

Artistic exchange

Ren Ming has long built art ties between China and the US

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Promising fencers in Kenyan slum poised for positive effects

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# CHINA DAILY

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## Xi emphasizes ecological conservation

On visit to Qinghai, president calls for promotion of ethnic unity, prosperity

By XU WEI  
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President Xi Jinping has reiterated the nation's strong emphasis on the ecological conservation and high-quality development of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, while calling for Qinghai province to better promote ethnic unity and common prosperity.

In remarks made during a two-day fact-finding trip to the province, which started on Tuesday, Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, set out wide-ranging requirements on deepening reform, expanding opening-up and pursuing green development.

Xi's visit to Qinghai, his first tour of the province in three years, took him to a middle school and a Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Xining, the provincial capital, on Tuesday.

The president had previously visited the province in 2016 and 2021, underscoring protection of the province's ecology and environment as a major issue for the nation, along with the region's increasingly prominent role in environmental, national, resource and energy security.

He listened to work reports from provincial authorities on Wednesday, during which he highlighted the nation's strategic priorities for the resource-rich and ethnically diverse area.

The plateau is home to the Sanjiangyuan area, known as China's "water tower". It is the source of Asia's three longest rivers — the Yangtze, the Yellow and the Lancang, and the location of the Three-River-Source National Park, the nation's first national park.

Emphasizing the rich diversity



President Xi Jinping interacts with students at a middle school in Xining, the capital of Northwest China's Qinghai province, on Tuesday. Xi was on an inspection tour in Qinghai on Tuesday and Wednesday, during which he also visited a Tibetan Buddhist temple. XIE HUANCHI / XINHUA

and fragility of the plateau's ecosystems, he urged stronger steps for ecological and environmental protection. He stressed the need to rigorously implement the law on ecological protection of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau to enable the "roof of the world" to lead in national efforts to build an ecological civilization.

The top priority, Xi said, is to ensure the sound preservation of the Sanjiangyuan area, adding that the region's biodiversity must be protected and its capacity for water conservation must be enhanced.

He also called for steps to strengthen the construction of a natural conservation system centered on national parks, creating

exemplary nature reserves with national and global significance.

The region must advance energy-saving and carbon-reduction initiatives in key sectors, develop eco-friendly industries, and accelerate the establishment of a new energy system, he added.

According to official statistics, Qinghai's installed capacity for clean energy, including hydropower and solar energy, reached 51.08 million kilowatts by the end of 2023, accounting for 93 percent of its overall energy structure, ranking first nationwide in this respect.

Xi told the province's top officials that Qinghai bears a significant responsibility for maintaining Chi-

na's ecological security, and the development of its industries must focus on cultivating a modern industrial system reflecting its local characteristics and strengths.

Key steps include accelerating the construction of a world-class salt-lake industrial base, developing a national clean energy industry hub, building an international ecotourism destination and beefing up its role as a supplier of green organic agricultural and livestock products.

The president also called for concrete steps to guarantee and improve public well-being, saying that actions must be prioritized to align with the public's needs, benefit the populace and warm people's hearts.

Qinghai, as an ethnically very diverse province, must continue to focus on forging a strong sense of community of the Chinese nation and encourage comprehensive integration and broad interaction among all ethnic groups, he added.

Xi also highlighted ethnic unity during his inspection of Northwest China's Ningxia Hui autonomous region on Wednesday.

Visiting a multiethnic residential community in Yinchuan, Xi was pleased to see the residents living harmoniously and happily together. "The 56 ethnic groups unite together to forge the community of the Chinese nation. The Chinese nation is a big family," he said.

## China set to enhance global AI cooperation

By OUYANG SHIJIA  
and YANG CHENG in Tianjin  
and WANG QINGYUN in Beijing

China stands ready to work with other countries to promote the healthy development of artificial intelligence, facilitate global growth and help improve the well-being of people from all countries, President Xi Jinping said on Thursday.

Xi made the remarks in a congratulatory message sent to the World Intelligence Expo 2024, which opened on the same day in Tianjin with the theme of "Intelligence: Extensive Development Space, Sustainable Growth Driver".

Xi said that AI is an important driving force for the new round of scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation, and will have a profound impact on global economic and social development and the progress of human civilization. China attaches great importance to the development of AI, and has actively promoted the in-depth integration of the internet, big data, AI and the real economy, he said.

The country has also worked to cultivate a stronger intelligent sector and grow new quality productive forces at a faster pace to provide new momentum for its high-quality development, Xi said.

China hopes to work with all other countries to seize the opportunities brought by digitalization, networking and smart technologies, and deepen international cooperation on AI development and governance, Xi said.

Chen Min'er, secretary of the Communist Party of China Tianjin Municipal Committee, attended the opening ceremony of the expo and read out the congratulatory message. He emphasized the importance of promoting the development of AI industries, saying that Tianjin will make more efforts to accelerate the integration of AI with other emerging fields and promote the development of digital industrialization and industrial digitalization.

Liu Liehong, head of the National Data Administration, said that AI has become a new growth engine for Tianjin to accelerate the formation of new quality productive forces, as the revenue of the city's AI-related industries exceeded 300 billion yuan (\$41.32 billion) in 2023.

"AI has become a strategic emerging industry leading the science and technology revolution and industrial transformation with (positive) spillover effects that drive development, playing a pivotal role in the advancement of the smart industry," he said. "We need to accelerate the construction of a nationwide integrated computing power system."

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## SCO serves as model for fairer intl coordination

Over the past 23 years, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has evolved from a regional project focused on solving border issues to a multifaceted international organization. It effectively addresses diverse security threats, promotes stability and fosters cooperation among member states to ensure peace and security in the Eurasian region.

The SCO's continuous expansion — Iran joined the group last year and Belarus is completing its accession this year — has extended its regional boundaries, making it a truly international entity.

This year, Kazakhstan holds the SCO chairmanship. As one of the founding countries, it has consistently supported the "Shanghai Spirit" and emphasized the SCO's growing influence and status since the group's inception on June 15, 2001.

Kazakhstan's practical approach focuses on enhancing mutually beneficial trade as well as economic and technological cooperation. Since assuming the SCO chairmanship in July last year, it has conducted over 90 events and meetings, including energy, digital and tourism forums. More than 30 documents have also been developed in various cooperation fields.

Adhering to the principle of "hot economy, cold politics", Kazakhstan has proposed major initiatives such



as the creation of an SCO investment fund and an economic preferences database.

Security remains a strong area of the SCO. Amid global geopolitical upheavals, where old rules no longer apply and new ones have yet to be established, the world finds itself in a state of distrust and dysfunction, with a "war of all against all" mentality. In this context, the SCO and its main security body — the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure, or RATS — play an increasingly important role. This year, the RATS council approved a counter-terrorism program for 2025-27.

For many years, SCO countries have successfully worked in the security sector, robustly countering the three evils of terrorism, extremism and separatism. Last fall, Kyrgyzstan hosted the first-ever joint anti-terrorist exercises between the SCO and the Commonwealth of Independent States, with representatives from 11 countries participating, including Armenia, Belarus, China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

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## SHANDONG SEES MAJOR BENEFITS FROM INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE LAW

NPC inspection tour finds traditions strengthened, but legal revisions may be needed

By CAO YIN in Heze, Shandong  
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Enjoying and learning about numerous intangible cultural heritage items, including wood carving, opera and dough sculpture, in just one venue exceeded national lawmaker Liu Lil's expectations.

"Many other venues only focus on one kind of traditional cultural heritage. But to my surprise, in this building I found almost all local living heritages. I could also

talk with inheritors and experience being a craftswoman doing paper-cutting or carving on porcelain," said Liu, a deputy to the National People's Congress, China's top legislature.

She shared her experiences with China Daily while visiting the Intangible Cultural Heritage Exhibition Hall in Heze,

Shandong province, last month.

From May 8 to 12, a team led by the NPC Standing Committee toured Shandong to evaluate the effectiveness of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Law. The team visited spots including workshops, museums, cultural centers and libraries, and also exchanged ideas with local heritage inheritors to understand how they are preserving and developing their skills.

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## Storm poses challenges

Civic employees work to drain water from a flooded overpass in Monterrey, Mexico, on Wednesday, as Tropical Storm Alberto triggered heavy rainfall in the country, where three deaths were reported, and in the US state of Texas. Alberto, which made landfall in northeastern Mexico early on Thursday, is the first named storm of what is forecast to be a busy hurricane season.

DANIEL BECERRIL / REUTERS

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# Heritage: Ensuring cultural continuity

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Liu, a Shandong performer of Lituqin opera, one of the country's intangible cultural heritage items, was one of the team members.

She gave a thumbs-up to the innovative measures taken in her home province to protect living heritage items, but expressed concern about the way some of them are passed on and spread.

"Problems such as some inheritors aging, and the single transmission method of traditional cultures are urgent issues that need to be solved," she said, suggesting the top legislature revise the law at an appropriate time to consolidate government duties, so that living heritage items can be strongly protected and effectively passed on.

### Optimized framework

Since the law, a major legislative measure in the cultural field, came into effect in June 2011, every municipality, province and autonomous region has issued relevant regulations and guidelines to enrich the legal system in this regard. Shandong is no exception.

While requiring local government agencies to seek out and promote intangible cultural heritage through more research and establishing special venues, the documents formulated by Shandong also clarified the use of funds and subsidies to protect and preserve various cultural aspects.

Shandong has 186 living heritage items at the national level, and 1,073 at the provincial level, according to data provided by the provincial government.

Inspired by his grandfather Li Fangqing, the pioneer of Caozhou dough figurines, Li Bin for decades has dedicated himself to promoting and teaching the sculpting skills required. The figurines are a specialty of Heze and a national intangible cultural heritage item.

"Carrying on my ancestors' artistic pursuits and skills is my mission, and also my legal obligation," said the 36-year-old.

Under the law and provincial regulations, inheritors are required to pass on their skills, cultivate successors, and participate in activities to introduce intangible cultural heritage items. Culture departments at and above county level, should provide the necessary venues or funding to assist inheritors in preserving and educating the public about these heritage items.

Thanks to the initiatives, more places for showcasing intangible cultural heritage items have been emerging in Shandong. For instance, a museum to help visitors learn about peach culture and peach-wood carving was established in Feicheng county. It attracted more than 3 million visits last year.

On Baihuazhou street in Jinan, capital of Shandong, there is a traditional craft workshop, where people can enjoy 21 living heritage items, including weaving, embroidery, pottery and sculpture when they walk in the bustling downtown area.

### Innovative patterns

Facilitated by the law, new methods to utilize intangible cultural heritage items have also expanded across Shandong to more effectively pass on traditional skills.

According to Wang Lei, head of the provincial culture and tourism bureau, many living heritages are now being better utilized and developed in local industries, educational research and tourism.

"Utilization has also played a bigger role in advancing our local economic growth and rural revitalization," she said.

Cai Xiufang, an inheritor of wood carving, is introducing innovations to the traditional craft.

In the 1990s, she married and moved to Lizhuang village in Caoxian county, Heze. To increase her family's income, she began combining her carving skills with local traditional woodworking. She created many furniture pieces such as square tables, wardrobes and tea tables adorned with carved flowers and birds, which attracted buyers.

Due to the time-consuming and labor-intensive nature of hand-carving, Cai found it too hard to



Top: Yang Hong, an inheritor of Ningyang puppet show, demonstrates a puppet in Ningyang county, Shandong province, in April. Above: Actors perform *baishoutu*, a folk dance with an animal theme, in Tai'an, Shandong province.

PHOTOS BY LIU SHUI AND XIE JIUJIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Actors from the Shandong Bangzi Opera Troupe perform a wooden clapper opera during a temple fair in April in Tai'an.



An inheritor works at the Nie family bronze casting workshop in Feicheng, Shandong province, in April.



Inheritor Zhang Keqing demonstrates his silver ornament works in Tai'an in April.



Inheritor Fan Zheng'an performs an opera with shadow puppets in April in Tai'an. The performance is unique as Fan acts alone and manipulates puppets he has made himself.

handle the soaring number of orders on her own. Therefore, she started recruiting villagers to join her team of carvers.

With more workers, Cai opened her own company, which paved the way for her to develop the wood-carving industry.

So far, the number of artisans trained by Cai has exceeded 300, and her company's woodcarving works are not only popular in China, but also exported to foreign countries.

Data provided by Cai showed that the online sales revenue of the corporation surpassed 6 million yuan (\$828,084) in 2022.

"The carving skills have enriched me, and have also helped me live a better life," said Li Yan, a villager who was Cai's apprentice and now works for the company.

Now, there are over 1.2 million enterprises or operators engaged in intangible cultural heritage in Shandong, with annual output value exceeding 160 billion yuan, providing employment opportunities for more than 4 million people, according to Wang, from the culture and tourism bureau.

In addition to leveraging living heritage to drive local economic development, she said Shandong has also designated 100 provincial-level intangible cultural heritage education bases for research and to promote study tours.

Huayang Nianhua, a living heritage campsite in Tai'an, has been open to the public since October.

"We've provided classes for visitors, especially students, to learn about the histories behind our local intangible cultural heritage items, such as paper cutting, and making pancakes and tofu," said Liu Bing, who is in charge of the base.

"We've also invited inheritors to share their stories here to spark the younger generation's interest and help promote cultural education," Liu said.

The campsite has a 14,000-square-meter learning experience center, an 8,000-sq-m accommodation area and a 6,000-sq-m restaurant and practical base, which cater to 2,000 people for short-term study and research. Since its opening, it has had 15,000 visits and organized more than 30 special activities for participants, he added.

