his new post at CityUHK, Boey has brought vast experience and a solutions-oriented mindset to Hong Kong.

A core element of Boey's vision is the newly established Academy of Innovation. Launched in January, the academy offers programs such as doctorates in innovation and master's degrees of science in venture creation. These programs emphasize practical research and deep-tech venture creation, equipping students with the skills to become not just inventors, but also successful entrepreneurs.

Among the programs the academy offers, the venture creation program had received 233 applications by late April from students from Hong Kong, the Chinese mainland

and Southeast Asia.

"I don't need a decade. The academy will have nurtured several hundred young students with experience in deep-tech startups within five to six years," Boey predicted.

Hong Kong has been pushing the boundaries of innovation and technology, which, in Boey's view, requires a fundamental shift in mindset.

He has advocated a transition from passive teaching to active learning, encouraging student-led exploration and fostering intrinsic curiosity. Communication and networking are also seen as crucial skills, preparing students for international collaboration.

"Heroes have different colors," Boey emphasized.

CityUHK aims to create an ecosystem where students can find their own paths, be it in academia, athletics or the arts. Exposure to diverse cultures and environments is seen as instrumental in this process.

Boey has recognized how important international collaboration is to CityUHK's success. He has actively sought partnerships with universities worldwide, including signing a recent memorandum of understanding with Lucy Cavendish College at the University of Cambridge. This

collaboration will provide opportunities for student exchange and joint research projects.

CityUHK's commitment to internationalization is reflected in its student body, with representation from over 80 countries and regions. Additionally, over 65 percent of undergraduates participate in exchange programs.

According to the 2024 Times Higher Education World University Rankings, CityUHK was recognized as the "most international university" among 1,900 institutions of higher learning worldwide.

While embracing a global outlook, CityUHK also prioritizes local engagement. The newly formed Office of the Vice-President (Community Engagement) aims to strengthen ties with local communities, including primary and secondary schools, youth groups and senior citizens. Initiatives like the Veterinary Community Outreach Program demonstrate the university's commitment to society.

Boey underscored the importance of research with a practical purpose.

"The focus should be on how these ideas and inventions can be implemented in society to benefit the people," he said. "I want to educate my students to be excellent, yet relevant."

Glory of ancient Mengshan tea experiencing revival

By HUANG ZHILING and PENG CHAO in Chengdu

Tea companies, tea masters and research institutes in Sichuan province are striving to revive the glory of the thousand-year-old Mengshan tea produced in and around Mengding Mountain in the city of Ya'an.

Mengding Mountain is known as one of the birthplaces of Chinese tea culture. Historical records show that Wu Lizhen, who was born in the area during the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24), was the world's first tea grower.

To protect the authenticity of Mengshan tea and inherit the culture, Ya'an has explicitly designated 300 hectares of tea gardens at an altitude above 800 meters in Mengding Mountain as the core area for Mengshan tea since 2021.

Zhou Xianwen, chairman of Ya'an Guangju Agricultural Development Co., which is responsible for managing 158.6 hectares of the Lizhen Mengding Mountain Authenticity Protection Tea Garden, said the garden aims to produce natural and pollution-free organic tea by implementing standardized management methods.

"The protection of authenticity in this area is mainly embodied in five aspects: variety, ecology, craftsmanship, culture and quality," he said.

Zhou said there are more than 300 varieties of native Sichuan tea



A woman serves Mengshan tea from a long-spout teapot to a visitor in Ya'an, Sichuan province, on Tuesday. PENG CHAO / CHINA DAILY

plants in the tea garden, all of which were bred from the tea plants originally grown by Wu Lizhen.

"The output of old Sichuan tea plants is relatively low, but the quality is exceptionally high, and the tea made from them has a uniquely good taste," he said, adding that 1 hectare of old Sichuan tea plants can only produce 7.5 kilograms of Mengding Ganlu, the most famous tea variety in the area, each year.

A representative brand of authentic tea, "Lizhen Mengding Ganlu" has been exported to 33 countries and regions around the world, according to the local government.

Zhou said his company is trying to

make Mengshan tea more popular among young people by opening experience stores and developing a variety of tea-based beverages. The company has opened two Lizhen Mengding Ganlu tea spaces in Chengdu, Sichuan's provincial capital, and in Chongqing, as well as a dozen franchise stores.

To meet market demands and the needs of tea farmers, the local government has been cooperating with Sichuan Agricultural University, the Tea Research Institute of the Sichuan Academy of Agricultural Sciences, and the Tea Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences to breed new tea plant varieties.

Luo Fan, director of the Tea Research Institute of the Sichuan Academy of Agricultural Sciences, said the native tea plants in Mengding Mountain are of very good quality, with strong environmental adaptability, high amino acid levels and buds that are easy to harvest.

"The quality of a tea is closely related to the tea plants, as they affect the aroma and taste of the tea leaves," he said. "What we are doing is breeding new tea plant varieties, such as those with higher yield, stronger adaptability, and superior aroma and taste."

The most successful tea plant variety bred by Luo's research institute has been widely planted not only in Ya'an, but also in provinces across the country. The three current varieties bred by the institute have been planted across a total area of 6,666 hectares, he said.

Wang Fei, a master of the traditional Mengshan tea-serving techniques, participates in more than 10 overseas cultural exchange activities each year to showcase her tea-serving skills and promote Mengshan tea and its culture.

"In the past, foreign friends only knew about Wulong, Pu'er and Longjing," she said. "Today, an increasing number of them are learning about Mengshan tea and its processing and serving techniques."

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Ministry introduces e-license pilot program

By YANG ZEKUN

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A pilot program for electronic vehicle registration licenses will start in 60 cities on July 1, the Ministry of Public Security announced on Thursday.

The e-license program, a significant step toward streamlining traffic management services, is one of eight new measures introduced by the

ministry to enhance traffic management, simplify license application procedures and optimize urban traffic flow.

The ministry estimates the reforms will benefit hundreds of millions of people and save motorists about 3 billion yuan (\$430 million).

"As of May, China had over 440 million motor vehicles and 530 million drivers," said Wang Qiang, director of the ministry's Traffic

Management Bureau. "We recognize the public's growing demand for efficient and intelligent traffic management services."

Since 2017, the ministry has implemented over 100 reform measures, resulting in cost savings exceeding 100 billion yuan for individuals and businesses. Additionally, over 100 million people have benefited from convenient services related to vehicle inspections, cross-

provincial certification applications and license replacements.

"We've actively promoted the use of electronic licenses in traffic management," Wang said. "This includes the complete digitization of vehicle inspection marks and driving licenses."

Authorities have issued nearly 1.48 billion electronic inspection marks and distributed electronic driving licenses to 250 million drivers to

date. The e-license application process during the pilot project is straightforward — people can apply directly through the ministry's Jiaoguan 12123 mobile app. The app also allows vehicle owners to authorize others to use their e-licenses for specific tasks.

To achieve nationwide validity and broader adoption, Wang emphasized that the ministry will focus on enhancing information and support systems and expanding the means to apply for e-licenses, with the goal of achieving nationwide implementation by the end of this year.

E-licenses offer several advantages, including verification of dynamic information about such matters as vehicle inspections, mortgages, traffic violations and accident processing in real time.

Also starting July 1, car owners selling vehicles to scrap yards can obtain electronic deregistration certificates through the Jiaoguan 12123 app.

People can also opt for door-to-door delivery services when replacing or renewing their license plates. Courier services will collect application materials and deliver the new plates upon approval.

CHINA

Xinjiang a cultural melting pot

Ancient trading hub remains repository of diverse heritage

By CUI JIA in Kashgar, Xinjiang
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It's important to step up archaeological excavation efforts in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, as its unique history can offer new perspectives on understanding China's history and culture, foreign scholars said.

There are few places in the world that have as many cultures that have come together and left behind rich heritages as they have in Xinjiang, said Neil Schmid, a researcher with the Dunhuang Academy. He made the remarks on the sidelines of the International Forum on the History and Future of Xinjiang held in southern Xinjiang's Kashgar city.

Xinjiang boasts a rich tradition and the coexistence of diverse cultures and religions. In addition to numerous Buddhist sites, a Zoroastrian fire altar from 2,500 years ago was found in Tashkurgan county. In the ancient city of Milan in Ruqiang county, a Greek-style "winged angel" Buddhist mural from 1,800 years ago was uncovered.

Taoist scriptures and a Christian Bible were unearthed together from a 1,300-year-old Nestorian monastery in Turpan. Also in Turpan, Manichaean worship scenes from 1,000 years ago were discovered in the murals of the ancient city of Gaochang.

In the ancient city known as Dun during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), in Qitai county, a Nestorian church from 1,200 years ago was found, whose murals depict the scene of Jesus entering Jerusalem on a donkey. Inside the city, an ancient Roman-style bathhouse from 1,000 years ago was also excavated.

"Xinjiang is a place where diverse civilizations converge. They are extremely mixed in many ways," Schmid said.

He shared research on the portrait of Li Shengting, King of Yutian — an ancient kingdom in the Western Regions — found in Cave 98 of Dunhuang's Mogao Grottoes at the forum.

"The costume patterns of the king



Zhan Ru (second from left), a professor from Peking University's department of South Asia studies, talks about the dissemination of Buddhism to Central China along the Silk Road via Xinjiang in ancient times, during the International Forum on the History and Future of Xinjiang in Kashgar, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, on Wednesday. JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

not only reflect the influence of the Han emperor's costume, but they can also be found in statues and murals in Iran. It also shows that the concept of the divine right of kings is also valued in Xinjiang," Schmid said.

The integration of different civilizations can generate interest from people with different backgrounds and find points that they can relate to and begin to explore the Chinese culture themselves, he added.

"I think Westerners don't understand China very well. This is unfortunately an ongoing problem. Xinjiang is an amazing gateway for them to start learning about China," Schmid said. "And I think people really deserve to know the complex layers of cultures and religions of Xinjiang. It's really incredible."

Buddhism came into China through different routes, and one of them was via Xinjiang. The translation of many Buddhist texts was done in the region, which has had an incredible impact on the Chinese language and culture, said Imre Galambos, a chair professor at Zhejiang University and emeritus professor at the faculty of Asian and Middle



Eastern Studies at the University of Cambridge.

"In recent years, there have been quite a few finds, including manuscripts in Xinjiang. All of these new discoveries are wonderful because we're going to have much more material to look at and that's going to lead to a much better understanding of the history of the region and also the history of the spread of Buddhism to China," said Galambos, who specializes in the study of medieval Chinese and Tangut manuscripts.

Galambos said it's incredibly exciting to see archaeological discoveries in Xinjiang as many relics such as ancient manuscripts can survive in the region due to its climate conditions. Continuous efforts

should be made to make new discoveries, which can help scholars and people better understand China, he said.

Wei Jian, a professor at the School of Ethnology and Sociology at Minzu University of China, said archaeological excavations in Xinjiang were mainly carried out on tombs in the past, but more large-scale excavations have been carried out in ancient cities and monasteries in recent years. It will surely provide more comprehensive information on the region's past, he said.

Colin Mackerras, an emeritus professor at Griffith University in Australia, said cultural relics are very important because they can tell the stories of the past, and that history is also important for the present.

He was glad to see that cultural relics have been well preserved in Kashgar, which was a key trade hub on the ancient Silk Road. They can show the outside world and the local people the importance of the city in terms of world history, Mackerras said.

Zhao Manfeng contributed to this story.

People of Western Regions 'co-creators' of Chinese identity

By CUI JIA in Kashgar, Xinjiang
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The internationally prevalent narrative that portrays the relationship between the culture in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, historically known as the Western Regions, and Chinese culture as being the "assimilation" of the former into the latter is untrue and reflects the widespread ignorance of Chinese history, Pan Yue, director of the National Ethnic Affairs Commission, said.

"In fact, peoples of the Western Regions have always been co-creators of Chinese culture," Pan said while delivering a speech at the International Forum on the History and Future of Xinjiang on Wednesday.

Some 170 scholars and archaeologists from countries such as China, the United States, Australia, Germany, Egypt and Kazakhstan took part in the forum in the city of southern Xinjiang, sharing the latest archaeological findings in the region and the ties between the history of the region and Chinese culture.

Pan said there are many examples of the influence of the Western Regions in shaping the Chinese culture. For instance, *Nongsang Yishi Cuoyao*, the ancient treatise on agriculture and sericulture, was compiled by the Gaochang agronomist Lu Mingshan, an ethnic Uygur in the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368).

Many important texts in Chinese Buddhism, including the *Diamond Sutra*, were translated by monk Kumarajiva in Kuqa. He introduced terms such as "compassion", "world", "enlightenment", "sea of suffering", and "river of love", which are terms adopted by Chinese language.

The Chinese culture and the Chinese nation have been continuously inherited and developed over generations. It's a collective creation and inheritance of various ethnic groups, including those from the Western Regions, he said.

The foundation of a cultural community is the deep integration of the economy and society. The geographical layout of the Pamir Plateau and the Hexi Corridor has been a significant factor in the economic integration of the Western Regions with the East. It was the high connectivity between the regions and the vast market of the Central Plains that enabled the Western Regions to facilitate communication across

the Eurasian continent, he added. "Ultimately, Xinjiang and the Central Plains belonged to the same political community, which was the inevitable result of the development of economic, social and cultural communities," Pan said.

He added that, in China, unity fosters diversity, and diversity enriches unity, as exemplified by the Mo'er Temple in Kashgar.

The site with a history spanning at least 700 years, contains an Indian Gandhara-style Buddhist stupa, a Central Asian and Xinjiang-native square-shaped temple, and a

Chinese Buddhist grand hall. It reflects how early Indian Buddhism evolved into a Western Regions variant in the Tarim Basin before spreading east to the Central Plains. Centuries later, Sinicized Buddhism returned to the Western Regions, building Chinese Buddhist halls at its original entry points into China.

Whether Buddhism or Islam, on entering China, both underwent collisions and integrations, evolving into Sinicized Buddhism and Sinicized Islam. The process of collision and integration was not aimed at eliminating each other but at enhancing each other, resulting in the emergence of more inclusive civilizations, Pan said.

"The stories of the peaceful coexistence of multiple ethnic groups and diverse religions in Xinjiang illustrate to the world that China, a country that has experienced almost no religious wars for thousands of years, and a country that has never engaged in colonial expansion or forced cultural exportation, may offer another perspective into ethnic and religious conflicts," he said.

He added that the world may not fully agree with each other's methods of seeking unity, but people can learn from each other, and realize their aspirations in their own ways.

Xinjiang will continue to protect the cultures of various ethnic groups to enrich and develop the splendid and diverse Chinese civilization, he said.

"Xinjiang is not only China's Xinjiang but also the world's. It is our shared vision to make Xinjiang, with its past, present and future, reach out to the world," Pan said.



Pan Yue

Modernization, local tradition equally embraced

By ZHAO MANFENG

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"Xinjiang is modernizing quickly while keeping its ethnic traditional culture, and the region will embrace a hopeful future," said Australian sinologist Colin Mackerras.

Mackerras, professor emeritus at Griffith University in Australia and a fellow of the Australian Academy of Humanities, made the remarks during his keynote speech at the International Forum on the History and Future of Xinjiang on Wednesday.

Citing Xinjiang's poverty alleviation efforts, life expectancy and health level — including infant mortality, Mackerras said Xinjiang has become very modern since his first visit to the region in 1982.

"Despite spurious reports spread by some Western media that China



Colin Mackerras

is trying to eradicate the local culture, factual data and my experience show otherwise," said Mackerras. "What I see in Xinjiang is attempts to preserve culture, arts, the historical relics, language, and there are more mosques in Xinjiang per capita than anywhere else in the world."

Mackerras took the example of his travel to Yarkant county in 2018, where he saw that the Twelve Muqam, a kind of traditional music of the Uygur ethnic group, was being taught in a dance training school.

"The ethnic culture is surviving quite well here in Xinjiang, and

the ethnic music and dance is continually performed both by professionals and by ordinary people, and the Uygur language seems to me to be used very widely, much more widely than the use of indigenous languages in Australia or the United States," said Mackerras.

"In the process of modernization, Xinjiang has a retention of culture, which includes languages, arts, architecture and food," he said.

