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# CHINA DAILY

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XI'S VISION | REFORM AND OPENING-UP

## Visa-free policy spurs exchanges

China committed to making it easier for expatriates to live, work in country

By MO JINGXI and XU WEI

Spanish businessman Jesus Perez Aguilar arrived in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, in late January for an 11-day business trip, a journey that also took him to Guangdong's Shenzhen and Changsha, Hunan province.

Aguilar's frequent trips to China have been propelled by a 2018 agreement signed during President Xi Jinping's visit to Spain, which allowed the European country to export bone-in ham to China.

Over the years, Aguilar has become a familiar face in China promoting Iberian ham. In 2023 alone, he visited China four times, staying

more than 90 days in the country. The January trip, however, stood out due to a new and convenient measure: a unilateral 15-day visa-free entry policy granted to ordinary passport holders from several European countries, including Spain, as well as Malaysia. This policy, on a trial basis and initially set to expire at the end of the year, has been extended to the end of 2025. It now applies to 14 countries, with Australia and New Zealand recently included.

"These small conveniences help a lot in promoting commercial exchanges between countries," said Aguilar, who works for the Interprofessional Iberian Pork

Association, which is based in Zafra, southern Spain.

In a written speech delivered at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation CEO Summit in San Francisco, the United States, in November, Xi reiterated Beijing's commitment to making it easier for foreign expatriates to live and work in China.

"We will also take more 'heart-warming' measures, such as improving the policies on entry and stay of foreign nationals in China and removing for them choke points in financial, medical, e-payment and other services," he told the global business community.

During the Central Economic Work Conference in December,

China's top leadership decided to remove more barriers to facilitate business, study and travel in China for foreigners. Since then, both central and local governments have introduced a series of measures to meet the diverse needs of foreign visitors and expatriates.

As China has pursued a more proactive strategy of opening-up since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, observers said these measures exemplify China's efforts to advance a broader agenda of opening-up across more areas and in greater depth.

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## Beijing vows to work with Canberra to advance ties

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

China and Australia vowed on Monday to work toward a mature, stable and constructive comprehensive strategic partnership while consolidating the current positive development momentum, and to jointly uphold regional and global peace, stability and prosperity.

During the ninth China-Australia Annual Leaders' Meeting held on Monday in Canberra, Premier Li Qiang and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese confirmed that the bilateral relationship is on the right track of steady improvement, and they agreed that the two countries should maintain regular engagement in support of the ongoing stabilization and development of their ties.

Li is making an official visit to Australia, the first by a Chinese premier since 2017. The first stop of his four-day visit to Australia was Adelaide in the state of South Australia, where he visited Adelaide Zoo on Sunday to inspect the countries' cooperative research on conservation of the giant panda.

He is scheduled to attend a China-Australia CEO Roundtable Meeting in Perth on Tuesday together with Albanese.

The premier pointed out during the meeting that China-Australia relations are essentially characterized by mutual benefit and win-win results. The development of China and Australia presents opportunities, rather than challenges, for each other, he said.

Li underlined the need for both countries to continuously expand trade, and actively explore cooperation in areas such as new energy vehicles and renewable energy.

It is hoped that Australia will provide a fair, just and non-discriminatory business environment for Chinese enterprises and facilitate people-to-people exchanges, he said.

Li expressed China's willingness to strengthen coordination and cooperation with Australia on regional and international affairs, and jointly oppose bloc confrontation and a new Cold War to safeguard regional peace and stability.

He also underscored the need for both countries to advocate openness, inclusiveness and common development, in order to promote regional economic integration and build an open world economy.

China has been Australia's largest trading partner for 15 consecutive years. Bilateral relations were severely damaged due to the negative policies adopted by the previous Australian government toward China. The two countries

have broken the ice since Albanese assumed office in 2022.

Albanese said during the meeting that Australia is happy to see an upturn in bilateral ties, and it is willing to maintain dialogue and cooperation with China and will not allow differences to define the countries' relationship.

Australia adheres to the one-China policy and does not support "Taiwan independence", he said, adding that it is in favor of China's development and prosperity.

Following the meeting, the leaders witnessed the signing of a range of bilateral documents and jointly met the media. The cooperation documents, which will help renew dialogue and strengthen cooperation between China and Australia, cover areas such as the strategic economic dialogue, implementation of the free trade agreement, climate change, education and culture.

The two sides issued a joint statement on the outcomes of the China-Australia Annual Leaders' Meeting. The statement said that both leaders agreed to continue or expand engagement in political dialogue, including through the defense strategic dialogue and defense coordination dialogue, and to convene an initial session of a bilateral maritime affairs dialogue.

Both sides welcomed the implementation of arrangements to facilitate exchanges, including reciprocal access to multi-entry visas of three to five years' duration for business, tourism and visiting family members, according to the statement.

In a separate arrangement, China will include Australia in the list of unilateral visa-free countries.

They welcome the important role played by the Australia-China High-Level Dialogue and plan to hold the next session later this year in Adelaide, the joint statement said. The two sides also agreed to hold the eighth China-Australia Ministerial Dialogue on Climate Change in Australia this year.

Both sides agreed to continue to work together in multilateral platforms including the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, G20, APEC and the East Asia Summit. The two sides attached importance to cooperation under the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement, the statement said.

Before the meeting, Albanese held a grand welcoming ceremony for Li at the Parliament House square, featuring a 19-gun salute. Li inspected the guard of honor.

On Monday, Li also met with other political leaders of Australia, including Governor-General David Hurley.

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

## Fast and fabulous



Passengers pose for photos on Monday with a model of a high-speed electrical multiple unit train of the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway at Halim station in Jakarta, Indonesia. The railway, a landmark project under Belt and Road cooperation and the first of its kind in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, completed eight months of operation on Monday, transporting a total of 3.54 million passengers. XU QIN / XINHUA

## US double standards undermine its moral integrity

WORLD WATCH By David Cottam

student demonstrators on their own campus," he wrote in 2019.

This year, referring to the student protests in the US, Senator Cotton wrote: "If the campus police can't do it, the schools should bring in local police. If the local police can't do it, then yes — the National Guard should restore law and order."

These contrasting attitudes may seem bewildering, especially when recalling the violence of the Hong Kong protests compared with the much more peaceful American ones. Clearly, very different standards are being used to determine what is acceptable at home and abroad.

Another example is Washington's condemnation of Hong Kong's new security laws, despite US laws being remarkably similar, and at times more stringent.

Double standards are also apparent in the US' approach to espionage. The US government frequently expresses its outrage at attempts by "malicious actors", usually referencing China, to spy on the US. However, this is never tempered by the fact that the US is itself a world leader in espionage. The CIA is probably the world's most sophisticated spying machine. Of course, the US government calls its work "intelligence gathering", but this is merely a euphemism for exactly the sort of espionage activities it condemns in other countries.

See Hypocrisy, page 3

## SEVERE DROUGHT, HEAT WAVE GRIP AGRICULTURAL HEARTLAND

Authorities move quickly to tackle challenges, cadres taking action at grassroots level

By ZHU LIXIN in Fuyang, Anhui, ZHU XINGXIN in Taiyuan and QI XIN in Zhengzhou

As the temperature gauge hit 38 C in Linquan county, Anhui province, on Friday afternoon, Guo Qinliang was more worried about his crops than the scorching heat.

"I don't really fear the heat wave, but I do worry a lot about the continuing drought," said Guo from Liuda village in Yangqiao township.

Guo, a farmer in his 60s, had arrived at his 10 mu (0.66 hectares) of cornfield before 4 am, planning to finish a third round of irrigation as quickly as possible

### in-depth

with water from the village's drought relief wells.

Liu Zigui, Party chief of Liuda village, said, "The last time it rained was on May 23."

After the rain, asking migrant workers to return home to harvest the wheat crop was trending on Chinese social media platforms. "At the beginning, we were happy to see it was remaining sunny as it was good for wheat harvesting," said Liu.

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INSIDE Ethics is embedded in nation's climate health adaptation strategies Global Views, page 13

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Premier Li Qiang shakes hands with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese at Parliament House in Canberra on Monday during the China-Australia Annual Leaders' Meeting. WANG YE / XINHUA

# PAGE TWO

## Dry spell: Joint efforts to ease heated situation



A thermometer shows the temperature exceeding 44 C outside the Drum Tower in Yuncheng, Shanxi province, on Thursday.

YAN XIN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Technicians from the State Grid Yinchuan Power Supply Company work in the heat in Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui autonomous region, on Friday.

YUAN HONGYAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

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Harvesting the village's 4,300 *mu* (287 hectares) of wheat began on May 27 and was finished in about a week.

However, planting the next crop was a major problem, as the farmers realized the soil was too dry and hard for planting corn, Liu said.

**Swift to act**

As large areas of China have sweltered under a heat wave in recent weeks, farming communities across the country are dealing with severe drought conditions.

Recent action taken by authorities to alleviate the impact of the drought include increased discharges in the Yellow River and Huaihe River basins, with various provinces contributing to drought relief efforts, Chen Min, vice-minister of water resources, said during a news conference on Monday.

Water diversion projects and reservoir management are helping ensure water supplies for both agricultural production and residential needs during the dry spell, Chen added.

In the Yellow River Basin, the Xiaolangdi Reservoir discharge has been raised from 1,500 to 1,800 cubic meters per second since June 15 for emergency drought relief in Henan and Shandong provinces.

Shaanxi province released 800 million cubic meters of water from its reservoirs, while water diversion projects provided 39.9 million cubic meters of water.

Looking ahead, rainfall expected over the next 10 days in drought-affected areas could provide relief by replenishing water sources, Chen said.

The State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters has maintained a Level 4 emergency response to the drought spell in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region and Hebei, Shandong and Henan, Xinhua News Agency reported on Monday. China has a four-tier response system, with Level 1 being for the most severe conditions.

On Monday, a yellow alert, the lowest level for high temperature warnings, was issued by the National Meteorological Centre.

High temperatures of 35 C to 36 C are forecast to hit parts of China's northern and central regions, with some areas expected to reach as high as 40 C.

On Tuesday, sections of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, and Shandong, Henan, Anhui, and Liaoning provinces will experience high temperatures of 37 C to 39 C, with some locations peaking at 40 C and above.

"This summer, temperatures in most parts of the country are higher than usual, with an increased number of hot days and more frequent occurrences of prolonged hot weather," said Zheng Zhihai, chief forecaster at China's National Climate Center.

He said areas such as North China, East China, Central China, South China and Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region may experience periodic heat waves, with certain areas possibly facing extreme high temperatures.

The Ministry of Emergency Management said recent rainfall in some parts of the country was half the amount typical for this time of year.

**Digging deep**

Sun Longgang, who cultivates 5,000 *mu* (333 hectares) of farmland in Yuncheng, Shanxi province, has expensive machinery and a trickle irrigation system to deal with drought conditions.

"When the surface soil is too dry, I turn to deep plowing so more moist soil can help the corn seeds sprout," said Sun, who added that getting water from a nearby river for trickle irrigation was not a difficult task for him.

However, farmers like Guo in Liuda village in Anhui, do not have access to resources such as rivers and have to rely on underground water from wells.

Every time a severe drought hits, the irrigation infrastructure in Liuda is improved, the villagers said.

"The village has 97 motor-pumped wells, with the first ones dug more than 20 years ago," said Liu the village Party chief, adding that all the wells are in good working order.

Recently, the local government connected electricity to all the

wells and installed power meters. Village cadres taught people how to use the equipment.

"The only expense is the electricity, I spend about 40 yuan (\$5.50) for a round of irrigation of my corn," said Guo.

"You can hope for rain, but can't do nothing and simply wait for it," he said, adding that timing is critical for a good harvest.

**Buds of hope**

At Guo's feet, seedlings planted on different days vary in height. Those with an extra round of irrigation are beginning to sprout leaves.

"We have taken precautions to prevent the villagers from electric shocks and heatstroke," said Han Chao, mayor of Yangqiao township, adding that the electrical wires were all lifted off the ground.

Guo said when he feels too hot, he cools down by splashing his face and arms with cold water from an underground well.

As it began to rain in Linquan on Sunday, the villagers' irrigation efforts were seemingly not in vain.

"The earlier we irrigate the crops, the more yields we will get from the land," said Guo.

Liu said: "The weather report says the rain will stop in the afternoon, but it will rain again for a few days after Wednesday. If so, the drought will have really eased by then."

Online videos show that in Henan some farmers were so excited to see it rain on Sunday that they even went down on their knees.

However, in Linyi, Shandong, the damage had already been done. Lack of rainfall has harmed the yield from fruit trees, including peaches. Fruit farmers estimated that their yields will be down 30 percent compared with last year, Beijing News reported.

Multiple videos posted online show villagers, mostly elderly, busily irrigating their crops as many of Linyi's young people had migrated to cities for work.

**Occupational hazards**

The scorching conditions have also affected workers in other industries and businesses' operations.

The Beijing Municipal Emer-

gency Management Bureau issued a high-temperature orange alert on Sunday. Employers in Beijing were ordered by the government to stop outdoor work, and measures to prevent heatstroke were recommended.

The Shaanxi and Henan governments have also urged employers to stop outdoor work to protect workers from hazardous heat. People were also reminded about fire prevention.

In Shijiazhuang, capital of Hebei, authorities have increased the frequency of spraying water on city roads and used more vehicles to replace sanitation workers.

From Saturday, Universal Beijing Resort extended its nighttime opening hours so visitors can attend when the temperature is cooler. The extended hours will continue until Aug 18.

Zhengzhou Zoo in Henan has taken proactive measures to help the animals adapt to the hot weather in the province's capital. Adequate water and hydrating fruits and vegetables to ensure the well-being and comfort of the animals during the heat wave are being provided by zoo staff.

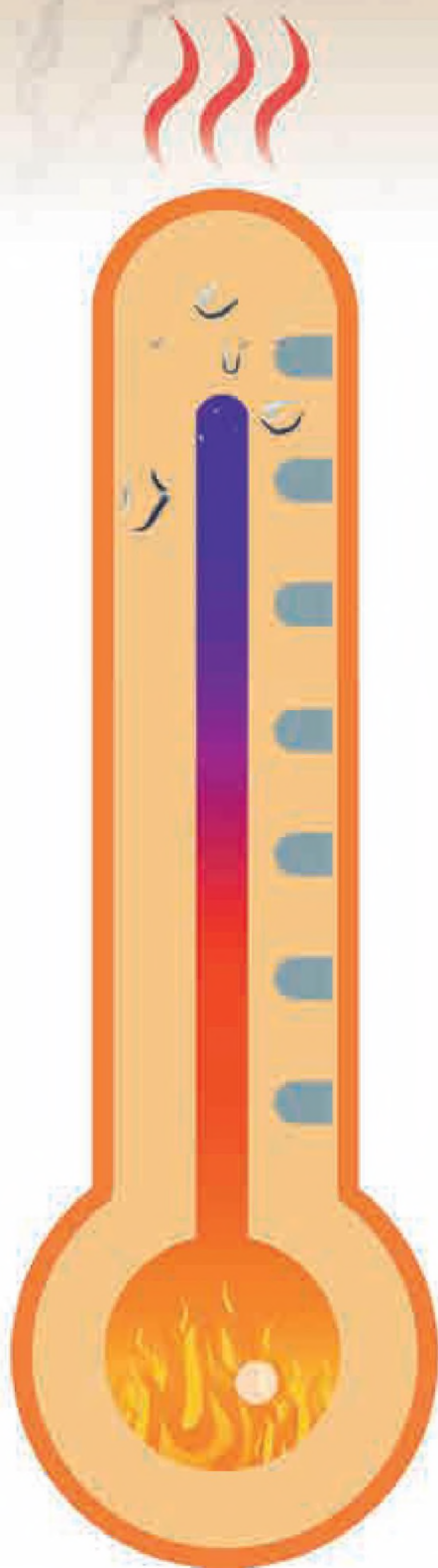
Gorillas, for instance, are being kept in air-conditioned rooms and fed bananas. These efforts help the animals stay cool, hydrated and healthy, and contribute to their overall welfare, zoo officials said.

In Lingshou county, Hebei, the number of bus passengers has decreased significantly as a result of the heat.

"The passenger numbers have dropped by about one-third, and there are barely any during the hot periods," said Hao Liwei, who drives buses running between the county seat and rural areas.

On June 10 in Jizhou, Hebei, a truck driver moved his vehicle off an expressway into an emergency lane when he noticed he had a flat tire. But due to the heat, the tires caught fire and burned some of the cargo before firefighters arrived. The cargo included calcium carbide, which is used as a source for acetylene and other chemicals.

Zheng Jinran, Du Juan, Zou Shuo, Hou Liqiang and Liu Kun contributed to this story.



ART BY LU PING / CHINA DAILY



Left: Staff from the Anyang Meteorological Center install artificial rain-making equipment, which will be put into use when necessary, in Anyang, Henan province, on Sunday. WANG JIANAN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Middle: Guo Qinliang, a farmer in Linquan county, Anhui province, irrigates his newly planted corn on Friday. ZHU LIXIN / CHINA DAILY



Right: Zebras are provided shelters to keep cool at Zhengzhou Zoo in the capital of Henan, on June 12. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## TOP NEWS

## Deadly collision

A search and rescue operation draws curious onlookers after a freight train rammed into a popular tourist express on Monday near New Jalpaiguri station in West Bengal, eastern India, killing at least 15 people and injuring many. The driver of the freight train disregarded a signal, causing the collision with the stationary Kanchenjunga Express, railway authorities said.

DIPTENDU DUTTA / AP



## German experts criticize EU tariffs on Chinese EVs

Protectionist moves will jeopardize electric mobility transition, they say

By XING YI in London  
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The European Union's decision to impose additional tariffs on Chinese battery electric vehicles is a protectionist move that could trigger a global trade conflict and slow down Europe's electric mobility transition, industry leaders in Germany said.

Hildegard Mueller, president of the German Association of the Automotive Industry, said the German automotive industry is in favor of free and fair trade. "As a matter of principle, any protectionist measure... restricts free trade and harbors the risk of trade conflicts that are ultimately detrimental to all sides."

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She said the EU tariffs on electric vehicles imported from China — some of which are up to 38 percent high — is a step away from global cooperation and "further increases the risk of a global trade conflict."

China plays a decisive role in the successful transition toward electric mobility and digitalization, and a trade conflict would jeopardize this transition, Mueller said.

"It would be expedient if we manage to overcome the existing challenges through dialogue and primarily strive for partnership-based formats and solutions," she added.

The European Commission, the executive arm of the EU, announced on June 12 that Chinese-made battery electric vehicles will face punitive countervailing tariffs starting on July 4, and the countervailing

duties will differ based on the brands.

The initial provisional decision imposes a 17.4 percent tariff on BYD, 20 percent on Geely and 38.1 percent on SAIC. These are in addition to the existing 10 percent import tariff that the EU imposes on all non-EU electric vehicle manufacturers.

Michael Schumann, chairman of the Board of the German Federal Association for Economic Development and Foreign Trade, said the association firmly rejects the EU's tariff decision.

"It sends the wrong signal at the wrong time," he said, referring to the EU's 2050 climate neutrality targets that require a mobility transition from gasoline to electricity.

Germany aims to have at least 15 million fully electric cars on the

road by 2030, Schumann said, noting that as of Jan 1, 2023, only 1.01 million electric cars had been registered in the country, while new EV registrations between January and May dropped compared with the same period last year.

"The transition is not taking place on German streets due to high prices and a lack of variety. Inexpensive suppliers from China could stimulate the market and help electric mobility gain more acceptance in Germany. However, protectionism is hindering this mobility transition," Schumann added.

Volker Treier, head of foreign trade at the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said the tariffs on Chinese EVs will inevitably and strongly impact Germany's heavily export-oriented economy, and warned that the EU must be careful not to get caught between the geopolitical mills of its two most important trading partners.

Treier suggested that Europe's best response to China's EV imports is to create its own favorable location conditions and strive for open markets and competition. "Europe must avoid additional trade conflicts and further compartmentalization within its borders," he said.

## China denounces false information on vaccines

By WANG XIAOYU and ZHANG YUNBI

China has firmly denounced an attempt by the United States to spread false information and smear the image of other countries, responding to a recent media report revealing a targeted campaign by the US military to discredit Chinese-made vaccines, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Monday.

Health industry insiders have also warned of severe consequences from the spread of vaccine misinformation.

Reuters reported on Friday that the US military had launched a secret program during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, using social media platforms to sow doubt about the efficacy and safety of vaccines made by Chinese developer Sinovac Biotech, among other medical supplies from China.

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Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said at a news conference in Beijing that such actions "only expose the hegemony and hypocrisy of the US," adding that the US "should behave the way a major country should."

"It has always been the practice of the US to manipulate social media to spread false information, poison the public opinion environment and smear the image of other countries. China firmly objects to this," Lin said.

He said that when Washington wants to contain and suppress a country, it ignores the truth and "coordinates resources" to smear and discredit it.

"This applies not only to the fabrication and dissemination of false information about Chinese vaccines, but also to various aspects, including defaming the popular Belt and Road Initiative and spreading rumors about the 'overcapacity' of China's new energy vehicles," Lin said.

"The international community should be clear-eyed about such US behavior," he added.

Sinovac expressed concern over misinformation and rumors circulating online during the COVID-19 pandemic, suspecting organized

and intentional campaigns aimed at attacking the company. In a written statement sent to China Daily on Sunday, the company emphasized that online misinformation about vaccines has not only affected its reputation but also undermined public trust in vaccines.

"Doubts over vaccines and other negative rumors could trigger panic, disrupt stability and bring pressure to families and individuals," the company said.

Sinovac warned that long-term stigmatization of vaccines could impair the public's trust in science, public health institutions and governments, and affect the implementation of public health policies.