Deng Yunfeng, vice-governor of Shandong, lauded the methods used to develop living heritage items in recent years, and called for more social organizations to support the building of venues or workshops as well as development diversity.

### Effective inheritance

Carrying tools and colorful dough, Li, the inheritor of dough sculpture, usually shuttles between campuses in Heze, to teach students kneading, rolling, pinching and sculpting skills.



A gourd carving made by the Yang family in Tai'an.

He shapes the dough into blooming flowers, historical figures and cartoon characters, captivating the children and sparking their eagerness to learn.

"The sculpting experience is a big joy for young people, and the process also plants the seeds of traditional cultures in their hearts," said Li, who likes to be innovative and imaginative with his dough sculptures.

"Innovation is more conducive to attracting youngsters, so that our living heritage can be effectively passed on," he explained.

The Heze intangible cultural heritage exhibition hall is one of venues where Li teaches. In the building, which is located in a science and technology park, students can learn over 10 traditional skills.

"We provide special workshops for inheritors like Li to display their works and skills in the park. We also invite them to educate students on their talents through courses and lectures," said An Yuan, an executive director of the park's committee.

In her view, the key to protecting and developing intangible cultural heritage is inheritance, and the root of this inheritance is people.

"Allowing inheritors to enter the park to teach and share the value of living heritage items is the foundation of inheritance. Without their storytelling, the traditional cultures and skills may not be passed on," she said. "At the same time, for students it's important to deeply understand the value behind the skills or crafts. Only by developing and innovating on this basis can intangible cultural heritage items truly be continued," she added.

Liu, the NPC deputy, also stressed the importance and urgency of passing on living heritage items during the recent law enforcement inspection tour.

She called for government departments to take more effective measures to enhance talent cultivation.

"We have living heritage items that focus on craftsmanship and can bring economic benefits through industrialization, such as clay sculpture and straw-weaving. We also have traditional operas and martial arts that may not be industrialized and yield immediate results," she said.

"This means that we must provide different approaches or pathways to educate talent and strengthen the heritage protection, so as to ensure the effectiveness of inheritance," she added, suggesting the top legislature specify relevant provisions as soon as possible.

## Tour guide's curiosity revives taste for tofu banquets

By CAO YIN in Tai'an, Shandong

Over 20 years ago, Wang Xiaogang won a tour guide competition in Shandong province's Tai'an city, where the famous Mount Tai is located. Today, he is an inheritor of the tofu banquet, one of the national intangible cultural heritage items.

Speaking of the change in his life, the 44-year-old said that it stemmed from a question he was frequently asked by tourists when he was a tour guide in the early 2000s: "What delicious food does Tai'an have?"

At that time, he instinctively responded with a local saying: "Tai'an has three delicacies — cabbage, tofu, and water."

But when tourists further inquired as to the reason, he found himself unable to provide an explanation.

"The lack of knowledge made me feel embarrassed, and also sparked my curiosity about traditions or cultures behind the old saying," Wang said.

Therefore, he delved into historical materials and visited chefs in Tai'an to better understand the ingredient, which he had been consuming since childhood.

Tofu sounds like *doufu* in Chinese, which is the word for "blessing," and symbolizes hope, happiness and luck, he said.

Historical records show that the tradition of the Tai'an tofu banquet dates back to the Han Dynasty (206BC-AD220), flourished during the Song Dynasty (960-1279), and reached its peak in the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties.

During imperial worship ceremonies held on Mount Tai, ancient emperors were required to eat plain food, making tofu an indispensable dish at that time, according to Wang.

After dedicating years to studying the food and its history, Wang selected nine dishes for a tofu banquet, and opened a museum in 2015 to feature them and introduce the culture behind them.

At the museum, visitors are educated via archived photos and written documents while enjoying the banquet. They can also experience the tofu-making process.

Since its establishment, the museum has attracted numerous domestic and overseas tourists as well as study groups, with peak annual attendance exceeding 500,000 visitors, Wang said.

In June 2021, the tofu banquet was listed as a national intangible cultural heritage item. That year, Wang began exploring a path to integrate it into rural revitalization and tourism development after visiting Dayuzhuang village, where many households use traditional skills to produce tofu and soy goods.

The village has become a preferred destination for weekend outings for visitors from Tai'an and surrounding areas.

In Wang's view, this approach is worth expanding nationwide for villagers to generate income by developing living heritages.



A chef cooks a traditional feast of 28 dishes in Tai'an.

## TOP NEWS

# China, Malaysia strive for closer bilateral bonds

Joint declaration set to elevate comprehensive strategic partnership between two countries

By WANG QINGYUN  
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China and Malaysia pledged on Thursday to enhance political mutual trust, step up alignment of development strategies and bolster people-to-people exchanges, with the two countries set to extend reciprocal visa-free policies for visitors.

The two sides issued a joint declaration in Kuala Lumpur on Thursday, the final day of Premier Li Qiang's three-day official visit to the Southeast Asian country, on deepening and elevating their comprehensive strategic partnership and jointly building a China-Malaysia community with a shared future.

According to the declaration, China has agreed to extend its visa-free policy to Malaysian travelers until the end of 2025.

In return, Malaysia will extend its visa-free policy for Chinese citizens until the end of 2026, the declaration said, adding that both sides are welcome to continue discussing their mutual visa-exemption arrangement to facilitate cross-border travel.

The two countries have also agreed to work for better synergy of their development, the declaration said.

They will take the signing of a bilateral cooperation plan to promote building of the Belt and Road as an opportunity to further align their development strategies and enhance pragmatic cooperation.

Both sides agreed to strengthen cooperation on infrastructure connectivity, including on the key projects of Malaysia's East Coast Rail Link, and to expand trade, enhance financial cooperation and encourage their companies to invest in each other's country.

Malaysia welcomed China to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. China said it will import more high-quality agricultural products and other products from Malaysia.

The two countries will also seize the opportunities brought by the digital economy, green development, artificial intelligence and energy, and discuss cooperation in fields including advanced manufacturing and technological innovation.

They agreed to carry out more cooperation in the semiconductor value chain to maintain the stability of the global supply chain.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties between China and Malaysia.

The two countries agreed to vigorously engage in a series of activities in culture, tourism, religion and other fields to promote bilateral exchanges at all levels and further deepen exchanges and mutual learning between the Chinese civilization and the Islamic civilization.

Both sides confirmed that they will conduct a new round of cooperation in giant panda conservation research to commemorate the anniversary of establishing ties and advance bilateral cooperation in such research.

The two countries also voiced their intention to strengthen collaboration on multilateral occasions, saying they share extensive interests and similar positions on international affairs.

They will work together to uphold international fairness and justice, and safeguard the unity and cooperation of the international community, according to the declaration.

Trade cooperation has played a vital role in bilateral ties, Premier Li said at a luncheon of the Malaysia-China Business Community in Kuala Lumpur on Thursday.

Bilateral trade has increased rapidly in recent years, Li said, adding that companies from the two countries will see more investment opportunities as both sides continue aligning their development strategies and upgrading their industries.

China hopes to speed up implementing various cooperation agreements with Malaysia, work with it to push forward major projects, and provide more cooperation opportunities for both sides, he said.

Li called on companies in China and Malaysia to continue investing in the two countries and make better use of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, who also attended the luncheon, said that Malaysia is firmly committed to deepening its friendly ties with China, and hopes to enhance mutual understanding and cooperation with China in trade, investment, science and technology, and education.

Li arrived in Beijing on Thursday, wrapping up his eight-day trip, which also took him to New Zealand and Australia.



## Climate protest

A bystander intervenes as two members of the "Just Stop Oil" environment group spray orange paint on Britain's most iconic prehistoric structure, the Stonehenge, in Wiltshire, southern England, on Wednesday, a day before huge crowds are expected to gather there for the summer solstice. In a video posted on social media platform X, the group said it wants the incoming British government to sign a legally binding treaty on phasing out fossil fuels by 2030. The two activists were arrested later.

JUST STOP OIL GROUP VIA AFP

## Japan-US security ties may heighten tensions in Asia-Pacific, experts warn

By CAI HONG  
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Japan and the United States have taken their security relationship to a new height, a move that might both create and escalate tensions in the Asia-Pacific region, experts said.

In a series of meetings held in Tokyo last week, the two countries agreed to set up working groups on joint missile production, warship and aircraft repairs and supply chain resiliency with the aim to promote defense industry cooperation.

US Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel called the East Asian country's engineering, industrial and manufacturing capacity "a major significant development" for the US defense industry, while admitting that "the US military-industrial base cannot meet all the security challenges".

The US is currently facing a shortage of ammunition, which is largely attributed to its support for Ukraine and Israel, and is also grappling with the challenge of augmenting its Patriot missile production capacity.

The Patriot, a surface-to-air guided missile system, is manufactured by Japan's Mitsubishi Heavy Industries under license from US defense contractors Lockheed Martin and Raytheon Technologies. In December, the Japanese government confirmed that it would send Patriot missiles to the US after amending its arms export rules.

Japanese and US defense officials deliberated for the first time in Tokyo at the Defense Industrial Cooperation, Acquisition and Sustainment Forum, which was established based on an agreement

“The US ambassador is using China's capacity in shipbuilding as an excuse to build US-Japan military cooperation.”

Liu Qingbin, former professor at Yokohama National University's Institute of Advanced Sciences

reached between Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and US President Joe Biden during their meeting in April.

The US requires Japan, "the frontline of defense in East Asia", to repair its warships and aircraft, so that they can be returned to operation quickly, Emanuel said.

The first working group meeting on maintenance and repair of forward-deployed US warships at Japanese commercial facilities was held on June 11. The working group meeting on US aircraft repairs is scheduled for August, he said.

Liu Qingbin, a former professor at Yokohama National University's Institute of Advanced Sciences, said the US ambassador is using "China's capacity in shipbuilding as an excuse to build US-Japan military cooperation".

Masaki Fukasawa, commissioner of the Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Agency of Japan's Defense Ministry, said that increasing the opportunities for US naval vessels to undergo maintenance, repair and overhaul at Japanese shipyards

would contribute to the readiness of US forces and strengthen the deterrence of the alliance as a whole.

Japanese analysts, however, expressed concerns over Washington using Tokyo as a key partner to boost its own military production. Japan may end up serving as a subcontractor because its defense industry is weak, they said.

Atsushi Koketsu, professor emeritus at Yamaguchi University of Japan, said that Japan's defense policy is increasingly drifting away from the country's pacifist Constitution, which forbids the use of force as a means to settle international disputes.

If Japan pursues deterrence by further building its military infrastructure and strengthening alliances without offering reassurances to China, it will inevitably result in a security dilemma for both countries, he said.

Koketsu added that the Japanese government should stop increasing militarization in the region and instead build friendly relations with neighboring countries.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry has repeatedly emphasized that US-Japan relations should not target other countries, harm their interests, or undermine regional peace and stability.

Lyu Yaodong, deputy director of the Institute of Japan Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said that Japan is acting in concert with the US' global strategy.

On the military front, Japan is forming a closer alliance with the US by extending support to the US' allies in East Asia and in other parts of the world, while on the economic front, Tokyo is joining Washington in its "decoupling

and breaking chains" strategy against China, Lyu said.

According to Emanuel, the US ambassador, the meeting of the US-Japan Security Consultative Committee to be held in July is the "deadline" for achieving concrete outcomes in defense industry cooperation.

Liu, the former Yokohama professor, said that Japan's participation in producing weapons for the US shows the weakening strength of Washington. "And there is a strong desire within the Japanese government to strengthen the alliance and enhance deterrence against China through cooperation with the United States."

He said that Japan's decision to acquire long-range land-attack capabilities, as outlined in its National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy in 2022, is a groundbreaking change for the country's Constitution.

"To meet these ambitions, Japan is embarking on greater acquisition of relevant technologies from the US under the framework of the US-Japan alliance, as well as developing indigenous long-range strike and hypersonic capabilities while pursuing a whole-of-government approach aimed at achieving self-sufficiency in certain types of missile production," he said.

According to the Japanese newspaper Mainichi Shimbun, the Kishida government has picked up its pace for laying the legal groundwork to introduce preemptive "active" cyber defense, with related laws ready to be proposed as early as this fall's extraordinary Diet session.

"Such moves are posing threats to the region," Liu said, adding that although the US enlists Japan for weapons production, the scale of such cooperation has its limits.

During the defense forum, Emanuel himself emphasized that US nuclear-powered vessels such as submarines and aircraft carriers would be "off-limits".

## AI: More efforts to be made for chip, algorithm development

From page 1

Shan Zhongde, vice-minister of industry and information technology, said that China has made considerable progress in promoting AI development, as the country has cultivated 421 national-level intelligent manufacturing demonstration plants, over 10,000 provincial-level digital workshops and smart factories, and over 4,500 AI enterprises.

In the next step, he said the country will intensify efforts to make break-

throughs in core technologies such as intelligent chips and algorithm frameworks, support the construction of high-quality data systems in key industrial sectors, accelerate R&D and innovation in industrial large models and promote the integration of AI with manufacturing.

More efforts will also be made to support enterprises that use special and sophisticated technologies to produce novel and unique products, build globally competitive industrial ecosystems, and con-

struct advanced manufacturing clusters with international competitiveness, Shan added.

Zhou Hongyi, founder of Chinese cybersecurity company 360 Security Group, highlighted the necessity of fostering new quality productive forces and pursuing innovation-driven development, saying the key is to embrace AI technologies, particularly large models.

"With the emergence of large models, AI will lead human society into the era of intelligence, bringing

profound impacts on our way of life and production," he said. "As a crucial supporting technology for new quality productive forces, AI technologies, notably large models, will usher in a new round of industrial revolution."