"Xinjiang has a diverse and integrated culture, and the multiculturalism is indeed an important part of the great Chinese civilization."

The sinologist attributes the West's misinformation to ignorance of Chinese policies. "The West knows so little about how much support the Chinese government got from its people," said Mackerras.

Looking ahead, with the Belt and Road Initiative creating infrastructure across the greater Eurasian continent, Xinjiang will embrace more opportunities in trade and civilization dialogues.

"From any perspective of development, Xinjiang has performed excellently in recent years, and it has a bright future ahead," he concluded.

Mackerras studied the Tang Dynasty (618-907) for his master of letters degree at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom in 1964, and completed his PhD on Chinese opera at the Australian National University in Canberra six years later.

Mackerras has spent 60 years teaching and writing about China. Specializing in Chinese history, art and ethnic minorities, he has written or edited more than 40 books on these topics.

East meets West



Visitors admire a three-ear clay jar with flower patterns, a star exhibit at Kashgar Museum in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, on Thursday. The jar, from Kashgar's Shufu county, dates back some 1,500 years and features patterns that show characteristics of both Eastern and Western civilizations. JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

Minority groups respected in autonomous region

By ZHAO MANFENG

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The respect for minority groups in Xinjiang is something that the West should learn from, not point fingers at, said scholars at an international forum on Xinjiang.

The International Forum on the History and Future of Xinjiang was held in Kashgar, Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region on Wednesday. Some 170 experts from China, the United States, Australia, Germany, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and other countries gathered to hold

in-depth discussions on the theme of Xinjiang's history and future.

"Local culture is well-preserved here in Xinjiang. People are still speaking their local languages, performing their local dances, singing their local songs and creating their own local art. This is very different from the ethnic minorities and indigenous people in the West," said Barry Sautman, a retired professor of social science at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and a distinguished professor at Tsinghua University.

"Western media is very influential in the world, and it tries to convince

people that everything is terrible in Xinjiang, but the opposite is actually true," said Sautman.

Speaking at the forum, Sautman made comparisons from six perspectives to evaluate Xinjiang's socioeconomic development, namely, poverty reduction and employment, life expectancy, land rights, population size, language retention and religious participation.

His comparisons found that the gap between the life expectancy of Han and Uygur communities in Xinjiang is only four years, a stark contrast to the 11-year gap between white Americans and

Native Americans in the US.

Unlike the widespread dispossession of indigenous lands in the West, China's system of collective ownership of rural land safeguards the land rights of all farmers. Settler colonialism in the West resulted in a severe decline in indigenous populations, whereas in Xinjiang, the growth rate of ethnic minority populations surpasses that of the Han population.

In contrast to Western countries, where a mere 9.5 percent of Australian aboriginals were able to speak their own language in 2021, the use of ethnic minority mother tongues in Xinjiang stands at 99 percent.

The number of religious buildings in the West is in decline. In contrast, Xinjiang has the highest density of mosques per capita globally.

"Comparative studies reveal that the perceived superiority of some developed countries may not be as justified as commonly believed," said Sautman.

"What is exciting in Xinjiang is the respect for minority people. Clearly, the music, dance and culture have been well-preserved here in Xinjiang," said Mary Tucker-Grim, a professor at the School of Forestry and Environment Studies at Yale University.

She was impressed with Xinjiang for maintaining its own culture while striving for modernity, and attributes such coexistence of tradition and modernity to a rich tradi-

tion and coexistence of diverse cultures and religions.

"China has the unique opportunity to have harmony with Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, as well as ethnic peoples, and that makes this region so unique. The culture of Xinjiang is diverse, but also in unity with the elements of Chinese culture," Tucker-Grim said.

"China puts a lot of effort into preserving and protecting the ethnic minority cultures. Sometimes, the political interests just obscure the reality, and I believe everyone should come to Xinjiang to see with their own eyes," said Imre Hamar, director of the Institute of East Asian Studies and head of the Department of Sinology at Eotvos Lorand University in Hungary.

WORLD

The arts help repair difficult bilateral ties

By CHANG JUN in San Francisco
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While many are dismayed by the currently tarnished China-US relationship, artists and community activists are using arts to address estrangement between people in China and the United States through exhibitions, seminars and paintings.

Song Min, president of the US-China Culture & Communication Association, headquartered in the San Francisco Bay Area, believes in the important role that storytelling through art has been playing in facilitating goodwill and dialogue between people.

Last fall, he led eight American artists to visit Xianning, Hubei province, and joined nine Chinese artists there for an activity — "Chinese in the Eyes of Americans — Telling the Story of Xianning, Hubei with a Paintbrush."

During the week, "artists mingle with each other through paintings and artistic expressions," said Song. "Together, they toured scenic spots, visited schools and museums, checked street vendors, talked to locals and captured moments of significance. They reflected their findings on canvas through brush strokes and colors."

The collective works of Chinese and American artists, 27 pieces in total, were first on display in Xianning before they were shown at an exhibition in late May at a public library in Cupertino, California, which has been in a sister-city relationship with Xianning since 2018.

Sheila Mohan, mayor of Cupertino, said the event will enhance collaboration and exchanges between the two cities through the medium of art and is expected to propel the relationship to a new high.

Olivia Edwards, one of the participating American artists said, "I have loved art all my life and I am further inspired when I visited Xianning. I remember the kindness, hospitality of the Chinese people there. Most importantly, I love the spirit of the people — their vision, their diligence, their hard work, their efforts to preserve the old neighborhood while building the new."

Moreover, Chinese artists impressed her with their "brilliant talents," and "getting to know them is the highlight of this trip," said Edwards, adding that to paint together and communicate through artwork is "something that connects us. I just love them."

Rebecca Jo Alex, another participant, said "There is no better way to see and visit a place than it is being painted. I saw great details of the beauty of China — their people are so warm; cuisines are diverse."

"The best memories are about

time with my fellow Chinese artists. Although we don't speak the same language, we do communicate through the universal language of arts."

Dacia Xu, director and co-founder of Qualia Contemporary Art, a gallery in Palo Alto, California, also believes in the enduring power of art exchanges in building relations.

On May 18, Qualia unveiled *Beneath the Golden Antlers*, its first solo exhibition featuring Chinese contemporary ink artist Yang Jiechang, which runs to late June.

"This is part of our ongoing programmatic focus on contemporary artists from the Asian diaspora," said Xu, adding that her gallery continues to showcase stellar artworks, with influences and elements from different cultures and genres.

"To underpin understandings between peoples through the platform of art is our mission," she said.

Xu noted that Yang's exhibition highlights his recent representations of animals.

"While he works in a variety of media, such as painting, sculpture, installation, performance and video, Yang is best known for his mastery of traditional Chinese media — brush and ink painting, meticulous color painting and calligraphy. This is a legacy and (Chinese) cultural tradition central to his work."

Yang, a Cantonese-speaking native, was born and raised in Foshan, Guangdong province, where he inherited his conservative, reserved family values. He then went to the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts in 1982, where four years of academic training bolstered his professional pursuits.

Since 1988, Yang has lived in Paris and Heidelberg, Germany, where he has honed his drawing skills and achieved international recognition.

"Isn't Yang's story interesting?" Xu said, adding that to orchestrate an exhibition such as this is also to build a bridge, to tell a story of human interest.

"We are committed to building lasting relationships with artists, collectors, curators and scholars, nationally and internationally," she said.

The grassroots efforts, which may seem trivial at first, are like the dripping water that accumulates strength that ultimately can penetrate boulders, said Song.

On June 10, Song led another delegation of 12 American teenagers and young adults on a journey of exploration in Hubei province. "This time, they will use cameras and painting brushes to capture and record anything they deem enticing, eye-opening or just different from that in the United States," he said.



Pro-Palestinian protesters gather on the UCLA campus on Wednesday in Los Angeles. The president of the University of Miami has been chosen to become the next chancellor of the UCLA, where the retiring incumbent is leaving a campus roiled by protests against Israel's campaign in Gaza. DAMIAN DOVARGANES / AP

Israeli forces thrust deeper into Rafah

Fighting rages as diplomatic efforts to secure cease-fire remain unabated

JERUSALEM/GAZA — Israeli forces advanced deeper into the western part of Rafah, amid one of the worst nights of bombardment, as Israel and Hamas' difficult-to-reconcile positions cast doubt on the prospect of a truce deal.

Residents in Rafah said on Thursday that Israeli forces thrust toward the Al-Mawasi area of Rafah near the beach, which is designated as a humanitarian area in all announcements and maps published by the Israeli army since it began its Rafah offensive in May.

But the Israeli military denied in a statement it had launched any strikes inside the Al-Mawasi humanitarian zone.

Israel said its assault aimed to wipe out Hamas' last intact combat units in Rafah, a city that had sheltered more than a million people before the latest advance began. Most of those people have now moved north toward Khan Younis and Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip.

The Israeli military said in a statement it was continuing "intelligence-based, targeted operations" in Rafah, saying forces in the past day had located weapons and killed Palestinian gunmen in close-range combat.

Over the past day, the military said it had struck 45 targets across the Gaza Strip from the air, including military structures, militant cells, rocket launchers and tunnel shafts.

Israel has ruled out peace until Hamas is eradicated.

Hamas welcomed a new US cease-fire proposal but made some

amendments, reaffirming its stance that any agreement must secure an end to the conflict.

The changes that Hamas requested to the cease-fire proposal are "not significant" and include the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip, a senior leader in the group told Reuters on Thursday.

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said on Thursday that Israel is standing behind the cease-fire proposal, and the goal is to bridge gaps with Hamas and get to a deal soon.

Efforts to secure an agreement are still continuing, according to mediators Qatar and Egypt.

Since a brief weeklong truce in November, repeated attempts to arrange a cease-fire have failed.

Hamas precipitated the conflict on Oct 7, killing about 1,200 people, according to Israeli tallies.

Staggering figure

Israel's bombardment of Gaza has killed at least 37,000 people since then, according to the territory's health ministry. Thousands more are feared dead buried under the rubble, with most of the 2.3 million population displaced.

Meanwhile, the United Nations said on Thursday that a staggering total of 120 million people are living forcibly displaced by war, violence and persecution, branding the ever-increasing number a "terrible indictment on the state of the world".

The UN's refugee agency said forced displacement across the globe had risen for a 12th consecu-

tive year to a record high, with conflicts in places like Gaza forcing even more people to flee their homes.

In the aftermath of campus turmoil over pro-Palestinian protests in the United States, the president of the University of Miami was chosen on Wednesday to become the next chancellor of the University of California, Los Angeles, where the retiring incumbent leaves a campus roiled by protests over the Gaza conflict.

Julio Frenk, a global public health researcher, was selected by regents of the University of California system at a meeting on the UCLA campus, where there was a swarm of security officers.

Frenk will succeed Gene Block, who has been chancellor for 17 years and announced his planned retirement long before UCLA became a national flashpoint for US campus protests. This spring, pro-Palestinian encampments were built and cleared by police with many arrests.

More than 200 pro-Palestinian protesters were arrested on May 2 as police moved to dismantle an encampment at the university. On May 23, a group of protesters briefly established a second encampment on the UCLA campus before police moved in to disband the efforts.

As the conflict in Gaza triggers wider tensions, hundreds of rockets were fired from Lebanon toward northern Israel on Wednesday, hours after Israeli airstrikes killed a Hezbollah militant commander.

The Israeli military said about 215 projectiles were detected, some of which were intercepted, and that several fires were caused by the strikes.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

South Africa on high alert after Mpox death case

By OTIATO OPALI in Nairobi, Kenya
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South Africa's health department on Wednesday announced plans to procure vaccines against the Mpox, virus formerly known as monkeypox after the country recorded its first confirmed death from the disease this week.

While addressing a media briefing, Joe Phaahla, South Africa's minister of health, said that five cases have been confirmed since May involving men aged between 30 and 39. However, none of the individuals were reported as having traveled abroad, suggesting the disease was being transmitted locally. He added that all five cases recorded in the country this year were classed as severe and required hospitalization.

"At the current moment, there is no registered treatment for Mpox in South Africa. However, the World Health Organization, or WHO, recommends the use of the Tecovirimat vaccine for the treatment of severe cases. We are trying to source vaccines from WHO member countries who have stockpiles that exceed their needs as well as from the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization," Phaahla said.

Close physical contact

Mpox is a viral infection which is transmitted through close physical contact. Its initial symptoms include headaches, fever, back pain, aching muscles and swellings which can develop into a rash. In 2022, WHO declared a public health emergency over an outbreak of Mpox. Despite lifting the public emergency last year, low levels of cases are still being reported in some countries.

"Although the World Health Organization has not recommended any travel restrictions, it is important for travelers to and from endemic countries to alert health officials on the situation to enable them to provide guidance for case detection and management," Phaahla said adding that one death is too many, especially from a preventable and manageable disease like Mpox.

Of the remaining four cases in South Africa, the health minister said that one patient has been discharged, one discharged for home isolation and two remain in hospital. He urged South Africans to help the government in curbing further spread of the infectious disease by having those with suspected symptoms, or who were in contact with known patients, present themselves at healthcare facilities for early diagnosis and effective treatment.

According to data published by WHO on June 5, the last severe cases of the disease in Africa were reported in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in April after the country recorded 19 cases of the virus. WHO said that as part of its coordination of potential Mpox vaccine donors, it was working with other WHO member states who are interested in donating vaccines to the country.



A group of American students from San Francisco learn to play Chinese drums during their study trip to Wuhan, capital of Hubei province, on Wednesday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

BRICS Sports Games kick off in Russia

By REN QI in Kazan, Russia
renqi@chinadaily.com.cn

Thousands of athletes will be vying for medals in the Russian city of Kazan at the sixth BRICS Sports Games, an international competition that kicked off on Wednesday amid Russia's exclusion from some sports events.

"The role of BRICS in global affairs grows rapidly," said Russian President Vladimir Putin in a video address at the opening ceremony of the Games.

"The Sports Games under the aegis of our organization are part of the comprehensive political, economic and humanitarian cooperation."

Since the launch of the special military operation in Ukraine, Russia has been frozen out of some prominent international competitions and sports associations. Some Russian passport holders will be allowed to compete as neutral athletes in the Paris Olympics that begin on July 26, but their results will not be credited to Russia.

Russian Deputy Prime Minister



Chinese participants are seen ahead of the opening ceremony of the BRICS Sports Games in Kazan on Wednesday. SOFYA SANDURSKAYA / TASS

Dmitry Chernyshenko said earlier that Russia has always adhered to the principle that sport is beyond politics, "but we are constantly drawn into the politics, because they understand the importance of sport in the lives of our Russian people".

Putin expressed his certainty that the popularity and attractiveness of the Games as a competition free from

political interference and pressure, which truly unites athletes from all over the world, will also grow.

"Especially considering that this is the first time the BRICS Games take place in an open format, which means that the games will become yet another symbol of the expanding intercultural dialogue, a significant contribution to the

strengthening of the friendship between nations and a fruitful cooperation between states in the interest of the people and universal development," Putin said.

Athletes from nearly 100 countries will be participating in the Games, Russian Sports Minister Mikhail Degtyarev said. This year's games will be held from June 12 to 23.

"Our objective is to ensure that all countries have the opportunity to compete without discrimination and politicization as well as to create equal conditions for everyone and follow the traditions of sports," Degtyarev said.

More than 190 athletes from China will participate in the Games this year. The inaugural BRICS Games were held in June 2017 in Guangzhou. Athletes vied for medals in sports such as men's basketball and women's volleyball.

The games this year have now expanded to 27 sports, including fencing, synchronized swimming, judo, wrestling and sambo.

There will also be competitions in two "phygital" sports — soccer and basketball — that combine physical matchups along with play on video screens.

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Subscription: 212-537-8899

Advertising: 212-537-8916

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These materials are distributed by China Daily Distribution Corp. on behalf of China Daily Beijing, China. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.

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CHINA DAILY (ISSN 0748-6154) is

published daily except weekends by China

Daily USA, 1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,

New York, NY 10036. Periodical postage

paid at New York, NY and additional

mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send

address changes to CHINA DAILY USA,

1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY

10036.