The company said that it has released abundant data on the clinical trial results for its COVID-19 vaccines and the outcomes of their actual use. More than 600 studies carried out globally have proved the vaccines' safety and efficacy, it said.

"While the COVID-19 pandemic has been contained and Sinovac has made its contributions, the world is still not at peace," the company said. "We will continue to focus on controlling diseases to safeguard the health of humanity in the future."

Global health experts have denounced planting skepticism and doubts over vaccines and called for concerted efforts to build public trust to fend off future health threats.

Joseph Bresee, an epidemiologist and director of respiratory virus prevention programs at the Taskforce for Global Health, a nonprofit based in the US, said that vaccine hesitancy and suspicion have become more serious compared with before the COVID-19 pandemic, with many populations less willing to be vaccinated.

"Tackling this issue will require lots of resources, lots of tailored strategies for different people, lots of complexity, but obviously it cannot be ignored," he said in an interview in May with the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, or Gavi.

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## Hypocrisy: US stance on military spending, security biased

From page 1

Such double standards exist in the US' approach to military expenditure as well. The US military-industrial complex has been at the heart of American policy since the end of World War II. In 1961, then US president Dwight D. Eisenhower used the term to warn US citizens about the dangerous relationship between the country's military and the arms industry. He saw this pairing as a vested interest that exerted a dominant influence on policy.

In a perceptive and statesmanlike speech, Eisenhower warned: "We must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence... by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists, and will persist."

Sadly, his warning went unheeded, as is evident in the Pentagon's 2023 report comparing China's defense budget of \$230 billion with the US' \$889 billion. Yet the US persists in portraying China, rather

than itself, as a threat to peace. The double standards here are based on the clearly false premise that China's military spending is offensive, whereas American spending is purely defensive.

The hypocrisy of the US stance on military spending is also exemplified by its current criticism of China's exports to Russia. According to US sources, these are nonmilitary exports such as microelectronics and telecommunications gear, but are still portrayed as helping Russia in its war with Ukraine. However, these exports are dwarfed by the direct military aid worth billions of dollars that the US is pumping into Ukraine, rather than trying to broker peace.

Similarly, the US is sending billions in aid to the Israeli military in support of its war in Gaza. To condemn China's nonmilitary exports to Russia while simultaneously exporting military equipment to both Ukraine and Israel is pure hypocrisy.

It's a similar story with the US' geopolitical approach to security. Its own security is protected by the

1823 Monroe Doctrine, which permits no foreign interference in the Western Hemisphere. Notably, this doctrine was invoked during the 1962 Cuban crisis, when Soviet missiles based in Cuba were regarded as an unacceptable provocation. After a tense standoff, the missiles were removed and the US' right to maintain the Western Hemisphere as its own distinct sphere of influence was reinforced.

This may seem a perfectly reasonable security stance, until you reflect on the US' policy toward other countries wishing to protect their own geopolitical security.

Despite verbal assurances given to the Soviet Union shortly before its breakup in 1991, the US has supported the encroachment of NATO into Eastern Europe, effectively removing the buffer zone that had previously eased Russian security concerns.

Similarly, the US has insisted on undertaking warship exercises in the South China Sea, seemingly oblivious to the fact that any reciprocal action by China in the Caribbean

would be seen as hostile provocation.

For a country as powerful as the US, it may seem baffling why its government demonstrates such double standards. It condemns other countries for acting exactly as America acts — arresting protesters, enacting security legislation, conducting espionage, spending on the military, trading with countries at war, and trying to preserve geopolitical security.

Such blatant double standards should concern all fair-minded people in the US. They certainly undermine American moral authority in the world. Yet this obvious truth doesn't seem to register in Washington. Its "do as I say, not do as I do" approach to international affairs is the antithesis of good leadership. The world and the American people deserve better.

The author is a British historian and former principal of Sha Tin College, an international secondary school in Hong Kong. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## Igniting creativity



Artist John Paul Marcelo paints a landscape on Sunday, inspired by the wind-driven wildfire near Geyserville, California, in the United States. The wildfire, which broke out on Sunday, prompted evacuations near its origin at Lake Sonoma. PETER DASILVA / NEWS.COM

## Exchanges: More foreigners willing to visit as convenience improves

From page 1

Matteo Giovannini, an Italian who has lived in China for nearly 11 years and has witnessed such efforts, highly rated the quality of life in China, considering aspects such as affordability, safety and cultural richness.

Giovannini said the digitalization of government services is one aspect he has found particularly beneficial for foreigners. "It has made it easier for residents to access public services, pay bills and complete administrative tasks online."

He said that initially, it was challenging for him to adapt to life in China as English was not widely used on public transportation and in restaurants when he arrived in 2013 in Dalian, Liaoning province.

It would be better if the availability of translation and interpretation services, especially in critical areas such as healthcare, legal services

and government offices can be further increased, he said.

Now being deeply immersed in China's culture and traditions and the Chinese language, Giovannini said he does not see himself living somewhere else in the foreseeable future. He was granted permanent residence status in 2022.

"The fact that China enjoys political stability with a predictable living environment is something that cannot be underestimated nowadays," he added.

Wang Ying, a researcher at the Beijing-based University of International Business and Economics' Academy of China Open Economy Studies, said that through the facilitation measures, the Chinese government is showing a welcoming attitude toward foreign visitors as well as expatriates in China.

"We can see that the adopted measures are targeted at existing bottlenecks and obstacles, with the purpose of creating a better envi-

ronment for them to work and live in China in the long run," she said.

As convenience improves, more and more foreigners, including businesspeople, will be willing to come to travel, work and live in China. "This will help boost economic, trade, as well as cultural exchanges between China and other countries, thus deepening cooperation and mutual understanding," Wang said.

Aguilar, the Spaniard, said he has full confidence in the Chinese economy and will deepen his involvement in the Chinese market with a planned visit in September.

He said that in the past five years, sales of Spanish cured ham to China increased by more than 104 percent, with an annual growth of 28.5 million euros (\$30.52 million). Now China has become Spain's second-largest destination for such products outside the European Union.

"China is a very large country with so many cities of interest to visit and work in," he said, adding that

he hopes the 15-day period of the visa-free policy could be extended by a few more days to facilitate his stay in China.

Wang, the UIBE researcher, said, "Efforts to improve the quality of life for foreign citizens in China will also help to establish an objective understanding of China and enhance their sense of belonging toward China by showcasing the openness, inclusiveness and friendliness of China as a major country."

For many foreign visitors who have never been to China before, an in-person visit will enable them to get a true picture of how the country looks today after decades of reform and opening-up, Wang said.

In the first quarter of this year, foreign nationals made four times more trips in and out of China, data from the National Immigration Administration showed. During this period, the administration issued around 466,000 visa documents for foreign nationals and granted over

1.98 million foreign travelers visa-free entry, up 118.8 percent and 266.1 percent, respectively.

Videos shared by foreign tourists on platforms such as YouTube and TikTok about their firsthand travel experiences in China have been going viral recently.

In a video titled "Shocked by this crazy city in China," which received 545,000 views, YouTube user "Jet-Lag Warriors" experienced the transportation and accommodations services, tasted local food and visited tourist attractions in Chongqing.

The six-day visit earlier this year was enabled by a 144-hour visa-free transit policy implemented by China that has been granted to travelers from 54 countries.

In a comment under the video, a viewer with the username "dr\_emmz" said: "I can't believe you guys made me smile the whole day. ... China is the best country, lots of places to explore, lots of

food, lots of cultures, it's almost unreal, and this is not what the media shows us, I'm actually coming to China for my vacation this year, so excited."

Miao Lu, secretary-general of the Center for China and Globalization, a Beijing-based think tank, said that with efforts to facilitate cross-border travel and high-standard opening-up, China is leading globalization against a rising trend of anti-globalization and implementing the Global Development Initiative and other major initiatives proposed by China.

"The convenient measures may appear to be small changes, but in reality, for a country as large as China, there were huge efforts behind every improvement. For instance, it is by no means an easy task to unilaterally grant visa-free access to an entire country," she said.

"By doing so, China is telling the rest of the world that its commitment to expanding opening-up is not just lip service," Miao added.

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## CHINA

## Carnival kickoff



Cosplayers interact with audience members as the weeklong Hainan Carnival kicks off in Haikou, the provincial capital, on Sunday. The tourism festival, usually held in December, is being held in summer for the first time to attract tourists, with over 50 activities combining elements of sunshine, sea, rainforest, beach, food, music, sports and intangible cultural heritage. WANG CHENGLONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Bay Area integrating industry, talent

By CHENG SI  
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The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area has achieved good results in integrating industry and talent, especially in the high-tech sector, according to a recent report by the recruitment portal Zhaopin and Peking University HSBC Business School.

It said the Bay Area had relatively balanced labor supply and demand last year, and the good integration between industry and talent in some cutting-edge sectors such as biomedicine and new energy will create new growth engines for the area's high-quality development.

Biomedicine and healthcare were among the industries achieving good results in integration last year thanks to a sufficient supply of labor, good pay and supportive policies from the local authorities, the report said.

It said over 3.5 million people sought healthcare-related jobs in the Bay Area last year, with new recruits' monthly pay averaging about 11,000 yuan (\$1,517). The average pay for newly recruited bioengineers was 13,902 yuan a month.

Guangdong province has included the biomedicine and healthcare industry in its development vision and wants it to achieve an annual revenue of 1 trillion yuan by next year.

However, some services-related industries, including retail, real estate and construction, have shown unsatisfactory results in integrating industry and talent, the report said, with problems such as surplus labor and pay cuts emerging.

Hao Jian, a data analyst from Zhaopin, said the Bay Area is strong in economic and manufacturing power and leads growth in new industries, including smart vehicles, the digital economy and the information industry.

He said its economic advantages help attract talent, and this has laid a solid foundation for the integration of industry and talent.

"The Bay Area has cooperated with other provinces to introduce good education resources for its talent production," he said. "As an important part of the Bay Area, Guangdong province has a population that is aging by less than the national average level, bringing it a demographic dividend."

He said the Bay Area can create more high-quality job openings in services-related industries such as logistics and finance, in addition to some high-tech and key sectors, as the area will need more all-around talent in the process of upgrading traditional industries.

## Coast guard boards Philippine vessels

Actions near Ren'ai Reef 'reasonable, lawful, professional and standardized'

By JIANG CHENGLONG  
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The China Coast Guard boarded, inspected and drove away Philippine vessels that illegally intruded into waters near Ren'ai Reef in the South China Sea on Monday, a spokesman said on Monday afternoon.

Spokesman Gan Yu said the Philippines had violated its commitments by dispatching a supply ship and two inflatable boats into waters near Ren'ai Reef in the Nansha Islands, attempting to deliver supplies to a Philippine warship which has been grounded there for 24 years.

During the process, the Philippine supply ship "dangerously approached and deliberately collided" with a normally navigating Chinese vessel, he said.

The China Coast Guard took control measures in accordance with the law, including issuing warnings, boarding Philippine ves-

sels and conducting inspections, and forcibly driving them away, Gan said, emphasizing that the actions were "reasonable, lawful, professional and standardized".

"We once again sternly warn the Philippine side: any form of infringement or provocation is futile," Gan said.

It was the first time the China Coast Guard has conducted onboard inspections of Philippine vessels.

An administrative law enforcement regulation for coast guard authorities that came into effect on Saturday said that China's actions in boarding, inspecting, intercepting and pursuing foreign ships must comply with relevant provisions of international treaties that China has acceded to.

The regulation also stipulates that foreign vessels illegally entering China's territorial waters or inland waters could be detained with the approval of the head of a city-level or higher coast guard authority.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian told a regular news conference on Monday that the implementation of the regulation aims to enforce China's Coast Guard Law, standardize the administrative law enforcement procedures of coast guard authorities and better maintain maritime order, which aligns with international practices.

"On the South China Sea issue, China insists on resolving disputes through negotiations and consultations with directly concerned parties, while resolutely responding to any maritime infringement and provocative acts," he said.

Zhang Junshe, a former researcher at the Naval Research Academy, said the China Coast Guard's control measures against Philippine vessels were a justified and professional countermeasure, in line with international law, in response to the Philippines' escalating infringements and provocations in the South China Sea.

He added that this also serves as a deterrent to the Philippine side, which has frequently violated its commitments in the region.

## CE proud Macao relying less on gaming

By WANG XU and FLORENCE LI  
in Macao

Ho lat-seng, chief executive of the Macao Special Administrative Region, hailed the city's reduced reliance on the gaming sector on Monday as he expressed optimism about Macao's economic prospects, expecting double-digit growth and a return to pre-pandemic levels in the second half of the year.

"The gambling industry accounted for less than 40 percent of Macao's GDP last year, with other non-gambling elements making up the rest," Ho said as he noted that despite anticipating an increase in the gambling industry's proportion this year, the government's goal is to keep its share at 40 percent or below.

Diversifying the economy and maintaining a balanced approach to the gambling industry has been a goal long pursued by Macao, as it is essential to build a sustainable and resilient economy that can withstand external shocks, create more employment opportunities, reduce socioeconomic disparities and adapt to changing global trends.

In 2019, before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Macao government's total revenue reached 133.5 billion Macao patacas (\$16.61 billion), with gambling tax-

es accounting for nearly 80 percent.

However, the pandemic had a significant impact on Macao's gambling industry, as related revenue decreased to 42.84 billion patacas in 2022, marking the lowest annual revenue achieved by the industry since 2004.

To wean Macao of its gaming dependency, Ho outlined strategic measures for economic diversification known as the "1+4" strategy and highlighted the promising strides the city made in the traditional Chinese medicine industry as a result of its ties with Lusophone, or Portuguese-speaking, countries.

As the cornerstone of the diversification effort, the "1+4" strategy refers to the "1" goal of building a world-class tourism and leisure center, while the "4" focuses on four key industries: health, finance, high-technology, and conventions and exhibitions.

A significant part of the diversification revolves around the TCM industry. Macao is home to two national key laboratories focusing on pharmacology and drug development. To support the TCM industry's growth, the city has set up a Drug Regulatory Bureau to oversee the approval and quality control of TCM products. This regulatory framework is crucial for ensuring that

Macao's TCM products meet high standards, facilitating their acceptance in international markets.

One notable success of this effort has been the growing market for Macao's Chinese patent medicines in Portuguese-speaking countries, especially in Africa.

"These countries have a preference for herbal medicine, which aligns with their medical culture and legal framework," Ho said, adding that this alignment has enabled Macao to establish a foothold in these markets.

Chen Xin, director of the State Key Laboratory of Quality Research in Chinese Medicine at the University of Macao, emphasized the importance of internationalizing TCM, saying that while acupuncture has achieved success globally, the acceptance of TCM as a medicinal practice faces challenges.

"What is lacking is scientific evidence obtained through rigorous scientific methods to demonstrate its efficacy and safety," Chen said.

"I believe our team has made significant contributions in this regard, and will undoubtedly contribute to the modernization and internationalization of TCM."

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## Police warn public about gaokao scams

By CAO YIN  
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Examinees and their parents should be vigilant if they receive offers of help in checking national college entrance exam scores early or assistance in applying for scholarships because they could be scammed, Beijing police have warned.

Soon after the exam — also known as the *gaokao* — which was held from June 7 to 10, the Beijing Public Security Bureau released an online anti-fraud handbook that summarizes several common test-related tricks, reminding students and guardians to avoid being deceived.

This year's exam scores are expected to be available from the end of this month, but police said that based on previous cases, some candidates and their parents are eager to learn their scores in advance, leading them to trust false promises of early access to the results.

Some scammers were found to have sent web links through text messages or WeChat groups to students and their families. After clicking on the links, users would be required to enter their identity card and examination registration numbers, and also pay some fees, police said.

"Such fraud not only resulted in financial losses, but also led to the leakage of personal data," they said, stressing that the exam scores can only be checked on an official website designated by the Ministry of Education.

The handbook also outlined another scam, in which individuals took advantage of the financial difficulties faced by some students' families and their need for scholarships to help pay for their college tuition. The scammers impersonated education department or university staff members,

claiming that they could help students apply for scholarships, but asked them to first pay some registration fees.

Applying for a scholarship does not involve payment of any additional fees, police said, "so students in need must be vigilant."

"After being admitted to a university, it's important to promptly verify the scholarship application information with the school or education department via their official channels," they said.

Over the past week, public security bureaus, education authorities and prosecuting organs in many provinces, including Hebei, Hubei, Jiangxi and Sichuan, have issued similar anti-scam tips about the exam to help students protect themselves from being cheated.

To protect the legitimate interests of those taking tests and ensure educational fairness, China has intensified efforts to crack down on violations and crimes related to exams over the past few years.

It passed an amendment to the Criminal Law in 2015 that added crimes, including organizing cheating in exams, illegal sale or provision of exam questions and answers, and taking exams on behalf of others, aiming to address behaviors that disrupt order in national exams.

From November 2015, when the amended law came into effect, to April this year, more than 11,000 people have been punished for exam-related crimes, according to data released by the Supreme People's Court early this month.

The court highlighted the growing sophistication of cheating schemes, facilitated by advances in communication technology, and pledged to crack down on the entire cheating chain, targeting those who provide technology platforms, sell cheating tools or illegally obtain test papers.



Teachers review the test papers from the math portion of the national college entrance examination, on computer screens at Tsinghua University in Beijing on Sunday. LI MUYI / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Chongqing aims to lure more young people

By TAN YINGZI and DENG RUI  
in Chongqing

Chongqing has introduced 48 measures aimed at making the city a more welcoming place for young people by 2027.

"The municipal government is taking the lead in favoring young people, with departments and districts joining forces to support young people," Zhang Ke, deputy secretary of the Communist Youth League of China Chongqing Committee, said at a news conference on Thursday.

According to the first provincial-level plan in China aimed at boosting initiatives for young people, Chongqing will establish 10 districts and counties that are particularly favorable places for them this year. All 41 districts and counties in the city are expected to follow suit by 2027.

The plan outlines 48 policies across six major areas: building service chains for young people and their children's education, enhancing mechanisms to promote young people's employment and entrepreneurship, increasing the supply of rental housing for young people, promoting marriage and parenthood among young people, restructuring the system protecting the rights of young people, and optimizing the environment for the physical and

mental health of young people.

With a population of 32 million, Chongqing has about 9 million people between the age 13 and 35.

According to the local human resources and social security bureau, an action plan was launched in April to attract college graduates to the city for employment and entrepreneurship. By the end of May, some 177,100 college graduates had chosen to stay in or move to Chongqing for employment or to start a business, a 10.34 percent year-on-year increase.

In 2022, the central government released a document on the pilot construction of cities that are more appealing to young people.

Among the first 45 pilot areas, Chongqing's Jiangbei and Shapingba districts have promoted various measures to make themselves more attractive to young people, Zhang said. Three initiatives in Shapingba — practical activities, a youth assistance project in grassroots social governance, and an urban renovator competition — have since been promoted nationwide.

Jiangbei's Guanyinqiao Youth Night School and Wulidian Hezuocun Youth Night School — two of the most popular such schools in the city — have become exemplary models.

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## CHINA

# Grassland protected in Zhangjiakou

Researchers' pasture conservation contributions benefit the world

By YAN DONGJIE  
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The fusion of agrarian and nomadic cultures in Zhangjiakou, Hebei province, where 900,000 hectares of grassland intermingle with farmland on the border with the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, has made the protection of the grassland ecosystem a key priority.

Northwest of Beijing, Zhangjiakou's abundant grassland and its Grass Skyline, acclaimed as one of the 10 most beautiful highways on the Chinese mainland, attract millions of tourists a year.



Wang Kun

But grassland is not only for admiring. More importantly, it carries crucial ecological functions. "Grasslands are the production homeland of herdsmen," said China Agricultural University grassland expert Wang Kun, who is vice-chairman of the Chinese Grassland Society. "They are also a genetic repository, serving as the foundation for the entire ecosystem of our country and the Earth's ecological balance."

Furthermore, grasslands play vital roles in water conservation, soil retention, windbreaks and sand fixation, serving as a natural barrier and green Great Wall in the northwest region of China.

Wang based himself in Zhangjiakou's Guyuan county in 1985, and established the National Field Scientific Observation Research Station for Grassland Ecosystem there 20 years later. Over the past 40 years, more than 200 master's and doctoral students have engaged in research related to grassland protection in Guyuan, producing numerous significant scientific achievements that have made important contributions to grassland conservation worldwide.

"When the cultivated agricultural land area exceeds 40 percent, the grassland ecosystem will be damaged," Wang said. "Through our years of research and observation, we have found that when the cultivated land area is between 30 to 40 percent, the ecosystem can be kept relatively healthy."

Due to reasons such as overgrazing, around 90 percent of China's grasslands degraded several decades ago, making the restoration

of saline-alkali land an important topic in grassland protection, Wang said.

After more than a decade of experiments at the Guyuan research station, Wang and his team discovered effective methods, identifying suitable grass species for pasture restoration and developed over 100 patented technologies.

"In the past, improving saline-alkali land mainly relied on engineering methods, which couldn't address the issue of excessive salt content in the soil," he said. "Therefore, we chose to plant salt-tolerant plants, especially salt-absorbing plants, to reduce the salt content of the saline-alkali land."

Wang's team has also improved corn into a forage variety with a yield of up to 150 metric tons per hectare, which is 10 to 20 times higher than other grass crops.

"This effectively helps herdsmen feed their sheep and cows, without damaging the natural grassland," Wang said.

The methods have been successfully validated in Zhangjiakou and are being promoted nationwide, with over a dozen provinces and regions engaging in similar work.

As summer approaches, sheep grass over a meter tall can be seen everywhere in Zhangjiakou, as high-quality pastures recover.

"Once again, we can see the picturesque scene of cows and sheep grazing in the grassland," Wang said. "Forests are the lungs of the Earth, while grasslands are its skin."