Zhou said he hopes his company could make use of its technical capabilities in specialized large models to help Tianjin build its large model industry ecosystem.

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## SCO: Law enforcement collaboration among member states increasing

From page 1

In my view, China's responsibilities in the field of security within the SCO are expanding. Alongside cooperation among security forces and defense departments, there is an increasing collaboration in law enforcement. China's role is becoming more active in ensuring security and political stability in SCO member states. Given the extraterritorial nature of modern threats, there is a growing need to enhance constructive interaction among partner countries.

As a responsible global power, China demonstrates to the world through the SCO's success that

there is always room for compromise. By focusing on development and cooperation rather than conflicts and disputes, greater prosperity can be achieved, benefiting all parties involved.

Today, the SCO serves as a prototype and model for a new, fairer mechanism of international interaction. Essentially, China is successfully testing its global concept of a community with a shared future for mankind within the SCO framework, proving its feasibility in practice. The SCO has become a platform where states with different political traditions and diplomatic practices meet, negotiate and establish connections.

In security studies, discursive political practices are of great importance. Threat assessment is a matter of political choice. Similarly, SCO countries have made their choice — cooperation over confrontation, dialogue over bloc divide, and economic interaction over sanctions and trade wars.

SCO participants and observers share an understanding of common, indivisible security and the goal of strengthened partnership to maintain peace. This has led to the development of the "SCO style" — a mode of behavior where states engage within a cooperative framework.

Even amid conflicts, SCO countries

find common ground and create space for dialogue. In the realm of security, having a "conflict-free zone" is crucial, and the SCO has emerged as such a platform.

Today, despite increasing conflicts globally and the complex nature of global challenges, the SCO is utilizing every opportunity for consolidation and active international positioning. Amid the crisis of universal multilateral institutions and the fragmentation of the global order, the SCO's significance is growing.

Regarding the trend of regionalization, it is essential to note that the voice of Central Asia within the SCO holds great

importance. Central Asia is the heart of the group, and connects various partners into a cohesive whole. Moreover, due to the constructive and nonaligned nature of the SCO, the role and potential of middle powers, such as Kazakhstan, are growing within the group.

It is not surprising that a diverse range of countries, from Saudi Arabia to Macedonia and Serbia, are interested in partnering with the SCO, and see it as a convenient platform for dialogue and an emerging center of power. The SCO attracts them with its stability, absence of double standards, adherence to principles of

international law, and cultural diversity.

The SCO summit in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan, on July 3 and 4 will be an event of immense geopolitical significance. It is expected that high-level representatives from all SCO partner states and partner organizations will attend the summit. The broadest possible engagement of interested parties will underscore the strategic importance and influence of the SCO in the contemporary international environment.

The author is chief expert at the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## CHINA

# Report says drug abuse in decline

Mainstream narcotics used less, but cheaper alternatives growing

By YANG ZEKUN  
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While drug smuggling remains a challenge, drug abuse in China has continued to decline, according to a report issued by the Office of the National Narcotics Control Commission on Wednesday.

The China Drug Situation Report 2023 said there has been a spike in the cross-border and inter-regional movements of people and vehicles, leading to a resurgence in drug smuggling and trafficking.

Last year, about 42,000 drug-related cases were solved, up 12.6 percent year-on-year; 65,000 suspects were captured, an increase of 21 percent year-on-year; and 25.9 metric tons of drugs were seized in total, 18 percent more than in the previous year, the report said.

**25.9 metric tons**  
amount of drugs seized last year

It also highlighted the decline in drug abuse last year. By the end of 2023, China had 896,000 registered drug users, a year-on-year decrease of 20.3 percent.

Last year, China also had about 4 million people who avoided relapsing after three years of sobriety, a year-on-year increase of 7.6 percent, and dealt with 195,000 instances of drug use, a decrease of 1.1 percent from 2022.

In addition, there were year-on-year decreases in the number of people abusing mainstream drugs such as heroin (down 26.7 percent), methamphetamine (22.6 percent) and ketamine (6.3 percent). And China has not detected any significant fentanyl abuse, the report said.

However, it warned that drug users have turned to more accessible, cheaper and similarly effective addictive substances such as narcotic and psychotropic medications, with the misuse of etomidate, which is meant for use in general anesthesia, particularly notable. The use of non-scheduled addictive substances has also been a significant problem, it said.

Wei Xiaojun, executive secretary-general of the narcotics control commission, said the country has taken a comprehensive approach to curbing the use of narcotic and psychotropic medications and other addictive substances, including improving monitoring, restricting access to more narcotics, implementing

crackdowns and promoting drug prevention education.

Authorities also announced they will place 46 substances, including Brorphine, a synthetic opioid, on the supplementary list of controlled drugs on July 1.

According to the report, most drugs being abused in China originate from overseas, with a small portion produced domestically. Last year, about 20.5 tons of drugs were smuggled into the country, up 84.7 percent year-on-year and accounting for 79.2 percent of drug seizures.

About 85.3 percent of methamphetamine, 95 percent of heroin and 99 percent of opium seized last year came from the Golden Triangle area, which spans parts of Thailand, Myanmar and Laos. Additionally, 800 kilograms of methamphetamine from Mexico were seized, a 24-fold increase year-on-year, and about 2.6 tons of cocaine from South America were captured, 13.5 times more than in 2022.

Large-scale drug production in China has been effectively curbed overall, but there has been a resurgence in some areas due to increased demand and profits driven by higher drug prices after the COVID-19 pandemic, the report said. Last year, 27 provincial-level regions detected such activities, with 210 drug manufacturing cases solved and 622 kg of synthetic drugs seized.

Wei, the narcotics commission official, emphasized that curbing drug manufacturing at its source requires placing precursor chemicals under control. Last year, 938.5 tons of such chemicals were seized, up 42.2 percent year-on-year.

"Efforts have been intensified to enhance supervision over the production, distribution, warehousing, transportation and import-export processes, promoting the establishment of an informatized traceability system for precursor chemicals to prevent them from being misused," he said.

This year, efforts are being made to strengthen control over precursor chemicals at their source, including adjusting the list of precursor chemicals being exported to specific countries or regions by adding 24 substances to the list of controlled drugs, and implementing strict control measures to curb drug production, he said.

Wei acknowledged that China still faces numerous risks and challenges in its anti-drug campaign because there is an ongoing global drug problem that has shown no signs of abating.

## Silk Road relics



A woman wearing *hanfu* views pottery figures from the Tang Dynasty (618-907) at an exhibition titled *Heavenly Palace: Chang'an on the Silk Roads* at the China National Silk Museum during the 2024 Silk Road Week in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Wednesday. The exhibition brings together 210 cultural relics from more than 10 museums in Zhejiang and Shaanxi provinces, including 50 first-class cultural relics showcasing the political, economic and cultural significance of Chang'an (now Xi'an) during the Tang Dynasty and highlighting the glorious history of the Silk Road. LI ZHONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Ministry supports Sino-French educational exchanges

By ZHAO YIMENG  
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With a long history of educational exchanges between China and France, cooperation in the education sector will play an increasing role in promoting the development of Sino-French relations, an official with the Ministry of Education said.

Yang Dan, director of the Ministry's Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges, said recently that China will continue supporting Sino-French educational and cultural collaboration and

will take steps to encourage more French students and scholars to come to China.

France was one of the first Western countries to engage in educational exchanges with China. In 1877, the Fochow Shipbuilding Institution in Fujian province sent the first batch of government-sponsored students to European countries, including France, to study advanced technology and enhance their skills in shipbuilding and navigation.

From March 1919 to the end of 1920, nearly 1,800 young students went to France in 20 batches,

working while studying to seek ways to transform China. Among them were Chinese revolutionary pioneers, including Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yi.

Over 46,000 Chinese students are now pursuing studies in France, while more than 1,500 French students are enrolled in Chinese institutions, according to the ministry.

Today, Chinese courses are being offered from primary school to the university level in France. Meanwhile, the French language is also being taught at different levels in

China, although the number of students learning French at primary schools is relatively low, according to the ministry.

An event promoting educational collaboration between the two nations, the Sino-French Education Development Forum, begins in Paris on Friday.

At the forum, top education officials and higher education representatives from the two countries will discuss topics such as the two-way flow of students and sign new cooperative agreements between their universities.

## Global cooperation critical in wildlife conservation

By LI MENGHAN  
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Collaboration in global wildlife conservation plays a vital role in advancing scientific research on wild animals, reintroducing animal species to nations where they have gone extinct and strengthening people-to-people exchanges, zoological experts said at a news conference in Beijing on Thursday.

"Wild animals are not only essential components of global biodiversity and natural ecosystems, but also significant messengers and carriers for friendly interactions among people of various countries," Wang Weisheng, head of the flora and fauna department at the National Forestry and Grassland Administration, told the news conference.

"Engaging in collaborative exchanges of wildlife is a widespread practice that plays a crucial role in enhancing scientific educa-

tion on nature conservation, fostering collaborative research efforts and promoting wildlife protection."

Since the launch of reform and opening-up in 1978, Chinese zoological parks have acquired dozens of wild animal species from foreign countries that are not native to China, including koalas, jaguars, polar bears, European bison and African lions. This not only allows Chinese people to observe such animals more easily, but also facilitates collaboration among scientists for research efforts focused on breeding and disease prevention, Wang said.

International cooperation is also important for species that have become locally extinct due to factors such as climate change and human hunting, he said.

He said that in 1985, China collaborated with the United Kingdom to import 77 Milu deer, also known as Pere David's deer, in batches. The species became extinct in China last century, but the country's Milu deer

population now numbers more than 6,000 through measures such as artificial breeding and wild release.

China also provided its expertise in revitalizing populations of crested ibis to Japan and South Korea, offering support in breeding resources, techniques and personnel training. The wild crested ibis, previously extinct in the two countries, has now rebounded, with 532 birds in Japan and several dozen in South Korea.

China has also been providing knowledge and training for wildlife conservation and management personnel in developing countries in Asia and Africa for 12 years, Wang said.

Wei Fuwen, an academician from the Chinese Academy of Sciences who has been engaged in global cooperation on giant panda research since the late 1990s, said international cooperation has showcased China's improved

research capabilities and its achievements in wildlife conservation.

"With the assistance of foreign institutions, China has overcome three major challenges in giant panda reproduction — estrus, mating and conception, and cub survival," Wei said. "Collaborative research on their food nutrition and disease control has enabled the health conditions of giant pandas to improve significantly."

He said giant pandas have received warm welcomes in host nations, and that during visits to countries such as the United States, Australia and the UK, he found local residents willing to wait in line for hours for a glimpse of the creatures, and caretakers demonstrating meticulous care for them.

"This serves as an indispensable tool in deepening foreign public awareness of China's success in wildlife preservation and ecological civilization advancement," Wei said.

## Wheat field helps fight desertification in Xinjiang

By MAO WEIHUA in Urumqi  
and ZHAO RUINAN

In China's vast Taklimakan Desert, also known as the "sea of death", a remarkable feat is taking place.

A large wheat field has been successfully planted on a trial basis on the southwestern edge of the desert in Makit county, part of Kashgar prefecture, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

The wheat field now covers over 400 hectares, making it China's largest pure-desert wheat field and marking a new approach to combating desertification through sustainable agriculture.

"An average yield of 4.4 metric tons per hectare surpassed expectations," Wang Jianjun, deputy general manager of Xinjiang Wuzheng Green Agricultural Development Co, said earlier this month, adding that the harvested wheat is top grade.

Makit is surrounded by sand on

three sides, and desert accounts for 90 percent of its total area.

The county has over 36,000 hectares of mild saline-alkali land, 13,000 hectares of which is severe, making sand control and disaster mitigation urgent.

To explore models for improving desert saline-alkali land, Shandong province, which is partnered with Xinjiang as part of an assistance program, has invested 30 million yuan (\$4.1 million) to support Xinjiang Wuzheng as it strives to plant wheat on 1,333 hectares of desert land.

"Sand control and reclamation are significant for ensuring food security, improving the ecological environment, increasing regional income and promoting sustainable agricultural development and technological innovation," said Gu Qianjun, head of the company's wheat base program.

The biggest obstacle to planting wheat in the Taklimakan Desert is constant shifting sands. For that

reason, the land needs to be quickly planted with vegetation once the sand is leveled; otherwise, a sandstorm could revert the planting grounds to their original state.

Traditional wheat planting methods also face other challenges, including low soil organic matter and nutrient content, high evaporation rates, poor water and fertilizer retention and high salinity.

To ensure successful planting, "we use a precise, quantitative, and high-frequency irrigation method to deliver the necessary nutrients and water to the wheat roots", Gu said.

"The key factor for successful trial planting is our innovative development of a systematic management application technology tailored to the desert's unique climate and soil conditions, addressing various issues at every planting stage," he said.

Xinjiang Wuzheng is also working with research institutes, including the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences and the

Shandong Academy of Agricultural Sciences, and using technologies such as satellite positioning and remote sensing monitoring.

The company said its collaborative efforts have enabled precise crop planting, fertilization and pest control management, creating a replicable and scalable standardized technique for desert wheat cultivation.

Yang Jun, an official from the pairing assistance program in Rizhao, Shandong, said the next step is to expand the winter wheat planting area.

"In the next three to five years, our goal is to plant wheat on over 3,333 hectares of desert land," Yang said. "This will enhance the quality and efficiency of the region's agriculture while promoting comprehensive rural vitalization."

Xinjiang has recently beefed up its efforts to foster agricultural productivity on desert land.

In late April, a research team



A harvester works in the desert wheat field in Makit county, Kashgar prefecture, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, on June 4.

YANG JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

from the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences successfully planted and rapidly cultivated a trial plot of rice in a desert greenhouse in Hotan prefecture, Xinjiang.