Vol. 38 - No.1352

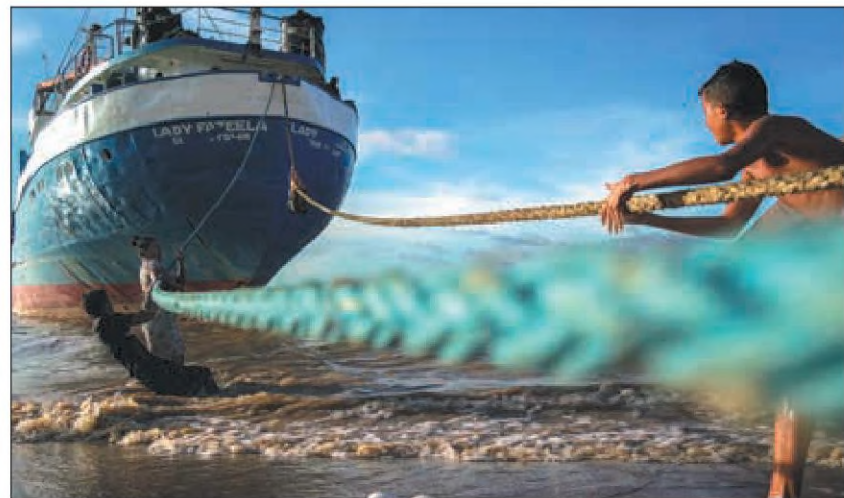
GLOBAL LENS



A worker is silhouetted against the setting sun as he bathes amid high temperatures in northern India on June 1. MUKESH GUPTA / AFP



A man jumps into the sea to cool himself off during hot weather in Istanbul on Tuesday. CEM TEKESINOGLU VIA GETTY IMAGES



Children play with the ropes of a ship docked on a beach during hot weather in Parika, Guyana, on Sunday. RAMON ESPINOSA / AP



From top: Women quench their thirst with tap water in the afternoon during a heat wave in Prayagraj, India, on Monday. ANIL SHAKYA / AFP



Tourists with an umbrella walk in front of the Parthenon in central Athens, Greece, on Wednesday. PETROS GIANNAKOURIS / AP

HOT SPOT

Temperatures hit record high as mercury continues to climb

The world has now marked one full year of back-to-back monthly heat records, the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service announced on June 5.

It said last month was the hottest May in recorded history — the 12th consecutive month in which the monthly high temperature record was broken.

It was also the 11th consecutive month where the global average temperature was at least 1.5 degrees above the preindustrial average. If that trend continues, it would mean the world is passing a major climate change milestone.

The effect has been felt around the globe. The United States is facing another summer of extreme heat along with wildfires in California and an explosive hurricane season in the Atlantic. In the past month, deadly floods killed hundreds in Afghanistan, Brazil and Indonesia, while dozens have died in India from extreme heat.

But this might only be the beginning, experts warned. "This string of hottest months will be remembered as comparatively cold," Carlo Buontempo, director of the Copernicus Climate Change Service, said in a statement.

Buontempo said the trend is "shocking but not surprising."

While the record-breaking streak might be interrupted, "the overall signature of climate change remains and there is no sign in sight of a change in such a trend," Buontempo said.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a special address in New York that for the past year, every turn of the calendar has turned up the heat.

"Our planet is trying to tell us something. But we don't seem to be listening. We're shattering global temperature records and reaping the whirlwind," Guterres said.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



From top: A man walks past fans for sale on the streets of Baghdad, Iraq, on Tuesday. AHMAD AL-RUBAYE / AFP Tourists rest at a cooling station, which offers cold air and water, at the Hoover Dam in Boulder City, the US state of Nevada, on Saturday. JIM WATSON / AFP



An aerial view of the smoke and flames as firefighters face a blaze amid vegetation in Los Banos of Merced County, California, on June 7. TAYFUN COSKUN VIA GETTY IMAGES



Drivers sleep at a bus station on a hot summer's day in Lahore, Pakistan, on June 2, amid a severe heat wave. ARIF ALI / AFP

BUSINESS

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Well-being firm vows to expand, invest in nation

By ZHENG XIN
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Confident of China's long-term potential, especially in the health, nutrition and beauty sectors, dsm-firmenich said it will continue to expand and invest in the nation, amid a gradual recovery of its economy and growing consumer confidence.

"The Chinese market has been an important strategic market for dsm-firmenich, and we have continuously invested and will keep investing in China," said Dimitri de Vreeze, CEO of dsm-firmenich, a company that specializes in health, nutrition and beauty.

"I'm pleased to say that we have had a strong start in the first quarter of the year, and we see positive momentum continuing into the second quarter, especially in China, where our growth outpaces our global growth. This is very promising," he said.

According to De Vreeze, China's consumer market is experiencing a stable recovery, generating diversified consumption demand and new trends, with the market necessitating quick responses from manufacturers.

In sectors such as nutrition, health and beauty, the company is witnessing these markets growing, he said.

"In China, a key engine of dsm-firmenich's economic growth, healthy, nutritious and delicious foods have become the most sought-after trait among consumers, where dsm-firmenich finds massive opportunities. What is more, the younger generation in China is spending more and more on fragrance and beauty to find their self-identity, providing a huge opportunity for dsm-firmenich," he said.

"Chinese consumers are attaching more importance to health and nutrition. People are now increasingly aware of the need to manage their immune health, increasing demand for easily accessible dietary solutions that support proactive health. We want to leverage the company's advantages to further facilitate Chinese consumers' demand in these sectors.

"China has become not only a key market and production base but also an innovation hub for many multinational corporations," he added.

Data released by the Ministry of Commerce show that the number of newly established foreign-invested businesses in China hit 16,805 in the first four months of 2024, up 19.2 percent year-on-year.

According to Pan Yuan, an associate researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of World Economics and Politics, China's wealth of innovative application scenarios, bolstered by supportive policies and a thriving market, will continue to attract global investors.

The allure of investment opportunities will endure, particularly in emerging industries and new business models, Pan said.

The company currently has four world-class research and development centers in China, to research, innovate, and respond to local customer demand for tailored fragrance, nutrition and health-conscious taste solutions.

"We have a strategy in China for all our three businesses to really be locally here. Not only with science, research and creation, but also production," De Vreeze said.

"It's not only China for China locally, but it's high-quality products which are appreciated globally. We already see that in the hydrocolloid business."



A property project under construction in Hefei, Anhui province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Housing oversupply remedy on agenda

Central bank recently announced 300 billion yuan re-lending facility

By ZHOU LANXU and OUYANG SHIJIA

China has launched the implementation of a recently announced policy to address surplus housing inventories, which analysts said is likely to significantly expand in size as a potent tool to stabilize the ailing residential property sector.

They made the comments after the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, held a meeting on Wednesday calling for efforts to ensure effective implementation of the affordable housing re-lending facility and accelerate the destocking of housing inventories.

On May 17, the PBOC announced that it would establish a 300 billion yuan (\$42.25 billion) re-lending facility, which will provide funding for State-owned enterprises to buy completed commercial properties for repurposed affordable housing.

The facility, offering funding to banks at an interest rate of 1.75 percent with a term of one year, can be rolled over four times, and will be issued to 21 national banks, including China Development Bank and Postal Savings Bank of China.

Yan Yuejin, director of the Shanghai-based E-house China Research and Development Institution, said that Wednesday's meeting means the country has started implementation of the re-lending facility policy and is expected to see an acceleration in housing inventory destocking in the third quarter.

"The re-lending facility is a crucial policy lever in this round of real estate inventory destocking, which, in turn, is a core focus of the current

"The re-lending facility is a crucial policy lever in this round of real estate inventory destocking ..."

Yang Haiping, researcher at the Central University of Finance and Economics' Institute of Securities and Futures

real estate support policy package," said Yang Haiping, a researcher at the Central University of Finance and Economics' Institute of Securities and Futures.

"This policy tool will complement other measures — including lowering mortgage interest rates, reducing down payment ratios and the 'white list' system to provide financing for real estate developers — in order to jointly stabilize the real estate market," Yang said.

He added that the size of the re-lending facility will very likely expand given the current supply-demand relationship in the housing market and homebuyers' lukewarm sentiment.

Sharing similar sentiments, Robin Xing, chief China economist at Morgan Stanley, said that the 300 billion yuan re-lending quota still falls short of the 3 to 4 trillion yuan needed to lower the scale of housing inventories to a desirable level.

"If local government pilot programs over the coming months give rise to an actionable and replicable mechanism, it could set the founda-

tion for a larger-scale nationwide implementation plan next year with more central government, or quasi-fiscal, backing," Xing said.

This, combined with the already deep housing market correction and some stabilization in the population aged 20 to 34 — who are core aged homebuyers — in the coming two years, suggests that the housing sector will likely become a smaller drag on the Chinese economy next year, he said.

At the PBOC's meeting on Wednesday, it was stressed that the creation of new local hidden debt should be strictly avoided during the implementation of the facility, and moral hazards should be prevented effectively.

Financial media 21jingji further reported on Wednesday that Zou Lan, head of the PBOC's monetary policy department, has required that any city government should select no more than two local SOEs to acquire housing inventories, and selected SOEs should not themselves be government financing vehicles.

The central bank meeting also called for adhering to the principles of voluntary participation, demand-driven procurement and reasonable pricing to ensure the facility's commercial sustainability.

Yang said that these requirements mean that despite the government funding support, the risks associated with housing acquisitions are not undertaken by the government and a market-oriented approach is adhered to.

"The risks are borne by the SOEs as well as the lenders who grant the loans."

Contact the writers at zhoulanzv@chinadaily.com.cn

Lens projected on intermediaries amid Evergrande debacle

By OUYANG SHIJIA and ZHOU LANXU

PwC, one of the Big Four global accounting firms, is facing a crisis of confidence as it has already lost dozens of Chinese clients recently over its alleged role in auditing bankrupt real estate developer Evergrande Group.

The China Securities Regulatory Commission, which slapped a fine of 4.175 billion yuan (\$575.7 million) on Evergrande Real Estate Group, the flagship subsidiary of Evergrande Group, for alleged financial fraud, has said that it will also hasten investigations into related intermediary agencies following the scandal.

PwC is facing a severe trust crisis and has lost over 30 Chinese clients due to the regulatory action on Evergrande, said Wang Peng, a researcher at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences.

"Intermediaries play a significant role in the capital market," Wang said. "Regulatory authorities should continue to intensify their oversight of intermediary agencies and severely crack down on violations to uphold market order."

Dai Guanchun, a senior capital markets lawyer, said it is likely that a longer list of firms will stop PwC's auditing services in the country.

"It is difficult for PwC to avoid the responsibility. It will likely pay a heavy fine and some of its local operations may be suspended for rectification in the future," he said.

Bai Wenxi, vice-chairman of the China Enterprise Capital Union, said the crisis of confidence has intensified client concerns over the quality of its audit services.

"Since large State-owned enterprises and other listed companies place significant importance on the quality of audit services and the reputa-

tion of audit firms, the crisis might lead those companies to change their auditors," he said.

"As one of the intermediaries tied to the Evergrande issue, PwC may face administrative penalties if found responsible, including but not limited to warnings, fines, business restrictions, or even market bans," Bai said.

Citing the strict regulation and penalties imposed by the authorities on intermediary institutions this year, Bai said it has demonstrated the regulatory authorities' determination to strengthen the responsibilities of intermediaries and enhance the transparency and fairness of the capital markets.

"Moving forward, regulatory authorities may need to take measures including strengthening on-site inspections, increasing the cost of violations, enhancing self-regulation of the industry, and improving the professional standards and ethics of intermediary agencies, to further maintain market order and protect investor interests," he said.

Li Chao, a lecturer at East China University of Political Science and Law, said that despite facing a crisis PwC still has the potential to regain market recognition if it can actively respond to the challenges by improving service quality as well as strengthening communication and cooperation with clients.

Li, who is also a researcher at Shanghai-based think tank KT Institute, said regulatory authorities are aiming to strengthen oversight over intermediary institutions and increase penalties for those violating laws and regulations, in order to fulfill their "gatekeeper" role in the capital markets. "That is crucial to maintain market order and protect investor rights."

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Briefly

PBOC adds liquidity via reverse repos

China's central bank conducted 2 billion yuan (\$281.21 million) in seven-day reverse repos at an interest rate of 1.8 percent on Thursday. The move aims to keep liquidity reasonable and ample in the banking system, the People's Bank of China said in a statement. A reverse repo is a process in which the central bank purchases securities from commercial banks through bidding, with an agreement to sell them back in the future.

8th China-Eurasia Expo coming up

The 8th China-Eurasia Expo is scheduled to be held between June 26-30 in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, said China's Ministry of Commerce. The ministry said the expo will cover an area of 140,000 square meters with four major exhibition zones covering investment cooperation, international exhibitions, special industries and equipment manufacturing.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Meitu riding cutting-edge AI breakthroughs

By FAN FEIFEI
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Chinese tech company Meitu Inc, which is known for its popular image-editing app and content sharing software, is doubling down on artificial intelligence-powered large language models, which are expected to see a wide range of applications in fields like e-commerce, advertising, gaming, film, television and animation.

Wu Xinhong, founder, chairman and CEO of Meitu, said AI is disrupting the traditional imaging and design industry, and serves as a significant driving force in bolstering innovation and improving work efficiency.

The multimodal LLMs that integrate different types of content like text, images, audio and video into AI models are key to the development of AI technology overall, Wu said, adding that Meitu is mainly concentrating on the visual domain, which covers the creation of images and videos.

He said generative AI technology will gradually lower the threshold of content creation and improve the

production efficiency of the imaging and video industry. Meitu will continue to invest in LLMs and bolster the application of AI in more sectors and scenarios, which presents huge growth potential while speeding up its monetization push.

LLMs refer to computer algorithms that are trained with huge amounts of data and are capable of generating content such as images, text, audio and video. They are the key technology underpinning ChatGPT, an AI chatbot developed by US-based AI research company OpenAI.

Meitu has updated its visual large model called MiracleVision. The latest version boasts improved performance in semantic understanding, image stability and continuity of actions compared with previous models. It has also released six AI tools covering image editing, professional video creation, commercial photography and commercial design.

Moreover, the company is expanding its presence in overseas markets, with the number of users abroad expected to account for more than 40 percent of its total users in the future, Wu said. As of

Tuesday, total VIP users of Meitu stood at 10.63 million worldwide, hitting a new high.

Meitu generated 2.7 billion yuan (\$372.3 million) in revenue last year, an increase of 29.3 percent year-on-year, while its adjusted net profit reached 370 million yuan in 2023, up 233.2 percent, mainly driven by AI tech breakthroughs.

Chen Duan, director of the Digital Economy Integration Innovation Development Center at the Central University of Finance and Economics, said AI-generated content (AIGC) will lead to a new revolution in the field of digital content production, and bolster innovation in the digital culture industry.

Chinese tech enterprises have unique advantages in expanding AI application scenarios compared with their foreign peers, based on China's enormous domestic social networks and the world's largest number of active internet users, she added.

Market consultancy Gartner predicts that by 2025, generative AI will account for 10 percent of all data created, compared with less than 1 percent in 2022, and could be used



A view of the booth of Meitu Inc during an expo in Fuzhou, Fujian province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

for a range of activities such as creating software code, facilitating drug development and targeted marketing.

AIGC-related technologies will improve the productivity of content production and inject fresh impetus into China's economic growth, said Pan Helin, a member of the Expert Committee for Information and Communication Economy, which is under the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

Pan called for more efforts to beef up self-developed innovation abili-

ties in computing power chips and programming software, as well as increase investments in basic scientific research to catch up with foreign counterparts in the global AI chatbot race.

Meitu's efforts to provide more AI tools for various scenarios will help the company serve more enterprise users, enrich its monetization channels and bolster its revenue by increasing the number of paying users, said Wang Qinglin, a senior analyst at market consultancy iMedia Research.

BUSINESS

5G-A pilots gathering steam

Enhanced telecom tech performs better in capacity, speed, latency, and positioning

By LIU YUKUN
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Several cities in China are exploring 5G-A network construction and application scenarios, unlocking vast opportunities for the technology's development as well as for the digital economy, experts and business executives said.