Wang said China has a grassland area close to 300 million hectares, accounting for around 30 percent of the country's land area and making it the country with the largest natural grassland area in the world.

The promulgation of China's first Grassland Law 39 years ago — on June 18, 1985 — led to the designation of June 18 as Grassland Conservation Day.

"The Grassland Law has guided the development of grassland protection construction toward a path where laws are relied upon and adhered to," Wang said. "The Grassland Conservation Day initiated by the Chinese Grassland Society aims to raise awareness among people to protect and develop grasslands."

Wang Ruiyuan contributed to this story.

## Pearl link



A cargo ship passes beneath the Shenzhen-Zhongshan Bridge, spanning the Pearl River in Guangdong province, on Sunday. The bridge is part of the Shenzhen-Zhongshan Link, a project approximately 24 kilometers long that includes bridges, islands, tunnels and underwater interchanges. It passed construction acceptance on Sunday, after seven years of challenging preparatory and building work. SHEN ZHONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Xi'an looks for joint efforts to address 'bachelor problem' in rural areas

By CHENG SI  
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As the "bachelor problem" intensifies in China's rural areas, the government and experts have brainstormed some solutions such as organizing matchmaking activities and regulating sky-high bride prices, to help single men find a spouse.

The bureau of agriculture and rural affairs in Xi'an, capital of Shaanxi province, recently published a reply to a proposal by members of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Xi'an Municipal Committee, saying that it will encourage districts and counties to establish matchmaking platforms for unmarried young people in rural areas.

It said the districts and counties can learn from a sitcom-like matchmaking performance in Henan province, in which matchmakers play the role of Wang Po, a role in the Chinese novel *Shuihu Zhuan*, or *Water Margin*, from the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127).

The bureau said that the growth in the number of unmarried men and women over age 30 from rural areas who postpone their marriages, or have difficulty finding a spouse, is due to the gender imbalance and widening gaps in education and incomes.

"Some older unmarried men from rural areas are not that competitive in the marriage market as they have comparatively weaker education backgrounds and lower incomes than women from urban areas, and the latter usually choose spouses with higher standards,"



The males face the pressure of paying bride prices — roughly 188,000 yuan (\$26,000) or even 300,000 yuan — and buying homes and cars."

Huang Zhenhua, professor from Central China Normal University

the bureau said. "Also, the stereotypical bias for sons in rural areas, the financial pressure of buying homes and weaker public services in the countryside may increase the difficulty of finding a spouse for a single man from a rural area."

The bachelor problem in rural areas was the subject of heated online discussion earlier this year, after a professor from Central China Normal University in Wuhan, Hubei province, published a report on the marriage situation of older single men in rural areas.

The report said that single men in over 40 percent of China's villages have trouble finding a spouse. The report was based on a survey of 1,785 rural households from 119 villages in 26 provinces and regions.

Huang Zhenhua, from the university's Institute of China Rural Studies, who led the research, told Red Star News — a news outlet in Chengdu, Sichuan province — that

the marriage problems faced by single men in rural areas are a social issue closely related to villagers' stereotypical views on childbirth, the economic situation in rural areas and the exodus from the countryside.

"The males face the pressure of paying bride prices — roughly 188,000 yuan (\$26,000) or even 300,000 yuan — and buying homes and cars," he said.

The bureau said that joint efforts from the government, families and wider society are needed to help ease the marriage problems of young people from rural areas.

It said the government can help young people from rural areas develop a reasonable and correct view of marriage through promotional activities, and offer them benefits such as pensions, healthcare and housing to reduce the financial pressure they are under.

It said it will establish marriage services and matchmaking platforms with other departments, and organize more on-site matchmaking events to offer young people from rural areas more opportunities to find a spouse. Some events will be held to guide people to boycott sky-high bride prices.

Figures from the National Bureau of Statistics show that by the end of 2021, China had about 239 million people over age 15 who were single. Census results show that in 2020, the average age of those getting married for the first time was 28.67 years, up from 24.89 in 2010.

Qin Feng in Xi'an contributed to this story.

## Visitor wins horse from tourist site in Ordos

By ZOU SHUO and YUAN HUI  
in Hohhot

A tourist visiting the Inner Mongolia autonomous region has been awarded a Mongolian horse worth 20,000 yuan (\$2,756) by a scenic area in Ordos, as part of the site's efforts to promote its unique horse culture and attract more tourists.

The traveler, surnamed Zhao, who hails from the Ningxia Hui autonomous region, won the horse in a random lottery draw during the Dragon Boat Festival, said Liu Qi, general manager of the marketing division of the Ordos Grassland Travel Area.

The annual lottery draw has been organized eight times, with one horse awarded to a visitor each year, Liu said. If the winner does not have suitable accommodations for the horse, they can receive a cash award instead, he added.

Ordos is known for its rich horse culture, which has been an essential part of people's lives in the region. Residents rely on horses for a variety of tasks and activities, including transportation, hunting, herding, breeding and horse racing.

The prize horse has been transported to Zhao's breeding base in Ningxia, Liu said.

A post about this year's draw on social media has garnered millions of views from netizens, who expressed surprise that the prize was a real horse. Others joked that the giant panda base in Sichuan province should consider holding a similar lottery and send the winner one of the animals.

Although it is rare for animals to be won in a lottery, such draws have been a popular way to promote sites and products.

For example, six tourists won pianos made by a piano company in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, during Spring Festival in early February as part of an event to promote the Canton Tower, the fifth-tallest free-standing tower in the world.

Deng Ning, vice-dean of Beijing International Studies University's School of Tourism Sciences, said the opportunity to win a horse from the grassland site helped it generate a great deal of attention that could attract more visitors.

Though lottery draws at such sites are common, many have failed to properly connect with their local cultures, Deng said.

"Combining a unique local culture and lottery draw can better help the travel area generate more social buzz and publicity," he said.

However, they also need to make sure draws are conducted fairly and that the prizes are awarded in a timely manner, he added. Travelers also need to watch out for fraudulent events, as there have been reports of phony lotteries related to travel.

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## Drone display



A figure formed by 300 drones lights up the main torch tower that was used for last year's Asian Games at Xianghu Lake in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Sunday. LI ZHONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Agriculture cooperation rooted in shared experience

By CHEN BOWEN in Sanya, Hainan  
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Agricultural science and technology cooperation between China and Africa is steadily gaining momentum, promising mutual benefits, participants said at a recent event held in Sanya, in South China's Hainan province.

The workshop on China-Africa Agricultural Science and Technology Cooperation, under the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's South-South and Triangular Cooperation Framework, aimed to bolster agricultural technology cooperation and facilitate the modernization of agriculture across Africa.

"Science and technology play a fundamental role in transforming agriculture and enhancing food security. Africa, with its vast potential for innovation, can benefit from adopting advanced agricultural technologies," said Sun Tan, vice-president of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences.

He added that China's technological advances and experiences can serve as references for African countries seeking to improve agricultural

productivity and sustainability.

Sun said small-scale farming is common in both China and many African countries. This makes China's experiences and technologies, accumulated during its transition from traditional to modern agriculture, particularly relevant for Africa.

The academy cooperates with 23 African countries and nine international organizations. It has distributed more than 1,000 green super rice materials to nine African countries, covering an area of 57,000 hectares, exceeding local varieties' productivity by over 20 percent. More than 30,000 farmers have benefited from such materials.

It has also assisted Rwanda in building an integrated underground pest control system to save the country's potato industry and helped develop an H5 bird flu vaccine for Egypt to prevent the spread of the disease among poultry.

By helping to build biogas facilities and conduct technology demonstrations in countries such as Tanzania, Mauritania and Angola, the academy has supported the adoption of renewable energy sources and promoted resource efficiency in agricultural production.

As a leading institution in educating African students in agriculture, the academy has trained 276 students from African countries. It plans to enroll African students in the National Nanfan Breeding Research Center in the Sanya Yazhou Bay Science and Technology City, with a specific focus on scientific and technological innovation in the seed industry. The plan aims to double the number of international students, particularly from Africa, within the next five years, Sun said.

Felix Dapare Dakora, former president of the African Academy of Sciences and a foreign academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, emphasized the importance of ensuring that African populations have access to an adequate supply of food and quality nutrition. Drawing parallels, he noted that China faced similar challenges in the 1950s and 60s. Despite the country only having 9 percent of global agricultural land, it managed to account for 20 percent of global food supply.

"Rather than looking to other regions with different contexts, it would be more beneficial for African nations to glean insights and experience from China's journey, given the shared historical challenges and the success China has achieved," Dakora said.

He said seed breeding in Hainan will play a crucial role in facilitating the exchange of high-quality seeds between China and Africa, and that the tropical province is a key player in sharing its expertise and resources with the world's tropical regions, including Africa.

Dakora added that he thought the Hainan Free Trade Port was a vital link with the African Continental Free Trade Area in Ghana, fostering exchanges of biological materials and enhancing food security measures between China and Africa.

Takele Weldu Gebrewahid, a post-doctoral researcher from Ethiopia specializing in crop science, now works in the academy's engineering team focused on big data and intelligent design in breeding innovation. He said that his home country has yet to harness the potential of intelligent technologies in agriculture, and he hopes to acquire knowledge and skills in utilizing cutting-edge approaches to benefit Ethiopia.

## WORLD

# Kremlin hits out at futility of Swiss talks

Saudi Arabia, India, South Africa opt out of document with key questions unresolved

By REN QI in Moscow  
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The Kremlin said on Monday that a Swiss-hosted conference on the Ukraine conflict had produced negligible results and showed the futility of holding talks without Russia.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters the results of the meeting were "close to zero".

Russia remains open to dialogue with all countries that intend to conduct it and will continue to convey its position to these countries, Peskov said.

It came as dozens of countries meeting in Switzerland agreed on Sunday that Kyiv should enter dialogue with Moscow, and some participating countries did not sign a final communiqué because of differences.

"We believe that reaching peace requires the involvement of and dialogue between all parties," the final communiqué read.

Western powers and their allies denounced Russia, but failed to persuade major nonaligned states to join their final statement, and no country came forward to host a sequel. They also left the key questions of how and when the conflict is resolved.

The Kremlin has described Switzerland as "openly hostile" and unfit to mediate in peace-building efforts, in particular because of its adoption of Western sanctions against Moscow.

Not all attendees backed the document. India, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Thailand, Indonesia, Mexico and the United Arab Emirates were among those not included in a list of supporting states displayed on screens at the meeting.

Brazil, which was listed as an "observer" on the list of attendees, also did not feature as a signatory.

## 'Absolute farce'

In Switzerland, the Swiss People's Party, the biggest group in the lower house of parliament, panned the conference in a bid to pressure Russia as an "embarrassment", reflecting the view that the talks are damaging to Switzerland's traditional neutrality.

Leading figures in the party have argued that Switzerland should not have hosted the meeting without Russia. And Nils Fiechter, chief of the party's youth wing, delivered a damning verdict on the talks to Russian broadcaster RT.

"The whole thing is an absolute farce and an embarrassment for our country," Fiechter said in comments picked up by Swiss media on Sunday.

The conference also came at a moment when Ukraine's military faces increased pressure on the battlefield.

Russian President Vladimir Putin is not ruling out talks with Ukraine, but guarantees will be needed to ensure the credibility of any negotiations, Peskov was cited by Russian news agencies as saying on Sunday.

On Saturday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said he hoped to garner international sup-

## Trump will scale back on Ukraine aid if elected

Former US president Donald Trump said at a campaign event that he would scale back aid to Ukraine if he is elected.

"I will have that settled prior to taking the White House as president-elect," said Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee in the November election, while speaking at a rally in Detroit, Michigan, on Saturday.

Trump also criticized Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, calling him "the greatest salesman of all time".

"He just left four days ago with \$60 billion, and he gets home, and he announces that he needs another \$60 billion. It never ends," said Trump, who has said that funding for Ukraine should be more in the form of loans, and that European nations should contribute more.

At the G7 summit in Fasano, Italy, on Thursday, US President Joe Biden and Zelensky signed a 10-year bilateral security agreement.

The 10-year US-Ukraine agreement, which is not considered a treaty and did not require congressional approval, could be discarded if Trump wins in November.

"If Trump is inaugurated at noon on the 20th of January next year, by about five after noon he could have dissolved this agreement in its entirety," said John Bolton, a former national security adviser to Trump, CNN reported.

In his first term, Trump withdrew the United States from the 2015 Paris Agreement on the climate and from a 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran.

HENG WEILI IN NEW YORK

port for a proposal to end the conflict that he could eventually present to Moscow.

Zelensky told participants that he hoped the conference would lay the groundwork for a "just" and "lasting" settlement with Russia.

Zelensky did not say if he was prepared to engage in talks with Putin directly. Putin called on Ukraine to withdraw its troops from the south and east and renounce its ambitions to join NATO, conditions quickly dismissed by the West.

"He is calling for surrender," United States Vice-President Kamala Harris said on Saturday commenting on Putin's demands.

Some countries from outside Ukraine's traditional circle of partners stressed the need to give Russia a voice and criticized some Western sanctions targeting Moscow.

Kyiv would have to be prepared for a "difficult compromise" if it wanted to end the conflict, Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud told the conference.

Agencies contributed to this story.

## Freedom flight



Thousands of racing pigeons are released in an Up North Combine liberation in Grantham, England on Sunday. A total of about 6,000 birds were released in three sections. Founded in 1905, the Up North Combine is an amalgamation of 23 pigeon racing federations in the north of England. OLI SCARFF / AFP

## Bank of Japan to cut buying govt bonds

By JIANG XUEQING in Tokyo  
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The Bank of Japan's recent announcement that it will reduce the scale of its long-term government bond purchases while leaving short-term interest rates unchanged is seen as a move toward monetary policy normalization by experts, who said it could alleviate some of the pressure on the depreciating yen.

"This move marks the beginning of the BOJ's shift from its ultra-loose monetary policy toward normalization, which could have a significant impact on the Japanese economy and global financial markets," said Marco Sun, chief financial markets analyst at MUFG Bank (China).

Japan's central bank said on Friday it will gather input from market participants and outline a detailed plan for reducing its bond purchases over the next one or two years at its next monetary policy meeting in July. At the end of 2023, the BOJ's government bond holdings totaled 581 trillion yen (\$3.69 trillion).

The market widely expects that the BOJ will announce a modest reduction in its monthly purchases of Japanese government bonds from approximately 6 trillion yen to 4 trillion yen, to avoid a sudden surge in yields, Sun said.

As the largest buyer of Japanese

government bonds, the BOJ's reduction in bond purchases could lead to a rise in long-term interest rates in Japan, thereby narrowing the interest rate differential between Japan and the United States, he said.

This narrowing of the differential typically attracts more capital inflow into Japan, increasing demand for the yen, and thus supporting the yen's exchange rate, Sun explained.

### Undeniable driver

Additionally, Japan's import-driven inflation has become an undeniable driver of overall inflation. According to the BOJ's forecast, Japan's year-on-year increase in the consumer price index could be between 2.6 percent and 3 percent for the current fiscal year.

At its monetary policy meeting in March, the BOJ decided to guide overnight lending rates to a range of 0 to 0.1 percent, slightly up from the previous range of minus 0.1 to 0 percent, effectively ending eight years of negative interest rates.

Sun predicted that the BOJ will raise its policy rate again in July, expecting an increase of 15 basis points to 0.25 percent. In this context, the rise in Japanese government bond yields might be relatively limited.

Meanwhile, the US Federal Reserve on Wednesday signaled

that it will cut its key interest rate just once this year.

Therefore, the narrowing of the Japan-US bond yield spread might be limited but it will still help alleviate the pressure of the yen's depreciation to some extent, he said.

Sun predicted that in the second and third quarters of this year, the dollar-yen exchange rate will range between 150 and 163.

Naka Matsuzawa, chief strategist at Japan's Nomura Securities, said the market expected a reduction in purchases of 1 trillion yen of Japanese government bonds per month, falling from the current about 6 trillion yen to 5 trillion yen.

A reduction plan that extends over the next two years goes further than market forecasts, but the more that market feedback is gathered and reflected in the plan, the more it is likely to be in line with market forecasts and set a cautious pace of reductions, said Matsuzawa in a report released on Friday.

The Japanese yen has weakened to levels that necessitate a response from policymakers, the report said. It falls to the Japanese government and the Ministry of Finance to take measures to address the depreciation of the yen next, according to Matsuzawa.

Foreign exchange market interventions also remain a possibility, he said.

## 'Meaty rice'? Scientists aim to change global protein

SEOUL — In a small laboratory in Seoul, a team of South Korean scientists are injecting cultured beef cells into individual grains of rice, in a process they hope could revolutionize how the world eats.

From helping prevent famines to feeding astronauts in space, team leader and professor Hong Jin-kee believes his new so-called meaty rice could become an eco-friendly, ethical way for people to get their protein.

No animals were harmed in the creation of the dish, which looks like a regular bowl of rice, albeit pink, but it gives off a faint buttery aroma, the result of being packed with beef muscle and fat cell culture.

Using cultured meat, "we can obtain animal protein without the slaughter of livestock", Hong from Seoul's Yonsei University said.

Companies worldwide have sought to commercialize meat alternatives, such as plant-based or cultured meat, due to ethical issues surrounding industrial livestock rearing, as well as environmental concerns linked to greenhouse gas emissions from animal farming.

Hong, who has a background in organoids and biomedical sciences, chose rice for his research as the grain was already the top source of protein for people in Asia.

His process can be time-consuming: a regular rice grain is coated with fish gelatin to help with adherence, then individually injected with beef cells before being cultured in a petri dish for up to 11 days.

Hong's "meaty" rice contains 8 percent more protein and 7 percent more fat than regular rice.

South Korea has not yet approved any cultivated meat for consumption, but it announced in 2022 plans to plow millions of dollars into a "food-tech" fund, while separately identifying cell-cultured meat as a priority research area.

Cultivated meat is sold in Singapore and the United States, but Italy banned it last year citing a need to safeguard its livestock industry.

Some scholars say potential ethical concerns with cultured meat include the sourcing of the initial animal cells.

It is difficult to be "certain about the safety of the serum used in culture media, and the antibiotics and hormones added during the culturing process", Choi Yoon-jae, a former emeritus professor at Seoul National University, wrote in a column on the Chuksan News website.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## Common passion for soccer spurs friendship

By YANG JUN in Guiyang and  
CHEN MEILING in Beijing

A Chinese company operating in Africa has brought the spirit of China's hugely popular Village Super League to the continent by building a community soccer pitch and organizing a grassroots competition.

Staff members at a Chinese-assisted cotton technology project in the city of Parakou, Benin, struck upon the idea of building the grounds and organizing the competition after noticing local children playing soccer despite having little equipment or even a suitable field to play on.

Shou Xiaoyong, leader of the technical team of the project and an organizer of the contest, said the league aims to further promote friendship and understanding between China and Africa through a shared love for soccer.

Twelve teams competed in the contest from March to late May, with 11 of the teams coming from nearby villages and one team from the University of Parakou.

Players included cotton farmers, tractor drivers, carpenters and college students.

The teams ran out onto a soccer field built using agricultural machinery and recycled material and shot at goals welded together by Chinese workers and local villagers.

At halftime, performances of Chinese martial arts, African drums and dance entertained the assembled crowd of 1,000 supporters.



Players receive their medals at an award ceremony after a soccer game at a village in the city of Parakou, Benin, on May 25. LI YAHUI / XINHUA

On the sidelines, vendors sold steamed cassava, fried fruit and juice.

The top three teams received medals and trophies, and each was awarded a sheep.

Chinese experts have been in the city of Parakou for the past 10 years promoting cotton planting techniques and teaching locals about agricultural machinery technology.

"Local children in Benin often play soccer barefoot on the muddy ground. They don't have proper shoes, let alone jerseys and shorts, but they don't mind," Shou said, adding that villagers didn't even have a complete soccer field, and casually built a goal using branches and sticks.

The situation is similar to that in Rongjiang — the rural county in China's Guizhou province where the phenomenon of the Village Super League first took off.

### Better facilities

A couple of decades back, young villagers in Rongjiang played soccer on a sandy wasteland. Around 2001, they transformed the wasteland into a soccer field with gates made of fir trees and lines drawn with lime. This marked the beginning of soccer matches being played by village teams in a league format, which was the precursor to the Village Super League in Guizhou.

In Parakou in March last year, Shou decided to build a standard

soccer field on unused land named Friendship Soccer Field. The idea quickly gained strong support from the local villagers.

Degnimon Fulbert, a soccer player in the league, told China Youth Daily that for people in big cities such games are very common, but for people in small villages, it's rare to participate in such gatherings. "It's turning my 'soccer dream' into reality," he said.

Another player Karim Souleman, a telephone maintenance worker, told the paper that the league had helped improve his soccer skills.

Shou said villagers from more villages want to join, and they plan to increase the size of the league to 20 teams.

To further encourage soccer enthusiasts in Benin, a company in Rongjiang donated 200 jerseys valued at 20,000 yuan (\$2,757) to them. The Guizhou Village Super League's logo, bullhead, is printed on the jersey to promote the spirit of striving and encourage them to play soccer well, according to Chang Longping from Guizhou Yueqian Chuanqi Clothing, the donor.

"Sports knows no boundaries, and the spirit of sports is always worthy of praise and admiration. We want them to feel our passion and friendship," said Chang.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

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## WORLD

## France begins campaigning for snap polls

Macron's alliance faces test as survey shows no party likely to secure majority

By MOHAMMAD ARIF ULLAH  
in Paris  
For China Daily

French President Emmanuel Macron caught the nation off guard when he dissolved the National Assembly following his party's weak performance in the European elections, in which it trailed far behind the National Rally, or RN.

"I trust the French people to choose wisely now, allowing us to face the challenges ahead," he said on national television on June 9.