The Hotan region in southern Xinjiang has abundant light and heat resources.

This breakthrough in rapid crop

cultivation technology in desert greenhouses will also provide technical support for year-round crop production and rapid breeding in the southern deserts of Xinjiang, according to the academy.

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## WORLD

## CHINA LINK

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

# China applauded as pillar of global travel

Promoting innovation, preserving culture help sector prosper, UN tourism official says



Foreign tourists visit the Temple of Heaven in Beijing on May 15. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By XU WEIWEI in Hong Kong  
vivienxu@chinadailyupac.com

For Natalia Bayona, a senior official from the United Nations' specialized agency for tourism, China is impressive for embracing innovation and development while successfully preserving its history and culture.

The executive director of UN Tourism, which was previously known as the United Nations World Tourism Organization, said she has not only been impressed by the virtues of people in China, such as their hospitality and generosity, but also by its development, including the embrace of innovative technologies and the way its tourism industry is planned.

Bayona, from Colombia, has visited China at least 10 times and returned from a cultural event in Quanzhou, Fujian province, in April. She said China's technological advancement is very important for tourism, including the use of artificial intelligence. Innovation has become one of the key pillars of tourism growth, as well as one of the main priorities of UN Tourism, she said.

Bayona, 38, was the first person under 40 to reach the position of executive director of UN Tourism in 2023.

In the fields of technology and innovation, Bayona said that UN Tourism — which promotes responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism and is headquartered in Madrid — works with more than 10,000 startups from more than 150 countries.

The most important thing is that those startups are focused on AI solutions to solve the challenges in the tourism industry, such as educating people through AI, measuring the capacity of the destinations and allocating tourism resources.

Bayona said that globally, tourism last year ended at 88 percent of pre-pandemic levels.

"The Asian markets are driving good recovery ... (with) better connectivity, visa relaxations. And, of course, Asia, and particularly speaking, China, is a strong market for Europe," she said.

In this sense, it is "not only a positive factor but also is part of amazing results that Europe has when it comes to tourism".

## Important industry

Tourism has become an important sector of the global economy. According to Bayona, international tourism export revenues were estimated at \$1.6 trillion in 2023.

"So I have to say that this is very good and we need to maintain it," she said. "Of course, China's outbound tourism is expected to accelerate the recovery. It is incredible to see that the country is implementing the visa facilitation measures for several markets and destinations so that it will help to boost Chinese domestic and international tourism."

Today, 3 percent of global GDP is linked to tourism and it can help with stability in the world, Bayona said. "As a driver of peace, I hope to help maintain good relations between countries in these difficult situations."

She said that this year is the Chinese Year



Foreigners in traditional Chinese costume pose with a Chinese girl during a Dragon Boat Festival event in Shanghai on June 9. CHEN AIPING / XINHUA



Foreign students learn baduanjin, a Chinese aerobic exercise, at a traditional Chinese medicine hospital in Qingdao, Shandong province, on Tuesday. GUO XULEI / XINHUA

of the Dragon, and the dragon is a symbol of power as well as generosity and innovation. "And those are key words for tourism," Bayona said. "We need to get stronger in our cooperation with China."

UN Tourism is also promoting tourism education, including through an online academy program, which focuses on Chinese culture, she said.

"We are working on massive online open courses for Chinese people," she said, adding that UN Tourism officials are planning to

visit China for topics related to tourism, education and technology with a focus on training local people. Meanwhile, they will keep promoting connections between the private and public sectors to maintain China as a key investor in tourism.

The UN agency will continue to collaborate with Chinese universities like Beijing International Studies University and Peking University to develop joint education programs focused on tourism and technology, Bayona said.



Natalia Bayona

Executive director of UN Tourism

## Career:

**2018:** Joins the United Nations World Tourism Organization, renamed UN Tourism, and helps launch the Innovation, Education, and Investment Department.

**2021:** Recognized by the annual Women Leading Travel & Hospitality report as one of the Leading Women in Innovation in the sector.

**2022-24:** Develops seven startup competitions and six innovation challenges for UN Tourism resulting in more than \$74 million in support for entrepreneurs and pilot programs for safe travel.

China when she was working with the Colombian government around the year 2006.

"I remember the thing that I loved most that time about China was how it maximizes traditions through its culture," she said.

She said that Chinese people have values such as welcoming diversity when it comes to cuisine, culture and education. But this does not mean that they will easily lose their traditions.

"For instance, it doesn't matter what kind of restaurants are near you, including international chains. You always have part of your (own cuisine) culture (even) inside of those international brands," she said.

Bayona finds this incredible because, at the end of the day, "you are preserving your history, your tradition and you're adapting international brands to the Chinese culture", which is "smart".

According to her, those main values of the Chinese today are key factors in attracting new tourists who would also like to understand Chinese culture. She hopes tourists to China can promote these unique values to the whole world.

She said she was amazed by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region when she first visited China. "I love fashion and I am passionate about fashion. Hong Kong is a strong city, where I saw how people believe in fashion and how people through traditions can create new trends."

## Frequent visitor

As Bayona has visited China many times, she finds that Hong Kong has been growing quickly over the years, and in fashion, it is "full of new brands" created there.

Seeing how some other Chinese cities have grown to become major cities of technology also impressed her. For instance, Shenzhen in Guangdong province has many top-tech companies, including Tencent, the company behind the instant messaging app WeChat. She recalled being in its headquarters during a visit to China around 2017 when she saw people working on data programming and decided to promote tourism through the application.

Bayona also highlighted how digital payments were launched through the WeChat and Alipay digital platforms, with companies promoting their brands and enabling bill payments. "That's unique ... (and) was really impressive."

Chinese people are conscious about their time and do things efficiently because of the huge population in the country, she said. "That's great because that makes a strong workforce to achieve good results," she said.

"And you can see it in the ways technology has been booming in the country, tourism has been booming in the country, (and) investments and infrastructure have been booming in the country."

Bayona also said that her home country, Colombia, is a good friend of China.

"I think there's a lot of Chinese elements in Colombia and a lot of Chinese investment coming to it," she said.



Natalia Bayona, executive director of UN Tourism, poses with children in traditional Chinese headpiece in Fujian province in April. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"China is our key player in Asia and we will continue through the existing collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism," she said.

This year, Bayona will help promote the Global Tourism Economic Forum to connect China with international businesses in the tourism sector. For her, the promotion is crucial to better connect China with the world in order to advance international businesses focused on tourism.

Bayona recalled the first time she visited

## WORLD

## Israeli forces push deeper into Rafah, forcing Gazans to flee

GAZA — Israeli tanks backed by warplanes and drones advanced deeper into the western part of Rafah on Wednesday, as rifts seem to be appearing between Israel's political and military leadership over the conduct of the fighting in Gaza.

Residents said the tanks moved into five neighborhoods after midnight. Heavy shelling and gunfire hit the tents of displaced families in the Al-Mawasi area, further to the west of the coastal enclave, they said.

Twelve Palestinians were also killed in an Israeli strike that hit a group of citizens and merchants in the south of the Gaza Strip, medical sources told Reuters on Wednesday.

The people were hit as they waited for convoys of aid trucks carrying goods through the Kerem Shalom crossing on Salahuddin Road north-east of Rafah, the sources added.

Medics and Hamas media said eight Palestinians were killed in Al-Mawasi and many families fled north in panic. They did not identify the fatalities and the Israeli military said it was looking into the report.

Residents said Israeli army forces blew up several homes in western Rafah, which had sheltered more than half of Gaza's 2.3 million people before last month, when Israel began its ground offensive and forced most of the population to head northward.

Some United Nations and Palestinian figures put those who remained at under 100,000 people.

Further north, Israel sent a column of tanks back into the Zeitoun neighborhood in Gaza City, while residents reported heavy fire from tanks, warplanes and also sounds of gunbattle with Hamas-led fighters.

In another Gaza City suburb, Sheikh Radwan, an Israeli airstrike on a house killed four Palestinians, including a child, medics said. A total of 20 people were killed across Gaza.

On Wednesday, the United Nations human rights office said Israeli forces may have "repeatedly violated fundamental principles of the laws of war" and failed to distinguish between civilians and fighters in their Gaza campaign.

Meanwhile, the Israeli army's chief spokesman on Wednesday appeared to question the stated goal of destroying the Hamas militant group in Gaza in a rare public rift between the country's political and military leadership.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has insisted Israel will pursue the fight against Hamas, the group running the besieged Gaza Strip, until its military and governing capabilities in the Palestinian territory are eliminated.

## Rare comment

"This business of destroying Hamas, making Hamas disappear — it's simply throwing sand in the eyes of the public," Daniel Hagari, spokesman of the Israel Defense Forces, told Israel's Channel 13 TV. "Whoever thinks we can eliminate Hamas is wrong."

Netanyahu's office responded by saying that the country's security cabinet, chaired by the prime minister, "has defined the destruction of Hamas' military and governing capabilities as one of the goals of the war. The Israeli military, of course, is committed to this."

The military quickly issued a clarification, saying it was "committed to achieving the goals of the war as defined by the cabinet" and that it has been working on this "throughout the war, day and night, and will continue to do so."

Hagari's comments, it said, "referred to the destruction of Hamas as an ideology and an idea, and this was said by him very clearly and explicitly," the military statement added. "Any other claim is taking things out of context."

There have already been open signs of discontent over the handling of the conflict by Netanyahu's government, a coalition that includes right-wing hard-liners who oppose any kind of settlement with Hamas. Meanwhile, months of internationally mediated truce talks, including a proposal floated this month by US President Joe Biden, have stalled.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



Palestinians flee an Israeli bombardment in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Wednesday. BASHAR TALEB / AFP



Vietnamese President To Lam (center left) and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin review the guard of honor at the Presidential Palace in Hanoi on Thursday. MINH HOANG / AP

## Putin vows to shore up ties with Vietnam

Moscow signs agreements with Hanoi to enhance 'close, effective cooperation'

By REN QI in Moscow  
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Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Thursday that strengthening strategic ties is one of his priorities during a state visit to Vietnam, as Moscow seeks to bolster relations with Asian states.

Hanoi and Moscow have had diplomatic relations since 1950, and this year marks 30 years of the establishment of friendly relations between Vietnam and Russia.

Putin and his Vietnamese counterpart To Lam signed agreements to further cooperation on education, science and technology, oil and gas exploration and health. They also agreed to work on a road map for a nuclear science and technology center in Vietnam.

Putin said he respected dialogue with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, in

which he said Vietnam played an active role.

Following the talks, Putin said the two countries share an interest in "developing a reliable security architecture" in the Asia-Pacific region based on peacefully settling disputes and not using force, with no room for "closed military-political blocs".

Putin arrived in Hanoi early in the morning from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, where he and DPRK's top leader Kim Jong-un signed a treaty on a comprehensive strategic partnership.

In the afternoon, Putin met with Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh and later met Nguyen Phu Trong, general secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee.

The Russian leader, who is making his first visit to Vietnam since 2017 when he attended an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit, said Russia and Vietnam also shared "similar

assessments of the situation in the Asia-Pacific region".

Russia is keen to maintain "close and effective cooperation" in energy, industry, technology, education, security and trade, said Russian Ambassador to Vietnam Gennady S Bezdetko on Wednesday, as reported by Vietnamese official media.

## Concrete measures

Vietnam's Ambassador to Russia Dang Minh Khoi told Vietnam News Agency that the state visit will strengthen Hanoi-Moscow ties and "an opportunity for the leaders of the two countries to discuss and propose concrete measures to boost bilateral trade and economic cooperation", TASS Russian News Agency reported.

In an article written for Nhan Dan newspaper, Putin vowed to deepen the ties between Moscow and Hanoi and hailed Vietnam as a "strong supporter of a fair world order based on international law, on the principles of equality of all states and noninterference in their domestic affairs".

He also thanked "Vietnamese

friends for their balanced position on the Ukrainian crisis", in the article released by the Kremlin.

Since the early 2000s, Russia accounted for about 80 percent of Vietnam's arms imports. This has been declining over the years due to Vietnamese attempts to diversify its supplies.

In September, United States' President Joe Biden visited Hanoi to promote ties. And Putin's trip has resulted in a sharp rebuke from the US embassy in Vietnam.

"The Vietnamese leadership and the Vietnamese people always see Russia as a very good old friend," said Hoang Thi Ha, senior fellow and co-coordinator of the Regional Strategic and Political Studies Programme at ISEAS-Yusuf Ishak Institute in Singapore.

Russia remains important to Vietnam as a key military equipment and energy supplier, so Vietnamese leadership would look at the importance of maintaining a good relationship with Russia both for pragmatic and sentimental reasons, she said.

Ha said the rebuke from the US is expected because Washington thinks Moscow is isolated because of the Ukraine crisis.

"The US considers Vietnam a partner in Southeast Asia ... and now Vietnam welcomes Putin and it may be seen as giving Russia more ... international recognition," Ha said.

Yang Han in Jakarta and agencies contributed to this story.

## Ren Ming: Crafting China-US art exchanges for decades

By CHANG JUN in San Francisco  
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In the 1980s, Ren Ming, then in his 20s, realized the need to facilitate dialogue between East and West. On his first US visit, he packed more than 3,500 handmade photographic images featuring Chinese arts, which he later used to introduce his motherland, "the mysterious, less-discovered yet multifaceted" China.

Four decades later, Ren is an international award-winning artist, with professorships at several esteemed American colleges of fine arts, including the Rhode Island School of Design. He has also orchestrated international programs in top-notch art schools such as the China Academy of Art and the Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts.

Still, he believes more than ever that China-US communications through art should be robust, frequent and more revolutionary, referring to technology such as AI.