5G-A, or 5G-Advanced (also known as 5.5G by some manufacturers), represents an enhancement over 5G. It offers significant improvements in capacity, speed, latency and positioning. For example, 5G-A is 10 times faster than 5G in terms of internet speed.

Currently, Chinese telecom operators are conducting pilot deployments across several provinces. The Beijing unit of China Mobile has partnered with companies like ZTE and MediaTek to complete 5G-A network deployment in 18 densely populated areas of Beijing, with over 1,500 5G-A base stations now operational. China Unicom and China Telecom also have made such deployments, boosting the total number in the city to over 3,500.

Earlier this month, 35 cities and regions jointly announced the start of the 5G-A era, actively promoting the evolution of 5G technology and application innovation.

"2024 is widely recognized as the first year of 5G-A commercialization with operators, industry chains, equipment and standards gradually maturing. There is immense potential for development in 5G-A busi-



China Mobile employees check 5G-A equipment at a facility in Tongling, Anhui province.
GUO SHINING / FOR CHINA DAILY

ness models, application scenarios and industry ecosystems. The development path for 5G-A is becoming increasingly clear," said Wu Hequan, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering, at a recent conference.

"5G development has reached a turning point. The application of 5G-A can meet the high bandwidth and low latency demands of extended reality and the internet of vehicles, which 5G cannot adequately support. 5G-A is crucial for enhancing and surpassing the current 5G network signal and is a necessary step toward upgrading to 6G," Wu added.

Zhao Zhiguo, chief engineer at the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, said at a recent event hosted by the Beijing Communications Administration that further

efforts are expected to strengthen China's leading advantages in 5G-A and quantum communication technologies, and advance breakthroughs in strategic technologies such as 6G, artificial intelligence and the next-generation internet.

Wen Ku, chairman of the China Communications Standards Association, said 5G-A international standards focus on continually enhancing 5G network capabilities and expanding new use cases, initiating comprehensive integration with artificial intelligence.

"Comprehensive integration with AI has become a core direction for the evolution of future communication networks," Wen said.

However, he also stressed that the smart development of mobile networks is a gradual process. The

5G-A is designed to lay a solid foundation for 6G to enable strong AI, promoting the transition from 5G "light intelligence" to achieving 6G "systematic intelligence".

Huawei's Senior Vice-President Cao Jibin predicted that in the next 5-10 years, the 5G-A network could cover needs in personal, household, office, production and travel scenarios, creating substantial economic value.

"Going forward, Beijing will actively advance the construction and deployment of 5G-A networks and actively expand application scenarios in areas such as new industrialization, urban governance, livelihood experiences and rural vitalization," said Su Shaolin, head of the Beijing Communications Administration.

Zespri eyes bigger sales in China buoyed by rising kiwifruit output

By HE QI in Shanghai
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Zespri, a kiwifruit brand from New Zealand, is hoping to double its sales in China within five years on the back of an estimated surge in supply to the nation this season, according to a senior executive.

Zespri said it expects to ship around 700,000 metric tons of kiwifruit to the global market, a 45 percent increase from last year. The kiwifruit season began in March this year.

Supply to the Chinese market, including Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, is expected to reach 193,000 tons this year, a 40 percent increase from last year.

"China represents our main market, accounting for 27 percent of Zespri's global supply," said Jiunn Shih, chief marketing and innovation and sustainability officer at Zespri. "Supply to the Chinese mainland will increase by 42 percent this season, and we are seeing fantastic growth within a few weeks since our season started."

Shih said the Chinese mainland had become the single largest market for Zespri since 2022.

In addition to the favorable climate and expansion of Zespri production hectares, Shih said changes in Chinese consumer preferences have also driven the increase in supply.

"I joined Zespri eight years ago and I remember that China was already a fast-growing market. But in these years, one of the things that has absolutely changed is the expectation of quality in fresh fruit," Shih said. "Chinese consumers are looking for better quality fruits and health has become much more important in people's daily lives now."

Shih said consumers are willing to learn about the nutritional content and detailed health benefits of fruits.

"What we offer at Zespri is a very comprehensive system that ensures that Zespri kiwifruit is of the highest quality," said Shih, adding that they inspect product details such as the dry matter, sugar levels, appearance, and transport packs.

Last month, New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon said at the China Business Summit 2024 in Auckland that trade and economic relationships with China remain central to the country's prosperity.

Bilateral trade volume reached \$23.24 billion in 2023, up more than fourfold since the NZ-China Free Trade Agreement came into force in 2008, Luxon said.



China represents our main market, accounting for 27 percent of Zespri's global supply. Supply to the Chinese mainland will increase by 42 percent this season ..."

Jiunn Shih, chief marketing and innovation and sustainability officer at Zespri

"I think that strengthening our relationship, as Zespri products count as one of the main exports from New Zealand, absolutely helps the relationship between these two great countries. And we are very happy to be a part of this exchange, bringing something really healthy from New Zealand, of high quality and tasty to Chinese," said Shih, adding that good bilateral trade relations help to promote the growth of companies like Zespri in the Chinese market.

Shih said the company plans to double Zespri's business volume in China within the next five years, expanding its footprint to 88 cities.

Zespri's distribution network now spans 72 cities across China, encompassing 57,000 retail outlets.

To enlarge its social influence, the company said it is ready to work closely with agencies such as the China Nutrition Society.

"Brand building is not just marketing, it's actually changing behaviors, helping educate and helping more families in China live a healthy lifestyle," Shih said.

Imported fruits have grown rapidly in China in recent years, with more than 70 fresh fruit varieties — such as Italian blood orange, Panama golden pineapple, and Kenya avocado — approved to enter the domestic market since the first China International Import Expo in 2018.

In the first four months, the value of imported fruits and nuts entering Shanghai Port reached 11.05 billion yuan (\$1.5 billion), a year-on-year increase of 20.4 percent, according to Shanghai Customs.

As the largest distribution center for imported consumer goods in China, Shanghai accounts for about a quarter of the total import volume of dried and fresh fruits and nuts in the country.

Farms in Inner Mongolia enjoy high-tech upgrade

By ZHUANG QIANG and PANG BO

In Tongliao, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, the prefecture-level city has added 1.73 million hectares of permanent basic farmland so far, including 404,700 hectares featuring shallow-buried drip irrigation, high-efficiency operations, water-saving results and high-standard farmland cultivation.

Last year, Tongliao netted a record grain output of 9.45 billion kilograms, an increase of 112.5 million kg over the previous year.

This year alone, the city plans to realize another 267,000 hectares of high-efficiency water-saving and high-standard farmland for its 2.8 million residents, in a bid to boost efficient agricultural production.

Bao Yushan, who works at Gaolintun seed and stock farm in Horqin district, said with the high-standard farmland project, several difficulties in farming have been resolved, but such acreage has relatively high irrigation requirements.

To lay a foundation for farmland harvesting, the capacity of local power transformers and electricity lines has to be increased, and some new lines must be put in place, Bao said.

Zhao Puguang, deputy general manager of Horqin District Power Supply Co under State Grid Tongliao Power Supply Co, said they have constructed new supporting power facilities and offered tailor-made solutions to aid local agricultural work.

"We have ushered in a three-pronged approach to aid local farming and animal husbandry, with an aim to bolster the city's

rural industrial development and rural vitalization," he said.

These include ordering supervision checklists, weekly reports and on-site checks to expedite the construction of supporting power facilities, establishing green channels for power expansion and providing round-the-clock services for farmers, in addition to implementing various irrigation-optimizing measures for high-standard farmland, he said.

Zhou He, a farmer from Dongfeng village, said prior to the renovation work, there used to be a large number of utility poles in the fields, making it highly inconvenient for agricultural machinery to maneuver around.

"Nowadays, all the poles and wires have been moved to the ridges between fields, helping to save cultivated land, improve irrigation efficiency and please the eye," he said.

Yin Zhipeng, Zhao's colleague, added that the city still has another 800,000 hectares of eligible basic farmland to be built, and intends to transform all the eligible permanent basic farmland into high-standard farmland by 2026, thereby achieving a full coverage scenario.

Yin said that in 2023, Tongliao's regional GDP hit 160.9 billion yuan (\$22.5 billion), an increase of 5.2 percent year-on-year.

Among this, the added value of agriculture was 40.72 billion yuan, a jump of 4.2 percent, while the secondary industry gained an added value of 49.29 billion yuan, up 4.9 percent and the services sector saw an added value of 70.88 billion yuan, 5.9 percent higher.

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In the past 19 years, 20% of their species disappeared or died out due to poaching, retaliatory killings, loss of habitat and climate change.

The global population of the snow leopard is less than 8,000, meaning it's very vulnerable to soon become extinct.

To reverse the tide, WWF is working to help the snow leopard and its habitat conservation in 8 out of 12 range countries.

www.wwfchina.org

AD

BUSINESSFOCUS

CHINA UP-CLOSE

Turbine makers riding favorable winds

China's 2023 production capacity for such products 60 percent of global total, despite prices plummeting 30 percent

By ZHENG XIN

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Chinese wind turbine manufacturers have been accelerating their global expansion in recent years, exhibiting their prowess at home and abroad, driven by technological advances and large-scale investment, said industry experts and company executives.

While Chinese wind turbine manufacturers have struggled to compete with international giants such as Vestas and General Electric for a long time, they have solidified their position as global leaders in recent years, setting new records while shaping the future of green energy worldwide, they said. Chinese wind turbine manufacturers are making strides in the overseas wind power market, securing notable contracts in recent years, said global consultancy Rystad Energy.

While the scale of these international orders remains minor compared to domestic demand in China, they hold strategic importance, helping Chinese original equipment manufacturers accumulate a track record while gaining global recognition, much like what the solar power sector experienced a decade ago, it said.

Guangdong province-based Mingyang Smart Energy Group, for example, has delivered 30 megawatts of wind turbines for the Taranto offshore wind farm in Italy, and is also one of seven contenders in Norway's first commercial offshore wind farm tender. Meanwhile, Zhejiang province-based Windey Energy Technology Group Co Ltd has secured nearly 1 GW of deals in Serbia from Italian energy company Fintel Energia.

Some of the country's wind turbine manufacturers are also contemplating establishing manufacturing bases or acquiring projects abroad, or setting up production facilities in countries like Brazil and India for a larger share of the global market, it said.

Qin Haiyan, secretary-general of the Chinese Wind Energy Association,

said supportive industrial policies have been instrumental in the rapid development of China's wind energy sector in recent years, positioning the country as the global leader in renewable energy capacity and related technological advancement.

Chinese OEM firms have dominated the domestic and international markets with an unprecedented number of new turbines, achieving the global lead in average turbine size, Qin said.

China has by far the world's largest wind turbine production capacity, or 60 percent of the total 163 GW in 2023, according to the Brussels-based Global Wind Energy Council. Production capacity in Europe and the United States, by contrast, stood at 19 percent and 9 percent respectively, it said.

China has long supported the development of wind farms and turbine production as part of its ambitious climate goals to reach peak emissions before 2030. In an annual report to China's legislature in March, Premier Li Qiang vowed to unleash new quality productive forces to drive growth in high-tech manufacturing.

Consultancy Wood Mackenzie said Chinese wind turbine makers' expanding presence on the global stage, which made up four of the world's top five manufacturers last year — the first time they achieved such dominance worldwide — came on the back of strong growth in their home market.

China exported about \$1.42 billion worth of wind turbines and components to the EU last year, it said.

Chinese turbine manufacturer Xinjiang Goldwind Science & Technology Co Ltd had the largest foreign footprint of the Chinese players, with 748 MW, followed closely by Envision with 561 MW and Vestas — the only Western OEM firm in the global top five — according to the 2023 Global Wind Turbine Market Shares report from BloombergNEF.

The accelerated installations, combined with a mature supply chain and ambitious provincial



A technician conducts maintenance work at an offshore wind farm in Zhoushan, Zhejiang province, in November. YAO FENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

targets, are pushing wind deployment to an unprecedented level in China, it said.

It's no surprise that Chinese wind turbine makers dominated the top 10 firms providing turbines worldwide last year, as buildout of gigawatt-scale wind projects sent installations soaring, said Cristian Dinca, wind analyst at BloombergNEF.

In the offshore wind sector, Chinese turbine maker Mingyang Smart Energy Group doubled its annual installations to almost 3 GW last year, becoming the largest global supplier of offshore turbines for the first time.

Mingyang unveiled plans last year for a new offshore wind turbine, which, at 22 MW, will be the largest such turbine in the world.

In addition to output, Chinese wind turbine manufacturers also lead in product design and innovation. The last four years have seen

426 new Chinese turbine models released, versus just 29 new turbines outside China.

Chinese companies commissioned 1.7 GW of wind projects in 20 overseas markets last year, including five EU member states, almost three times as many markets as in 2018, the BloombergNEF report said, adding that prices for Chinese turbines are about 20 percent lower than US and European equivalents.

The top five destination countries for Chinese manufactured wind turbine exports have been Vietnam (23 percent), followed by Australia (13.1 percent), India (7.4 percent), the US (6.4 percent) and Kazakhstan (5.2 percent) during the past few years, with a growing interest in exports to emerging markets such as the Middle East and Latin America in recent years, where wind turbine costs are a critical factor in procurement deci-

sions, said Rystad Energy.

The export of wind turbine components from China to Europe, including blades, generating sets, gearboxes and nacelles — making up about 30 to 70 percent of Europe's relevant imports — plays a crucial role in the European wind power supply chain, it said. Amid strategic considerations in wind turbine and component trading, pricing remains an underlying factor shaping the competitive landscape, it added.

Christian Bruch, CEO of Siemens Energy, said, "Trying to build a wind turbine without Chinese supplies will be almost impossible, and the energy transition won't work without China."

Bruch said wind unit Siemens Gamesa would not be able to compete in markets where it was up against two or three Chinese players if price were the only consideration.

Due to technological advances and fierce competition, prices of Chinese turbines dropped by more than 30 percent in 2023, Wood Mackenzie said.

Siemens Energy sees its wind division relying almost entirely on rare earth elements and permanent magnets from China, according to Reuters, adding that while some European governments suggested companies cut their relative exposure to China, the leaders of companies such as BASF have increased their engagement with the country.

It reflects the dilemma of an industry in need of supplies from the world's second-largest economy, but not the competition that comes with it, it added.

Industry experts believe the wind power sector in China will grow rapidly in the coming years, with wind turbines becoming bigger, entailing taller hub heights and larger rotor diameters.

According to Qin from the Chinese Wind Energy Association, wind power is preferred because it is not only green, but also cost-effective and cheaper compared to traditional fossil fuels like coal.

Chinese wind turbine manufacturers are likely to continue accelerating their efforts to capture overseas markets through exports with cost advantages and technological advances, which have led to a steep reduction in the price of turbines. Together with the government's ambitious renewable energy targets, these will offer a chance for Chinese companies to further expand their global footprint, he said.

The export of wind turbines produced by Chinese OEM firms increased significantly between 2016 and 2021, said Rystad Energy. However, when compared to China's annual wind power additions in 2022, which amounted for around 50 GW, exports during the same period only accounted for slightly more than 4 percent of the annual installation volume, leaving substantial room for further development, it said.



A view of wind turbine blades produced by Mingyang Smart Energy Group in Yangjiang, Guangdong province, in May 2023. HE HUAWEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Goldwind lands major green power deal in Brazil

By ZHENG XIN

Chinese turbine manufacturer Xinjiang Goldwind Science & Technology Co Ltd is committed to further expanding its presence abroad with the acquisition of its first overseas wind turbine manufacturing plant in Brazil.

The company finalized an agreement with General Electric to acquire the Camacari assembly plant located in Bahia state, Brazil, in May, which is set to commence mass production of wind turbines by the end of 2024, creating more than 1,000 jobs in the region, it said.

Optimistic about the long-term prosperity of the Brazilian wind power market, which is committed to doubling its wind power sector in size by 2030 with investments projected to reach 246.5 billion yuan

(\$34 billion), Goldwind said its investment in Brazil will better enhance local supply chains while taking advantage of the rich wind resources in the region.

Goldwind maintained its pole position as the world's leading wind turbine supplier, commissioning 16.4 gigawatts of projects last year, 95 percent of which were in its home market, according to the 2023 Global Wind Turbine Market Shares report from BloombergNEF.