Macron's centrist alliance holds approximately 250 seats, while Marine Le Pen's far-right RN has 88, and the left commands 149 seats across various parties in the 577-seat National Assembly, or the lower house of the French parliament.

In the French system, the president appoints the prime minister, who must be able to form a government that can survive no-confidence votes in the National Assembly, often necessitating alignment with the majority party or coalition.

Candidates had until Sunday evening to register for the 577 seats in the National Assembly ahead of the official start of campaigning from midnight for the June 30 first round. The decisive second round takes place on July 7.

Macron's decision has taken both France and the rest of Europe by surprise, but it makes sense, said Yves Sintomer, a political science professor at Paris 8 University.

"It's logical, given that, unlike Germany's frequent grand coalitions, Macron has struggled to pass legislation without forming similar alliances, which are rare in French politics," Sintomer said. "The recent (EU) results further weakened his position, reinforcing his decision."

Sintomer said Macron acted independently, excluding input from key allies such as Edouard Philippe, president of the Horizons Party, and Francois Bayrou, head of the Democratic Movement party. Despite Macron's efforts to secure a legislative majority, there is the risk of the RN winning a majority in the upcoming elections.

Footballer Kylian Mbappe, representing France at the Euro 2024 tournament in Germany, said he was "against extremes and divisive ideas" and urged young people to vote at a "crucial moment" in French history.

Ahead of the poll, speculation suggests the outcome might resemble that of the European Parliament elections.



National Rally's Marine Le Pen (left) and France's President Emmanuel Macron (right).

"The outcome could be similar to the European elections, but it's still too early for solid predictions as these are different types of elections," Sintomer said, adding that the most likely scenario is a parliament dominated by the RN.

"Another possible scenario is a Parliament without a clear majority, leading to ungovernability, with three roughly equal groups: centrists, right and far right, and left. A third less likely scenario is the left becoming the majority," he said.

On Friday, RN leader Jordan Bardella stated on French TV channel BFM that if he becomes prime minister, immigration and border control will be one of his top priorities.

But former president Nicolas Sarkozy has questioned the wisdom of backing Bardella as prime minister. Bardella has "never been in charge of anything," Sarkozy told the Journal du Dimanche newspaper. "Can you lead France when you are so young and inexperienced?"

The conservative party of France, the Republicans, or LR, is in turmoil. Eric Ciotti, its leader, was expelled for suggesting an alliance with the far-right RN, but a Paris court overturned the expulsion on Friday, causing controversy and division within the party.

Some members are considering aligning with Macron, while Ciotti continues to support a partnership with RN. Others plan to contest the elections independently under the party banner.

#### Challenges ahead

Damien Bol, a professor of political behavior at the Center for Political Research at Sciences Po Paris, commented that Ciotti's move aims to protect LR seats amid electoral challenges by aligning with RN to avoid extinction. However, Bol noted that not all MPs will support this alliance, and some may choose to run independently.

The left and greens have united under the "New Popular Front", a significant development in French politics. The broad left-wing electoral alliance of six parties agreed to field single candidates in every constituency for the snap elections.

Former French Socialist president Francois Hollande made a surprise announcement on Saturday, declaring that he will run for Parliament again. "This is an exceptional decision for an exceptional situation," he told reporters.

A poll by an independent opinion research group for Cluster 17, as reported by the French daily Le Point on Friday, showed a major political shift, with no party likely to secure a National Assembly majority. Macron's alliance is projected to win 18 percent in the first round, behind the New Popular Front at 28.5 percent and the National Rally at 29.5 percent.

Agencies contributed to this story.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.



Palestinians prepare sheep for the Eid al-Adha in Khan Younis, Gaza, on Sunday. BASHAR TALEB / AFP

## Gazans mark Eid in shadow of conflict as Netanyahu disbands war cabinet

GAZA/JERUSALEM — In tents in the stifling heat and in bombed-out mosques, Gazans marked the start of the Muslim holiday Eid al-Adha on Sunday, as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu dissolved the six-member war cabinet.

Israeli media reported on Monday that Netanyahu told the security cabinet on Sunday night that the war cabinet, which was created on Oct 11, has been officially disbanded. Netanyahu is now expected to hold consultations about the Gaza conflict with a small group of ministers, including Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer who had been in the war cabinet, Reuters reported.

The prime minister had faced demands from partners in his coalition, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir, to be included in the war cabinet, a move which would have intensified strains with international partners, including the United States.

Former general Benny Gantz left the government last week, over what he said was Netanyahu's failure to form a strategy for the Gaza operation.

After more than eight months of a devastating Israeli offensive that has flattened much of Gaza, displaced most of the besieged territory's 2.4 million people and sparked repeated warnings of

famine, Eid this year is a day of misery for many.

"There is no joy. We have been robbed of it," said Malakiya Salman, who is now living in a tent in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip.

"I hope the world will put pressure to end the war on us, because we are truly dying, and our children are broken."

Palestinians used to celebrate the holiday by decorating streets and alleys, slaughtering sacrificial animals, exchanging visits to offer greetings, and children and young people by visiting parks and playgrounds in the Strip with their families to have fun.

#### Holiday rituals absent

All the holiday rituals, however, were absent from the family of Ahmed Mansour, who was displaced from his home in Gaza City after October. "I was not able to buy new clothes for my children and we could not prepare the cakes. In short, this holiday came without joy," the 35-year-old father of three told Xinhua News Agency.

The Israeli military announced on Sunday morning a "tactical pause of military activity" around a Rafah-area route to facilitate the delivery of desperately needed humanitarian aid to Gazans.

The pause "for humanitarian purposes will take place from 8:00 am until 7:00 pm every day until further notice along the road that

leads from the Kerem Shalom crossing to the Salah al-Din road and then northward", a military statement said.

The United Nations welcomed the Israeli move, although "this has yet to translate into more aid reaching people in need", said Jens Laerke, spokesman for the UN humanitarian agency OCHA.

But Netanyahu criticized the plans announced by the military.

"When the prime minister heard the reports of an 11-hour humanitarian pause in the morning, he turned to his military secretary and made it clear that this was unacceptable to him," an Israeli official said.

More than 37,347 Palestinians have been killed in the Israeli military offensive on Gaza since Hamas' surprise attack on Israel, in which about 1,200 people were killed.

Egyptian, Qatari and US mediators have been pushing for a new Gaza truce, so far without success. The only previous truce lasted one week in November and saw many hostages released in exchange for Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails, while increased aid flowed into Gaza.

Hamas has insisted on the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and a permanent cease-fire — demands Israel has repeatedly rejected.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

## Briefly

#### CHINA Envoy heads to S. Africa for leader's inauguration

Chinese President Xi Jinping's Special Envoy Xiao Jie, who serves as vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, will attend the inauguration of President Cyril Ramaphosa in Pretoria, capital of South Africa, on Wednesday. Ramaphosa, leader of South Africa's ruling African National Congress, was reelected by the National Assembly on Friday as the nation's president for the next five years. The trip was organized after the invitation of the government of the Republic of South Africa, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said on Monday.

#### Senior CPC official to attend Singapore forum

Chen Wenqing, a senior Communist Party of China official, will attend the fourth China-Singapore Social Governance Forum in Singapore. Chen is a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and head of the Commission for Political and Legal Affairs of the CPC Central Committee. From Tuesday to June 25, he will also visit Singapore and South Africa upon invitation, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said on Monday.

#### INDIA 15 killed, 30 injured in railway collision

A freight train smashed into the rear of a stationary passenger train in India's West Bengal state on Monday, police said, in an accident that railway authorities blamed on a disregarded signal. At least 15 bodies have been pulled from the mangled carriages and nearly 30 people were injured, said Abhishek Roy, a senior police official in the district of Darjeeling, the site of the accident.

#### ITALY 10 migrants dead after shipwreck off coast

Ten migrants have died after a shipwreck, a migrant rescue charity said Monday. Rescuers coming to the aid of migrants on a wooden boat off Lampedusa found 10 bodies below deck, the German aid group ResQ-ship said on X. A total of 61 people were on the wooden boat, it said. The crew aboard ResQship's vessel is caring for 51 people on board.

CHINA DAILY—AGENCIES

## China slams 'arrogant, prejudiced' G7 statement

By ZHANG YUNBI  
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The Group of Seven is a real "coercer" that politicizes and weaponizes economic and trade relations, Beijing warned on Monday in response to a joint statement issued at the latest G7 summit.

"It runs counter to the trend of deeper integration of the interests of all countries in the era of globalization. Such behavior will eventually backfire on the G7 itself," Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said.

The joint statement once again worked on hyping China-related topics such as the Taiwan Strait, East China Sea, South China Sea, Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Xizang, analysts noted.

Speaking at a daily news confer-

ence in Beijing, Lin said these slanders, attacks and hype "have no factual basis and lack legal grounds" and are "cliques with no moral justification, full of arrogance, prejudice and lies."

Currently, the G7 accounts for only 10 percent of the global population, and its share of the global economy is declining year by year.

"Today's G7 has long drifted away from its original objective of coordinating and stabilizing the international economic environment, and has become more and more of a political tool to defend the hegemony of the United States and the West," the spokesman said.

By making its own rules overriding the tenets and principles of the United Nations Charter and international law, the G7 has "lost its ground in rep-

resenting the world and has lost its international credibility," he said.

Referring to the G7's claim of securing world peace, Lin said the grouping keeps drawing lines based on ideology and values, playing up the false narrative of "democracy versus authoritarianism" and stirring up bloc-based confrontation by using its cliques.

In addition, it worked to fuel regional conflicts and looked to shift the blame, sending warships and military aircraft to the Asia-Pacific region to create tensions and repeatedly engaged in offering arms to Taiwan, threatening peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

"These erroneous acts that undermine international order and jeopardize peace and security are being shunned by more and more interna-

tional righteous forces," Lin said.

In recent years, the US has repeatedly abused export control measures, engaged in unilateral sanctions and intensified its suppression against Chinese companies, and Washington has also encouraged its allies to copy its wrong practices.

That "seriously violates the principles of market economy and fair competition and disrupts the international economic and trade order," Lin said.

Regarding the G7's hype about China's "overcapacity", Lin said it "completely runs counter to the facts and the laws of the economy."

The move "creates excuses for protectionism and will harm global efforts for a green low-carbon transition and cooperation to address climate change," he said.

## US free trade group: Extend comment period on new China tariffs

By HENG WEILI in New York  
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A free trade group has requested another month to comment before the US jacks up tariffs on Chinese imports such as electric vehicles, batteries, solar products and other goods.

Americans for Free Trade (AFT), in a letter to Juan Millan, the acting general counsel of the US Trade Representative's (USTR) office, is seeking to delay the Aug 1 start date for the new duties.

"Comments are currently due on June 28, 2024. We believe an extension of at least 30 days — to July 28, 2024 — is in the public interest," the group says in the June 4 letter, which was signed by

173 trade associations.

Americans for Free Trade "represents every part of the US economy including manufacturers, farmers and agribusinesses, powersports, retailers, technology companies, service suppliers, natural gas and oil companies, importers, exporters, and other supply chain stakeholders."

"Collectively, we employ tens of millions of Americans through our vast supply chains," the association says in the letter.

US President Joe Biden in May announced the tariff increases on \$18 billion worth of Chinese imports, targeting electric vehicles (EVs), advanced batteries, steel and critical minerals.

The USTR subsequently

announced a 30-day public comment period, with a quadrupling of levies on Chinese EVs to over 100 percent, starting this year.

The tariff rate on semiconductors will surge from 25 percent to 50 percent by next year, while levies on Chinese EV batteries and battery parts will more than triple to 25 percent by 2026.

"Many of our members are small businesses and US manufacturers, critical stakeholders in this review process. We are actively surveying our collective membership to gather feedback on the projected impacts of the proposed modifications and document them in a manner that is most helpful to USTR," the letter said.

The group said that a public

hearing would be consistent with past USTR practice regarding Section 301 tariff actions, when it held a hearing on its investigation in October 2017, and to receive stakeholder input on each collection of proposed tariffs and products in May 2018, July 2018, August 2018 and June 2019.

A hearing also would give the USTR the benefit of asking questions directly to stakeholders over the proposed modifications and exclusions, the letter said.

Among the prominent endorsers of the letter were the Consumer Technology Association, the National Retail Federation, the Semiconductor Industry Association and the US-China Business Council.

The signatories represent a vast swath of US industry, including the American Bakers Association, the American Fly Fishing Trade Association, the American Trucking Association, the Beer Institute, the Council of Fashion Designers of America, the Florida Ports Council, the Maine Lobster Dealers' Association, the National Ski & Snowboard Retailers Association, the North American Association of Food Equipment Manufacturers, the Virginia-DC District Export Council and the Window and Door Manufacturers Association.

Auto and truck parts associations signed, but trade groups representing auto and EV manufacturers did not.

Americans for Free Trade has a

map of the US on its website that shows each state's tolls from the tariffs on China.

Nationally, the group in its "Tariff Misery Impact" section says that the Section 301 tariffs have cost Americans \$129 billion since the trade war began in 2018.

California, the US' most populous state, sustained the highest burden from the tariffs, according to AFT, which estimated that free trade supports 5.1 million jobs in the state and that the Section 301 tariffs have cost Californians \$33.5 billion.

California also saved \$5.7 billion from Section 301 exclusions, but those expired in December 2020.

Agencies contributed to this story.

## BUSINESS

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## Brazil new hot spot for Chinese NEVs

By LIU YUKUN  
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Brazil is emerging as a top importer of Chinese new energy vehicles amid China's diversification of NEV exports against the backdrop of ongoing trade conflicts.

In April, Brazil imported 40,159 NEVs from China, up 92 percent year-on-year, thus becoming the top importer for two consecutive months, taking over from Belgium that held the top spot in February, said Cui Dongshu, secretary-general of the Chinese Passenger Car Association, after analyzing data from the General Administration of Customs.

The Brazilian Report, a local media outlet, predicted Brazil's surge in NEV imports from China will continue until at least 2025, driven by companies' rush for such vehicles, considering a gradual reinstatement of import taxes on foreign EVs, which will return to the full rate by 2026.

From January to April, Brazil led all markets in year-on-year growth of NEVs imported from China. Despite Belgium maintaining its top position in cumulative imports for the first four months, Cui noted potential market shifts influenced by tariffs.

On June 12, the European Commission's months-long anti-subsidy investigation on Chinese electric vehicles revealed preliminary results proposing extra temporary anti-subsidy tariffs of up to 38.1 percent on imports from China.

Cui said that EU markets that were hot spots of Chinese NEV exports, such as Belgium, Spain and France, may see weakened demand while countries like Brazil and Mexico, and Southeast Asian countries like Thailand and the Philippines, may exhibit stronger performance.

"The evolving geopolitical landscape has facilitated diversification in China's exports. The export of

Chinese NEVs to developed markets demonstrated high-quality development over the past few years, particularly in Western Europe and Southeast Asia," Cui said.

"Countries like Belgium, Spain and Slovenia have consistently been export highlights, while this year we see strong growth in exports to countries like Brazil. Domestic brands such as SAIC Motor and BYD have shown strong performance in the (overseas) NEV market," he said.

Cui further said the outlook for China's NEV exports to Europe, currently tempered by anti-subsidy impacts, is expected to rebound as adjustments to European policies evolve.

"This decision (of temporary tariff increase on Chinese NEVs imported to the EU) will adversely affect both China's and the EU's NEV industries, limiting competition and harming consumer interests," Cui said.

"It may also affect Germany's NEV industry chain by restricting competition, affecting certain vehicle models and related industries, and hampering independent industry development. China may consider reciprocal measures to safeguard its interests," he said.

Agreed Hildegard Muller, president of the German Association of the Automotive Industry, who said in an official statement that the EU's move is a further step away from global cooperation and will further increase the risk of a global trade conflict.

"The potential damage that could be caused by the measures now announced may be greater than the potential benefits for the European — and, in particular, the German — automotive industry... countervailing duties on e-cars imported from China are not suitable for strengthening the competitiveness of the European automotive industry," she said.



Shoppers buy groceries at a supermarket in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province. GENG YUHE / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Economy is set for steady rebound in Q2

Analysts underline demand recovery, resilient exports, low comparison base

By OUYANG SHIJIA  
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China's economy is set to rebound steadily in the second quarter given steady demand recovery, resilient exports and a low comparison base in the previous year, analysts said.

They noted the country is heading in the right direction with regard to dealing with structural issues like property woes, saying more efforts should be made to overcome housing troubles and boost effective domestic demand.

Their comments came after data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed on Monday that China's economy is showing signs of stabilization in May with improvement in some key indicators and new growth drivers gaining momentum.

Liu Aihua, an NBS spokeswoman, said May's steady economic rebound was led by strong policy stimulus, improvement in external demand and the positive impact of the May Day holiday on consumption.

NBS data showed China's retail sales, a key measurement of consumer spending, rose 3.7 percent year-on-year in May versus the 2.3 percent rise in April.

China's value-added industrial output grew by 5.6 percent in May, while fixed-asset investment

increased by 4 percent in the January-May period.

"Looking ahead, China's economy will likely continue the recovery trend with China's innovations gaining further momentum, ongoing industrial upgrading, gradual recovery in domestic demand and strong policy stimulus," Liu told a news conference held in Beijing on Monday.

Meanwhile, she cautioned that the correction in China's property sector is still ongoing.

For the January-May period, China's property investment fell 10.1 percent year-on-year while sales area of new properties slumped 20.3 percent, compared with 9.8 percent and 20.2 percent falls in the first four months, respectively, said the NBS.

Liu said the implementation of a series of recently eased housing policy measures will gradually stabilize the property sector.

Zhou Maohua, a researcher at China Everbright Bank, said the latest data suggest that the recovery in domestic consumption and demand is steadily gathering steam, pointing to a more balanced recovery in the world's second-largest economy.

"Given the steady demand recovery, the resilient exports and the low base effect, China's economic growth will likely accelerate in the second quarter, laying a solid base

for achieving an annual growth target of around 5 percent this year," he said.

While the potential improvement in consumption and a factory boom may help offset the housing slump in the second half of the year, Zhou called for stronger policy efforts to deal with the persistently low prices and further housing easing policies.

"More forceful property easing measures, rather than the slow-drip of incremental measures seen last year, are now necessary and likely if authorities were to successfully engineer a desired shallow house price correction path," said Louise Loo, lead economist at British think tank Oxford Economics.

On the monetary policy front, May's weak credit and money data continue to point to the eroding effectiveness of traditional monetary tools like outright rate cuts, Loo said.

Given the weakness in currency and the delay in Fed rate cuts to the end of the third quarter, she said her team has pushed out the People's Bank of China rate cut calls to the fourth quarter, versus a previous expectation of a cumulative 20-basis-point cut in the second quarter and the third quarter.

"Still-squeezed bank net interest margins, capital outflow concerns and persistently poor credit demand have been the reasons we think monetary easing will act only as a very modest, secondary stimulus tool this year," she said.

## German firms open to more investment

By ZHU WENQIAN  
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German companies' optimism about China's economic prospects in the next six months is recovering, with half of the companies in a survey willing to increase investments in the country, according to the German Chamber of Commerce in China.

A report based on a survey of business sentiment among 186 German companies operating in China in May found 53 percent of respondents planning to increase their investments in the nation in the next two years. The survey was released by the chamber in Beijing on Friday.

Around 30 percent of the surveyed companies are involved in machinery and industrial equipment, while others are in automotive, mobility, business services, electronics and chemicals.

Their business outlook regarding China is recovering, and 29 percent of respondents expect their industry to improve compared to the previous year, up 8 percentage points over last year.

Besides, 39 percent of German companies operating in China projected their turnovers to increase by the end of this year compared to last year, while their anticipation of profits remains unchanged. When asked the same question last year, only 13 percent were expecting increased turnover, the survey found. On the biggest challenges that German businesses face in China, they said price pressures take center stage.

53 percent

proportion of German firms in China willing to invest more in the country in the next two years

The survey comes at a time when the European Union has decided to impose additional tariffs of 17.4 percent to 38.1 percent on electric cars produced in China.

"The move by the European Union will not help increase the competitiveness of the industry. The market share of Chinese-made electric vehicles in Europe is still so small. There is so much more cooperation going on between China and the EU, and we need to keep pushing for fair competition," said Maximilian Butek, executive director at the German Chamber of Commerce in China.

Butek added that several German companies operating in China are utilizing the "local for local" strategy, and keeping their Chinese business as resilient as possible.

China has been Germany's largest trading partner for eight consecutive years, followed by the United States and the Netherlands. In 2023, Germany's direct investment in China increased by 4.3 percent year-on-year to 11.9 billion euros (\$12.7 billion), a record high, according to Deutsche Bundesbank, the central bank of Germany.

In addition, Germany is China's largest trading partner in Europe and an important investment destination, the Ministry of Commerce said.

The automotive industry has been a highlight of Sino-German economic and trade cooperation. The two countries have continuously strengthened cooperation and jointly promoted green and low-carbon transformation of the automotive industry.

In late April, German automaker BMW Group said it plans to invest an additional 20 billion yuan in its production base in Shenyang, Northeast China's Liaoning province.



BYD vehicles bound for Brazil await shipment in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province. WANG CHUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Briefly

## PBOC adds liquidity via reverse repos, MLF

China's central bank injected liquidity into the banking system through reverse repos and a medium-term lending facility on Monday. The People's Bank of China conducted 4 billion yuan (\$562.2 million) of seven-day reverse repos at an interest rate of 1.8 percent. A total of 182 billion yuan was also injected into the market via the MLF, which will mature in one year at an interest rate of 2.5 percent.