"It (art exchange) has been playing a unique and irreplaceable role in enhancing mutual understanding and trust," Ren told China Daily. "Paintings and arts have no national boundaries, neither should exchanges and collaborations between artists."

Ren enrolled in 1980 at the China Academy of Art, in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, as an oil painting

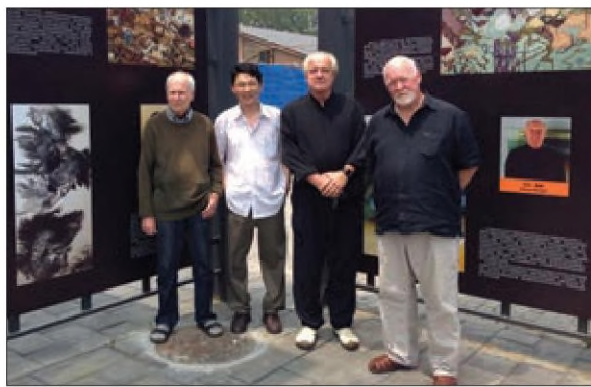
major. Although he excelled in pursuits such as traditional Chinese ink painting, his claim to fame on campus was "the one who can speak fluent English", a foreign language that was rarely spoken and studied at the time, as China had just opened its doors to the world.

"Often, I was asked to interpret for visiting artists and professors from American art schools," Ren recalled. "Through their conversations, I realized that there was a knowledge gap — their understanding of Chinese art history stalled at the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), no more, no updates, nothing. Development of China's art in modern days is a blank, a vacancy."

"I hope I could mend the gap by showcasing them (Americans) the authentic, comprehensive and complete Chinese art history," Ren thought at the time. "China has too much ... to offer when it comes to art; for that, no Westerners would doubt."

It took Ren three years of preparing to fulfill that vision. He spent every penny collecting lecture materials, artifacts, and more importantly, making the 3,500 projector slides that were divided into 20 themes of Chinese art.

"Literally, I was broke," Ren joked. In January 1988, Ren, with a passion to understand and embrace differences, was invited to teach at the Rhode Island School of Design,



Ren Ming (second from left) joins three artist friends (from left), Fred Martin and Jeremy Morgan, from the San Francisco Art Institute, and David Frazer of the Rhode Island School of Design, at their joint exhibition at the Beijing 798 Art Zone in 2014. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

becoming the first scholar from the Chinese mainland to attend the American art institute.

Ren's lectures, with his novel, illuminating method, detailed artifacts and informative slides, earned him instant recognition in the American art world.

Mainstream art schools and universities invited Ren to lecture, and the San Francisco Art Institute offered him a position. Fred Martin, vice-president of the

institute, once told Ren, "The work of art calls; the viewer, the listener, the reader responds. We see, hear and read now, but all of that is in the context of a lifetime of memory."

To generate such a "lifetime of memory" not only in the hearts of Americans but also Chinese people, Ren expanded his realm in the 1990s.

He extended his own study and research of Western abstract expressionist paintings and won international recognition. Ren won the gold

medal in the 2003 Florence Biennial International Exhibition of Contemporary Art in Italy.

One of the materials Ren adopted was acrylic paint. The mostly water-based, fast-drying paint has been widely used by Western artists since the 1960s, but until the late 1990s, Chinese artists had no access to it.

"Art exchanges took place in many forms. How could the Chinese artists keep abreast with their Western peers if without the same materials for their creations and work?" he wondered.

He then spent six months in 1997 touring six American acrylics factories, lobbying for free samples. They eventually agreed to tailor some products for Chinese artists.

"The first package of \$50,000 worth of acrylic paints was delivered to China, enabling my counterparts there to catch up in this regard," Ren said.

Ren noted the need to establish a globalized, high-level art education mechanism in which Chinese and Western professors and artists work together to teach, to mentor and to supervise students.

"As the second-largest world economy, China needs to match its economic strength with a culturally abundant art education that communicates to the West smoothly, obstacle-free," he added.

In 2017, he pushed to create an

international program at the China Academy of Art. One year later, he initiated a doctoral program at the Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts and became the head of its faculty.

"I am now like a talent-hunter — all American professor friends, colleagues and stellar artists are on my radar. Beep, yeah, I got you," said Ren, adding that he visited art schools, museums and galleries around the United States to sharpen his artistic acumen.

Charlotte Jeanningros, a French artist, is in the doctoral program. She chose to attend the Chinese university because she believes that "art offers the possibility of transmitting a vision of the world, of countries, of cultures, from different angles, and above all of sharing these unique visions".

Jeanningros told China Daily: "The great asset of this program is the professors. They also come from different backgrounds and all have great experience and a high level of expertise."

"Ren said: 'When it (exchange) starts, we remain determined and uninterrupted. Very inspiringly, along the road there are so many like-minded in China and America.'"

Jin Jiangbo, deputy dean of the Academy of Fine Art, Shanghai University, said: "As we strive to be a top-level art institute home and abroad, we need to learn from our American counterparts."

# GLOBAL LENS



From left: Children observe Tsavora Fencing Mtaani club members during an outdoor training session in the Mathare area of Nairobi, Kenya, on June 9. A club member with fencing gear walks in the Mathare area on June 9. Commuters in a minibus watch fencing club members practice in the Mathare area on June 9. PHOTOS BY LUIS TATO / AFP

## FOCAL POINT

### Promising young fencers in Kenyan slum poised for sport's positive effects

A decade ago, life for Wanyoike in Mathare, one of the largest urban slums in Kenya, seemed worlds apart.

"I was in crime, I was a gangster," said Wanyoike, 27. He described how he was shot and lost two friends amid the violence that rattled the area.

But a second chance at life came in the form of a fencing coach, who spotted Wanyoike while he was working out. The young man quickly became attracted to the novel sport.

Wanyoike later won a scholarship to South Africa and qualified as a teacher. He returned to his hometown in Nairobi to set up the fencing club Tsavora Fencing Mtaani in 2021, determined to help young people.

"The only thing they could do was ... crime and drugs; for ladies, prostitution," Wanyoike said.

His story is one that Dixon Mumia can understand.

"I was stealing things, I was not a nice boy," the 17-year-old said. "I decided that this was the place I was supposed to be. I found myself changing."

Still, it was not easy for him to turn to an unfamiliar sport.

"First, when my friends saw me, they laughed. They said that it is a waste of time, and this game's played by the richest people," Mumia said.

The average daily income in Mathare is about \$2, according to EduKenya, an education charity

operating in the slum, while annual fencing training and competing costs about \$2,500, which is unaffordable for the community, according to Wanyoike.

But Mumia is determined to make it work. "I was born here but I don't want to stay here," he said.

One of the fencing team's stars is Eline Marendes, whose past as a dancer shines through when she deftly wields her epee — even Wanyoike has a fight on his hands when he faces her.

"At first I thought it was a very dangerous sport, because I thought we would hurt each other," she said.

Two years of training have changed her mind.

"I see myself as a very big fencer," said Marendes, 16, who grew up in Mathare. "Maybe in two years, I will be earning from fencing."

After the fencers warmed up in a community center — recent floods in Kenya destroyed their usual training grounds — they hit the streets, with curious onlookers and captivated children following their moves.

The boys tussled over a point until Wanyoike stepped in, as behind them packed matatu minibuses screeched past and touts screamed for business.

Marendes watched the chaos and smiled. "They are like children, but they are like my brothers," she said.



Clockwise from top: Fencing club members spar during a training session in the Mathare area of Nairobi on June 9. Club members warm up for their training session at a community center in the Mathare area on June 9. Club members discuss fencing techniques during a training session at a community center in the Mathare area on June 9. Below: Club members train on streets in the Mathare area on June 9.



## BUSINESS

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## HIGHER GROUND



Chinese new energy vehicles on display during an auto expo in Brussels earlier this year.  
ZHAO DINGZHE / XINHUA

## Voices grow against EU's protectionism

EC tariffs on Chinese EVs, unreasonable requests for info attract sharp rebuke

By WANG KEJU and ZHU WENQIAN

China will take all necessary measures to firmly defend the legitimate rights of its companies, said the Ministry of Commerce on Thursday, in the wake of the European Union's unfounded actions to slap hefty tariffs on Chinese-made electric cars.

Brussels' protectionist actions are in utter disregard for the cooperation of Chinese firms extended during the probe, and discourage governments and industries of EU member states, besides straining ties between the bloc and the world's second-largest economy, officials and executives said.

The European Commission has demanded a substantial amount of information regarding development plans, technological processes and product formulations of Chinese EV and battery companies, said He Yadong, a spokesman for the ministry, at a news conference.

The scope, scale and quantity of information requested by the EC are unprecedented and far exceed the requirements of an antisubsidy investigation, He said.

Despite that, consequent to Brussels' decision to launch the probe, the Chinese government has engaged in extensive communications with the EU and its member states, including Germany and France, in multiple forms, like face-to-face meetings, official talks and written correspondences over 80 times, the ministry said.

Beijing has actively sought avenues for open communication and constructive engagement with Brussels, fully demonstrating its sincerity and willingness to seek win-win solutions, said Xu Hongcai, deputy director of the China Association of Policy Science's Economic Policy Committee.

Though Chinese enterprises

cooperated with the EU's probe to the extent possible and provided information as required, Brussels still decided to impose punitive tariffs, He said.

From next month, the EU will impose additional tariffs on Chinese-made EVs, ranging from 17.4 percent for BYD to 38.1 percent for SAIC, on top of the standard 10 percent car duty, unless Beijing agrees to an effective solution to so-called subsidies that the EU claims are distorting its markets.

The EU's move to impose hefty tariffs on Chinese EVs is a blatant protectionist measure and a politically motivated decision, said Jian Junbo, deputy director of the Center for China-Europe Relations at Fudan University's Institute of International Studies.

The basis and procedures for this decision do not align with the World Trade Organization's rules, and its consequences could prove detrimental to the stable and healthy development of China-EU relations, Jian said, adding that the EU's protectionist measures run counter to the global trend of globalization and ultimately hinder the innovation and global competitiveness of European EV manufacturers.

The European automobile industry, however, has not submitted any applications to the European Commission requesting the investigations. On the contrary, European car manufacturers such as BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Volkswagen have expressed their opposition to Brussels' actions.

Oliver Zipse, CEO of BMW, said in a statement that the adoption of protectionist measures like tariffs could trigger a cycle of retaliation, leading to a breakdown of cooperative trade relations.

On Monday, Beijing opened an antidumping investigation into pork imports from the EU and is

also reviewing applications seeking an antisubsidy probe into the bloc's dairy products.

In addition, an antidumping investigation launched in January into brandy imported from the EU is moving forward.

Governments of various EU member states also voiced their concerns that protectionist moves of the EC may cripple fair global competition.

"The European Commission's punitive tariffs hit German companies and their top products," German Transport Minister Volker Wissing said on the social media platform X. "Cars must become cheaper through more competition, open markets and significantly better business conditions in the EU, not through trade war and market isolation."

Hungarian Minister for National Economy Marton Nagy condemned the move as overly protectionist in a statement. "We do not agree with the brutal European punitive tariffs on Chinese electric car manufacturers; excessive protectionism is not the solution."

The commission's decision would unfairly discriminate against Chinese manufacturers and disrupt market competition, which had been vital for the European Union, Nagy said.

In addition to the probe into Chinese electric cars, Brussels has resorted to a series of trade and investment restrictions on China since October last year. In all, 41 measures have been taken, with an estimated combined value of \$28.4 billion, according to China's Commerce Ministry.

These measures have been accompanied by intense investigations under the pretext of the Foreign Subsidy Regulation and International Procurement Instrument, severely affecting Chinese companies' economic activities in Europe and undermining China-EU economic cooperation.

Contact the writers at wangkeju@chinadaily.com.cn

## NEA head rips apart claims new energy industry has 'overcapacity'

By LIU YUKUN liuyukun@chinadaily.com.cn

China's new energy industry does not have an "overcapacity" issue, said Zhang Jianhua, head of the National Energy Administration on Thursday.

He called for the international community to uphold fair competition and open collaboration for global green and low-carbon transformation.

Zhang said supply-demand equilibrium is relative, and imbalances are common in market-driven economies. Moderate supply over demand can facilitate technological advancements and cost efficiencies. Solutions mainly lie in market adjustments.

He noted the photovoltaics industry is thriving, driven by a surge in production enthusiasm globally.

Zhang said: "Projections by the International Renewable Energy Agency indicated that by 2030, global PV capacity will surpass 5.4 billion kilowatts to meet the goal set by the Paris Agreement, nearly quadrupling the 2023 capacity. China's PV sector, primarily led by private enterprises, displayed intense competition and expansion due to optimistic market expectations," he said.

"However, the industry faces challenges in adopting new technologies and phasing out outdated

capacity. While technological progress has accelerated, enterprises are investing in advanced capacity to stay competitive. Simultaneously, the coexistence of old and new capacities during technological transitions has inflated overall industry capacity."

Zhang's remarks came after some Western politicians and media outlets recently claimed that the Chinese new energy industry's "overcapacity" has been causing market distortions abroad by dumping products at low prices. In May, the US government decided to impose additional tariffs on imports of Chinese solar cells, raising them from 25 percent to 50 percent.

Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University, said the price advantage of Chinese PV products was due to years of large-scale development and technological iterations, while the additional tariffs are more of a political maneuver rather than economically driven, considering China's direct exports to the US are small.

"They fear that China's PV industry will quickly dominate the global market, leaving little space for them," Lin said.

Latest data from the National Energy Administration showed that from 2013 to 2023, China's wind power's installed capacity has

grown from over 76 million kilowatts to over 440 million kilowatts, nearly a fivefold increase, while PV installed capacity has increased from over 19 million kilowatts to over 600 million kilowatts, up over 30 times.