It also had the highest overseas newly installed capacity of all Chinese industry players last year at 748 megawatts, which accounted for less than 5 percent of the company's total newly installed capacity of 16.4 GW, leaving massive potential for further growth.

While Chinese wind turbine manufacturers used to struggle to compete with international giants, the

country's wind turbine makers have since gained significant competitiveness in the global market thanks to technological advances.

As of April 2023, around 60 percent of the world's wind power equipment was produced in China. Chinese manufacturers are also expanding their presence overseas.

Last year, four of the top five companies in global wind power newly installed capacity rankings were Chinese companies, BloombergNEF said, adding that Chinese wind turbines are sold at prices approximately 20 percent lower than their Western counterparts, making them more competitive on the global stage.

Goldwind, as one of the earliest wind power companies to go global, now sees its business operations spanning 38 countries across six continents. Over the past three

years, Goldwind's newly installed wind power capacity has consistently ranked among the top three globally, according to BloombergNEF.

Brazil represents Goldwind's first international market. In 2021, the company delivered its first wind turbine project to the country with a total installed capacity of 82 MW. To date, Goldwind's installed capacity in Brazil has reached 662 MW, it said.

The company made a debut in the Philippines market in May with the 100.8 MW Kalayaan 2 project, which is set to deploy 17 units of 6 MW turbines, with Goldwind to offer a full suite of services from supply and transportation to installation, commissioning and a 10-year maintenance program.

Currently, 50 percent of China's wind turbine exports are made by Goldwind, with installations in North



Staff members inspect a wind turbine at a factory of Xinjiang Goldwind Science & Technology Co Ltd in Fuyang, Anhui province, in February 2023. WANG BIAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

America, Oceania, Asia and South America exceeding 1 GW, it said.

While the company's export revenue share from such products remains relatively small, it has

shown significant growth. The proportion of international sales in total revenue has increased from 9.23 percent in 2022 to 15.54 percent currently, it said.

COMMENT

Editorials

Sanctions show US stubbornly clinging to the reins of its high horse of war

Sanctions have never been instrumental in resolving an international conflict. And the sanctions regime imposed by the United States against Russia has only fanned the flames of the conflict in Ukraine and worsened the plight of the Ukrainian people.

Yet, as if to conceal its inability to help Ukraine win the upper hand on the battlefield, the US announced on Wednesday that it has slapped a new round of sanctions on over 300 individuals and entities that it claims are enabling Russia to sustain its military campaign in Ukraine. The US has repeatedly alleged in recent months that China is supplying Russia with dual-use goods so it is no surprise that Chinese entities and individuals are included on the list of those being sanctioned.

Speaking to the media ahead of the G7 Summit in Italy, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said that the targets of the sanctions include "major nonbank entities that help Russia finance its war effort and evade sanctions; entities and individuals across multiple evasion and foreign procurement networks, like networks that support Russia's UAV production, gold laundering, and procurement of sensitive items such as anti-UAV equipment, machine tools, industrial materials and microelectronics".

While the US claims that it wants to make it harder for Russia to source crucial technology for its military, by targeting over \$100 million in trade with Russia, the US is putting itself above international law and using sanctions to support what is in purpose and effect its own war effort. The US has a penchant for using such duplicitously presented long-arm coercion to serve its own agenda. Its sanctions regime is notoriously weaponized.

To uphold international justice and fairness, the world must act to counter the US' illegitimate unilateral sanctions. Beijing will therefore adopt countermeasures in response to the US' latest sanctions on more than two dozen Chinese entities and individuals.

The US' targeting of countries' normal trade relations with Russia has no basis in international law. Nor is there any United Nations' resolution banning countries from conducting normal economic exchanges with Russia or Ukraine. China has a legitimate right to maintain normal trade ties with any country, including the two belligerent parties in the Ukraine crisis.

As the conflict in Ukraine continues to drag on, there has been growing public opposition in Western countries to their governments prolonging the conflict by providing weapons and assistance to support Ukraine's war effort. Western leaders are desperate to help Ukraine drain Russia's strength. But the US is barking up the wrong tree by sanctioning China as Beijing is neither a party to the conflict nor providing support to the military of either of the belligerents. The self-serving US move does a disservice to the international efforts to broker peace in Ukraine by creating conditions to bring the two battling parties to the negotiating table.

Yet, it seems that not content with this, the US also intends to push the G7 countries to follow its lead in its proxied aggression against Russia by supplying substantial resources, military assistance, intelligence and economic support for Ukraine.

Since the Ukraine conflict started, the US has rallied European countries to provide a colossal amount of military aid to Kyiv. This month, Western leaders have also given the green light for Kyiv to use Western-supplied weapons to strike targets inside Russia, painting an even gloomier picture of a wider and deeper crisis at the heart of Europe. The US has also rallied its allies to slap sanctions on Russia and third parties, which has disrupted the global financial system and international supply chains.

The US should get off its high horse. Ahead of the G7 Summit, the nonprofit organization Oxfam released analysis showing that the G7 countries could end global hunger by allocating just 2.9 percent of their annual military spending to solving the world food debt crisis. The US should put its feet on the ground so that it can join with others on the right course to resolving not only the Ukraine conflict through dialogues and negotiations but also the crises at the heart of the sustainable development agenda.

Politicized protection hurts cooperation

Slammed by China's Commerce Ministry as a "naked protectionist act" that creates and escalates trade frictions by "destroying fair competition" in the name of "maintaining fair competition", the European Union is imposing anti-subsidy tariffs of up to 38.1 percent on electric vehicles shipped from China from July 4, on top of the 10 percent duties for all imported EVs.

It is how those tariffs have come about and how they will be implemented that belies the European Commission's claim that they are being imposed in the name of fairness.

Rather than being in response to the "threat of economic injury" to EV producers in Europe as a result of the "unfair subsidies" the Chinese automakers enjoy, as it said when announcing the tariffs, "the European Commission is holding high the banner of green development with one hand and wielding the big stick of 'protectionism' with the other hand to politicize and weaponize economic and trade issues", as the Commerce Ministry said in a statement in response to the announcement.

The additional tariff rates vary from one Chinese brand to another, ranging from 17.4 percent on EVs produced by Geely to 38.1 percent on those of SAIC, supposedly depending on the company's cooperativeness with the commission's probe. But many EU automakers have joint ventures in China and policymakers have hinted that special favors might be done to Western carmakers' EVs exported to the EU from China.

That the European Commission chose to make public the tariff move in such a haste, while its policymakers admit many parts of their anti-subsidy probe are still underway, is another indication that the commission views EU imports as a bargaining chip. This was further supported by Valdis Dombrovskis, the EU commissioner for trade, who has said that engagement with the Chinese authorities and stakeholders about potential solutions was ongoing.

It is thought that subject to discussions the final rates will change, if not scrapped completely, in the final decision, which has to be made by November 2024. Even if they are imposed, the higher tariff rates will not prevent Chinese EVs from entering the EU market, they just mean EU consumers will foot the bill for the commission's power play.

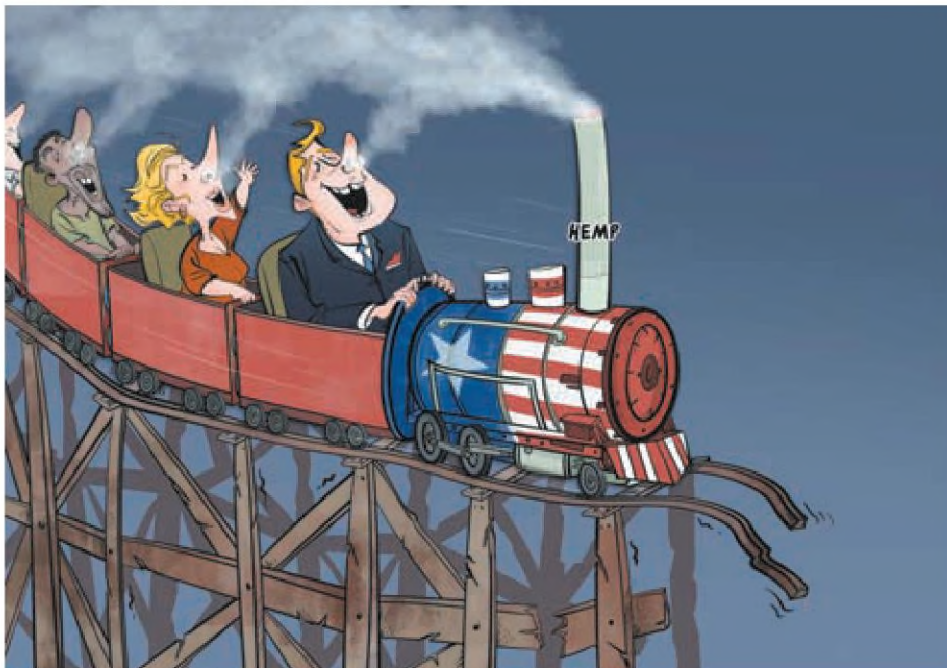
Rather than politicizing Chinese imports in this way, the EU policymakers should look into whether some EU enterprises enjoying even more favorable and supportive policies in China than their Chinese counterparts just choose to price their products at a high level to fatten their profits, while pretending to be a victim of so-called subsidies to their Chinese competitors.

Having threatened to retaliate against the EU with measures against the agricultural or aviation sector, Beijing has pledged to raise duties on cars with engines larger than 2.5 liters in response to the commission's move. Given the limited market share of such automobiles in the Chinese market, it is viewed as being of more symbolic than practical meaning and shows that China does not want the issue to become unduly disruptive of the broader bilateral relations with the EU. That being said, no party will benefit from the EU move, and the great lengths the EU policymakers have gone to in a bid to make the tariffs seem a result of transparency and procedural justice only serve to highlight their coercive intent.

As the Chinese EV maker Nio said in a statement, the commission's move hinders rather than promotes global environmental protection, emissions reduction and sustainable development, all of which the EU is trying to claim leadership in. Chinese EVs are widely viewed as being a key support for the realization of the EU's goal of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 55 percent by 2030 compared to its 1990 level. So the commission is hindering the EU's attempt to race to the front in the green transition by shooting the EU in the foot.

How things develop will depend on how the EU follows up on the announcement, as Beijing will take all necessary measures to firmly defend the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese companies.

Cao Yi



Opinion Line

CPI, PPI expected to improve due to strengthening of policy measures

China's consumer price index, a preliminary indicator of inflation, rose 0.3 percent year-on-year in May, on par with that in April but down 0.1 percent month-on-month, and the producer price index, an indicator of factory-gate prices, dropped by 1.4 percent year-on-year, narrowing from a 2.5 percent decline in April, the latest National Bureau of Statistics data show.

The main factor affecting the CPI is agricultural products. In May, food prices fell by 2.0 percent year-on-year, and the prices of tobacco and alcohol fell by 1.0 percent year-on-year, bringing the CPI down by about 0.28 percentage points. But pork prices rose by 4.6 percent from a year before and the prices of fresh vegetables rose by 2.3 percent, raising the CPI by about 0.05 percentage points. Among the seven major expenditure categories within the CPI, only transportation and telecommunication prices fell year-on-year in May, while the other six categories saw prices rise year-on-year.

That agricultural products continue to

influence the CPI is mainly due to increased supply. Meat production received a big boost after the outbreak of the African swine fever was controlled, leading to long-term oversupply. Because of imbalances between supply and demand, beef prices fell 3.6 percent month-on-month and 12.9 percent year-on-year in May. In addition, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, a large number of people who have returned to their hometowns have joined planting and breeding, especially in areas with higher prices and profits, which have also significantly increased their supplies.

As domestic prices are higher than international prices, China has also significantly increased beef imports, with the import from January to March reaching a total of 1 million metric tons, up 22 percent year-on-year. The increased supply over demand in the short term is the main reason for the low prices of agricultural products.

However, the rise in pork prices accel-

erated in May from the previous month, and the growth momentum continues in June. In addition, weather anomalies such as the current drought in some northern provinces and continuous rain in southern China may affect the output of grain and other agricultural products this year, and push prices up in the months ahead.

On the whole, agricultural products are affected by the increase in domestic supply and imports, while service prices lack the momentum of sustained growth due to soft demand.

In the industrial sector, the government is making persistent efforts to eliminate backward production capacity through equipment replacement and trade-in of consumer goods, carbon reduction, and higher standards, which will release some new demands. With the implementation of a series of policy measures stimulating consumption, the impotent CPI and PPI trend is expected to change.

— 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS HERALD

Apple still has catching up to do in terms of AI

It's easy for Apple to name its artificial intelligence function Apple Intelligence. And it no doubt thinks the slogan "AI for the rest of us" is smart.

But keeping the door shut on its AI for the majority of its users by only allowing iPhones carrying A17 Pro or M1 series of chips, or iPhone 15 Pro series, to use its AI may be easy but its probably not being smart. In other words, those using iPhone 15 series and earlier models, who account for the majority of iPhone users, will have to buy newer phones to gain access to Apple Intelligence.

The move might push a group of loyal Apple fans to dump their existing models

and buy an iPhone 15 Pro or higher model, thus boosting iPhones' falling sales. But it will come at a cost of less data supply to train its AI model. With its total number of users worldwide reaching more than 1.3 billion, or about one-third of Android's 3.5 billion users, and having not announced any significant AI function until years after its Android competitors developed and diversified their products, Apple has already been falling behind OpenAI. Its close-minded move will only widen the gap.

After all, AI is a dynamic model and incessant input of content is necessary to keep it alive. With a smaller user base,

that cannot be guaranteed.

However, Apple is now cooperating with OpenAI on the latter's ChatGPT model. That might make it somewhat dependent on other high-tech companies such as Google and invite criticism from others, such as X CEO Elon Musk, who raised questions about Apple's security with OpenAI technology. He even threatened to ban Apple devices in his companies, saying visitors will have to deposit their Apple devices in a Faraday cage.

Apple has so far worked in a closed system, but opening a window called AI might help it diversify its strategy.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Interference bill has obvious troublemaking intent

In its latest move to interfere in China's internal affairs, the US House of Representatives passed a bill that urges China to mend ties with the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan leaders.

The "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act" received broad bipartisan support and now heads to President Joe Biden's desk to be signed into law after being passed by the Senate last month.

It is not that the US politicians want to help mediate relations between Beijing and Dalai Lama with the Xizang-related bill, but they want to meddle in China's internal affairs in order to put pressure on Beijing.

Xizang is part of China. The "Tibet-China dispute" the US lawmakers are trying to project is an attempt to denigrate Beijing and create difficulties for it within the international community.

It is Beijing's consistent stance to remain open to constructive dialogue with the Dalai Lama, as long as the latter stops his activities aimed at splitting Xizang from the motherland, stop inciting violent activities in Xizang and nearby areas resided by the Tibetan people, stop acting as a proxy of anti-China forces in the United States, and stop hyping up so-called human rights and religious issues related to Xizang.

Washington lawmakers are seeking to use Xizang as further leverage for their "human rights" and "freedom of religion" smears against Beijing. These claims are egregious lies intended to vilify China. They fly in the face of the long-term

peace and stability the autonomous region has enjoyed in recent times thanks to the attention that the central authorities have paid to helping Xizang pursue high-quality development characterized by harmonious coexistence among the different ethnic groups, religions and cultures in the region, as well as between people and nature.

If the US truly cares about human rights, it should stop smearing China with false accusations, stop interfering in China's internal affairs and stop trying to undermine China's social stability under the pretext of "human rights".

If the US side really hopes to resolve issues related to the Dalai Lama, it should stop its funding to him and stop using him as a pawn to tarnish China's international image.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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COMMENT

David Gosset

The reality behind tariffs on Chinese EVs

While in the midst of writing *Inspiring Greater Bay Area*, a book dedicated to introducing the transformative vision reshaping southern China and beyond, I stumbled upon news on the European Union's imposition of tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles (EV). It would apply additional duties of up to 38.1 percent on imported Chinese electric vehicles from next month, potentially instigating a trade war with China.