## China-Hungary air cargo route launched

A new international air cargo route linking Ezhou Huahu Airport in Central China's Hubei province with Hungary's capital Budapest was launched on Monday, said SF Airlines. The Ezhou-Budapest cargo route is the first such linking Hungary with the Hubei facility, China's first cargo-focused airport. It is also SF Airlines' third route from the airport to Europe.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

## Oman's OQ bullish on China's petrochem market

By LIU ZHIHUA and OUYANG SHIJIA

China remains a key market for OQ, an Oman-based integrated energy company. A senior company executive emphasized the long-term positive fundamentals of the Chinese economy and its continuous expansion, saying it offers abundant opportunities for foreign companies like OQ.

In an exclusive interview with China Daily, Hilal Al Kharusi, chief executive of Commercial and Downstream at the energy giant, expressed the company's eagerness to grow together with China amid the country's increasing market openness and deepening green development.

The company officially entered China in 2010 and currently operates in 17 countries and regions around the world, with its polymers and chemical products sold in more than 85 countries and regions.

"We are very optimistic about our business prospects in China. The Chinese economy is continuously growing, and the Chinese government is implementing policies to boost consumption, with examples including promoting consumer

goods trade-in programs and boosting spending in electric vehicles," said Kharusi.

"All will drive growth and create opportunities for OQ."

These policies will ensure that demand for household appliances and automobiles remains robust in China, generating more demand for OQ's products like polypropylene and polyethylene. The packaging industry, benefiting from the recovery of sectors like culture, entertainment and tourism, presents additional avenues for growth. Moreover, China's efforts to reduce resource waste will further drive demand for OQ's offerings, particularly in the development of reusable plastic packaging.

Kharusi highlighted that OQ aims to enrich its product portfolios and offer solutions tailored to Chinese consumers' evolving needs amid intense competition. To facilitate this, OQ has expanded its logistics network, partnering with 10 ports in China to optimize shipment processes, enabling the company to sustainably accommodate the increased demand. That has led to the shortest lead time for shipments from the Middle East to China so far, ranging from 22 to 28 days.

The National Bureau of Statistics said on Monday that China's economy continued a recovery trend in May amid a steady rebound in demand.

Its value-added industrial output — a gauge of activity in the manufacturing, mining and utilities sectors — grew 5.6 percent in May from a year earlier after a 6.7 percent rise in April, said the NBS.

Retail sales, a key measure of consumer spending, rose 3.7 percent year-on-year in May versus a 2.3 percent increase in April.

"OQ always believes that the development of new quality productive forces will empower the Chinese energy sector's green low-carbon transition and facilitate the Chinese economy's high-quality development," the executive said.

Kharusi anticipates new cooperation opportunities between Oman and China in green, clean and new energy sectors, exemplified by strategic initiatives like the OQ HYPOR Duqm project. This collaboration aims to produce around 330,000 metric tons of green ammonia in phase one and over 650,000 tons in phase two.

"This will attract Chinese manu-

facturers and enable collaboration with Chinese investors who are interested," he said.

In pursuit of investment opportunities, OQ seeks to invest almost \$40 billion in green sectors, with projects spanning Oman's southern, central and northern regions. The company's development of Ladayn Polymer Park, coupled with strategic agreements like the one signed during Chinaplas 2024 — an international plastics and rubber trade fair held in Shanghai in late April — demonstrates its commitment to fostering partnerships with Chinese investors and advancing mutual growth.

"We see a lot of Chinese investment flowing into the Middle East. I can imagine that energy must be one of the key sectors along with construction, infrastructure and agriculture. Chinese investors could play a major role in supplying these sectors in not only Oman but the Middle East," he said.

"When it comes to green sectors such as renewables, solar, wind and green hydrogen, Chinese enterprises will also play a major role."

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## BUSINESS

## Partnership raises fruit produce

Andros China's engineers help Linyi farmers grow better varieties, optimize yields

By WANG ZHUOQIONG  
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In a small town in East China, farmers are generating good income from producing quality and fresh fruits, thanks to a collaboration with Andros China.

Wang Yongfeng, a 47-year-old farmer from Linyi, Shandong province, manages a 50 mu (3.3 hectares) fruit farm, collaborating closely with the company, a joint venture between Andros Group, a food and agricultural enterprise based in France, and Beijing Capital Agribusiness & Foods Group.

The partnership has empowered local farmers with French agriculture know-how, spanning seed selection to disease control, significantly boosting productivity and resilience against extreme weather conditions like frost and hail.

"Engineers from Andros have worked with us to experiment with methods to grow better fruits, such as deploying facilities crucial to shield strawberries during adverse weather, optimizing yields and reducing the mortality of the strawberries," said Wang.

During peak season, Wang's fruit farm hires about 70 people, mostly elders from nearby villages. His farm produces a maximum 2.5 metric tons per mu, generating an annual revenue of 150,000 yuan (\$20,672), he added.

Damien Chapoulat, director of fruits at Andros Group, which has produced a diverse range of high-quality fruit processing products in food service, industrial and retail sectors, said the company has provided a star project in Shandong



Farmers harvest at an Andros plantation base in Linyi, Shandong province, in May. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

for three years and the size of the program has been doubled every year, to implement efficient strawberry farming with good quality varieties.

The JV, which has distributed in more than 150 cities in China and exports to 20 countries and regions in the Asia Pacific, expanded a new plant in Shandong province this year, equipping it with French fruit processing lines and freezers imported from Europe.

The strawberry plant in Shandong has produced 800 tons of fruit products so far this year. In fact, strawberry and raspberry jams are sought by many city dwellers in China to make their breakfasts richer.

"We rely on the know-how of farmers here. Our first job is to find the best farmers in every area, and some of them have a great wealth of knowledge. The idea is to work with them to make the best practice to grow the plant, to harvest, the best

tools that they can have for the machinery," he said.

Digital applications and modern farming techniques are integral to ensuring both profitability and quality in fruit production, he said.

"The company has strong faith in its operations in China to run a long-term business. Having been in China since 1998, China is a strategic pillar for us. Our home is Europe. We have hoped to develop a second home here to provide fruit products for China, but also for the rest of Asia."

China is a leading country for fruit production in the world, he added.

"China has amazing wealth in fruits, with tropical fruits in the south and continental fruits in the north," Chapoulat added.

"Our role here is to give value to the fruit wealth of China by helping farmers grow fruit in a qualitative

and efficient way and 'cook' it into trendy and delicious products for the Chinese market so that people can maintain this supply chain and sector," he said.

Last year, the Chinese and French governments together launched an initiative, called "From the French farm to the Chinese table".

Cedric Prevost, counselor for agricultural affairs, at the French embassy in China, said the two countries are eager to make the initiative concrete and operational.

"We have very close ties in agriculture to develop bilateral cooperation in many fields, including research, vocational training, wine, raising cattle, and also to develop trade between our two countries," Prevost said.

"Investing in China allows Andros to enrich bilateral agricultural collaboration, offering Chinese consumers a taste of French quality and diversity," he said.

## Sino-Argentine ties set to improve further

By LIU ZHIHUA and LI JIAYING

Closer trade and economic cooperation between China and Argentina is expected, which will benefit not only the two countries but also the rest of the world, said experts and government officials on Monday.

They made the remarks at the launch of the Argentine Studies Center at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing.

In recent years, economic and trade cooperation between China and Argentina has flourished, with bilateral trade steadily growing. In sectors including agriculture, energy and infrastructure, collaboration between the two countries has progressively intensified, yielding substantial results. In particular, the signing of a MOU (memorandum of understanding) on the Belt and Road Initiative by the two countries about two years ago has opened up vast possibilities for them to expand collaborative endeavors and enhance the depth of their partnership, said Zhao Zhongxiu, president of UIBE.

Marcelo Gabriel Suarez Salvia, Argentine ambassador to China, said that he is very optimistic about the future of the trade relationship between the two nations.

"Argentina and China hold a very long friendship and a very strong partnership. Our economies are very complementary to each other. In that regard, Argentina has become a very reliable provider of food for China. China has become a very reliable investor in Argentina, particularly in the mining sector and in clean energy," he said.

Clean energy is key for the future of Argentina, and China is leading in that area, he added, saying "everything seems to be very positive for the future in terms of our friendship and bilateral relationship".

The ambassador also agreed that cooperation between the two

countries in clean energy will benefit not only themselves, but also the rest of the world.

"Because as long as we can improve our energy efficiency and clean energy production, it's not only a benefit for Argentina and China as a provider of all the equipment that is needed to do that. Also since it will have a beneficial impact on the environment, that will be a benefit to the world," he said.

"It's a win-win situation, which is clearly one of the guides that China follows when engaging in trade relationships with other countries," he added.

Experts and officials also said the establishment of UIBE's Argentine Studies Center marks an important step in bilateral exchanges.

Zhao said the center aims to become an important channel for Sino-Argentine academic exchanges, a think tank platform for economic and trade cooperation, and a bridge for cultural exchanges.

"With a pragmatic attitude and pioneering spirit, we will promote mutually beneficial cooperation between China and Argentina in more areas," Zhao said.

"We believe that with support and joint efforts, the center will certainly become a crucial force in promoting the comprehensive development of Sino-Argentine relations."

The establishment of the center signifies the deepening and strengthening of friendly relations between the two countries, the ambassador said.

"Through intellectual exchanges and academic research, we will better understand the complexity and vast potential of bilateral relations, thereby promoting deeper and more practical cooperation between the two countries in various strategic fields," he added.

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## Power electrifies rice seedling cultivation in Hangzhou

By ZHUANG QIANG and PANG BO

At Lin'an Yuqian Modern Agricultural Service Center in Hangzhou, provincial capital of Zhejiang, the head of the seedling center, Chen Quan, was very pleased with its booming business as wheat is being harvested and rice cultivation is in full swing.

Driving a small forklift truck to transport trays of seedlings to logistics vehicles on a daily basis, Chen said that each day, his center can provide seedlings for at least 26.7 hectares of rice fields, serving over 7,670 hectares annually.

"From the end of April to mid-June each year, our seedling center sees its busiest activity," he said.

"Farmers from nearby towns of

Tianmushan and Taiyang also bring their rice seeds here for seedling cultivation."

In recent years, with the acceleration of agricultural modernization, the rate of agricultural mechanization has significantly increased, and various mechanical equipment has begun to play a vital role in agricultural production.

Lin'an Yuqian Modern Agricultural Service Center is fully equipped with a digital platform for agricultural social services, a factory-style seedling center, a rice and wheat drying center, a rice processing center and an agricultural technology services center, Chen said, adding that digitization has become the center's most prominent feature.

With a history of over 5,000 years

and now acting as a semi-provincial level city administering 10 districts, one county-level city and two counties, Hangzhou achieved a regional GDP of 2.01 trillion yuan (\$282.1 billion) in 2023, of which the added value of agriculture was 34.7 billion yuan.

"The rice seedling production line runs at full capacity, with six air conditioners in the seedling room operating round the clock, all supported by reliable electricity," Chen said.

On June 5, Feng Long and Sun Zhiwen, staffers at State Grid Lin'an District Electric Power Co in Hangzhou, visited the service center to inspect its electricity-powered substrate recovery machine and seedling tray stacking machine, trying to safeguard the smooth operation of

smart seedling cultivation.

As the wheat ripens and plums turn yellow amid the rain, the summer fields showcase a golden stretch of wheat on one side, and rice transplanting machines diligently at work on the other, covering the fields with a touch of green.

"In addition to conducting on-site inspections of electrical equipment every half month, we have also established an online communication mechanism with large-scale agricultural growers in the district," said Feng.

"Farmers can seek help in our group for any electricity-related issues, and we will respond and resolve them promptly to ensure precise electricity services,"

Fu Yunxiao, Feng's colleague,

stressed that to ensure all the grain is harvested during the summer harvest, sowing and crop management period, electric power must be ensured.

To support the high-quality development of local agriculture in Lin'an, State Grid Lin'an District Electric Power Co has innovated a practice mode of "joint organization, joint problem-solving and data sharing", Fu said.

Working with the State Grid-dispatched first Party secretary stationed in a village as a carrier, the power supplier has initiated 12 electricity services, covering power line rectification, electricity consultation for village enterprises, as well as power support for local projects.

"This helps accelerate a new

round of rural power grid transformation, and upgrade rural power supply levels," Fu said.

Earlier, during construction of the service center, Lin'an District Electric Power Co implemented a customer management tracking service system, providing one-stop services from its power application and on-site survey to speed up installation and electricity supply, ensuring that the center has no issues with electricity use, Feng said.

Additionally, the company also formulated an electricity guarantee table in accordance with the traditional 24 Chinese lunar periodic fixtures, and required its power supply stations to guarantee a full-service model in a bid to support high-quality development of local agriculture with dedicated services, he said.

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## Future calling

As we move on to even greener pastures, more farmers are reaping the benefits of digital technology. Internet-connected infrastructure and a future blossoming with opportunities for green growth. With the digital world at their fingertips, they can unleash the power of innovation to welcome a more bounteous harvest than ever before.



## BUSINESSFOCUS

## Low-altitude economy poised for takeoff

Government plan to link up aviation equipment with people's jobs, lives by 2030 will boost nascent industry

By MA SI

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On May 25, XPeng Aeroht, a leading player in the aerial mobility industry, let its flying car, the X2, fly over the Shenzhen central business district in Guangdong province for the first time, giving a sneak peek into the future of urban transportation.

The event was a milestone not only for XPeng Aeroht, an affiliate of Chinese smart carmaker Xpeng, but also for the burgeoning low-altitude economy in China.

Its X2, a two-seater electric vertical takeoff and landing aircraft, took off vertically from Shenzhen's talent park square, flying around the park at an altitude of 30 meters. The vehicle, designed and manufactured by XPeng Aeroht, operated entirely in autonomous mode, providing a bird's-eye view of Shenzhen's landmark buildings.

Before this public unveiling, the X2 had undergone nearly 6,000 test flights in various environments, including CBDs, coastal areas, deserts, and rivers, ensuring its reliability and safety in different conditions.

Shenzhen is committed to advancing new economic sectors, including the low-altitude economy and smart connected vehicles, the municipal government said in its 2024 transport work report.

This initiative aims to leverage "small scene innovation" to drive "large industry development", accelerating the establishment of a "Sky City" with integrated low-altitude management, panoramic applications, and industrial clustering.

Eyeing the big opportunity, XPeng Aeroht said it is currently focused on developing its first mass-production model, the "Land Aircraft Carrier", a modular flying car expected to revolutionize personal transportation.

The Land Aircraft Carrier comprises two main parts: a ground vehicle and a flying module. The ground vehicle can house the flying module for terrestrial travel and can seamlessly transition into a flying car, the company said.

"Pre-orders for the Land Aircraft Carrier are set to begin in the fourth quarter of 2024, with production and deliveries planned for the fourth quarter of 2025. The estimated price for this innovative vehicle is over 1 million yuan (\$138,000)," said Zhao Deli, founder and president of XPeng Aeroht.

XPeng Aeroht's daring mirrors a broader trend and enthusiasm for the low-altitude economy in China.

Though an official definition has yet to be agreed upon, the concept of a "low-altitude economy" is general-



Above: XPeng Aeroht's flying car, the X2, flies over the Shenzhen central business district in Guangdong province in May.

Below: United Aircraft's drone Q20 is used to inspect grid systems in Wuhu, Anhui province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



ly understood by economists as a range of business activities occurring within airspace up to 1,000 meters above ground.

It encompasses both manned and unmanned civilian aircraft operations. These activities include passenger transportation, air tourism, cargo delivery as well as the manufacturing, maintenance and integrated services associated with related equipment.

In March, the Ministry of Indus-

try and Information Technology and three other ministerial-level departments unveiled an ambitious plan to form a trillion-yuan-level market in general aviation equipment.

The plan to integrate general aviation equipment comprehensively into people's jobs and daily lives by 2030 will give a strong boost to the development of the low-altitude economy, including eVTOL aircraft, experts said.

The plan aims to capitalize on advancements in unmanned, electric and intelligent technologies to propel the commercial application of new-generation general aviation equipment in urban air transportation, logistics distribution and emergency rescue operations.

China is seeking to lead in the development of green and intelligent general aviation aircraft, positioning itself at the forefront of global innovation.

Wu Peixin, an independent aviation industry analyst in Beijing, said this is the latest signal from the Chinese government that the country attaches great importance to the development of the low-altitude economy.

According to the plan, key initiatives include the establishment of joint laboratories, technology innovation centers and tech innovation service platforms in the general aviation sector. Additionally, efforts will be directed toward laying the groundwork for a robust regulatory and safety verification system, while demonstrating the tangible benefits of aviation emergency rescue and logistics distribution on a large scale.

By 2030, China aims to establish a new model for the development of the general aviation industry characterized by high-end, intelligent and green features. This model will support and ensure the safe and efficient operation of various networks, including passenger transportation, drone delivery and low-altitude production operations, thus fueling

low-altitude economic growth and forming a trillion-yuan-level market scale.

China will also support the development of smart air mobility equipment, such as eVTOL, to meet the evolving needs of consumers, the plan said.

As an active participant in this new economy, XPeng Aeroht said it aims to facilitate urban low-altitude commuting and sightseeing, contributing valuable insights for the future of three-dimensional urban transportation.

On June 1, the construction of a tourism town featuring low-altitude economy began in Jiangmen, a city in Guangdong province, and the project signed a procurement agreement with XPeng Aeroht for 100 Land Aircraft Carriers.

The preorders were secured with advance payment, marking a significant step in integrating flying cars into the low-altitude tourism sector. Founded in 2013, XPeng Aeroht has grown into Asia's largest flying car company and an integral part of XPeng Motors' ecosystem. The company aims to integrate intelligent automotive and modern aviation technologies to create the safest electric flying cars for personal use.

With its research and development center and flight test base located in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, and advanced flying car laboratories in Shenzhen and Shanghai, XPeng Aeroht is at the forefront of the eVTOL industry. The company has developed six generations of eVTOL vehicles, com-

pleting over 15,000 test flights.

The market scale of China's low-altitude economy, which is regarded as a strategic emerging industry, reached 505.95 billion yuan in 2023, up 33.8 percent year-on-year, and is expected to surpass 1 trillion yuan in 2026, according to a new report by market research firm CCID Consulting.

Revenues from eVTOL aircraft rose 77.3 percent year-on-year to 980 million yuan last year, the report said. This segment is poised to see wider commercial application in fields like aerial sightseeing and tourism in 2024.

The report estimates that the eVTOL industry will maintain rapid growth in the next few years, with the market scale hitting 9.5 billion yuan in 2026, fueled by the speedy issuance of airworthiness certifications by authorities.

Industry-level drones are finding applications in a wide range of fields, such as emergency rescue work, power line patrolling, farming, and surveillance and security operations, it added.

"A decade ago, the consumer drone industry boomed. Today, industrial drones are on the rise. In 10 years, the aviation-grade drone market will inevitably explode," said Tian Gangyin, founder, chairman and president of the Chinese unmanned aerial vehicle developer, United Aircraft.

The company debuted its Q100 agricultural drone at an exhibition in Shenzhen in May. It boasts a maximum spray load of 50 kilograms, and is capable of covering 400 *mu* (267 hectares) in an hour. It can effectively guard against pesticide corrosion, can be washed entirely, and offers greater efficiency and convenience. Its intelligent route planning and one-click autonomous operation make it a formidable asset in spraying pesticide, transportation, and aerial surveying, United Aircraft said.

The agility, efficiency, safety, and risk reduction features of drones have seen extensive application in emergency rescue and firefighting, Tian said.

The TD550 all-scenario emergency firefighting drone helicopter, showcased by United Aircraft, demonstrates large load capacity, long endurance, multifunctionality, high speed, and precise hovering in firefighting, material delivery, and emergency communication support.

The company has also developed the TD220 power-type drone, designed specifically for the power industry. With integrated advanced sensors and autonomous flight control systems, the drone can adapt to complex grid environments, performing efficient inspections and maintenance, significantly improving the management efficiency and safety of power facilities, United Aircraft said.

"To advance the low-altitude economy, infrastructure needs to come first," Tian said, adding that more efforts are needed to accelerate the construction of infrastructure, such as takeoff and landing facilities for drones in cities.

## Regions lead in seizing opportunities of niche sector

By MA SI

The low-altitude economy, highlighted for the first time in China's Government Work Report for 2024, is rapidly gaining momentum across the country.

With strategic policies and targeted development plans, some provinces and cities are leveraging the opportunity to significantly accelerate the growth of the low-altitude industry.

Beijing, for instance, recently released a draft plan for the high-quality development of the low-altitude economy (2024-27) for public feedback. The comprehensive plan outlines six major categories and 20 specific tasks, aiming to greatly boost the industry.

By 2027, the goal is to have over 5,000 enterprises engaged in the low-altitude economy, with nationwide coverage of low-altitude technology services and enhanced international and domestic influence. The plan emphasizes innovation and application, targeting a contribution of over 100 billion yuan (\$13.8 billion) to the city's economy within three years, Beijing said.

Guangdong province's government work report for 2024 explicitly supports the development of comprehensive general aviation industrial demonstration zones in Shenzhen, Guangzhou, and Zhuhai. The plan for 2024-26 aims to establish the province as a global leader in the low-altitude economy, targeting an industry scale exceeding 300 billion yuan within three years.

Shandong, an industrial powerhouse, is focusing on the drone industry. The "Shandong High-Quality Development Implementation Plan for the Drone Industry" aims for the drone manufacturing sector to surpass 10 billion yuan by 2025. This includes nurturing about 10 leading enterprises with outputs exceeding 1 billion yuan and around 100 innovative small and medium-sized enterprises.

Luo Jun, secretary-general of the China Low-Altitude Economy Alliance, said the potential for the low-altitude economy is vast, with market demand driving the development of advanced personal air vehicles and sophisticated logistics tools.

He underscored the need for regions to leverage their unique advantages without overexpansion.