In 2023, the new installed capacity of renewable energy for power generation exceeded half of the global total, while China's cumulative installed capacity of renewable energy for power generation accounted for nearly 40 percent of the global share.

As China's wind and photovoltaic power capacity exceeded 1.1 billion kilowatts by April, efforts are underway to improve the consumption rate of new energy sources. The NEA addressed the need to expedite the construction of power grid projects, in order to smoothen the power-to-grid connection for new energy sources, optimize power-to-grid connection processes and equip the distribution network with a target total capacity of around 500 million kilowatts for distributed new energy sources by 2025.

Energy consumption saw substantial growth in the past decade. NEA data showed the proportion of consumption of nonfossil energy like wind power, solar power, hydropower, nuclear power and biomass has increased from 10.2 percent to 17.9 percent, a cumulative increase of 7.7 percentage points.

## Fresh measures to enthuse VC sector

By SHI JING in Shanghai shijing@chinadaily.com.cn

Following the government's latest move to promote high-quality development of the venture capital sector in the country, VC firms will be able to better serve technology startups and facilitate new quality productive forces, experts and market mavens said.

The General Office of the State Council released on Wednesday 17 new measures that cover five major themes. These include nurturing more VC entities, expanding capital sources, strengthening regulatory guidance and differentiated supervision, completing exit mechanisms and optimizing the market environment.

Experts from Shenzhen Qianhai Financial Holdings wrote in a report on Thursday that the highlight of the new measures included encouraging industry leaders and research institutes to participate in VC investments, supporting international institutions to set up onshore yuan-denominated funds and giving more play to government-funded VCs.

Qualified VCs are encouraged to issue corporate bonds and use similar financing tools, they said.

In his keynote speech during the opening ceremony of the two-day Lujiazui Forum in Shanghai on Wednesday, Wu Qing, chairman of the China Securities Regulatory

Commission, the country's top securities watchdog, said efforts will be made to optimize policies regarding the entire life cycle of VC and private equity firms, covering fundraising, investment, capital management and exit.

More long-term capital will be introduced in the market to invest in small technology companies, such as those specializing in chip-making and biomedicine, at their early development phase. This will help create a virtuous cycle among technologies, industries and finance, said Wu.

During a panel discussion at the forum, CSRC Vice-Chairman Fang Xinghai said Chinese PE and VC firms have invested in 4,438 projects in the first quarter of this year, with the total investment value contracting moderately to 191.5 billion yuan (\$26.4 billion) year-on-year.

The whole-year investment value is expected to be in the range of 800 billion yuan to 1 trillion yuan this year.

According to Fang, PE and VC firms are important in boosting technology innovation. While fundraising is not difficult in China given the country's large deposit size, exits may be a major hurdle for the expansion of PE and VC firms.

To that end, overseas listings can be an option for exits and the CSRC believes that Chinese mainland companies should accelerate the

pace of filing their overseas listing applications, said Fang.

"We encourage more Chinese mainland companies to choose Hong Kong as their overseas listing destination," he said.

Ever since China's new filing regulations for overseas listings took effect on March 31 last year, the CSRC has received such applications from 158 Chinese mainland companies as of Tuesday, among which 85 floated on the Hong Kong bourse while 73 went public in the United States, said Fang.

While China has shown much potential in financing technology startups during their early days of development, it should explore more financing channels for these companies when they have entered a later stage of development, said Kevin D Sneider, president of Asia-Pacific Ex-Japan for Goldman Sachs, during the forum.

The introduction of more private capital can be considered when companies enter this further development phase, he said.

Bonnie Y Chan, CEO of Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Ltd, said small and medium-sized technology companies usually encounter greater financing difficulties, especially when market liquidity is taken up by several industry behemoths.

"An effective market should be able to provide financing to companies of different sizes," she said.

## Starbucks ups perks as rivalry brews

By WANG ZHUOQIONG wangzhuoqiong@chinadaily.com.cn

Starbucks China on Thursday unveiled major upgrades to its rewards program in China amid its promotional activities in an effort to gain more consumers in fierce competition of the on-premise coffee sector.

The second-largest coffee chain house in China after Luckin Coffee by store number announced major perks in its Starbucks Rewards membership program, which involves about 100 million members, including measures to introduce a new Diamond Star Card membership tier offering personalized and richer experiences, exclusive gifts and superior services. Starbucks is also collaborating with hospitality operator Hilton Group for the first time to innovate the membership experience.

"This is the most groundbreaking upgrade since the establishment of

the Starbucks Rewards program," said Molly Liu, executive vice-president and co-CEO of Starbucks China.

In the second quarter of the 2024 fiscal year, sales from members continued to grow, reaching a record high of 75 percent of total sales, the company said. Currently, Starbucks has over 7,000 outlets in China, covering nearly 900 county-level urban areas and cities.

The company has denied participating in a price war waged by competitors.

On online posts by consumers buying Starbucks products at extreme discounts, coffee fans posted comments such as, "These cases are rare and require meeting many conditions to combine multiple platform discounts," according to the company.

The company has encountered a difficult second quarter this year. Comparable global store sales declined 6 percent, with comparable China store sales down 11 percent, driven by an 8 percent decline

in average receipts and a 4 percent decline in comparable transactions.

Belinda Wong, chairwoman and CEO of Starbucks China, said at the earnings release, "Starbucks China has launched personalized promotional activities to increase consumer purchase frequency, allowing us to optimize sales and profits."

Starbucks strategies include developing new products. In the fiscal second quarter of 2024, Starbucks China launched 27 new products, twice the number of the previous quarter and three times that of the same period the previous year.

More activities are scheduled for afternoon business hours, directly addressing the decline in afternoon sales.

Starbucks said its goal is to pursue high-quality, profitable and sustainable growth to solidify leadership in the premium segment, and to continue focusing on high-quality coffee and people connections, providing high-end coffee experiences for Chinese customers.



An outlet of Starbucks in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province.  
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Jason Yu, general manager of Kantar Worldpanel China, said, "Starbucks has had its membership benefits system in place for a long time, but the highest tier had a relatively low threshold and didn't offer much perceived value."

In the current competitive landscape, Starbucks is taking a dual approach. On the one hand, it is offering various coupons, including

major promotions in livestreams, to make prices more accessible and appeal to cost-conscious consumers. On the other hand, by introducing high-end benefits like the Diamond Star Card, it aims to attract and retain middle-income group members with higher spending power, providing them with unique and delightful experiences, said Yu.

### Briefly

#### Loan prime rates remain unchanged

China's one-year loan prime rate, a market-based benchmark lending rate, came in at 3.45 percent on Thursday, unchanged from the previous month. The over-five-year LPR, on which many lenders base their mortgage rates, also remained unchanged from the previous reading of 3.95 percent, said the National Interbank Funding Center.

#### Renminbi weakens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, also known as the yuan, weakened 33 pips to 7.1192 against the US dollar on Thursday, said the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

# BUSINESS

## Air support



Farmers use an aerial drone to transport newly harvested oranges outside an orchard in Zigui county, a major producer of the fruit in China, on Wednesday. Helped by the county government in Hubei province, planting oranges has become a major source of income for farmers, with the county's total orange output exceeding 70,000 metric tons last year. ZHENG JIAYU / FOR CHINA DAILY

# Stronger health awareness awakens sleep economy

Demand for better rest seen on the rise, propelling emergence of various products

By ZHENG YIRAN  
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China's sleep economy is experiencing rapid growth as well as showing vast business potential, thanks to a consumption upgrade and surging concerns over sleep health spurred on by a fast-paced modern life.

Zhang Min, a post-95s white-collar worker who has been suffering from insomnia for three years, averages a sleep time of just 6.75 hours daily.

"I have tried a lot of sleep-aid products, including eye masks, earplugs, sleep aromatherapy, essential oils, melatonin, among others. Last year, I even went to a sleep experience store, where I tried out sleep-aid mattresses and memory foam pillows. In the past two years, I have spent over 10,000 yuan (\$1,378) on these products," she said.

According to a study conducted by the Chinese Sleep Research Society in March, most Chinese people normally go to sleep after 12 am and average a sleep time of just 6.75 hours.

Among the 10,000 interviewees aged between 20 and 70 years in the study, 30 percent said they suffered from sleep disorders, including waking up early, having difficulty falling asleep, using the bathroom at night, snoring, coughing, having nightmares, as well as pain and discomfort during sleep.

Estimates by global consultancy Frost & Sullivan show that people with insomnia will hit 300 million by 2025 in China.

The growing group with sleeping issues propelled the emergence of numerous sleep-aid products.

On e-commerce platforms such as Taobao and JD.com, a search for the term "sleep-aid" pulls up a wide variety of products. Melatonin, sleep monitors, sleep patches, essential oils, smart mattresses — prices of these products range quite broadly.

According to market research firm iiMedia Research, in 2023, China's sleep economy market totaled nearly 496 billion yuan, up 8.6 percent year-on-year.

With the reach and variety of sleep-aid products on the rise, the



A visitor (left) tries out a sleep-aid device during a consumer product expo in Haikou, Hainan province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

market is expected to grow to an estimated size of 658.7 billion yuan by 2027, and 1 trillion yuan by 2030.

Wang Peng, associate research fellow at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, said: "Owing to a fast-paced life, work stress, and emotional problems, a growing number of people are suffering from sleep problems. They, as consumers, are paying increased attention to sleep health, and are willing to purchase professional sleep-aid products to improve sleep quality, stimulating the development of the sleep economy."

According to business data provider Qichacha, a total of 9,096 enterprises were operating sleep-related businesses in China as of Tuesday.

On May 31, Nanjing-based Simcere Pharmaceutical Group Ltd said the Chinese Phase III clinical study of its novel drug for treating insomnia patients in China had met the primary study endpoint. The drug is the only dual orexin receptor antagonist approved by the European Medicines Agency that has shown improvements in functioning during daytime.

On Nov 15, 2022, Simcere inked a deal with Basel, Switzerland-based company Idorsia Ltd, to be granted an exclusive right to develop and commercialize the product on the Chinese mainland, and the Hong

“They, as consumers, are paying increased attention to sleep health, and are willing to purchase professional sleep-aid products to improve sleep quality, stimulating the development of the sleep economy.”

Wang Peng, associate research fellow at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences

**496 billion yuan**  
scale of China's sleep economy in 2023, according to market research firm iiMedia Research

Kong and Macao special administrative regions. The product has already been launched in the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, France, Spain, Austria and Canada.

Sleep-aid home appliance companies are also ramping up efforts to develop the sleep economy.

In September 2020, Shaoxing, Zhejiang province-based Sleemon launched a smart mattress. Using sleeping posture adaptation and artificial intelligence sleep data technology, the smart mattress offers customized solutions to consumers with sleep disorders.

By March, it had invested over 1 billion yuan in sleep technology research and development, and had gained more than 1,200 patents, data from the company showed.

Other sleep technology companies, including DeRucci and Simmons Bedding Co, are also making inroads into China's sleep economy.

In terms of new growth points, Hong Yong, an associate research fellow at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation's e-commerce research institute, said intelligent sleep products, including smart mattresses and wearable devices, will maintain their popularity.

Hong said developing a smart sleep environment for the house, such as creating a more conducive home environment for sleep through intelligent lighting, temperature and humidity regulation, is also a subcategory worth exploring.

"Sleep health consultancy services, as well as the combination of sleep economy with the tourism and hotel industry, are also expected to pick up pace," he added.

# Rules to improve level playing field for firms

By WANG KEJU  
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China has rolled out a fair competition review system to enable private enterprises to compete on equal terms with other market players.

Experts said the regulations will help dismantle "invisible barriers" that have hindered the growth of private companies and help foster increased competition.

From Aug 1, administrative agencies and organizations legally authorized to manage public affairs must conduct fair competition reviews while formulating laws, rules and policies related to business activities, according to the new regulations.

The introduction of a fair competition review system signifies a step forward in promoting a market-oriented approach, where competition takes precedence, said Xu Hongcai, deputy director of the China Association of Policy Science's Economic Policy Committee.

By implementing this system, the government aims to minimize interference in the micro-economy. The approach highlights the decisive role of the market in efficiently allocating resources and encourages a level playing field for businesses to compete fairly, Xu added.

While its establishment holds numerous benefits, it is important to recognize that it is also a long-term, systematic and complex endeavor.

In 2016, the State Council proposed the establishment of such a system. In 2022, the amended Anti-Monopoly Law explicitly stated the need to establish and improve a fair competition review system, signifying its integration into the country's legal framework.

To date, China has issued several documents on this front. However, prior to the introduction of the regulations, there was a lack of specific provisions with a higher legal rank, said Zhong Gang, executive director of the Competition

Law Research Institute at East China University of Political Science and Law in Shanghai.

The fair competition review system will still face notable challenges during its implementation, the Ministry of Justice said in a statement.

Discriminatory practices and differential treatment toward businesses, especially private enterprises, have emerged in areas such as market access, resource acquisition, government procurement, bidding process and subsidy allocation, the ministry added.

By prohibiting the inclusion of hidden restrictions on market entry and exit, the regulations aim to address pressing concerns facing businesses during market competition, such as the introduction of policies that may inadvertently exclude private enterprises or businesses from outside the region.

By promoting transparency and fairness, the regulations aim to foster a level playing field that encourages the participation of all businesses, regardless of their ownership structure or geographical location. This will help unlock the potential of private enterprises and attract investments from outside regions, promoting economic growth and innovation, Zhong added.

Meanwhile, the regulations will help promote regions where conditions are ripe to explore the establishment of cross-regional and cross-departmental mechanisms for fair competition review.