The news prompted me to explore BYD, a company that is under close scrutiny by the European Commission. When examining BYD, it's hoped people recognize that tariffs serve to obscure genuine issues on the EU front and prompt the raising of more fundamental questions about the future trajectory of Chinese enterprises and their role in the global market.

BYD Auto was established in January 2003 by Wang Chuanfu, who was born in 1966. Much has been written about the journey of Wang, a destitute child from Anhui province, who has ascended to become one of the world's most prominent business leaders.

Regarding Wang, one quote from Charlie Munger (1924-2023) stands out as particularly intriguing. Munger said: "This guy is a combination of Thomas Edison and Jack Welch." In 2008, acting on Munger's recommendation, Warren Buffett made a \$232 million investment in what was then a relatively obscure Chinese company.

Both in the United States and the European Union, BYD has been frequently finding itself portrayed as a threat. This recurring spotlight underscores the company's significant stature. One cannot consistently attract attention if one's influence is negligible. Western politicians often attribute BYD's success to unfair practices, citing government subsidies that supposedly give it an edge over US and EU automobile manufacturers. Yet such arguments overlook crucial factors.

The success of companies such as BYD primarily stems from a conducive ecosystem — such as that found in the Shenzhen region — stable leadership, diligent work ethic and, perhaps most significantly, a genuine capacity for innovation. BYD has more than 90,000 research and development engineers, and it has applied for more than 48,000 patents globally and has been granted more than 30,000.

Tariffs imposed by Western politicians

on Chinese cars offer no solution in the long run. While they may appear as protective measures — naturally, countries aim to defend their interests — they merely mask weaknesses and fail to bolster players capable of winning global competitions. In other words, imposing tariffs is the easy route and doesn't demand much innovation or strategic thinking.

It's worth noting that both the EU and the US had ample time and resources to anticipate the shift toward EVs. The lack of European counterparts to BYD raises significant questions about the EU's strategic planning. In the realm of EVs, as well as in cyberspace and artificial intelligence, the world operates as a G2, with China and the US represented by BYD and Tesla, respectively. The EU faces a challenge in this regard, and rather than attributing its shortcomings to external factors, it should focus on

internal reform, strategic thinking and assertive action.

China's adept maneuvering on the global stage deserves acknowledgment. The most fundamental question is whether companies such as BYD can pass the test of internationalization and truly establish themselves as global entities. While many obstacles lie ahead, both internal and external, seeing Chinese companies globalize themselves would be beneficial, not just for China but for the world as a whole. Especially in a field as crucial as sustainable transportation, such progress holds immense promise for the future well-being of humanity.

The moment has arrived for Chinese companies to step into the spotlight as global leaders. While they will forge their own distinct path, they can draw valuable lessons from historical examples such as the success of US enterprises and

the complex experiences of Japan. Nevertheless, a global corporation earns its distinction through its executives possessing a global mindset and its products and brands eliciting universal appeal across continents.

It is crucial for the world, particularly the Western world, to embrace this shift in principle. Taking all aspects into consideration, this shift promises to trigger heightened competition, thus driving progress for all stakeholders involved.

The author is founder of the *China-Europe-America Global Initiative*, editor of *China and the World in three volumes*, and creator of the *Inspiring Series*, a collection of books that aims to introduce China to the world. The forthcoming installment in the series is *China: Inspiring Greater Bay Area*. The views don't necessarily reflect those of *China Daily*.



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Zhao Huirong

China right to not attend Swiss peace summit

China has announced it will not participate in the Summit on Peace in Ukraine to be held in Switzerland on Saturday and Sunday, because to broker peace both parties to a conflict need to be present at the negotiation table but the organizers have not invited Russia to the summit. Yet, instead of criticizing the organizers for their mistake and bias, some Western politicians and observers claim China is not attending the summit because it stands with Russia and does not want the conflict to end.

In response, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said on June 3 that China attaches great importance to the "peace meeting" in Switzerland and has been in close contact with Switzerland, Ukraine and other countries, but has repeatedly stressed that the peace summit needs to meet three important elements — recognition from both Russia and Ukraine, equal participation of all parties, and fair discussion on all peace plans. Since the meeting does not seem to satisfy these three requirements, China has decided to stay away from it.

First, China's stance on the Russia-Ukraine conflict has been consistent and transparent. It remains committed to promoting peace talks, and has made its stance on the issue clear in a document, titled "China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis", which was released in February 2023. China believes that in any conflict, third parties can only communicate with the conflicting parties to help deescalate the situation and reach a cease-fire. But only the conflicting parties can agree to a cease-fire.

Without Russia being present, the summit cannot help restore peace. It appears the summit has been unilaterally initiated by Ukraine in the hope of forging a united front in support of

Since the China-Brazil six-point consensus meets the expectations of most countries, China has been urging more countries to support it and persuade Russia and Ukraine to peacefully resolve their differences.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's peace plan and isolating Russia. The aim of his 10-point peace plan is to regain territory and punish Russia.

However, without the mandate to declare a cease-fire, the summit, the fifth initiated by Ukraine, will end up being another talking shop. Hence, China refuses to take part in the summit.

Western support, both material and political, has boosted Ukraine's confidence that it can defeat Russia through military means. And China's participation in the meeting will not be enough to persuade the Ukrainian leadership to seek a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Among the previous four meetings on the Ukraine crisis, China's Special Representative on Eurasian Affairs Li Hui attended the one in Jeddah last year. He also carried out a third round of shuttle diplomacy in May to seek a political resolution to the Ukraine crisis. However, Kyiv refuses to withdraw or amend its decree which rules out talks with Moscow as long as President Vladimir Putin remains at the helm of Russian affairs.

Although many countries kept calling for peace talks till December 2023, when many considered Ukraine's counterof-

fensive to have failed and US Congress refused to approve more aid for Ukraine, such calls have rarely been heard this year. In fact, some Western countries have signed security agreements with Ukraine and are gradually easing their restrictions which prevented Ukraine from using Western-supplied weapons against Russia, further raising tensions.

China is working to create a peaceful international environment so it can pursue high-quality development. Yet some Western countries and Ukrainian politicians have been questioning China's neutral stance, because they want China to toe their line. They are even trying to interfere in China's internal affairs in order to compel it to adhere to their policies.

In such circumstances, if China attends the meeting in Switzerland and insists on remaining neutral, one can imagine how fierce the Western powers' reaction will be.

China believes that all countries are equal regardless of their size and national strength. Therefore, it is regrettable that Zelensky talked negatively about Sino-Ukrainian relations at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on June 2.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning has made it clear that not attending the peace meeting does not mean not supporting peace. As an independent and responsible major country, China's decision on whether to attend the meeting is based on its own judgment, and it will not be swayed by the likes and dislikes of other countries.

During his meeting with Ukrainian First Deputy Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha in Beijing on June 5, Vice-Foreign Minister Sun Weidong said that in the 32 years since the establishment of Sino-Ukrainian diplomatic relations, overall bilateral ties have developed steadily.

China is willing to work with Ukraine to implement the important consensus the two countries have reached and carry forward the fine tradition of mutual respect, Sun said. And calling for the promotion of bilateral exchanges and cooperation in various fields, Sun urged that efforts be made to safeguard Sino-Ukrainian relations.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has claimed thousands of lives and caused extensive economic losses on both sides. This is exactly what China means when it stresses there are no winners in a conflict, and lasting peace cannot be established through military power.

Besides, according to the six common understandings China and Brazil reached on May 23, the international community should help find a political solution to the Ukraine crisis. Also, Beijing and Brasilia believe dialogue and negotiation are the only viable way of resolving the Ukraine crisis, and the two countries are making great efforts to provide increased humanitarian assistance for people caught in the conflict in a bid to prevent a greater humanitarian crisis. China and Brazil are also strongly opposed to the use of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

Since the China-Brazil six-point consensus meets the expectations of most countries, China has been urging more countries to support it and persuade Russia and Ukraine to peacefully resolve their differences. In the meantime, China will continue to promote peace talks and conduct shuttle diplomacy in order to help restore peace in Ukraine.

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Chen Weihua

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G7 approach to Ukraine crisis is dangerous

The Russia-Ukraine conflict is high on the agenda of the ongoing G7 Summit in Italy. However, no one should expect the summit to help resolve the conflict and restore lasting peace in Eurasia.

The reason is quite clear. The G7 leaders, who are meeting from Thursday to Saturday, are busy raising funds, and making efforts to use the proceeds from Russia's frozen assets, to finance Ukraine and escalate as well as prolong the conflict. But their aim of weakening, if not vanquishing, Russia is seen as unattainable even by many Western military and foreign policy experts.

Their latest effort to escalate the conflict is the "permission" Washington and several European capitals have given Ukraine to use the long-range missiles they have supplied to strike targets within Russia. They had prevented Ukraine from doing so over the past two years for fear of triggering a stronger response from Russia and spreading the conflict to Europe.

While no one is sure about G7's strategy to defeat Russia, what is certain is there will be more deaths and destruction in both Ukraine and Russia and the risk of the conflict spreading will increase. This could lead to a nuclear war and even a third world war if G7 leaders continue to refuse to seek an immediate cease-fire.

When I asked a panel at the European Policy Center this week why the conflict which many expected to last only a few months has continued so long, one expert said the European Union should help Ukraine defeat Russia because if Europe lets Russian President Vladimir Putin win, Russia won't stop at Ukraine.

The G7 also has a huge credibility crisis given its blatant double standard and hypocrisy on the Israel-Palestine conflict.

That is sheer speculation and brainwashing by Western politicians. If you read the letter Putin wrote to the United States and NATO in January 2022, you will realize that he raised genuine and legitimate security concerns over NATO's continued eastward expansion. Yet the US and NATO, in their reply, deliberately ignored such concerns.

Back in December 2022, even French President Emmanuel Macron had said that an "essential point" in any peace talks on the Russia-Ukraine conflict should be how to provide security "guarantee to Russia" given Moscow's concerns over NATO's expansion.

Given the current political mood, I doubt whether any G7 leaders will have the courage to mention Russia's security concerns at the summit. Instead, they will continue to dodge the question or pretend it is a non-issue.

The timing of this year's G7 is ominous. Except for Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni whose Brothers of Italy party won a major victory in last week's European Parliament election, Macron's Renaissance Party and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's three coalition parties — the Social Democrats, the Greens and the Free Democrats — all suffered major defeats, forcing Macron to call snap polls on June 30.

In the US, President Joe Biden and his predecessor Donald Trump are neck and neck in the presidential race less than five months before the presidential election despite Trump being found guilty on 34 charges by a New York court.

In the United Kingdom, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is trailing behind his rival and Labour Party leader Keir Starmer in opinion polls just three weeks before the national elections. In Japan, voter support for Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has fallen to 21 percent, the lowest since he took office in 2021, while in Canada, only 17 percent of those surveyed said they think Prime Minister Justin Trudeau should continue as Liberal Party leader in the next election.

All this indicates that the G7 leaders have gathered in Italy on weak platforms and are distracted by their domestic problems.

The G7 also has a huge credibility crisis given its blatant double standard and hypocrisy on the Israel-Palestine conflict. It will be much harder for G7 leaders, therefore, to hijack the "international community" and lecture the world about their "rules-based order".

The G7, a Cold War legacy, believes that inviting countries such as Brazil and India to the summit will increase its relevance. The G7 can become relevant only by listening to the rest of the world, which wants an immediate and permanent cease-fire in both the Russia-Ukraine and Middle East conflicts, and addressing their issues through dialogue and diplomacy.

GLOBAL VIEWS



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

ANDREW WILFORD

Bedrock to build on

Dynamic and evolving economic relations between China and New Zealand have been underpinned by rules and trade architecture of their FTA

The visit of Chinese Premier Li Qiang to New Zealand is the first of its kind in seven years. Such high-level visits are the cornerstone of a constructive bilateral relationship and a testament to the success of the groundbreaking



China-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement. The 2024 visit is especially significant as it coincides with the 10th anniversary of the

China-New Zealand comprehensive strategic partnership, offering a prime opportunity to reflect on past achievements while considering future avenues of collaboration. Since the implementation of the New Zealand-China FTA in 2008, bilateral trade has soared, reaching nearly NZ\$38 billion (\$23.28 billion) in 2023. Two years ago, the agreement was upgraded to reflect changes in the global economy, incorporating e-commerce, competition policy, government procurement and environmental trade provisions. The rise of artificial intelligence, digital services and other avenues of opportunity means that both sides should remain open to frequently revisiting the agreement that has served each side so well. Building on the world-class agreement will be vital to maintain positive economic relations, given the importance of trade to both countries.

New Zealand is a trading nation that places immense value on robust trade rules. The China-New Zealand FTA has created the primary architecture for the relationship through trade facilitation and dispute resolution procedures. This is important bilaterally and also strategically as a means of promoting the development of a high-quality, rules-based system of commerce between states of different sizes, stages of development and national interests. Given its success, it is worth considering how the principles underpinning the FTA could be further improved and perhaps even act as a stimulant for reform at the multilateral level.

An expectation of Premier Li's visit could be further upgrades to the trade in services agreement within the existing FTA. New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon has announced that New Zealand aims to double the value of its exports over the next decade, with sectors such as education, tourism and agri-tech playing a crucial role. Strengthening trade in services could significantly contribute to this goal, and reforming the China-New Zealand FTA would be a logical step in pursuing that aim.

The FTA has benefited both sides economically and reinforced the collaborative atmosphere that underpins the broader relationship. It further opens opportunities for cooperation in new areas.

The success of Chinese electric vehicle manufacturers in New Zealand, visible on the streets, is a testament to the importance of trade facilitation mechanisms such as FTAs. As New Zealand's electrical grid is over 80 percent renewable, there is a ripe opportunity for even deeper cooperation in clean energy technologies. This aligns with New Zealand's commitment to open trade, climate action and embracing innovation and sustainability.

Beyond trade, there are numerous sectors where collaboration could thrive, such as agricultural research, gaming and health foods. Leveraging the momentum from Premier Li's visit under the FTA architecture could spur new agreements in these areas, reflecting the dynamic and evolving nature of economic relations underpinned by rules and trade architecture.

New Zealand's relationships with Pacific partners and Australia are also integral to New Zealand's trading strategy. While some hold concerns about over-reliance on any single market, the principles guiding economic engagement with China, especially those encapsulated in the FTA, can be applied to these relations and to the multilateral setting. Mature partnerships focus on areas of mutual interest while managing differences constructively within existing multilateral

frameworks such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the World Trade Organization.

Another area that could benefit from increased focus relates to enhancing people-to-people exchanges through short-term visa waivers. Such a step would boost tourism and cultural exchanges, benefiting both economies and people. China's visa-free policy with several European nations has proven popular, and a similar approach with New Zealand could yield positive results. Tourism operators in New Zealand would welcome increased numbers and support the notion of visitors coming during the shoulder season. Encouraging more visitors to China would further strengthen bilateral connections.

Marking the 10th anniversary of the New Zealand-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with such initiatives as these would signify a forward-looking relationship. While differences between China and New Zealand exist, the focus remains on nurturing areas of common interest and cooperation. By doing so, both sides ensure that the partnership between the two countries remains robust and beneficial for both nations and fit for purpose in today's world.

As New Zealand welcomes Premier Li, the country can reflect on the areas where more work can be done in the bilateral and multilateral space to construct a more robust rules-based trading system. The New Zealand-China relationship has achieved much in the past decade under the China-New Zealand FTA architecture. With a considered approach to each country's areas of complementarity, it should be possible to ensure the next decade sees similar levels of achievement.

The author is a researcher at the New Zealand Contemporary China Research Centre. 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.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

WOLFGANG ROEHR

Applied partnership

China and Germany can act in concert on shared principles to address pertinent challenges and help resolve the conflict in Ukraine

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz visited China in April, undertaking his longest visit to any country since assuming office. He was joined by three Cabinet ministers as well as the CEOs of some of Germany's largest companies. His visit coincided with renewed activity in



China's diplomacy vis-a-vis Europe. In May, Chinese President Xi Jinping, accompanied by a delegation of several hundred members, paid visits to France, Serbia and Hungary, his first trip to Europe in five years. While in France, he also met European Union Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. A few days later, Russian President Vladimir Putin came to China.