"China's low-altitude economy is still in the nascent stage," Luo said, noting the significant market space and the current focus on lightweight, low-speed drones and small vertical takeoff and landing aircraft.

According to him, as the low-altitude economy evolves, Chinese companies are poised to drive innovation, enhance infrastructure, and ensure sustainable growth. The dynamic sector is set to become a cornerstone of China's economic landscape, fostering new quality productive forces and serving as a new growth engine.

A notable example of technological advancement is in Zhoushan, Zhejiang province, where a massive drone recently took off from a large fishing vessel, carrying live fish to Shanghai in just one hour. This significant reduction in time for the traditional three-hour boat ride was made possible by extensive 5G network coverage.

Utilizing multifrequency coordination and low-altitude coverage

optimization, China Mobile said it has achieved comprehensive 5G network coverage at altitudes up to 300 meters, ensuring reliable communication for drones over long distances.

China Mobile has also pioneered the construction of "zero-carbon" 5G base stations on uninhabited islands using solar power, overcoming challenges such as harsh weather conditions and lack of power supply. These efforts ensure continuous network connectivity, facilitating efficient drone operations for logistics, sea rescue, emergency response, and environmental monitoring.

Tian Gangyin, founder, chairman, and president of United Aircraft Group, said the expansion of low-altitude flights in future, particularly with the explosive growth of drones, necessitates robust interconnectivity and management solutions.

He emphasized the need for comprehensive communication, monitoring, and countermeasures to manage this expansion effectively.

Sun Xin, an assistant professor at Beihang University, said application scenarios are a critical link in the



United Aircraft's drone is used to fight fire in Wuhu, Anhui province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

low-altitude economy industrial chain. Currently, the low-altitude economy has been integrated into tourism, agricultural production, environmental monitoring, emergency rescue, and logistics. The range of applications is continuously expanding, and the "flight radius" is extending.

Meanwhile, unmanned flight operations and manned flights are in the experimental verification

stage, and drone logistics services have extended to urban business districts and communities, he added.

From a regional perspective, local governments are using various financial tools to promote the coordinated development of all segments of the low-altitude economy, with notable industrial clustering advantages and distinctive industrial characteristics, Sun said.

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Manila's persistent claimjumping efforts display the extent of its avariciousness

The latest incident in the waters adjacent to China's Ren'ai Reef, in which there was slight collision when an illegally intruding Philippine supply ship dangerously approached a China Coast Guard vessel, is the latest in a series of risky encounters between Chinese law enforcement vessels and Philippine vessels near Ren'ai Reef in recent months due to the Philippines' brazen land-grabbing antics.

Such incidents have occurred with increasing frequency as the Philippines has stepped up its efforts to ship construction materials to an aging warship it deliberately ran aground on the reef so it can make it a permanent facility, thus driving in its stake to claim the reef as its territory.

In another development, Manila is trying to give a veneer of validity to its attempt to illegally seize Chinese maritime territory and encroach upon China's maritime interests by submitting information to the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf on June 15, in a bid to gain recognition for an extended continental shelf.

According to an Associated Press report, the undersea region Manila is seeking to formally establish its sovereignty over under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea covers China's Nansha Islands and other disputed islands, islets and reefs.

Manila played a similar trick in 2013 when it unilaterally filed a case against China's territorial

claims in the South China Sea, which only served to complicate the situation in the region by producing a politically motivated decision that is legally null and void.

With its latest move, Manila is once again seeking to mislead the international community and further escalate tensions with China over the South China Sea issue.

By portraying it as being not a claim for territorial ownership but a submission to establish entitlement to a continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles, Manila is being disingenuous.

With new procedures coming into effect on June 15, the China Coast Guard will be equipped with more forceful legal measures to enforce maritime law and advance China's maritime legal governance in its territorial waters, including detaining foreign ships that have illegally entered China's waters.

It is beyond doubt that Manila would not be displaying such showy bravura without the hustling of the United States, whose "Indo-Pacific" strategy would be severely compromised if Manila and Beijing were to restore nonconfrontational relations.

But Manila should know that it is also beyond doubt that it is playing with fire and risks being burned. Beijing has warned there is a limit to its restraint. Certainly, whatever ploys Manila comes up with to challenge China's territorial integrity and sovereignty, Beijing will resolutely respond to them.

## China-EU partnership crucial for green transition

As the European Union and China have been rapidly transforming their economies to align with their ambitious climate goals, their competition in green technologies, market share and standards has increased. If this competition is managed properly, it can encourage a race to the top and drive innovation in green technology, the European Council of Foreign Relations has acknowledged. But if managed poorly, the risk of trade-related disputes over low-carbon products and standards will rise.

With their climate competition having come to the fore in the form of higher tariffs of up to 38.1 percent that the European Commission has said will be slapped on Chinese electric vehicle imports starting next month, it is timely that Vice-Premier Ding Xuexiang is visiting Belgium and Luxembourg from Monday to Friday, during which he will co-chair the fifth High-Level Environment and Climate Dialogue between the two sides at the EU headquarters in Brussels.

That the two sides have already held four rounds of dialogue since the mechanism was established in 2020 points to the extensive common interests they share and the huge potential for the mutually beneficial cooperation between them in green development.

China and the EU, which are two of the world's biggest emitters of greenhouse gases, were both important facilitators in securing the Paris Agreement and have been playing leading roles in international efforts to limit the global average temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels.

China proposed in 2020 to peak its carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and to strive to achieve carbon neutrality before 2060. The EU, on its part, proposed a package plan to address climate change in 2021 that aims to reduce the net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 percent from the 1990 levels by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

How well the two sides can manage their competition, strengthen their climate policy coordination and enhance their cooperation in green technologies will to a large extent determine the fate of global efforts aimed at realizing the green transition and addressing climate change. Fruitful cooperation in reducing GHG emissions would undoubtedly set a good example for other countries and encourage them to follow suit.

China's rapid progress in the renewable energy sector is a key driver of its green transition, but has also been playing a pivotal role in advancing that of the EU. For example, in 2021, China supplied 80 percent of the EU's solar panels and 60 percent of its wind turbines, which has helped the bloc to meet its ambitious renewable energy targets.

Yet with some politicians in Europe willing to follow Washington's lead by trying to politicize cooperation with China as a "threat", they have been loudly repeating the lie that China's "overcapacity" in green products is hurting domestic industries.

Hopefully, the high-level dialogue will help the two sides expand common ground while enhancing mutual trust so that their differences will not become obstacles to their long-term green cooperation, which will benefit not only China and the EU, but also the rest of the world.

## Pentagon's despicable act drags US to new low

It is no surprise that the United States Defense Department has not confirmed reports that the US military committed what some observers have called an "indefensible" crime against humanity. Nor is it surprising that it has not denied it, given the evidence stacked against it.

According to a Reuters report, the US military launched a clandestine program during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic to smear Chinese vaccines and other life-saving medical supplies.

The particular campaign identified by Reuters was apparently intended to counter what the US perceived as China's growing influence in the Philippines, a nation hit especially hard by the deadly virus, through phony internet accounts meant to impersonate Filipinos. According to the report, social media posts were used to undermine trust in the quality of Chinese face masks, test kits and a Sinovac vaccine, the first to be available in the Philippines.

Reuters identified at least 300 accounts on X, formerly Twitter, that matched descriptions shared by former US military officials familiar with the operation. Almost all of these accounts were created in the middle of 2020 and employed the hashtag "#Chinaangvirus" — Tagalog for "China is the virus".

"COVID came from China and the VACCINE also came from China, don't trust China!" one typical tweet from July 2020 read. The words were posted next to a photo of a syringe beside a Chinese flag and a soaring chart of infections. Another post

read: "From China — PPE, Face Mask, Vaccine: FAKE. But the Coronavirus is real."

Ironically, X removed the posts immediately following the report, stating they were part of a coordinated bot campaign based on activity patterns and internal data.

According to the findings of the report, the US military's dirty anti-vaccine game began in the spring of 2020 and expanded beyond Southeast Asia. The Pentagon tailored the campaign to local audiences across Central Asia and the Middle East using a combination of fake social media accounts on multiple platforms to spread fear of China's vaccines among Muslims at a time when the virus was killing tens of thousands of people each day.

One senior US military officer whom Reuters described as directly involved with the propaganda campaign in Southeast Asia told the outlet that "we didn't do a good job sharing vaccines with partners", so "what was left to us was to throw shade on China's".

While China was trying its best to provide vaccines to hard-hit countries and regions during the COVID-19 pandemic, the US not only repeatedly obstructed efforts to lift the patents on vaccines to enable them to be more widely distributed but also spread misinformation to smear China's life-saving efforts.

That dirty deed cost lives. It seems that there are no limits to the depths to which the US is willing to sink.

Cai Meng



## Opinion Line

## Ultra-long special treasury bonds can promote quantitative growth

The Ministry of Finance recently, for the first time, issued 50-year ultra-long special treasury bonds, with a total issue of 35 billion yuan (\$4.82 billion).

Maintaining a moderate fiscal deficit and reasonably expanding the scale of national debt issuance will help cope with some domestic economic difficulties and challenges. General public budgetary incomes in the first four months of this year was 8.09 trillion yuan, down 2.7 percent year-on-year. An important reason for this is the decline in tax revenue, especially the value added tax, which fell by 7.6 percent year-on-year. In order to make up the gap of fiscal revenue and expenditure, it is necessary to increase the issuance of government bonds, especially long-term special treasury bonds.

Another set worth 885 billion yuan will be issued from June to Novem-

ber, indicating the accelerated landing of proactive fiscal policies.

The funds raised by the issuance of government bonds are mainly used for public spending and infrastructure construction, which can improve overall economic activity and effective demands, thereby boosting market expectations and confidence. The issuance of government bonds can raise a large amount of available funds for public finances, and these funds will directly stimulate the expansion of investment demand and drive consumer demand.

When treasury funds are used for the construction of infrastructure such as transportation, energy and water conservancy projects, the demand for investment in these areas will increase immediately, not only directly creating a large number of employment opportunities, but also promoting the develop-

ment of related upstream and downstream industries, which will create more employment opportunities and correspondingly improve people's incomes.

According to this year's Government Work Report, the ultra-long special treasury bonds issued this year are to solve the funding problems of some major projects, and are specifically used for the implementation of major national strategies and security capacity building in key areas. The use of government bonds for these projects pertinent to scientific and technological innovation, key technologies, energy security and other fields can promote the transformation and upgrading of economic structure and steadily improve the efficiency of growth, and help achieve "effective qualitative improvement" and "reasonable quantitative growth" of the economy.

— 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS HERALD

## Unicorns require considerate care to thrive

The "2024 Global Unicorn List" recently released by the Hurun Group shows that by 2023, China had a total of 340 unicorn companies, ranking second globally. In 2023, China saw 56 newly emerging unicorn companies, mostly in high-technology sectors such as smart manufacturing, energy and power.

For years, China's newly emerging unicorn companies have exhibited a clear edge in technology, thanks to the fastest growth in smart manufacturing and power sectors and stable growth in automotive transportation, artificial intelligence, and healthcare sectors.

China is committed to creating a market-oriented, legalized and

internationalized business environment, while deeply implementing the strategy of rejuvenating the country through science and education and the strategy of innovation-driven development, significantly enhancing independent innovation capabilities.

Currently, China is accelerating the development of new quality productive forces and requires the continued emergence of more technology-based unicorn companies. Unicorn enterprises are micro-carriers of new quality productive forces. Cultivating more technology-based unicorns to grow vigorously is conducive to developing new economic drivers, fostering new

momentum, and building new advantages for future development.

But domestic technology-based unicorn companies still need to further improve their innovation quality and effectively enhance their core competitiveness. Various localities and departments need to adopt multiple measures to actively create a business environment and policy atmosphere that encourages innovation and creation, precisely support relevant companies in promoting technological innovation and demand creation, pool various forces to cultivate an innovative soil, and focus on cultivating more technology-based unicorn companies.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

## What They Say

## Hopes visit will help drive settlement of EV dispute

With the European Union and Beijing locked in a row about the EU's planned anti-subsidy tariffs on imports of Chinese electric vehicles, Robert Habeck, Germany's minister for economic affairs and climate action, is to visit China next week, said the German government.

According to Habeck's schedule, he will make a trip to Beijing, Shanghai and Hangzhou from Friday to Sunday. The topics on his agenda include economic ties between Germany and China, as well as the political developments in the EU and climate protection, a German economy ministry spokesman said.

Habeck does not represent the European Commission, the EU's executive body, but he "will not be able to avoid addressing" the issue of the planned EU tariffs, the spokesman said.

The trade volume between Germany and China was about €254

billion (\$272 billion) last year. It is natural that Germany worries the EU tariffs on Chinese EVs will trigger a tariff war with China, which will make Germany a major victim.

Habeck's visit to China at this juncture reflects Berlin's anxiety over the tariffs' possible influences on German companies dealing with China and German investment in China.

Habeck's concerns over the EU tariffs are palpable in his calling for immediate negotiations between the EU and China following the European Commission's announcement of the tariffs.

The EU has left a window open until July 4 for negotiations with China over its proposed anti-subsidy tariffs of up to 38 percent on imports of Chinese EVs.

Habeck has warned that tariffs are always the worst means to resolve trade disputes, and if Germany, an economy relying heavily

on trade and investment, is involved in a tariff war with China because of the EU tariffs, "then the baby would be thrown out with the bathwater".

Beijing initiated anti-dumping probes into EU pork products on Monday. Despite so, China attaches great significance to stabilizing healthy economic ties with the EU. It is a consensus, even among some policymakers of the EU, that Chinese EVs are indispensable for the EU's green transition. China always values its mutually beneficial economic and trade ties with Germany, and is committed to providing fair, transparent and predictable business environment for foreign companies and investments.

It is to be hoped that proper solutions can be found through Habeck's exchanges with his Chinese hosts before the new measures come into force on July 4.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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## COMMENT

Zhang Donggang and Zang Fengyu

## Cultural harmony leads to better future

Xi Jinping Thought on Culture reveals the outstanding characteristics of Chinese civilization and discusses the theories, principles and philosophy of cultural exchanges. According to Xi Jinping Thought on Culture, civilizational exchanges can transcend barriers and conflicts, and inter-civilizational interactions can boost the harmonious development of civilizations.

No civilization can exist independently, or by refusing to interact with other civilizations. The coexistence of and exchanges between civilizations are the norm, with all civilizations moving toward a harmonious future.

Marxism reveals the characteristics of human civilization. The internal structure of every nation is determined by its production capacity, and internal and external exchanges. Civilization is the result of people's joint activities in certain social setups, with the social division of labor and interactions promoting the development of civilizations.

Chinese philosophers have always emphasized the importance of "harmony". In Chinese culture, harmony does not mean that all things are uniform, nor does it mean they are merged into one. Instead, harmony means peaceful coexistence, recognizing and respecting differences, and forging a better future.

A harmonious social environment has always been the mainstream trend in China's history. China started developing its economy and culture in ancient times by communicating with

neighboring countries and spreading its civilization and culture in other parts of the world. Although China was the center of the ancient Silk Road, it never took advantage of the system to economically exploit other countries; rather, it treated foreign business people very well.

Today, civilizations are adopting a new format despite the turbulent and uncertain global landscape. And together with other countries, China has been promoting civilizational dialogue and exchanges across the globe, learning from each other and abandoning the old political order based on protectionism and unilateralism. The country has also been contributing its unique wisdom to the development of civilizations, in order to help develop a more healthy global governance system.

The integration of the basic tenets of Marxism, and China's specific realities and traditional culture forms the basis of Chinese Marxism, which has been guiding China's reforms and economic construction during the past decades.

First, the "two integrations" form the foundation for building a harmonious civilization. Since its founding, the Communist Party of China has been the leading practitioner of modern Chinese culture, as well as the inheritor and promoter of traditional culture. The Party employs Marxism to promote traditional culture, boost the national spirit, and meet the people's new spiritual needs. Chinese Marxism thrives on traditional culture, creating a favorable environment

for the harmonious development of Chinese civilization.

Second, the "two integrations" show the inclusiveness of Chinese civilization. The more than 5,000-year-old Chinese civilization has developed by incorporating the good elements of the Central Plains culture, grassland culture, southern culture, West Asian culture and Siberian culture. This incorporation has transcended geographical limitations and introduced diversified elements into Chinese civilization. More importantly, in the early 20th century, Marxism injected new vitality into Chinese civilization, turning it into a more open and inclusive society.

Third, the "two integrations" have added Chinese characteristics to Marxism. The Chinese civilization keeps reforming itself, reflecting its modern spirit after adopting Marxism as the guiding political principle, which in turn promotes Marxism and has helped make great achievements in the new era.

And fourth, the "two integrations" consolidate the historical and cultural foundations of Chinese modernization, promote cultural prosperity brought about by the harmonious development of the Chinese civilization. During the more than 100 years of its existence, the Party has been drawing wisdom from traditional Chinese culture and promoting Chinese modernization, which reflects the cultural connotations and unique advantages of the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

The achievements of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era

have provided better institutional guarantee, material foundation and spiritual power for Chinese modernization. Chinese modernization, incidentally, also offers a new option for other developing countries to realize modernity, and helping their people achieve both material and spiritual prosperity.

Furthermore, the Global Civilization Initiative proposed by China defines the primary premise, historical position and development path of global civilization, explains the basic vision of civilizational development in the new era, and provides strong support for creating a new global order and jointly building a community with a shared future for mankind.

The concept of a community with a shared future for mankind is rooted in traditional Chinese culture, which has developed through revolutions, and matured after the launch of reform and opening-up. Building a community with a shared future for mankind will promote the harmonious development of civilizations and help solve major global problems, apart from injecting new energy into global development and boosting international cooperation.

By realizing civilizational harmony, we can forge a new and better future for all.

Zhang Donggang is Party secretary of Renmin University of China; and Zang Fengyu is dean of the School of Philosophy, Renmin University of China. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Hu Meidong

## Cross-Taiwan Strait integration best way to maintain peace

Compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait want peace and stability, and thus seek an end to cross-strait tensions that have intensified in recent years. But in his inaugural speech on May 20, the new Taiwan administrative head, Lai Ching-te, paid scant respect to the sentiments of compatriots across the Strait by refusing to acknowledge the 1992 Consensus that there is only one China, prompting the People's Liberation Army to hold large-scale military exercises to preempt any attempt by Lai and his ilk to seek "Taiwan independence".

Lai sees himself as a pursuer of Western democracy in Asia, and is opposed to the Chinese mainland's whole-process people's democracy. But he cannot weaken the bond between compatriots on the two sides of the Strait.

In fact, the strong bond between people on the two sides of the Strait was evident in a grand dragon boat race that was held amid the PLA drills, in Jimei district of Xiamen, Fujian province. And the contrast between the peaceful cultural event and the looming threat of conflict underlines the dual nature of the current cross-strait dynamics.

Nevertheless, peaceful reunification remains the aspiration of Taiwan compatriots. From June 13 to 15, for instance, thousands of Taiwan representatives from different sectors participated in the 16th Strait Forum in Fujian, fostering friendship and deepening mutual understanding. This shows that despite the stormy political climate, more and more compatriots on both sides are seeking cross-strait solidarity.

Therefore, by increasing cultural exchanges and cooperation, they can deepen mutual understanding and prevent misunderstandings.

Economics is a crucial link in cross-strait relations. Since the launch of reform and opening-up, trade and economic ties between the mainland and Taiwan have grown from strength to strength, as is evident from the cross-strait trade volume, which surpassed \$267.8 billion last year, reflecting the high complementarity of the two economies as well as the huge potential for further cooperation.

Economic integration will sharpen the competitive edge of both sides, and help create jobs and improve people's livelihoods. By jointly developing high-tech industries, green energy and modern agriculture, the two sides can share resources and complement each other technologically. Additionally, Taiwan island's participation in the Belt and Road Initiative can expand its international market.

Traditional culture forms an emotional link between the people on the two sides of the Strait. Speaking the same language and sharing the same cultural heritage, the two sides have common historical roots and traditions. Therefore, by increasing cultural exchanges and cooperation, they can deepen mutual understanding and prevent misunderstandings.

In recent years, cultural, educational, sports and tourism exchanges between the two sides have become increasingly frequent. Young people from both sides of the Strait are deepening their understanding and friendship through summer camps, cultural festivals and academic exchanges.

Also, social integration is essential for peaceful development across the Strait. So there is need to promote social integration, which will also enhance the sense of belonging and identity of compatriots on both sides, and help build a community of shared destiny. As such, cross-strait cooperation in healthcare, eldercare and education should be strengthened. For instance, the two sides can deepen cooperation in healthcare by recognizing each other's medical insurance system, thereby forming a cross-border medical insurance link. They can also collaborate to address the aging population problems, and boost educational cooperation and talent exchanges to cultivate more outstanding talents, and promote common development.

In this regard, realizing peaceful national reunification not only aligns with the interests of compatriots on both sides but also is crucial for maintaining regional peace and stability. So based on the 1992 Consensus, the two sides should engage in dialogue and establish mechanisms to enhance mutual trust.

By strengthening political trust, the two sides can prevent misjudgments and conflict, and by establishing a high-level cross-strait dialogue mechanism, they can increase communication. The two sides can enhance cooperation in international affairs, too, to address global challenges such as climate change, terrorism and infectious diseases, thus boosting their international influence.

But despite the promising prospects of cross-strait integration, numerous challenges remain. For example, there is a lack of mutual political trust between the two sides of the Strait, with some elements on the island stirring up pro-independence sentiments. This makes it necessary for the two sides to adhere to the path of peaceful development, oppose any pro-independence activities, and enhance mutual trust through increased exchanges and cooperation.

The two sides also need to intensify their economic integration, by further opening up their markets for each other, lift the trade and investment barriers, and raise cross-strait economic cooperation to a higher level.