By involving multiple regions and departments, decisionmaking processes will be subjected to broader scrutiny, enhancing transparency and accountability in policy implementation while minimizing the potential for biased or protectionist practices, said Dong Zhongyun, chief economist at China AVIC Securities.

The encouragement of cross-regional fair competition review mechanisms aligns with the broader objective of building a unified national market characterized by high efficiency, standardization, openness and fair competition, Dong said.

# Desertification battle powers ecosystem revamp

By ZHUANG QIANG  
and PANG BO

As a power supply worker in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, Wang Fei is proud he is doing his bit in combatting desertification in a region known as the Horqin Sandy Land — the second-largest of its kind in China.

The region covers an area of 5.73 million hectares, spanning 16 counties, banners and districts in the prefecture-level cities of Tongliao, Chifeng, as well as Hinggan League.

Wang's unit, State Grid Tongliao Power Supply Co, has developed a new model of coexistence between the sandy grid and economic necessity, letting its staff members engage in a campaign they call the "Hundred-Herb Bag Initiative" and plant fire-resistant green vegetation along the power lines.

As 52.9 percent of its total area is covered by sandy topsoil, Tongliao plans to develop "five major ecological industries" in achieving "five major ecological governance targets", so as to win the battle against Horqin by 2030.

Wang, head of the Baxiantong Central Power Supply Business Office, said Tongliao Power Supply Co has constructed a herb garden, selecting 12 plant species suitable for growth in Horqin for seedling, germination and experimental cultivation.

Carrying bags of seeds of plant species such as *Pterolobium punctatum* and *Salix gordejewii*, the power grid employees can plant green vegetation along their power line inspection routes, helping strengthen the foundations of the towers as well as stabilize the sand dunes, he said.

This can also help solve the problem of unstable power grid operations as well as high operating and maintenance costs caused by falling poles, he said.

To keep the plants in the sandy soil, they have devised various methods such as constructing grass grids and planting drought-resistant shrubs and willows, all of which aid in wind protection and soil reinforcement, Wang said.

"Since launching the Hundred-Herb Bag Initiative, we power workers have successfully transformed 23.3 hectares of sandy soil into fixed sand dunes, slashing the number of line failures by 56 percent, or 103 occurrences, while protecting the beauty of nature," Wang said.

Besides planting fire-resistant green vegetation, the power workers also distribute seedlings among nearby villagers, encouraging them to grow the plants in their fields and earn extra income, Wang said.

Tumen Jaregen, a villager in Ulaan-eregegacha under Naiman banner's Baxiantong town, said: "This year, 68 kilograms of seeds were distributed to villagers, and 1.7 hectares of sandy land were planted. When the seeds sprout, we can earn an extra income of 22,500 yuan (\$3,160) for each hectare."

Cui Yubo, government head of Baxiantong, said the good practice of power workers spreading grass seeds while checking power lines has not only provided better guarantees for electricity supplies of local herdsmen, but also improved the ecological value of the sandy areas.

"Their Hundred-Herb Bag Initiative is a good project that is environmentally friendly and benefits the people," Cui said.

According to Tongliao's municipal forestry and grassland bureau, the existing 2.73 million hectares of sandy land in the city are still fragile in an ecological sense, and difficult to control.

When the battle against Horqin is won by 2030, the city's forest and grass coverage rate could reach 54.68 percent while the comprehensive vegetation coverage rate of desertified land could fall to 48 percent, it said.

By then, Tongliao would be in a position to develop its forest medicine industry as well as its forest and grass carbon sink industry, it said, noting that by 2030, the cultivation area of the city's agricultural base featuring red apples will likely reach 33,330 hectares, with an expected annual output valuing 2 billion yuan.

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# BUSINESSFOCUS



**Above:** Visitors check out digital manufacturing platforms in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, in May 2022.  
**Below:** A visitor experiences an online digital sales system in Hangzhou in May 2022. PHOTOS BY LONG WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Digital tech fuels manufacturing growth in Yangtze River Delta

Region a hub for technological innovation and development

HANGZHOU/NANJING — At an electronics workshop in the Yangtze River Delta region, automated machines follow computer programs, with one directing a storage system for materials. Soon, a one-meter-tall robot is ready to deliver the necessary components.

"Several major production lines in our factory have achieved automated workflows throughout the production process, and we will continue to expand them," said Ge Yongming, director of digital and intelligent operation at Suzhou Good-Ark Electronics Co Ltd, in East China's Jiangsu province. As he spoke, several small logistics robots bustled along the production line behind him.

Covering a large range of products, Good-Ark Electronics has more than 100,000 kinds of materials needed for production, most of which are components, such as diodes, that measure a few millimeters in length. The challenge of accurately storing and dispatching thousands of materials during production prompted Good-Ark Electronics to initiate a new round of digital upgrades in 2022.

However, there was no existing automated conveyor system for millimeters-long electronic com-



ponents. Good-Ark Electronics and its partners had to invent a special, customized digital production line.

Stereoscopic warehouse, collaborative robotic arms, automated roller lines ... Customizing automated production lines requires many equipment suppliers, but it's convenient for Good-Ark Electronics because all the required manufacturers can be found in the same industrial park.

"Initially, we had no idea what the final production line would look like. When we came up with an idea, we would share it and go to each other's factory to check the feasibility in front of the equipment, and we ended up refining it for almost two years before it took shape," Ge said.

Today, Good-Ark Electronics

operates an automated production system that spans multiple processes, which has increased material retrieval accuracy to 100 percent and reduced retrieval time from 20 minutes to just three minutes.

Good-Ark Electronics is an example of the mutual-benefit cooperation among agglomerated manufacturing enterprises in digitalization transformation, and the Yangtze River Delta (Hangzhou) Manufacturing Digitalization Empowerment Center in Zhejiang province reflects the trend of cross-city technology cooperation in the Yangtze River Delta region.

On a large screen in the center's display area, the digital twin virtual production line, which is identical to the physical production line, shows all production processes so that enterprises can precisely mon-

itor workflows and manage personnel and equipment.

Manufacturing enterprises can access everything needed for digital transformation, from industrial software to transformation plans in this center which links more than 400 digital transformation service providers.

For instance, Shanghai Machine Tool Factory Co Ltd, helped by the center, has improved production efficiency by 97 percent and on-time delivery rate by 98 percent, with the utilization rate of redundant materials increasing from less than 10 percent to 40 percent.

"At present, the empowerment center has promoted nearly 100 digital transformation implementation projects of manufacturing enterprises in the Yangtze River Delta region," said Fu Zheng, director of the center.

For three consecutive years, China has launched smart manufacturing pilot projects, building 421 national-level demonstration factories along with over 10,000 provincial-level digital workshops and smart factories.

Technologies such as artificial intelligence and digital twins have been applied in more than 90 percent of the demonstration plants. 5G has been promoted on a large scale in quality inspection, mining production and other fields. The industrial internet now spans all major sectors, with over 200 application examples established.

XINHUA

## 'Virtual power plant' makes good use of new energy

YINCHUAN — Despite the lunch break, several furnaces and ancillary facilities continue to rumble at Jujin Chemical Co Ltd in Zhongwei, Northwest China's Ningxia Hui autonomous region. The production of calcium carbide fills the workshop with hot air and a dazzling glare.

"We have flexibly adjusted our production timing since September 2023 to increase production when the power grid is less occupied," said Yu Shengyuan, deputy general manager of the company.

"Each kilowatt-hour of electricity generated by new energy, if consumed in this way, can help our company receive a direct subsidy of 0.19 yuan (2.6 cents), which not only ensures production but has also earned us an additional 400,000 yuan so far."

This approach, known as the "virtual power plant", allows users to participate in daily power grid regulation and make sure the electricity generated by new energy will not be wasted.

Ningxia has abundant wind and solar resources, with green power capacity exceeding 36 million kilowatts by the end of 2023. New energy has surpassed coal to become the region's largest electricity source.

"However, there is a mismatch in time and space between the generation and consumption of green energy in Ningxia, making it difficult to achieve a real-time balance of power supply and demand," said Wang Fang, technical director of the region's virtual power plants.

"A virtual power plant is invisible. It acts as an intelligent energy regulation system, bringing together various electricity users, distributed power sources, and energy storage providers," Wang said. "It lets users voluntarily change their electricity consumption behavior through market incentives."

The virtual power plant has emerged as a supplementary and effective regulation mode. When there is surplus power supply, it can guide users to increase green energy consumption. During peak hours, it can reduce electricity load to secure the power grid.

XINHUA



Workers dust photovoltaic panels after windy weather at a power station in Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui autonomous region, in March 2023. WANG PENG / XINHUA

## SAVE WATER, SAVE THE PLANET.

IT'S NOT JUST A DROP  
IN THE OCEAN.  
IT'S LIFE.

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## EU's EV tariffs will sabotage its ambition to be the leader of the green transition

Following an investigation that concluded the Chinese electric vehicle industry "benefits from unfair subsidization", the European Commission has announced it is to impose additional tariffs of 17.4 percent to 38.1 percent on Chinese EV imports.

Industry insiders say that the tariffs will hardly frustrate the momentum of Chinese-made EVs in the European market, or help their local counterparts compete, and some take them as being a bargaining chip for a better deal in subsequent negotiations with China.

Yet even if the pending tariffs do not translate into debilitating damage to Chinese EV manufacturers, they indicate a very harmful turn in European policies. They betray the European Union's long-standing commitment to free trade, and signal its resort to interventionist, protectionist tools.

Although Brussels has so far sounded like it does have reservations about Washington's enthusiasm for a trade assault, its latest move targeting the Chinese EV industry could, if not managed well, be the first shots in what would be a damaging trade war between China and the EU.

Beijing is opposed to any form of trade war. With the trade tit-for-tat with Washington still ongoing, the last thing it wants is another trade war with one of its most important trading partners. Beijing has no major geopolitical conflict with Brussels. For decades, bilateral political relations have been generally fine and stable; and economic and trade ties between China and the EU have thrived.

The planned punitive tariffs, however, risk reversing that trend and hurting both economies badly, especially at a time when both economies are struggling to get firing on all cylinders again. The Chinese and European economies are interwoven so broadly and deeply that when one side gets hurt, both do. This at least in part explains why both Chinese and European car-makers participating in a closed-door meeting on Tuesday voiced opposition to Brussels' proposal of higher tariffs. That meeting convened by the Chinese Commerce Ministry reportedly featured four Chinese and six European automakers as well as related chambers of commerce, industry associations and research institutions. In the discussions, the representatives of some Chinese enterprises reportedly called for the government to take "the harshest measures" against the European side. The idea mooted was to raise import tariffs for high-displacement European vehicles to 25 percent, which they argued was consistent both with World Trade Organization rules and the country's low-carbon development goals. But such a retaliatory move would not be conducive to resolving the trade concerns bothering the two sides.

Yet if Brussels goes ahead with its tariffs, it will indeed leave Beijing no option but to retaliate. In a statement, the Commerce Ministry vowed to take "all necessary measures to firmly defend the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese companies". German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has voiced his concerns about the EU Commission's move, arguing protectionism "ultimately just makes everything more expensive and everyone poorer". "We do not close our market to foreign companies because we do not want that for our companies either," he said on Saturday.

All European automakers present at the Commerce Ministry meeting expressed opposition to the impending tariffs, and expressed their hopes for China and Europe to engage in negotiations as soon as possible, so as to avoid an escalation of the bilateral trade frictions.

The same day, Vice-Premier Ding Xuexiang conveyed such concerns to European Commission Executive Vice-President Maros Sefcovic at the fifth EU-China High-Level Environment and Climate Dialogue in Brussels. The tariffs are "typical protectionism," he said, "which is not conducive to the EU's green transition, and detrimental to the overall situation of global cooperation on climate response".

The EU should be prudent in its approach and not over bet on the cards it is holding, as it risks becoming piggy in the middle in the game between China and the US for leadership in the green transition, putting paid to its own ambition coveting that position.

## Selling damaging US chip move no easy task

The US side makes no bones about the core mission of Under Secretary of Commerce for Industry and Security Alan Estevez's planned visits to the Netherlands and Japan early next month. The intention is to press the two US allies to further tighten and expand their implementation of the United States' ban on high-end chip and equipment exports to China.

The requirements are concrete: adding another 11 Chinese companies to the current list consisting of five prohibited enterprises; extending the exports ban to high-bandwidth memory chips needed for the development of artificial intelligence; and scrapping all servicing contracts related to high-end chips between their companies, in particular ASML and Tokyo Electron, and their Chinese partners.

The reason why the Republic of Korea does not appear in the US export control policy chief's itinerary is because its major HBM chipmakers, including SK Hynix, Samsung Electronics and Micron Technology, mainly rely on equipment from ASML and Tokyo Electron. So as long as the latter two companies submit to US pressure, the ROK companies will also be subject to it.

Holding aloft its banner of values, the US implemented its China-targeted chip exports ban in 2022, and pressed the Netherlands, Japan and the ROK to join it last year. But all of the three allies have been quietly resisting the US' pressure. Although they ostensibly stopped their companies exporting high-end chips and equipment to China, their companies still seek to do whatever they can to protect their own interests. That includes providing contracted after-sales services to Chinese partners for the equipment the latter bought before the US ban was introduced.

Meanwhile, the three countries are taking advantage of bilateral and multilateral occasions to negotiate with China to explore ways to sustain their chip companies' China business, as the US side does not, and cannot, provide them with any alternative market that can replace China for their enterprises. It is no secret that some major US chipmaking companies have been doing exactly the same.