Just as in 2022, when Scholz was the first Western leader to visit China after the COVID-19 pandemic, he was criticized by many German politicians and media. His choice of accompanying ministers was lambasted because they were allegedly only "minor" Cabinet members, and his business delegation allegedly made him a supplicant. Such criticism is however wide of the mark. China is one of Germany's most important partners, and regular high-level contacts are essential. For eight years running, China has been Germany's most important partner for trade in goods. In 2023, German investment in China amounted to a record 11.9 billion euros (\$12.8 billion), and the first two months of 2024 saw a continued upward trend.

For Beijing, Berlin is also an indispensable partner. Germany has been China's most important trading partner in the EU for decades; and 2023 was a record year for Chinese investment in Germany, too. Not to forget that Germany is the largest European economy, and Berlin has decisive influence on decision-making in Brussels.

For German companies, China continues to be a location of choice. In the most recent Business Confidence Survey of the German Chamber of Commerce in China, more than three-fourths of the participating companies expected consistent growth in their industry in China over the next five years. Small wonder that more than 90 percent

intend to remain in China and well over half plan to continue to invest in the country over the next years. One of the reasons for this is that half of the surveyed companies expect their Chinese competitors to become innovation leaders over the next five years. At the same time, one-third complained about regulatory challenges, and more than half of those who participate in public procurement reported encountering obstacles.

During Scholz's visit, President Xi stated that during the 10 years since the establishment of the partnership between China and Germany — the world's second- and third-largest economies — bilateral relations had maintained steady growth. Chinese exports of new energy products have made important contributions to fighting climate change and advancing the green transition. On the Ukraine crisis, President Xi noted that both China and Germany are committed to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter.

Scholz described the Ukraine crisis as an issue of major importance. Regarding possible EU tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles, he stated that as the head of government of one of the world's most successful exporting countries, he was committed to fair competitive conditions. He made clear that the federal government's 2023 Strategy on China does not seek to curtail cooperation.

In light of the recent diplomatic activity, it is to be hoped that both Beijing and Berlin can continue to work toward good cooperation between China and the EU. That will require the recognition that fruitful economic ties need no "de-risking" from either side but the establishment of a level playing field. The claim by the EU Commission that Chinese overcapacity in certain sectors threatens economic exchange is a myth. That a state produces more goods than it needs itself is not a hindrance but, indeed, a prerequisite for international trade. No countries know that better than export champions China and Germany do. That the "risk" of Chinese EVs is overstated is also shown by the fact that in Germany more than 2.8 million new passenger cars were registered in 2023 — of which, less than 34,000 came from

China. Germany should therefore maintain its principled position against tariffs on the imports of Chinese EVs.

On the Ukraine crisis, China should abide by its consistent view. It is not a party to the conflict but strives to maintain regional peace and stability such as through shuttle diplomacy. The major elements of this position, as set down in the joint statement issued following the meeting of the presidents of China and Russia on May 16, can also be embraced by Germany: All nuclear weapon states should uphold global strategic stability, stop adopting confrontational policies and interfering in the internal affairs of other countries, stop disrupting existing security architectures and stop exacerbating regional tensions. The reasonable security concerns of all states should be taken into consideration.

The Ukraine crisis could be resolved by adhering to these principles. There should be an end to foreign interference by imposing economic sanctions and also an end to military operations in neighboring states. International crises should neither be fueled by arms deliveries nor should they be set in motion by infringing on the territorial integrity of states. Regional tensions should not be exacerbated and existing security architectures should not be disrupted, be it by extending military alliance groupings with a view to the intended use of armed force nor by actually using armed force. Meeting the legitimate security concerns of a UN member state precludes the denial of its existence.

On this basis, Berlin and Beijing could jointly strive to bring about a resolution of the Ukraine crisis. Their cooperation should, as in the past, be based on an objective view of international relations, in particular the clear censure of violations of the UN Charter wherever they take place.

The author is a former member of the German Foreign Service, advisory professor at Tongji University and visiting scholar at the Center for Cultural Studies on Science and Technology in China of Technical University Berlin. 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

Scientist equates hard work with gaming

Driving ambition fuels the passion required for success, **Li Yingxue** reports.

During high school, Yan Nieng envisioned a career in journalism. Even today, she jokes on her Weibo account that writing short tweets undermines her dream of becoming a literary giant.

However, after more than two decades in scientific research, Yan, now 47, finds the field of science to be an indispensable part of her life.

"I could not imagine myself not being a scientist," she remarks.

Yan likens her research to playing video games, where each step leads to new questions and challenges.

"I pursue scientific research because it's fun," she says, highlighting her passion for the ever-evolving nature of scientific discovery.

Yan, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Sciences and a professor at the School of Life Sciences at Tsinghua University, also serves as the founding president of the Shenzhen Medical Academy of Research and Translation and is the director of the Shenzhen Bay Laboratory.

Yan balances her demanding roles with a strict schedule: administrative duties during office hours and scientific research in the evenings.

She often reads and writes essays late into the night, relying on numerous cups of coffee to stay alert for early morning commitments.

The past two weeks have been as busy as ever for Yan. She presented reports at Stanford University and the University of California in the United States, fielded questions about China, and even made a trip to Paris.

This time, however, the trip was not for a science forum but to receive an award.

On May 28, at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, Yan was honored with the 2024 L'Oreal-UNESCO For Women in Science International Award for the Asia-Pacific.

Yan was recognized for her groundbreaking research in structural biology, which has shed light on multiple disorders, including epilepsy and arrhythmia, and has informed on the treatment of pain syndromes.

As the eighth Chinese scientist to receive this prestigious award, Yan discovered the atomic structure of several membrane proteins responsible for the transport of ions and sugars across cell membranes, uncovering fundamental principles that govern cross-membrane transport.

"We aim to push the envelope of human knowledge," she says. "Using pioneering technology, I have transformed my work from the exploration of physiological and cellular processes to achieve a more precise view of potentially effective health solutions. Ultimately, I'd like science to understand the universe, the origins of life and the basis of consciousness."

In particular, Yan is exploring voltage-gated sodium channels, which control the electrical signals that enable rapid responses to various stimuli in the body. For these channels to function effectively, they must open and close quickly.

In 2017, Yan used cryo-electron microscopy to reveal, in high resolution, the structure of a sodium channel isolated from electric eels.

This breakthrough allows scientists to observe the active mechanisms of medicines and toxic substances, paving the way for new therapeutic solutions.

"In structural biology, we always proudly say that seeing is believing," she says.

"Observing the structure at an atomic resolution allowed us to solve the puzzle immediately — I felt it was a miracle created by nature," she adds.

For Yan, winning awards used to be a matter of pride when she was younger.

However, this time, she feels a stronger sense of duty.

"Firstly, it's about sharing scientific knowledge with the public. Secondly, although I've tried to avoid it, I now see the importance of being a role model for younger scientists," she explains.

There's also the responsibility of being an



LIANG LUWEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

“We must change the historical and cultural bias against women in academia and society by establishing gender equality and creating more female role models to show that women can and do lead, and deserve fair recognition.”

Yan Nieng, founding president of the Shenzhen Medical Academy of Research and Translation

ambassador for international exchange and communication, she adds.

"This recognition is not just a testament to my own efforts, but also a celebration of the countless individuals who have supported and inspired me along this remarkable journey.

"Aside from the scientific discoveries, it is truly gratifying to witness the growth of young scientists in my lab. It has been a privilege to work with my fabulous team members over the past 17 years. Without their support, I would not be able to stand here today," she says.

UNESCO describes Yan as a prominent figure in her field, stating that "she inspires female scientists worldwide and is a staunch advocate for gender equality in research and science education."

Among the other recipients of the award were Professor Rose Leke, an immunologist from Cameroon; Professor Alicia Kowaltowski, a biochemist from Brazil; Professor Nada Jabado from Canada, whose research focuses on human genetics and Professor Genevieve Almouzni, a molecular biologist from France.

Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO's director-general, emphasized the crucial role of science in addressing contemporary challenges, stating, "in a world where science is indispensable, we must leverage all talents".

She highlights the stark gender disparities

in research, particularly in fields like artificial intelligence, where only one in 10 researchers is female.

Despite advancements in other sectors, gender inequalities persist in science, affecting publications, recognition, funding and career progression.

This glass ceiling is a very real obstacle but it can be broken and that is what we at UNESCO strive for every day, Azoulay says.

Since 1998, the L'Oreal Group and UNESCO have jointly pioneered the For Women in Science program, honoring 132 laureates from over 110 countries and regions since.

Jean-Paul Agon, L'Oreal Group chairman and president of Fondation L'Oreal, emphasizes their commitment to supporting female scientists.

He states that "the world needs science, and science needs women", highlighting the program's vital role in promoting gender equality in research.

Agon underscores the program's impact in giving female scientists the recognition they deserve, overcoming obstacles they face, and inspiring future generations.

He says they have supported, both personally and financially, more than 4,400 researchers in more than 140 countries and regions.

In 2023, two of them — Anne L'Huillier and Katalin Kariko — received Nobel Prizes in physics and medicine, respectively.

This brings the total number of For Women in Science International Award laureates who have won Nobel Prizes to seven.

Caring for female scientists

As a child, Yan was captivated by the traditional Chinese mythical novel *A Journey to the West*, where the main character can transform into objects of any size.

This sparked her curiosity about the sub-microscopic world.

Yan credits her high school chemistry teacher, Guan Yi, as an inspiring role model. "She wasn't very tall, had short grey hair, and wore glasses with a confident smile," Yan recalls.

"She told me more than once, 'Girls are good at science. Believe in yourself.' And she was right," Yan says.

Yan's full list of role models is a long one and includes notable scientists Zhang

Miman, Kuang Tingyun, Wang Zhizhen, Shi Yunyu, Shirley M. Tilghman, and many more.

Now, she is stepping into the role of a mentor herself, inspiring the next generation of women scientists.

She recalls not noticing the gender disparity among professors until she became one herself.

"When I looked around, there were far fewer female professors," she says.

"In graduate school, especially in biology, there are usually equal numbers of men and women. But as careers progress, the ratio of men increases dramatically while the number of women drops significantly.

"We must change the historical and cultural bias against women in academia and society by establishing gender equality and creating more female role models to show that women can and do lead, and deserve fair recognition," she says.

Yan believes promoting female leaders is essential, with women leading the way themselves.

"As female leaders, we understand the unique challenges women face," she says.

At her institute, the Shenzhen Medical Academy of Research and Translation, she has appointed three female vice-presidents. This has attracted many female researchers, creating a supportive, female-friendly environment.

In keeping with the tradition of female scientists fighting for other women to enter the scientific workplace, she has organized an annual forum since 2015 dedicated to women in science.

"It is now my turn to create a similarly nurturing environment for young scholars, particularly women," she says.

"I always tell my students and my young colleagues to be brave and be yourself. You're not alone. We have faced many common challenges. The key is we have overcome all of them. If we can, you can," Yan says.

Contact the writer at liyingsxue@chinadaily.com.cn



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Role of honor

Since 1998, the Fondation L'Oreal and UNESCO have annually honored five exceptional female scientists from different regions. The program promotes their work globally and empowers them as role models.

Laureates are recognized for their scientific achievements and contributions to global research.

One laureate is selected from each of the five major regions: Africa and the Arab states, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America.

The program has recognized 132 winners from more than 110 countries and regions, including seven Nobel Prize recipients and eight scientists from China.

2024 Laureate

Yan Nieng
Chinese Academy of Sciences academician, university professor at the School of Life Sciences at Tsinghua University,



founding president of Shenzhen Medical Academy of Research and Translation, and director of the Shenzhen Bay Laboratory. She was awarded for discovering the atomic structure of multiple membrane proteins that mediate the traffic of ions and sugars across the cell membrane, revealing principles that govern cross-membrane transport.

2022 Laureate

Hu Hailan
Professor and executive director of the Neuroscience Center of Zhejiang University School of Medicine



She was awarded for major discoveries in social and emotional neuroscience. Her groundbreaking work has revolutionized the scientific understanding of mental health and deciphered the mechanism of depression to inform innovative treatment strategies and new medicines.

2018 Laureate

Zhang Miman
Professor, Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology, member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences



She was awarded for her pioneering work on fossil records leading to insights on how aquatic vertebrates adapted to life on land.

2016 Laureate

Chen Hualan
Member of the World Organization for Animal Health Sciences, researcher and doctoral supervisor at the Harbin Veterinary Research Institute of Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences



She was awarded for her outstanding research into the biology of the bird flu virus, leading to the development and use of an effective vaccine.

2015 Laureate

Xie Yi
Member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry headquartered in the United Kingdom, professor and doctoral supervisor at the University of Science and Technology of China



She was awarded for her significant contributions to inorganic solid state solvothermal chemistry at the nanoscale, particularly unconventional semiconductor materials and graphene-like structures a few atoms thick.

2011 Laureate

Vivian Yam
Chair of Chemistry, Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Science, the University of Hong Kong, member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences



She was awarded for her work on light-emitting materials and innovative ways of capturing solar energy; pioneering contributions in the molecular design of photo-active materials that are particularly relevant to solar energy conversion.

2004 Laureate

Nancy Ip
President of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences



She received the award for her discoveries on the molecular control of growth, differentiation and synapse formation in the nervous system. Her recent research on deregulated signaling pathways in cell surface receptors has provided critical insights into Alzheimer's disease mechanisms, revealing new molecular targets and potential therapeutic strategies.

2003 Laureate

Li Fanghua (1932-2020)
Member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the World Academy of Sciences



A specialist in electron microscopy, Li's strenuous work has pushed the limits of observation of crystalline structures through the elimination of interference. Her research promotes the development of related disciplines and provides crystal structure information of new materials, which helps to draw the laws of the relationship between material properties, structure and technology.

LI YINGXUE

LIFESHANGHAI



A *mamianqun* from the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) features phoenix as the ornament.

The *mamianqun*, translated as the "horse-face skirt", is a type of traditional clothing that is making a comeback as the latest fashion trend, gaining increasing popularity among younger Chinese generations, according to those in the know.

The curators of an ongoing exhibition, *Splendid Mamianqun*, at the Shanghai Textiles Museum, made the above observation, due to the emerging trend of young people's growing sense of cultural pride.

Mamianqun is a type of *hanfu* that features a high, flat front and pleated sides. It originated in the Song Dynasty (960-1279) and maintained its popularity during the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911).

Launched on May 18, the two-month exhibition showcases dozens of *mamianqun*, including over 40 pieces from the ancient dynasties and 12 modified skirts with innovative designs. The exhibition has attracted a large number of visitors, many of which came dressed in *mamianqun* — both males and females, says Jia Yiliang, curator of the Shanghai Textiles Museum and a curator of the exhibition.

"There is an old saying — 'You are what you wear'. *Mamianqun* embodies the aesthetic, philosophy and wisdom of ancient Chinese dressmakers, reflecting the status, thoughts and experiences of the people wearing them," Jia says.

"*Mamianqun*, as a type of clothing, is also a language of self-expression and is close to our daily lives. You can either admire them from a professional perspective for the craftsmanship, technique and philosophy, or simply from a personal view and preference."

Despite the long history of *mamianqun*, it was not until recent years that this traditional garment drew extensive focus, gaining international attention on the ancient Chinese skirt.

Ma Wenjuan, one of the curators of the exhibition and deputy director of the Journal Center at Donghua University, was among the first to introduce in details the skirt to more people in 2022.

Along with some notable professors, Ma published a post to explain the fea-



Above: The Shanghai Textiles Museum's ongoing exhibition *Splendid Mamianqun*.

Below: A painting from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) features people in the royal palace dressed in *mamianqun*. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Another, featuring figures and courtyards, also from the Qing Dynasty.

If You Go

Splendid Mamianqun

Through to July 18
F3, Shanghai Textiles Museum, 150
Aomen Road, Putuo district, Shanghai

Traditional Chinese garment makes stylish comeback

Mamianqun becomes trendy among younger generations as modern iterations reflect self-expression, Wang Xin reports.

tures of *mamianqun* and its origin in China.

Yet, Ma found one single post far from enough to make the public understand *mamianqun*.

Working together with authors, Donghua University Press published a book on May 17 to comprehensively explain the traditional Chinese clothing, including its history, colors, patterns, techniques and cultural connotations.