But since cross-strait cultural and social integration face obstacles, such as information asymmetry and cultural differences, the two sides of the Strait should increase information exchanges and cultural interaction to foster mutual understanding, and promote grassroots interactions and exchanges to lay a solid foundation for peaceful development.

Cross-strait integration is the best way to achieve peace and prosperity. Through comprehensive integration in the fields of economics, culture, society and politics, the two sides of the Strait can achieve mutual benefit, improve public welfare and help maintain regional peace and stability. As long as both sides adhere to the path of peaceful development and strengthen exchanges and cooperation, they can usher in a new era of peaceful cross-strait development and achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

The author is chief of China Daily Fujian Bureau in Fuzhou.

Jia Duqiang

## Li's tour to boost regional cooperation

Premier Li Qiang's visits to New Zealand, Australia and Malaysia are significant for many reasons. For instance, his visit to New Zealand on Thursday coincides with the 10th anniversary of the establishment of a comprehensive strategic partnership between China and New Zealand.

Li's visit to Australia has gained added importance because it is the first by a Chinese premier since 2017. And his visit to Malaysia coincides with the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Beijing and Kuala Lumpur, and marks the Year of China-Malaysia Friendship.

Li's visits to the three countries will not only strengthen bilateral relations but also boost regional cooperation.

Regular exchanges between Beijing and Wellington, including New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon's visit to China last year and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit to New Zealand in March this year show why the two complementary economies have boosted trade cooperation. China is New Zealand's top trading partner and has been its largest export market for the past 10 years, and while New Zealand's foreign direct investment in China increased by 104.7 percent year-on-year in 2023, China's FDI in New Zealand grew by 16.7 percent.

The two countries have strengthened their comprehensive strategic partnership by deepening high-quality trade cooperation. The two sides have made great achievements in the traditional fields of infrastructure, and the dairy and insurance sectors, while exploring opportunities in areas such as the digital economy, electric vehicles and renewable energy.

Li's visit to New Zealand in the 10th year of the establishment of the China-New Zealand comprehensive strategic partnership surely injects new impetus into bilateral trade and deepens bilateral cooperation.

For Australia, on the other hand, China is the largest trading partner and important market. And despite their highly complementary economies and close trade relations, the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitics dealt a heavy blow to bilateral ties and trade cooperation in the recent past. But fortunately, the two countries resumed constructive cooperation after Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese assumed office in 2022 and changed the country's policy toward China.

Thanks to the two sides' joint efforts, Sino-Australian ties are improving and bilateral trade is regaining its vitality after the removal of obstacles that hindered the development of bilateral relations. Li's visit to Australia, hopefully, will prompt the two countries to resume normal high-level exchanges and dialogue. And China will include Australia in the list of unilateral visa-free countries.

In fact, the two sides are planning to expand the China-Australia free trade agreement and unleash the full potential of cooperation under the framework of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement. While deepening cooperation in traditional areas including energy, agriculture, tourism and education, the two sides are looking for new economic growth points in fields such as the green economy, digital finance, smart manufacturing and climate change.

Since Australia is an ally of the United States as well as an important trading partner of China, it needs to learn from its experiences to ensure geopolitics doesn't influence its relations with China. During his visit to China last year, Albanese said it is natural for Australia and China to have differences, but they should not let those differences define their relationship. That signaled a new beginning for the two sides on multiple fronts.

China and Australia are following the correct direction by preferring dialogue over argument, managing differences over confrontations, and promoting trust through deepened cooperation.

As for China's relationship with Malaysia, it is friendly and mutually beneficial. To be sure, Sino-Malaysian ties are a model of friendly cooperation. Apart from deepening strategic mutual trust, the two sides have achieved fruitful results in projects under the Belt and Road Initiative framework. And last year, they announced their plan to jointly build a China-Malaysia community with a shared future.



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

During his visit to Malaysia, Li will attend the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two sides, and discuss with the country's leaders how to deepen Sino-Malaysian cooperation.

First, during his visit to the three countries, Li will impress upon their leaderships that China attaches great importance to its relationships with the three countries, and assure them that China will not only intensify its high-quality opening-up but also pursue win-win cooperation. Li will also hold in-depth exchanges with the leaders in the three countries on bilateral, regional and global issues.

Li's visits to the Asia-Pacific countries also highlight that China remains committed to promoting cooperation with countries across the world and is willing to work with any country that pursues win-win cooperation and common development.

Second, the improvement of Sino-Australian ties shows that even countries with different ideologies, security policies and political systems can engage in mutually beneficial trade so long as they respect each other and

appropriately handle their differences. As a matter of fact, China is willing to establish close and mutually beneficial relations with Western countries on the basis of equality and mutual respect.

Third, China's healthy and high-quality growth has created favorable conditions for it to deepen cooperation with countries in the region and beyond based on openness, inclusiveness, mutual respect, mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence.

And fourth, countries in the Asia-Pacific region should work together to achieve common development despite the unstable global landscape, oppose hegemonism, unilateralism, protectionism, and the building of "small yards with high fences", and desist from inciting bloc confrontation, because they run counter to beneficial cooperation and common development.

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## GLOBAL VIEWS

YE XINGQING AND CHENG YU

## Growing pains

It is imperative for China to establish an all-encompassing approach to secure its supply of key agricultural products

China's imports of certain key agricultural products, mainly driven by supply shortfalls, have continued to increase with rising domestic demand, greater market openness, and widening disparities in prices between domestic and international markets. This has led to an increasing dependence on the global supply. To balance development and security in a coordinative way while considering both domestic and international situations, it is imperative for China to strategize its agricultural supply security for the modernization journey ahead.



Ye Xingqing



Cheng Yu

This entails adhering to an all-encompassing approach to food, resources, and agriculture, while deepening supply-side structural reforms in the agricultural sector.

First, it is important to establish a comprehensive support system to sustain the increase of agricultural production capacity. This includes implementing the strictest farmland protection system, bolstering the dynamic monitoring and evaluation of farmland quality, establishing incentive and constraint mechanisms, and enhancing the responsibility of relevant parties in protecting farmland quality. Furthermore, it is important to advance the construction of high-standard farmland, integrate investments across various departments, and promote soil improvement and ecological governance. The potential of arable land resources,

coupled with the development of suitable machinery and cultivation techniques, should be further harnessed. It is important to embrace an all-encompassing approach to food, leverage technology to empower the synergized development of agricultural production and ecology, and explore new channels such as agroforestry, deep-sea aquaculture, desert agriculture, and plant factories for bolstering food supply. Additionally, the nation should establish an innovative seed sector and strengthen agricultural disaster-relief technologies and material reserves to enhance climate resilience in the agricultural sector.

Second, it is important to optimize agricultural subsidy policies to align with farmers' motivation for planting grain and the emphasis from local authorities on grain production. This involves supporting the establishment of a new type of unified management and cooperative operation system, promoting the integration of planting and breeding practices, extending processing chains, and diversifying functions. It also entails enhancing support for new-type agricultural business entities, regulating land transfer behaviors, and stabilizing long-term agricultural investment expectations. Meanwhile, it is also important to target agricultural subsidies in a more precise manner, improve crop insurance systems, increase subsidies for farm machinery, social service procurement, and agricultural inputs, and beef up support for green practices. We also need to strengthen support for major agricultural production areas and promote production-sales integration, while providing warehousing and transportation subsidies for important agricultural products.

Moreover, China must carry out a diversified import strategy to



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

enhance the stability and reliability of its overseas supply chains.

First, the nation should stabilize and expand imports of agricultural products from North America and Oceania. The two regions, with superior agricultural resources and high-level modernization, represent an important source of China's key agricultural imports. Agricultural cooperation is also the ballast for trade and economic ties between China and countries in these regions, and thus heightened cooperation serves mutual economic interests.

Second, it is important for China to address weak links in its agricultural supply chains in South America, which serves as a primary source of the nation's agricultural imports. The region, with immense potential for future growth in agricultural production and exports, holds a crucial position in China's strategy for diversifying agricultural imports. Countries such as Brazil are highly dependent on imports for fertilizers and seeds. For instance, Brazil relies on the international market for 85 percent of its fertilizers, with nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium fertilizers

reaching dependency levels of 95.7 percent, 72 percent, and 96.4 percent, respectively. Looking ahead, to enhance the stability and reliability of China's agricultural supply chains in South America, it is essential to support relevant enterprises in establishing coordinated supply chains in the region. The nation should strengthen investment and trade cooperation across the entire agricultural industry chain with countries such as Brazil and Argentina, particularly in fertilizers and seeds.

Third, the Black Sea and Central Asia should be identified as key regions for diversifying agricultural imports. The Black Sea region, including Russia, and Central Asia, including Kazakhstan, still possess significant potential for agricultural production and trade growth. Chinese businesses should sign long-term agreements in conducting trade and investment cooperation within such regions. They should strive for more exemptions from export restrictions, make their terms of cooperation more specific and enforceable, and increase collaboration in areas such as seed industry and agricultural machin-

ery. Meanwhile, countries in the region should be incentivized to cultivate more crops that are in massive demand in China.

Fourth, the agricultural investment and trade cooperation with countries in Southeast Asia and Africa must be elevated. Some countries in Southeast Asia and Africa possess favorable agricultural resources, with considerable potential for the production and export growth of edible oil plants, rice, maize, and other agricultural products. Agricultural cooperation with these countries can be prioritized within the framework of strategic partnerships, particularly under the Belt and Road Initiative. Through initiatives such as agricultural infrastructure construction and technical assistance, regional countries will be assisted to enhance the agricultural production capacity, so that they can export their agricultural produce after meeting the demand for domestic consumption. It is important to conduct thorough assessments of the natural ecology and cultural customs in these countries to mitigate potential risks in agricultural investment

and trade cooperation.

In addition, the development of a unified and interconnected national agricultural product market should be advanced. This entails enhancing communication and joint research among various departments, improving the collection and analysis mechanism for market information across entire agricultural industry chains, and enhancing the ability to comprehensively utilize survey data and real-time big data. A unified system for the release of agricultural supply and demand information should be established. Meanwhile, it is imperative to improve the futures trading mechanisms to facilitate effective linkage between agricultural futures and spot markets. The development of rural cooperatives and the encouragement of collaboration between businesses and farmers must be promoted to assist small farmers in utilizing futures tools to mitigate market risks.

The nation should move forward with the alignment of its agricultural market system with international standards. While China is now among the top nations in terms of agricultural futures trading volume, its futures market still lags behind in terms of internationalization. The internationalization of China's agricultural futures market should be actively advanced by encouraging more foreign businesses to establish a presence in China and more Chinese businesses to go global, aligning trading varieties and rules with international standards, attracting the participation from more foreign enterprises and overseas investors. It is also important to encourage leading futures companies, asset management companies, and companies in the trading of spot products to engage in international market transactions through various means.

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JOHN S. JI

## To cope with change

Ethics is embedded in China's climate health adaptation strategies

Embedding ethics into climate health adaptation is essential to ensure that actions benefit and do not compromise future generations. However, it is unclear how we can create a fair and equitable system today. Climate change policy should



fundamentally incorporate ethics at the core. Climate change affects many places in different capacities, and it is unequivocal that the poorest and those with the least resources are the most vulnerable and hit the hardest. Most developed countries, communities, and individuals have a greater capacity to mitigate and adapt because of financial resources, bargaining power and information access. This raises questions about fair distribution of burdens and benefits.

A rights-based approach based on universality and inalienability underscores that climate change threatens fundamental human rights, including the rights to life, health and a safe environment. For instance, climate-induced extreme weather events make some places uninhabitable, displacing communities and creating climate migrants, thereby jeopardizing the rights of many through a spillover effect. Renewable energy projects must consider the local communities to ensure fair and equitable land use, incorporating mechanisms for meaningful participation of vulnerable communities, and aligning policies with international agreements such as the Paris Agreement.

Multilateral intergovernmental agencies created financial mechanisms, such as the Loss and Damage Fund, Green Climate Fund, and Adaptation Fund, which are pivotal in climate health adaptation. These mechanisms, along with processes like Global Stocktaking, are instrumental in building climate change health adaptation capacities. Achieving equity in these mechanisms should apply the "veil of



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

ignorance", a concept introduced by philosopher John Rawls. This concept suggests that designing fair and impartial principles of justice should be done from an original position of equality, where individuals, or policy decision-makers, lack knowledge of their own status, abilities, preferences, and circumstances. Decision-makers can suppose they do not know their own circumstances for climate health funds — whether they represent a wealthy country with advanced healthcare or a poor country vulnerable to climate change. Only with the decision-maker behind a "veil of ignorance", can they be compelled

to develop systems that protect the most vulnerable and distribute resources equitably.

While the "veil of ignorance" approach promotes fairness and equity in resource distribution, the immediacy and urgency of decision-making during climate disasters may necessitate a shift toward a utilitarian framework — evaluating actions that aim for the greatest good for the greatest number of people — often instantaneous and without time for thorough consideration. However, utilitarianism can oversimplify decision-making by focusing solely on immediate outcomes, neglecting long-term

consequences, and overlooking the revealed preferences of groups and individuals. By integrating the fairness principles of the "veil of ignorance" with the practical efficiency of utilitarianism, policymakers can develop a more balanced and just framework for climate disaster response. This approach ensures immediate needs are met while also considering long-term recovery and resilience-building efforts, ultimately preventing future vulnerabilities.

China's collectivism that values group goals over individual ones ensures order, and a sense of community and mutual support. In the

context of climate change adaptation, this principle lets collective efforts build resilience and protect vulnerable populations. Collectivism facilitates the pooling of resources and the sharing of knowledge, both of which are essential for effective climate adaptation. China's strong emphasis on order and hierarchical structure enables the efficient implementation of climate adaptation policies. The centralized governance model allows for coordinated action, ensuring that strategies are systematically and effectively executed. However, it is also important to consider potential challenges, such as ensuring

that the voices of all community members are heard and that local contexts are adequately addressed in the centralized approach.

The role of local context in effective climate health adaptation cannot be overstated. Implementing a centralized strategy across a vast and diverse country such as China is always challenging. Local climate health adaptation that allows for flexibility is crucial for addressing specific regional risk factors, and this is where local culture plays a vital role in embedding ethics into climate change adaptation by providing valuable knowledge, fostering community engagement, ensuring cultural appropriateness, promoting inclusive governance, and enhancing social cohesion.

China's long history is a testament to its resilience against climate risks, offering experiences from the past for today's climate discourse. From the raging Yellow River floods that were tamed by the legendary hero Da Yu, to the droughts during the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), to the droughts and famines during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), to the Little Ice Age (14th-19th centuries), and to the Yangtze River floods in 1931, China's civilization has weathered it all. In the 21st century, modern climate change is ramping up the frequency and intensity of extreme weather — heat waves, typhoons, heavy rainfall, wildfire — posing significant challenges to both urban and rural areas.

Today, China tackles these modern climate risks with eco-civilization principles and technological innovations to safeguard public health gains. The key to moving forward is embedding ethics, applying cultural specificity, and fostering global cohesion — a blueprint for resilience.

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## CULTURAL HERITAGE



It's green. It's also blue. Originating from nature, this color of vitality has not only left its mark on the various perspectives of Chinese people's daily lives throughout history, but it has also been associated with poetic reminiscences for many generations.

The color cyan, known as *qing* in Chinese, continues to comfort and inspire people today.

An exhibition in Nanjing, capital of Jiangsu province, *Cyan, The Exceptional Chinese Color*, unfolds a fascinating epic on this colorful legend through 180 cultural relics on loan from across the nation.

Opened in the city's Oriental Metropolitan Museum, the exhibition was co-launched by Art Exhibitions China and the Nanjing Museum Administration and will run until October.

"We hope to present the aesthetic beauty of this unique Chinese color concept," Zhang Xuemeng, a curator of the event from Art Exhibitions China, explains. "The theme choice is made also due to the rich and broad interpretations of 'cyan' in traditional Chinese culture. We aim to delve deep into the cultural spirit it embodies."

"This color is reflected in various aspects of traditional Chinese cultural life: clothing, food, housing, transportation, leisure activities and more," she adds. "This diversity in cultural representation naturally leads to a variety of exhibit types."

Jade, porcelain, turquoise, glassware, clothes, paintings and other varieties of objects spanning millennia, the gallery resembles an idyllic mountain setting or a rustling bamboo forest.

Real bamboo is used to decorate the gallery and a giant showcase is designed in the shape of rolling mountains. Zhang Lei, a co-curator of the exhibition from the Oriental Metropolitan Museum, came up with the idea to create a mesmerizing atmosphere for visitors to approach, witness and appreciate ancient literati's feelings by replicating the natural settings from yesteryear.

"In China, different colors are given various ceremonial meanings," Zhang Lei says. "In ancient Chinese text, the term *qing* was also used to describe a wide spectrum of colors including blue, green and sometimes gray. This one word has a rich connotation."

Cyan is one of "five colors" that was used by ancient Chinese people to describe everything in the world, based on yin-yang and the related five elements theory.

In *Rites of Zhou*, a fundamental ancient Chinese classic on organizational theory, this color was also used to refer to the East.

It was almost as if cyan was predestined to best represent the eastern aesthetics in the following centuries.

#### Stories of precious stones

To design such a comprehensive exhibition, it is natural to first credit jade when reviewing the lasting legacies of cyan in Chinese culture.

From arc-shaped *huang* or disc-like *bi* of the Neolithic period (10,000 to 4,000 years ago), the 3,000-odd-year ritual *cong*, a straight tube with a circular bore and square outer, to exquisite decorations from the Warring States Period (475-221 BC), jade demonstrated people's understanding of the color in early history, but was not based solely on aesthetics.

"Jade artifacts served as key symbols in ceremonies and sacrificial rituals," Tan Ping, director of Art Exhibitions China, says. "The exhibits are witnesses to the unified ceremonial system of a centralized authority, reflecting the unity of Chinese civilization."

Once seen as a crucial indicator of national governance, jade later played a key role in aristocratic burial customs during the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) as a bridge to connect with the afterworld.

Following the 3rd century, jade was widely worn as a daily accessory by various social classes in China.

"Ancient Chinese referred to jade items to worship heaven," Zhang Lei explains.

"They also often used this cultural icon to describe men with virtue."

"From the very beginning of our civilization, jade has been seen as something precious," she continues. "People tend to have some special affection for its color, its soft green revealing elegance. The color also represents everything growing in nature."

Compared with this dominating role of jade, the significance of turquoise in ancient China seems to have been overshadowed. However,



A Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) celadon vase (center) produced in Longquan Kiln in Zhejiang province and other porcelain objects on display in *Cyan, The Exceptional Chinese Color* in Nanjing, Jiangsu province. WANG KAIHAO / CHINA DAILY

## MUSEUM SHOWS ITS TRUE COLORS

Exhibition demonstrates long-lasting charm of a particular shade in history, Wang Kaihao reports in Nanjing.

like many other key hubs of ancient civilizations, China also had a long tradition to admire such a precious stone, as the exhibition shows.

A bronze handle inlaid with turquoise from the Western Zhou Dynasty (c.11th century-771 BC) is such an example.

Back then, turquoise was often used as decorations on bronze weapons, ceremonial items, or settings on horses and chariots. An exhibited necklace of turquoise from the same period also reveals Chinese people's admiration for cyan.

#### Exquisite ceramics

Ancient poets dedicated numerous stanzas to admire cyan. A rich and descriptive collection of words were used to describe its subtle variations, like *canglang* (rippling waves), *wizi* (West Lake beauty), *zhuyue* (bamboo moon), or *qian-shancui* (verdant mountains), as Zhang Lei notes.

Ceramics probably stand out as a perfect and long-lasting way to fully interpret this exquisite group of colors.

Celadon, most notably produced in Longquan kilns in Zhejiang province dating back more than 1,700 years, showcased its green charm, particularly by the literati.

Changsha wares from Hunan province, during the Tang Dynasty



The decorative artwork of a blue-and-white vase, on display from the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), reflects a popular play of its time. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



We hope to present the aesthetic beauty of this unique Chinese color concept."

Zhang Xuemeng, exhibition curator

(618-907), were famed for their vivid reflection of natural hues.

The basic tone of celadon was dotted with green adornments. People then often marked paintings and poems on the wares, reflecting a prosperous era of literature.

Blue-and-white porcelain from the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), though produced via imported dye, evolved into a signature example of made-in-China products.

In one highlighted exhibit, a Yuan blue-and-white porcelain displays the work of artisans who drew a vivid scene of a famous play.

This scene depicts Xiao He, a statesman from the Han Dynasty, chasing after Han Xin under the moon and persuading this disappointed general to change his mind and come back to serve the Han.

"The decorative patterns of these porcelains show fashion and popular topics during different times," she says.

"Other than admiring their outstanding techniques, we can also feel the warmth of life from these relics."

Longquan products, blue-and-white porcelain and Changsha wares all sailed along the Maritime Silk Road centuries ago, Tan adds.

"From ancient times to the present, the exchange and mutual influence among civilizations have always been the main theme of historical development," he says. "It vividly reflects the inherent 'harmony' in the genes of the Chinese nation."

#### A resonating space

Putting this exhibition in the Oriental Metropolitan Museum is not the result of coincidence.

The museum focuses on history between the 3rd to 6th centuries when Nanjing was the capital of six dynasties that ruled the southern part of China and rose as a metropolitan city with a powerful influence. Nanjing is thus often dubbed as the "ancient capital of six dynasties". The museum regularly displays 1,200 related relics, among which celadon is a pillar of its inventory.

"People then had a tendency to admire the color of cyan," Zhang Lei says. "It shows a pursuit for harmony between humans and nature."

She further explains: "While North China was shaken by continuous wars, a large group of literati were exiled to the south. The unstable social environment made them listen to their 'inner world' more often and highlighted the importance of individual feelings and psychological relief."

As the exhibition shows, forests, plants and natural landscapes, which were used as backdrops or adornments in paintings, became main features in artworks during this nature-worshipping era. Blue-and-green landscape paintings later became a key genre in traditional Chinese art.

Naturally, cyan, reminding visitors of the Six Dynasties period, can easily resonate with modern urban dwellers who also look for inner peace amid their fast-paced life, Zhang Lei points out.

Tan from Art Exhibitions China sees the exhibition as a chance to explore an alternative combining resources of middle- and small-sized museums.

"Compared with those large museums, many such smaller venues are less noticed, but they are deeply rooted in local cultures and closer to people's daily life," he says.

"Presentations of their collections in thematic design can thus provide better cultural service."

According to Song Yan, deputy director of the Nanjing Museum Administration, about 60 percent of visitors to the Oriental Metropolitan Museum are aged between 10 and 35.

"That means, as operators of modern museums, we have to approach history in a fresh and comfortable way," says Song, also a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress.

"After a few years of experiencing the booming scenario of Chinese museums, today's visitors have well-nurtured taste. They will not be satisfied with just checking out a new museum and seeing treasures. They seek a deeper understanding through immersive experiences to feel the cultural ethos of the past times."

"This process is essential for art education for the public," she says. "In this way, people can also fall in love with history and breed closer emotional ties with the city they live in."

Song has long promoted her idea of ushering museums into people's regular lifestyles by building a "museum without boundaries".

In the Oriental Metropolitan Museum, people pass through bamboo groves in the galleries. They also stop in front of the huge French window on the third floor to appreciate the soothing summertime scene: The verdant city skyline of Nanjing spreads toward the horizon. Boundaries of time and space seem to blur at that moment.

By the exit of the cyan-themed exhibition, a wall is full of comments left by visitors. Many of them cite famous poems on color throughout history, but some people write their own.

"Mystic shade of cyan, elusive yet alluring," a visitor writes. "It's refreshing, and makes me approach."

Probably, for the exhibition curators admiring the color of life, this "growing" wall is the fruit they harvest.

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Left: A visitor in traditional costume poses elegantly in front of porcelain at the exhibition. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Top right: A jade *bi*, a disc-shaped ceremonial artifact from the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24). Above right: An ornate necklace with a jade pendant and turquoise beads from the Western Zhou Dynasty (c.11th century-771 BC). PHOTOS BY WANG KAIHAO / CHINA DAILY



## LIFE

# Yuju Opera production set for Avignon Festival stage

Three works to be presented at event will highlight discipline and grace of format to international audiences, **Cheng Yuezhu** reports.



**Clockwise from left:** Wu Suzhen plays the role of a young woman in love in the Yuju Opera production *Shi Yuzhuo* (Picking up the Jade Bracelet). In *Yuzhou Feng* (The Cosmic Sword), Wu plays a woman feigning madness. Wu is a veteran Yuju Opera performer who won the Plum Performance Award in 2019. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

As an award-winning performer of Yuju Opera, a style of traditional Chinese opera prevalent in Henan province, Wu Suzhen specializes in the role of *qingyi* — dignified female characters who often exude elegance and maturity.

In the classic production *Yuzhou Feng* (The Cosmic Sword), however, she departs from her usual graceful demeanor, as the story depicts a woman in ancient times who feigns madness to avoid being taken as a concubine by the emperor.

It takes a great deal of nuance to portray this character, apart from exaggerated gestures and farcical lines, according to Wu. In one scene where the protagonist turns her head three times, she needs to convey different expressions and emotions with each turn — from signs of derangement, to genuine grief and indignation.

This is among the creative designs of Yuju Opera master Chen Suzhen (1918-1994), who made innovations and developed an artistic style known for its elegance, authenticity and subtlety, named as the Chen School of Yuju Opera.

Now an inheritor of the Chen School, Wu Suzhen, who in 2019 won the Plum Performance Award, China's top honor for traditional Chinese theatrical art, is soon to bring her Suzhen Theater, based in Kaifeng, Henan province, to this year's Avignon Festival in France.

*Yuzhou Feng* is one of three Yuju Opera productions to be staged at the festival, along with *Shi Yuzhuo* (Picking up the Jade Bracelet), and *Fanwang Gong* (Palace of Brahma). "These are all classic Chen School

productions. *Yuzhou Feng* was the first piece I learned after joining the Chen School, and until this day, I still feel that it is so difficult to perform," she says.

"I prefer characters with distinctive personalities. The characters in these three plays are very different from each other, yet all three productions highlight expressive movements, which make them fitting choices to present to international audiences."

This year, the festival runs from June 29 to July 21. Suzhen Theater will perform from July 3 until the end of the festival, presenting 38 stage and outdoor performances.

As 2024 marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and France, as well as the China-France Year of Culture and Tourism, Suzhen Theater's performance series has been included in the cultural exchange events taking place throughout the year in the two countries.

"These performances are very meaningful in that they center on Yuju Opera, a specific style of traditional Chinese opera, and almost span the entirety of the Avignon Festival," says Wang Lu, general manager of the China Performing Arts Agency, a co-organizer of the performances.

"Every July, theater lovers from around the world gather at the festival, which means that these Yuju productions will face international audiences daily, enhancing their influence and reach."

Last year, as a field trip to research the venues and to gauge the French audience's response, Suzhen Theater performed a Yuju Opera excerpt as an opening act in Avignon.



Wu and her Suzhen Theater are taking three Yuju Opera productions, including *Fanwang Gong* (The Palace of Brahma), to this year's Avignon Festival in France.

As Wu recalls, despite the cultural and language barriers, they were met with warm applause and positive feedback. After the performance, audience members came up to them, complimenting them on the makeup and costumes, and pointing out details of her performance, such as the way her eyes shifted in different directions, which boosted the troupe members' confidence in staging full productions in France.

"When it comes to a foreign art form, audiences may not be familiar with the format or the language, but they'll appreciate its beauty and be willing to attend the performances," Wu says.

"We'll be sure to refine the performances and present more polished shows to the audiences of the Avignon Festival."

Despite the long distance, the troupe members plan to transport all of their original props and set pieces to France. The chairs, for example, cannot be easily replaced, because those used in Yuju Opera are meticulously designed so that the sitting postures of different characters can reflect their personalities.

"We don't want to compromise when it comes to the stage sets. We must bring the authentic props and present the same effect as on the domestic stage," Wu says.

"These works are the lifelong legacy of traditional Chinese opera masters. They have been performed

onstage and refined over and over again. This allows them to be recognized by the audiences. We'll try our best to convey the charm of traditional Chinese opera to international audiences."

Born in 1977 in Zhumadian, Henan province, Wu grew fond of Yuju Opera during her childhood while watching performances with her grandmother. At the age of 12, she joined a local troupe, where she learned and performed a wide range of roles.

Having established herself as a seasoned performer, she enrolled in the National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts in 2009, when the academy first introduced its Yuju Opera bachelor's program. There, she studied under the guidance of Yuju Opera artist Niu Shuxian, a student of Chen Suzhen, and was later recognized by Niu as an inheritor of the Chen School.

"I consider myself a very diligent person. Whether performing for a small audience or in an outdoor performance in rural areas, I have developed the habit of taking each performance very seriously. Although it can be tiring performing the same piece over and over again, it is essential to present a fresh perspective for the audience."

During the troupe's visit to France, Wu will share her Yuju Opera expertise through two lectures. The first will be hosted on June 30 at the China Cultural Center in Paris and the second will take place during the festival. In these sessions, she will introduce Yuju Opera makeup, costumes and acting techniques by combining lecture with live demonstrations.

"In my initial vision, I'll be seated onstage before the lectures begin, with my makeup on. As the audience members arrive, I'll attach hair extensions, put on the headpieces, and finally don the costumes piece by piece," Wu says.

This way, the audience will have the chance to witness the elaborate preparations of Chinese opera performers before each performance. Along with support from other troupe members, Wu will introduce and demonstrate the four fundamental skills of Chinese opera — singing, speaking, acting and martial arts.

The lectures will also incorporate interactive elements and Q&A sessions, allowing the audience members to ask questions or join her on stage to learn the movements.

"One of the great charms of traditional Chinese opera is that it requires performers with in-depth and comprehensive skills. Yuju Opera in particular, has been passed down through time and continues to evolve, which allows it to enjoy a wide, dedicated audience today," Wang says.

"As a representative of the Chen School, Wu is an admirable artist dedicated to perfecting her craft, and who is firmly committed to preserving and passing down the art form. With the upcoming performances, she is bringing Chinese culture onto an international stage."

"Hopefully, the audiences will develop an interest in traditional Chinese opera and want to explore it further."

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## Romeo and Juliet imprisoned by love

Matthew Bourne's *Romeo and Juliet*, a radical modern reinterpretation of the classical love tragedy, is touring China starting with six performances at Shanghai Culture Square from Wednesday to Sunday.

The dance drama will go on to perform in Beijing from Thursday to Sunday, Guangzhou in Guangdong province from July 5 to 7, and Macao Special Administrative Region from July 11 to 13.

Bourne is the UK's most popular and successful choreographer and director. Best known for his creation of *Swan Lake*, the world's longest-running ballet production, he is a record-breaking nine-time Olivier Award winner, and the only British director to have won the Tony Award for both best choreographer and best director of a musical.

It has been five years since the British choreographer's creation was presented in China. His *Swan Lake*, featuring a menacing male ensemble instead of the female *corps de ballet*, made its China debut at Shanghai Culture Square in 2014. In 2016 and 2018, respectively his *Sleeping Beauty* and *Cinderella* performances were shown in Shanghai, and in 2019, Shanghai Culture Square saw the return of *Swan Lake*.

"Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake* amazed audiences in Shanghai and



Matthew Bourne's *Romeo and Juliet* takes Shakespeare's timeless tragedy to a prison-like institute in the near future and adopts a creative interpretation of the story. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

since then, we have seen the creative model continue in more of his dance theater productions: the traditional tale subverted, classical music retained, contemporary aesthetics and psychological value highlighted," says Fei Yuanhong, deputy general manager of Shanghai Culture Square. "He has injected a new impetus and perspective into the dance world."

His version of *Romeo and Juliet* gives Shakespeare's timeless story of

forbidden love an injection of raw passion and youthful vitality. A skillful retelling of teenage discovery and the madness of first love, the production won critical acclaim when it premiered in 2019.

*Romeo and Juliet*, presented by his New Adventures company, takes Shakespeare's timeless tragedy to a prison-like institute in the near future and adopts a free interpretation of the story, changing the feud between two families into conflicts



between the guards and young inmates of the Verona Institute. It focuses on youthful love, and serious and relevant contemporary themes such as violence and consequences.

Bourne created the dance drama using the original music of former Soviet composer Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953). Bourne says that the music was his "greatest asset."

"To me, it sounds like a modern movie score. It is full of intense feel-

### IF YOU GO

Matthew Bourne's *Romeo and Juliet*  
7:30 pm, June 12-15; 2 pm, June 15-16  
Shanghai Culture Square, 597 Fuxing Road Middle, Huangpu district, Shanghai. 021-5461-9961.  
7:30 pm, June 20-23; 2:30 pm, June 22-23  
Beijing Tianqiao Performing Art Center, Building No 9, Tianqiao Nan Dajie, Xicheng district, Beijing. 400-635-3355.  
7:30 pm July 5-7; 2:30 pm, July 6-7  
Guangzhou Opera House, No 1 Zhujiang Road West, Tianhe district, Guangzhou, Guangdong province. 020-3839-2888.  
8 pm, July 11-12; 3 pm, July 13  
Macao Cultural Center, 733-J Yu Yi Da Ma Lu, Macao Peninsula, Tel: 853-2870-0699

ing and yearning, a gift to a storyteller but not necessarily the story it was written for. The music is so rich, if you listen again and again you can find new stories and emotions with-

in it," the choreographer tells Chinese media via written notes.

Bourne had the original score recomposed and used various instruments to different parts, says Monique Jonas, who plays Juliet in the show, before the premiere in Shanghai on Wednesday.

"It's been twisted around just like the story has. So that kind of detail, as well as the attention to details in the creation of this show, is just highlighting its brilliance," Jonas says.

Storytelling is of great importance in all of Bourne's dance dramas. He chooses stories that "people need no prior knowledge of to follow", and adds to his modern interpretation of the familiar story with a touch of British wit and humor.

"And I cast dancers who look like real people who the audience can identify with. I think that helps too," Bourne says.

"I think Matthew is really great at finding performers that have the ability to act and dance so beautifully together," says Alan Vincent, resident director of *Romeo and Juliet*.

In the creative process, the cast starts with a lot of exercises in finding the characters and playing around with different scenes and ideas and how they can be made into a dance, he explains.

"And then it just sort of develops over time ... with all the shows we do, I feel like they grow and get bigger and the storytelling gets clearer."

# LIFE



Hong Kong actor Wong Cho-lam performs at the closing ceremony of the China (Shenyang) Comedy Film Week.



Comedian Gong Hanlin (left) and his wife comedian Jin Zhu (center) at the closing ceremony.



Ambassadors for this year's comedy film week Zhu Shimao (center) and Jia Bing (right).

People in Northeast China are noted for their sense of humor. The region's famous fertile black soil, some claim, helps shape their outgoing nature. These traits, along with hard work and humor, are perfectly suited to the film sector. It's no coincidence that more than a century ago, Ren Qingtai from Shenyang, Liaoning province, incorporated comedic elements into China's first domestic film *Dingjun Mountain*. On Jan 22, 1949, China's first comedic animated film *Go After an Easy Prey*, premiered at the Hongda Cinema in Shenyang, now the Shenyang Cultural Palace theater.

Shenyang, the capital city of Liaoning, has a long and deep connection with comedy films and its "Northeast Style" has become an essential part of Chinese comedy. In recent years, popular comedic films and TV shows such as *You Only Live Once*, *The Last Frenzy* and *Johnny Keep Walking* have featured talents from Northeast China.

Early this summer, the city of Shenyang played host to a major comedy event. The inaugural China (Shenyang) Comedy Film Week, a five-day celebration of humor and film, concluded on the evening of June 11, drawing significant attention to the Northeast region.

With the theme "Comedy Gathers in Shenyang, Joy Blooms", the event ran from June 7-11, showcasing the region's vibrant comedic culture.

"By using comedy films as a medium, we've invited renowned comedy stars and showcased high-scoring classics to bring joy to Shenyang and celebrate this festive event," says Deng Song, deputy director of the Publicity Department of the CPC Shenyang Municipal Committee.

"We aim to highlight the beauty, rich culture and development of the Liaoning-Shenyang region to both domestic and international audiences, bolstering our efforts to create a 'high-quality model' for the integrated development of culture, sports and tourism," she says.

During the event, eight cinemas in Shenyang screened 15 classic comedy films, including *Johnny Keep Walking*, *If You Are the One* and *Goodbye Mr. Loser*.

Lin Zhenyu, the chief director of the opening and closing ceremonies of the event, says these 15 films were carefully selected, featuring early realistic comedies, Golden Rooster Award winners, and recent hits with great reviews and box office success.

"We hope this event showcases the achievements and contributions of comedy since the founding of New China," Lin says.

In addition to movie screenings, the Comedy Film Week offered a wide range of activities. Filmmakers visited various cultural and tourist landmarks in the city, interacting closely with fans. They explored pla-

## Tradition of humor is no laughing matter

Comedy film week shows the hard work and creativity that goes into making a mark, **Li Yingxue** and **Wu Yong** report in Shenyang.



Comedian Pan Changjiang (center) performs during the inaugural China (Shenyang) Comedy Film Week. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ces like the Shenyang Imperial Palace, Zhongjie Street and the Xita food street.

Organizers also hosted five major events for the public, including "Coffee Youth Movie Time", the classic comedy music game "Guess Guess Guess", a showcase of domestic animated comedy films, visits to film locations of comedy movies, and a display of comedy film dubbing.

On the evening of June 11, the film week concluded with a grand event themed "Blending Tradition with Innovation, Combining Joy with Sentiment". The star-studded celebration featured renowned comedy stars, performing artists, directors, and actors delivering outstanding performances.

As the closing film of the event, this year's top-grossing May Day hit *The Last Frenzy* had its creators in attendance. Jia Bing, the lead actor and a native of Shenyang, says that the film's success is thanks to the support of hometown fans. "We'll keep making comedies to bring joy to everyone."

Jia and veteran actor Zhu Shimao



Veteran artist Tao Yuling (right, front) onstage during a song and dance show as scenes from old movies play in the background.

served as ambassadors for the festival. Jia adds, "I'm still learning and look up to veteran Zhu Shimao to refine my acting skills and find more comedy inspiration."

The event began with song and dance performances, which repeatedly brought the audience to their feet.

Lin explains that the opening and closing ceremonies used the concept of sunflowers in their stage design. "We wanted to show that

from this region have consistently pursued their craft, raising Chinese comedy to new heights. Shenyang has a rich tradition and spirit, making it a natural choice to host the inaugural comedy film week," says Lin.

He also describes Shenyang as a joyful city. "In Shenyang's airports, taxis and restaurants, you always hear humorous conversations. The people of Shenyang have humor and a comedic spirit deeply ingrained in them."

Zhang Pimin, chairman of the China Film Foundation, attended the China (Shenyang) Comedy Film Week and noted the city's significant transformation in recent years.

"A few days ago, I did a livestream by the Hunhe River. I walked through a park and saw people exercising, families dining together, and friends gathering — all very joyful scenes. This atmosphere really aligns with the essence of comedy," Zhang says.

He highlights the rich comedic heritage of the Liaoning-Shenyang region, which has produced many talents. Recently, comedy actors

and creators from the area, such as Jia and Dong Chengpeng, aka Da Peng, have gained prominence.

"Hosting the comedy film week in Shenyang allows residents to learn more about comedy films and connect with actors and creators. It brings comedy into daily life and enriches the cultural experience," Zhang says.

He adds, "This event also draws national attention, promoting a better understanding of Shenyang and Northeast China. I hope Shenyang can leverage the comedy film week to focus on talent cultivation, discovery and creative work in the future."

Jiang Defu, CEO of Bona Film Group, believes the rapid growth of the film industry is closely tied to public support. Currently, comedy and action films are the most popular genres in China.

Jiang highlights that China's first interprovincial cinema chain originated in Shenyang. In 2001, Shenyang led the way in cinema system reforms, and today, dozens of cinema chains have been established nationwide, putting Shenyang at the forefront of this development.

"I believe the inaugural China Comedy Film Week in Shenyang will boost local and regional interest in Chinese cinema," Jiang says.

He hopes future editions of the film week will include training programs to cultivate more talent, making Shenyang not only the event's host city but also a hub for comedy talent.

"Shenyang is a city rich in potential. Beyond hosting a film week, it should offer extensive training for comedy films, including programs for directors, screenwriters and other film professionals. This would greatly benefit the comedy film industry," Jiang says.

Jiang Yaoyao, associate professor at Liaoning University's College of Communication, says, "The increasing popularity of northeastern comedy largely stems from its rich cultural heritage."

These traits are often showcased in northeastern comedy films. Jiang Yaoyao believes that northeasterners naturally possess an optimistic spirit and a talent for using humor to navigate life's challenges. Additionally, their sociable nature makes it easier for them to find comedic inspiration in everyday interactions, she says.

Huangfu Yichuan, a researcher at the China Film Art Research Center, sees Northeast China as a thriving hub for comedy, producing numerous influential talents and great works.

"I hope and eagerly anticipate that the comedy film week will not only become a well-known brand in China but also expand internationally as a major comedy film event," he says.

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## Shedding light on the perfect sunset as ancient expertise comes into view

With summer now upon us, the longer days and clearer skies signal the coming of more and more eye-catching sunsets.



Michael Rhys Card  
Second Thoughts

not the only one.

This fascination with the perfect sunset, or simply the sun in general, is not just a modern trend.

Ancient cultures and religions across the globe have long paid reverence to that mysterious, fiery orb in the sky, with particular attention given to the setting of the sun at certain times of year, with the summer and winter solstices held in the highest regard. It was not uncommon for ancient cultures to erect vast buildings or monuments to recognize the sun's importance, with locations around the world, such as Stonehenge in England, Machu Picchu in Peru, and the Temple of Karnak in Egypt, all being built with a deference to the sun in mind.

This principle is one that also holds weight here in Beijing. The precision design and construction of the capital, which began in the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) and was further developed in the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911)

dynasties, is a perfect example of ancient Chinese urban planning. At the heart of this metropolitan marvel is the city's Central Axis, a highlight of Beijing's well-preserved history, that cuts through the city's most famous landmarks including Tian'anmen Square, the Forbidden City, Jingshan Park, and the Bell and Drum towers. But more than just an example of excellent city planning, a number of the capital's streets and buildings also tie into the movement of the sun at certain times of year.

These locations were built with regard to annual solar movements, for example Qianqing Palace (The Palace of Heavenly Purity), the Seventeen-Arch Bridge in the Summer Palace, which is illuminated during the winter solstice, and the Temple of Heaven, with the sun setting per-



The sun sets behind the Temple of Heaven.  
MICHAEL RHYSCARD / CHINA DAILY

fectly behind Qiniandian, the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests.

Yet, aside from these landmarks, wandering around the city's hutong

can bring its own sun-based rewards due to the north-south, east-west street planning, making the whole city ideal for catching a

sunset. And it's due to this meticulous planning that such stunning views have followed through to modern times, with buildings such as the CCTV headquarters in Guomao, whether by luck or design, letting the sun pass through its legs during the solstice.

We now live in a time when there are countless apps available that can predict the light, cloud cover and even the angle and position of any given sunset, and social media that showcases the most beautiful and popular places to get that ideal selfie. But there is something to be said for just getting out into the city, exploring its streets and hoping for the best.

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