"*Mamianqun* is one of the most influential and widely worn traditional Chinese clothing in the recent *guojing* — Chinese style using elements from traditional culture — boom. Its popularity not only leads the new Chinese fashion

trends but also witnesses the rising cultural confidence of Chinese people," says Jia Xizeng, one of the curators of the exhibition and an author of the book.

He notes that the *mamianqun* design, structure, pattern and cultural connotations have formed the coexistence of its sporty, decorative and ceremonial features, representing the wisdom and aesthetic of ancient Chinese dressmaking.

Such features have also made *mamianqun* a versatile garment suited for both everyday wear and ceremonious occasions.

Seamlessly integrating tradition and modernity, an increasing number of young people in China are choosing it for their mix-and-match daily outfits.

According to a report on female consumption trends by Douyin e-commerce, over the past year, the platform's orders for new Chinese-style clothing increased by 195 percent year-on-year. Orders for *hanfu* surged by 336 percent year-on-year, with orders for *mamianqun* rocketing by 841 percent year-on-year.

Jia Yiliang also notes that she has seen the growing popularity of *mamianqun* and *hanfu* among males.

"In addition to young female visitors, we are pleased to see many males and elderly at the exhibition. They are yearning for traditional Chinese clothing as well. Unlike other traditional Chinese garments, such as *qipao*, *mamianqun*

usually relies less on gender or body shape and is easier to wear."

"Although people's lifestyles and dress habits have changed dramatically with the development of society, the *mamianqun* still exudes a unique charm. It is not only loved by traditional dress enthusiasts but also valued and sought after by Western fashion brands and designers," Jia Xizeng adds.

At the exhibition, several relic *mamianqun*, as well as new designs by Lin Xi, are on display.

As an inheritor of the craftsmanship for making *mamianqun* and the founder of a clothing brand, Lin has been making efforts to bring this traditional Chinese garment to the global stage with her modern modifications. Notably, Lin launched a show featuring *mamianqun* during the Paris Fashion Week last September.

"Clothing is a premier bridge for cultural exchanges," says Jia Yiliang, highlighting a donated piece of *mamianqun* on display. At the request of an American in China back in the Qing Dynasty, the garment was remodeled from the traditional Chinese skirt, brought to the United States, kept generation to generation, and finally found its way back home to the Shanghai Textiles Museum.

Witnessing the success of the exhibition, both Ma and Jia Yiliang are confident and ready for their plans to dig deeper into this sector.

"Through *mamianqun*, we expect to draw more attention to the clothing and traditional Chinese culture. We will continue to work to promote the culture to a wider audience, and I believe more young people will join us," says Ma firmly.

Contact the writer at wangxin2@chinadaily.com.cn



Vintage animation gets fresh update at exhibition

By ZHANG KUN
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Vintage films by the Shanghai Animation Film Studio are projected at the Inlet, a new lifestyle hub in Shanghai's Hongkou district, alongside more recent notable animation films from across China.

A *Dialogue Beyond Time and Space* is an exhibition jointly hosted by Shanghai Animation Film Studio and the HiShorts! Film Festival.

Taking place from June 8 to the end of August, it features some of the "forgotten gems" of animated films by the Shanghai Animation Film Studio, as well as a series of new animation films curated by the HiShorts! Film Festival. It is a leading festival in China featuring short film productions of no more than 40 minutes.

Since its founding in 1957, the animation film studio has created more than 500 feature films.

Some widely beloved productions, such as the *Monkey King*, have been so popular through the past decades that they conjure treasured childhood memories of different Chinese generations, says Wang Anyi, a staff member of the studio.

"We have selected 36 films from our archives, which are as brilliant as the most beloved classics but are less known to the public because they have had fewer opportunities for projection."

Some of the vintage films, such as the 1963 film *Princess Peahen*, have been restored with 4K technology, exhibiting vivid colors and fresh brightness.



Left: Visitors interact with the Window Project artwork. Right: Audiences enjoy the restored animation movies by the Shanghai Animation Film Studio. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Also showcased are films selected by the HiShorts! Film Festival. With the first installation launched in Xiamen of Fujian province in 2019, the festival has been held annually, receiving more than 7,000 entries from 118 countries and regions in 2023.

"We have discovered through the festival's past five sessions that the cutting-edge animation filmmakers in China are keen to bor-

row from traditional Chinese art, such as the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) brick and stone pictorial reliefs and the Buddhist frescoes of Dunhuang," says Zeng Yiling, a staff member for the festival.

The films are arranged in four chapters, showcased in posters, manuscripts, stop-motion puppets, storyboards and so on, revealing the creative process and evolu-

tion of the art and craft of animation filmmaking.

"This exhibition is a dialogue that goes beyond time and space when we rediscover the heritage and artistic achievements of pioneering animation artists," says Peng Yong, deputy general manager of the animation film studio.

"It also provides new inspiration and

motivation for the younger generation of animation creators."

Qiu Anxiong, the curator of the exhibition, recalls his childhood experience of watching cartoon movies shown before the feature film in the cinema.

"Very often I enjoyed the cartoon more than the feature film," he says.

Later on, when he became a contemporary artist, cartoon movies, such as *Nezha Against the Dragon King*, inspired him to create one of his most significant art projects, *The New Book of Mountains and Seas*.

"As a child, I watched the cartoon movies simply for fun, without any artistic or aesthetic judgment," he says at the opening.

"When I grew up and became a professional artist, I took a fresh look at them and found them artistically impeccable, often with elements of Chinese ink painting and other strong stylistic expressions."

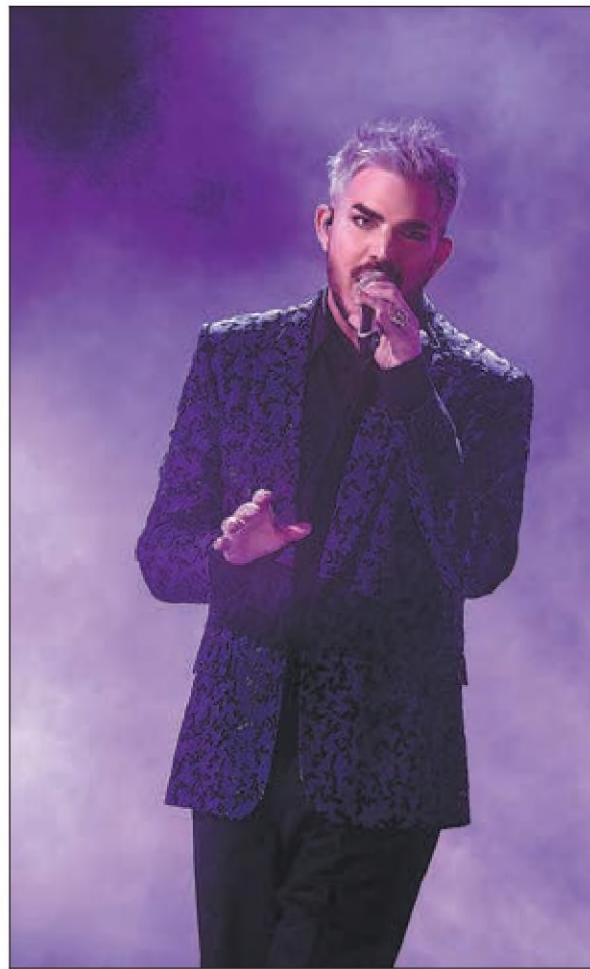
The Shanghai studio has achieved such artistic heights that it was widely recognized in the world animation art scene as the representative China school.

"Looking back, I feel more and more grateful for the artistic nourishment these films brought me as a child," he says.

Qiu has brought together a group of contemporary artists to create The Window Project for the exhibition, consisting of installations, live music, poetry, performances and more.

All those are showcased in giant glass boxes in different corners of the Inlet, a lifestyle hub refurbished from old houses along eight lanes at the juncture of Sichuan Road North and Haining Road in the city.

LIFE



From left: American singer-songwriter Adam Lambert, Moroccan-Canadian singer-songwriter Faouzia Ouihya and American diva Chante Moore perform on the music competition show *Singer 2024*. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Singers fine-tune their appeal

Show's live performances up the ante, proving a hit with viewers, **Xing Wen** and **Wang Yu** report in Changsha.

The "Catfish Effect" describes how the presence of a strong competitor can invigorate and revitalize a complacent group. This phenomenon has been vividly illustrated by the Chinese music competition show *Singer 2024*, which features a mix of international and domestic singers competing in live broadcasts on Hunan Satellite TV and online video platform Mango TV.

The program is known for its strict standards, requiring performances to be completely live with only one take. The "catfishes" include American diva Chante Moore and Moroccan-Canadian singer-songwriter Faouzia Ouihya, who are among the show's initial lineup, as well as American singer-songwriter Adam Lambert, who was invited to perform his hit single *Whataya Want from Me* in the third episode. This phenomenon has made the show, well, phenomenal.

Its first episode on May 10 sparked heated debates because the only two foreign singers in its initial lineup — Moore and Ouihya — took the top two spots, while Chinese veteran vocalist Na Ying ranked third, with the other four Chinese singers trailing behind.

Since then, the program has broadcast live performances every Friday night, with new competitors joining each week. Every episode has sparked hot discussions on Chinese social media, making it a sensation in China.

Chinese internet users have expressed disappointment, suggesting that Chinese singers have been relying too much on postproduction edits instead of honing their authentic vocal performances. Some say that *Singer 2024* is a wake-up call for the Chinese music industry, exposing it to international standards.

The show has even stirred nationalist sentiments among netizens, who are calling for truly capable Chinese

singers to participate and represent China.

Chinese singers including Han Hong, Jiang Yingrong, Ji Minjia, Wang Xi, Li Jiawei, Luo Qi, Liu Meilin and Huang Xiaoyun have all expressed their desire to participate in the show on their social media platforms.

Music critic Lu Shiwei believes that the use of live broadcasting in the program sets a good example for the domestic music industry.

"Some may mistakenly think that singers just need to get on stage and sing directly but in reality, it takes coordination among various departments such as accompaniment and lighting to present a perfect performance. The widespread discussion brings the focus back to the essence of singing, which is a good thing," he says.

Lu believes that, physiologically, Western singers differ from Chinese singers, especially in their natural execution of vocal techniques like transitions and glissandos (gliding from one pitch to another). Western singers often have a more open and grand musical style, immediately projecting a strong presence and energy onstage. In contrast, Chinese singers tend to convey more restraint and delicate emotions, requiring deeper audience engagement to fully appreciate.

"Overall, Western singers tend to have a stronger performance impact compared to emotionally restrained Chinese singers in live shows," Lu adds.

Moore, 57, impressed the audience with her wide vocal range and adept use of whistle tones during her debut performance on the show, where she covered *If I Ain't Got You*.

Rising to fame in the early 1990s, Moore made a name for herself as an R&B singer.

Moore's statement regarding the experience of joining the show in China is straightforward: "This is not

“We aim to create an international music stage where audiences can appreciate talent from around the world and experience different music cultures.”

Zhang Danyang,
executive director of *Singer 2024*

for the fainthearted.”

She advises other foreign singers interested in participating to avoid a mindset of superiority or competition. Instead, she encourages them to adopt an attitude centered on learning and embracing the gentle and kind spirit of Chinese culture.

During her stay in China, Moore finds that speaking Chinese has a rhythm very similar to singing, saying, "It captures my heart."

She was also captivated by the scene when Hanggai, a band with ethnic Mongolian musicians, demonstrated *khoomei*, throat singing, onstage during the competition.

"That's the first time I've ever experienced seeing anything like that or hearing anything like that live. It just blew my hair back," she recalls.

Moore says she would like to cooperate with such Chinese artists in the future.

Ouihya has also shown her interest in collaborating with Chinese artists. "I think it would be great to do some sort of collaboration, maybe in the future, with a Chinese artist and have Chinese elements in that song. I think that would be a really cool opportunity." Born in 2000, she is the youngest

singer among the initial lineup of the program. However, she displays a sense of ease and relaxation during her performances. By now, she has claimed the first place in both the second and third episodes of the program.

"What's helped me is simply doing it more often — going onstage, performing regularly and not taking myself too seriously. When I stress less about a performance, I'm less likely to make mistakes or have one that I'm not satisfied with. So, I focus on enjoying myself and being present in the moment. That's when I perform at my best," she explains.

Describing her expectations for the show, she refers to it as a "lifetime opportunity".

She expresses her desire to savor every moment, meet new people, connect with the audience in China, and simply have fun experiencing the music.

"I'm just trying to enjoy the moment," she says.

Although she isn't someone who enjoys competition, she still describes the experience as "the loveliest".

She even recommends other foreign singers to give it a try.

"I think it's been so much fun, and it also teaches you a new skill, it teaches you to stay calm under pressure. Competing in something like this isn't something that most artists do because once you have a career started, you don't compete anymore. You're just in your own world. So this is just a whole new world for people to experience."

Zhang Danyang, executive director of *Singer 2024*, hopes the international lineup will offer a diverse range of musical styles and cultural exchange for the audience.

"We aim to create an international music stage where audiences can appreciate talent from around the world and experience different music cultures. Simultaneously, we aim to promote the

exchange and integration of Chinese music with world music."

In this music competition format, song selection is pivotal.

Zhang says that the program gives singers substantial freedom in choosing their songs.

"Each song performed by the singers reflects their true feelings and experiences, representing what they genuinely want to share. While the program team offers suggestions, the final decision rests with the singers."

Ouihya says that "on this show, I'm hoping to do songs that are more emotional and touching and that I really feel, and songs that also showcase vocal and technical ability, because I think that's important. My goal is to have both in each of my performances as best as I can."

Recently, this young and promising musician got a taste of overnight fame in China.

During her time in China, she traveled to different places and was frequently recognized by people. On Chinese social media platforms, there were posts about encounters with her and photos taken together.

She vividly remembers the day after her debut on the show when she went to an amusement park and was approached by many people asking for photos.

"I was so shocked that people remembered me or recognized me from the show. And now I'm seeing it happen more and more, and they're always very sweet, kind and respectful, which I really appreciate."

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Antiaging causes wrinkles in health awareness

In a world where it seems everyone is fighting the effects of aging, and social media is filled with cosmetic solutions while providing photo filters to assist, early-onset cancer rates in people aged 18 to 49 are rising, according to an article published by Yale Medicine in March. Riding on the cusp of turning 50, it is astounding



Kara Schroeder
Second Thoughts

ing and frightening to tick off the number of people I know in their 30s, 40s and 50s who have been diagnosed with and passed from various cancer diagnoses in the past decade. Yet most people seem to be distracted by how they can look younger rather than going to a physician to get health screenings.

Antiaging treatments worldwide are booming. Statista.com valued the antiaging market in 2021 at \$62 billion with a forecasted increase to \$93 billion by

2027. Weight loss drugs, injectable fillers, noninvasive liposuction and facelifts — it's no longer a stigma to publicly announce you've had these procedures. Videos of "influencers" fill social media showing the processes with before and after photos, sparking a desire in viewers to get more and more done to look younger.

While statistics show those having cosmetic treatments are mostly women, male aesthetic procedures have been on the rise. We live in a society that hypocritically

and publicly condemns body shaming and ageism, but it seems the push for that equality is all but going unheard. Advertisements for antiaging are everywhere but self-acceptance ads are rare.

With the rise in early-onset diseases, getting regular health screenings should take priority over how to get rid of smile lines and cellulite. But in a society that values appearance over physical and mental well-being, including billionaires like Jeff Bezos invest-

ing in the antiaging market, how can we influence everyone to take better care of themselves?

Innovation in healthcare has vastly improved but imagine if the money invested in antiaging research was invested in cancer research. And if someone is willing to shell out thousands of dollars to look younger, wouldn't it make sense to spend a couple of hundred to catch a deadly disease in its early stages?

Having never had any cosmetic procedure, I don't judge others for

trying to look their best. However, at what point do we appreciate just being alive and having the ability to keep aging? It always baffles me when someone fudges their age or won't disclose what year they were born. Birthdays are such a blessing. As more people I know suffer from deadly health issues, the happier I am to have the privilege of waking up every morning.

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