All of the three countries want more time to evaluate the impact of the current export bans on high-end chip-making equipment. Not to mention the fact that they are all waiting to see the outcome of the US presidential election in November. So Estevez might find his lobbying a challenging task if he only waves the flag of value diplomacy and cannot tell his hosts how the US can help ASML and Tokyo Electron make up the losses that will result from meeting the new requirements of the US.

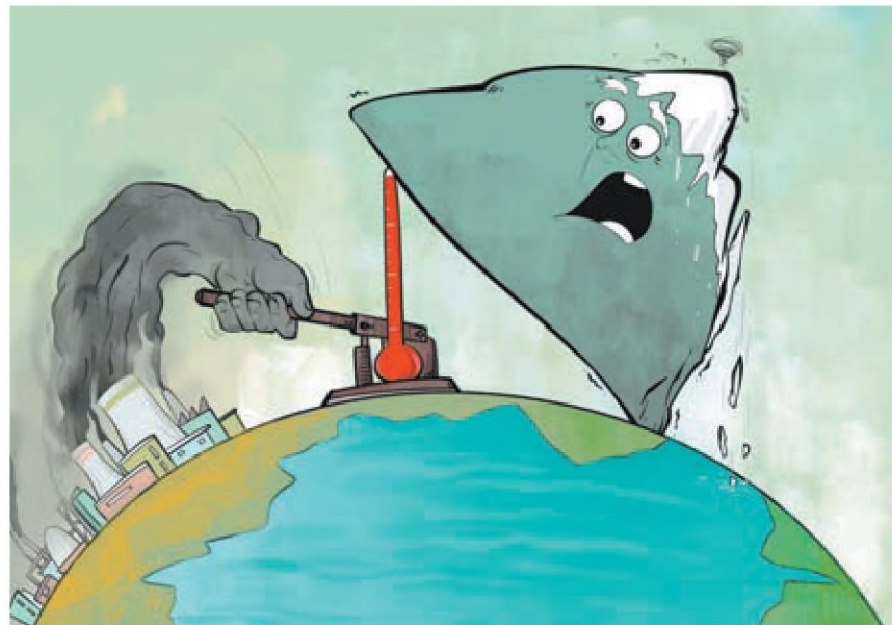
Notably, Estevez's planned trip to the Netherlands will follow the swearing-in of the new Dutch Cabinet that shows an even stronger will to protect the national interests of the Netherlands. That the outgoing Foreign Trade Minister Liesje Schreinemacher paid a farewell visit to the US last week to lobby for the interests of ASML is also a telling sign that to maintain the Chinese market is a consensus of the country's political circle.

Not only the Dutch people, but all US allies are wary that the restrictive, coercive, bullying and protectionist moves the US takes targeting China in economy, trade, technology and industry are all to defend the US' hegemony rather than serving other parties' interests.

Estevez's hosts should bear in mind that Washington has already imposed the restrictions on US companies including Applied Materials and Lam Research, and it will not want any foreign companies, even those of its allies, to benefit from its rules-bending moves.

That both the Dutch and Japanese government have declined to comment on Estevez's visits should prepare the US visitor for difficult discussions in both stops, if he cannot resolve their concerns.

Cao Yi



## Opinion Line

## Authorities should resolve concerns of those in new forms of employment

Statistics show that the number of people engaged in new forms of employment, including couriers, take-out delivery riders, ride-hailing drivers and other related occupations, has reached 84 million in China, accounting for 21 percent of the total workforce.

However, the current law and social security system have not been adjusted in line with the new employment pattern, and the rights and interests of workers in many aspects still need to be further protected.

Because of complex employment modes, quite a number of practitioners have not signed labor contracts with the platforms, resulting in a

series of problems. In addition, given that most of the new employment forms rely on the internet and lack transparent and full-fledged rules, this has affected the rights and interests of workers.

To solve the problems, the country should improve the laws, regulations and institutional systems to ensure the rights and interests of workers in new forms of employment are safeguarded.

The authorities should improve the labor laws and regulations, defining the relationship between enterprises and workers under different forms of employment and their application standards through unified national legislation. The clear basis for the

rights and obligations between two parties at the legal level is of substantial significance for the protection of the rights and interests of workers.

Not long ago, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security and other departments issued a notice to explore the construction of a one-stop diversified joint mediation mode of labor disputes under the new employment forms. More forward-looking innovations and explorations should be made.

A better employment environment and a sound institutional system should be created to make all workers feel more secure and respected.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

## Kishida government facing uphill task in Southeast Asia

Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa is reportedly considering a visit to Cambodia to confirm the progress of bilateral cooperation, in early July.

Despite the bubble bursting, Japan has generally maintained close economic, infrastructure, and bilateral exchange development with Southeast Asian countries.

In recent years, China's rise poses a challenge to Japan's traditional advantages in Southeast Asia. China has already undertaken key projects through its Belt and Road Initiative, including the Phnom Penh-Sihanoukville Expressway, Cambodia's first highway. Construction is also underway on a second expressway connect-

ing Phnom Penh with the Cambodian-Vietnamese border city of Bavet, with an investment of \$1.35 billion.

Japan remains a significant participant in Cambodia's infrastructure investment. Since 1994, Cambodia has carried out 210 Japanese investment projects totaling \$3.1 billion. In 2022, bilateral trade between Japan and Cambodia reached \$1.95 billion. Expanding the Southeast Asian market has been a consistent national policy for Japan since the 1960s.

Through Yoko Kamikawa's planned visits, Japan's intention of strengthening its economic existence in Cambodia and the whole of Southeast Asia is clear. However, it might not be so easy to fulfill that.

Recent polls show the approval rating of the Fumio Kishida government has dropped to 16.5 percent, and the long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party is also experiencing instability. If Japan spends lavishly on Cambodian infrastructure projects, it could provoke greater dissatisfaction at home.

When US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin was visiting Cambodia, it was made clear to him that Cambodia would not take sides between China and the US, but would simultaneously develop friendly relations with all countries. Obviously, this principle will also apply to the China-Japan-Cambodia triangle.

— BEIJING NEWS

## What They Say

## Upgraded dialogue boost for trust and cooperation

The first "2+2 dialogue", the foreign affairs and defense meeting between the Republic of Korea and China, was held in Seoul on Tuesday. The dialogue at the vice-minister-level has produced some positive results, which are conducive to maintaining the healthy development of Sino-ROK ties.

The two sides had a candid and in-depth exchange of views on bilateral relations and international and regional issues of mutual interest. Seoul reiterated that it remains unchanged in its position of respect-

ing the one-China principle, stressed that it values and would like to grow the good neighborly relations and mutually-beneficial cooperation with China, and agreed to actively promote dialogue and exchanges at all levels and in various areas with China, so as to continuously step up communication, enhance political mutual trust and

advance practical cooperation.

Apart from taking advantage of existing channels of exchanges between Seoul and Beijing to translate that willingness into action, the two countries should pay more attention to enhancing exchanges at the sub-national level and between their youth to steadily improve the friendly relations between the two peoples, the foundation to carry on the two neighbors' traditional friendship and cultivate correct judgment of each other's development.

China and the ROK, having both benefited from economic globalization, need to jointly safeguard the stable and unimpeded global industry and supply chains, reject turning economic issues into political or security issues, and oppose all forms of trade protectionism and moves to build walls and set up obstacles.

Both the crises in the Middle East and Ukraine should serve to highlight the rationality and pertinence of the common, comprehensive, cooperative

and sustainable security vision China champions. All countries' legitimate security concerns should be respected, and the global security cooperation must and can only be strengthened through dialogue and consultation. All regional countries should cherish the hard-won stable and peaceful development environment of the Asia-Pacific and take the initiative to oppose hegemonism, unilateralism and power politics.

The world clearly understands how the Korean Peninsula issue developed into the current situation and where the crux lies for resolving it. As a spokesperson of the Chinese Foreign Ministry urged, the pressing task is to cool down the situation, avoid any escalation of confrontation and rivalry, and keep to the major direction of political settlement. China has always determined its position on the merits of the matter itself and will continue to make efforts to play a constructive role in the Peninsula affairs.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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## COMMENT

Jim Reid and David Folkerts-Landau

## World outlook optimistic but with uncertainties

As we approach the half-way mark of 2024, the global economic outlook is looking increasingly positive. A soft landing for the US economy is a strong possibility now that it has proved resilient against the rapid rate hikes of 2022-23. Growth is looking more positive in the European Union too, although it appears to be more of a cyclical rather than a structural upswing.

In Asia, China's growth has surprised on the upside in the first quarter of this year, while Japan's growth is likely to stay above potential. This will help support risk assets in the near term as well, with our (Deutsche Bank's) strategists seeing the S&P 500 rising to 5,500 by year-end, as credit spreads should grind tighter over the coming months.

## Many obstacles to navigate

But there are plenty of obstacles to navigate. The global economy is still experiencing the lagged effects of tighter monetary policy while quantitative tightening continues. Inflation has come down, but both headline and core inflation are still above target in several major economies, including the United States and the eurozone. The rest of 2024 will also see elections in many countries, with results expected from France, the United Kingdom and the US. The results of the US election will be in particular focus, with the potential for major implications for the global trading system.

Moreover, the elections will be held against the backdrop of several geopolitical hotspots, including in the Middle East and Ukraine. Indeed, given the surprises of recent years, it's hard to imagine there won't be at least some economic shock in the next couple of years.

Looking at the different regions, our US economists continue to anticipate a soft landing with GDP growth of about 2.4 per-



**This back and forth in rate expectations, where the market has been too dovish, has been a constant narrative for the last couple of years and suggests that this cycle is struggling to conform to models the market relies on.**

cent this year (close to the 2023 level) and about 2.2 percent in 2025 and 2026. Inflation in the US is running hot but our economists believe that rent prices will ultimately aid the disinflation process and allow the US Federal Reserve to cut rates in December. The economists see the start of a 75 basis-point mid-cycle adjustment by mid-2025, before edging toward neutral (3.75-4 percent) by 2026.

The greatest uncertainty, however, is the US presidential election in November, especially given how close it looks set to be. It's unlikely there will be any move to reduce the deficit, and for now it's a reasonable assumption that it will remain around 6.5 percent of GDP over the next five years, regardless of which party's candidate wins the presidential election.

However, the nature of that budget deficit could well change after the election, as Republicans would pursue more tax reductions while Democrats would prefer

increasing spending, possibly combined with a lapse of tax cuts on upper-income households and some increase in the corporate tax rate. The potential outcomes will depend not just on the new president, but also on which party controls the two chambers in Congress.

For the EU, our economists have made substantial upgrades, raising the eurozone's 2024 GDP forecast by half a point to 0.9 percent. After the stagnation in 2022-23, the European Union's GDP started growing again in the first quarter of this year, with external demand as the driver. However, this optimism is more cyclical than structural. Our economists are not extrapolating the faster 2024 momentum into 2025, and forecast a 1.5 percent GDP growth.

With wage growth peaking, our economists continue to believe inflation would converge back to target in 2025, and expect three 25 basis-point rate cuts by the European Central Bank in 2024, with the risk now skewing toward two.

## China's growth forecast raised to 5.2 percent

Turning to Asia, in April our economists raised the forecast for China's growth in 2024 by 0.5 percentage point to 5.2 percent after a stronger-than-expected first quarter. The economic outlook has not changed much since then; growth in the near term will be supported by a continued recovery in exports and a healthy increase in fiscal spending. Beyond that, growth will likely slow to 4.5 percent in 2025, with the economists expecting the People's Bank of China to cut the policy rate twice this year for a total of 20 basis points.

In Japan, our economists expect growth to remain above potential for the next two years. Japan's external environment is improving, and its domestic demand is expected to remain steady, supported by

accelerating wage hikes. Although the underlying inflation trend will continue to decelerate, it is likely to rise again as wage increases are passed through to sales prices. Our forecast for Bank of Japan is more hawkish than the market with a hike to 0.25 percent in July, 0.5 percent in December, followed by further 25 basis-point hikes in the third quarter of 2025 and the first quarter of 2026.

When it comes to our market forecast, a significant shift in fiscal policy could have a material impact on the rates outlook in the longer term. From an economic perspective, there is a strong case for easier fiscal policy in the EU to deal with the strategic geopolitical challenges ahead. From a political perspective, the current fiscal construct in the eurozone in general and Germany in particular are hurdles to easier fiscal policy.

On the other hand, the lack of tighter fiscal policy even under a divided government in the US right now indicates increased political tolerance for fiscal spending. The resolution to the conflict between economic logic and the political environment will ultimately be key to determining the outlook for monetary policy and rates in the years ahead.

## Bullish view on dollar and foreign exchange

In foreign exchange, our strategists' bullish outlook on both the US dollar and foreign exchange continues. More than half of the world's developed market central banks, including the Fed and the ECB, are expected to have identical easing cycles leading into 2025-26. As long as the US dollar remains a high yielder, the strategists continue to see a potential Fed easing cycle as a bark with no bite for the dollar. And with global growth holding up so far, the dollar can continue doing well, with a break below 1.05 for euro/US dollar being more likely than a sustained move above 1.10.

In Japan, our economists don't see the

stars aligning for a stronger yen. Intervention has been aimed at slowing the move rather than defending the levels, and underlying inflation can still afford a gradualist Bank of Japan in the economists' opinion.

Japan's external balance is not responding to a weak yen. And the broader basic balance remains negative, with foreign direct investment and portfolio outflows continuing. A big shift toward repatriation dynamics is the biggest potential positive catalyst for the yen, so our economists are keeping an eye on the upcoming government pension investment fund portfolio review later this year.

In equities, our strategists continue to be constructive as they feel macro upgrades have further to go. While the macro consensus has dropped persistent US recession calls, it has remained below actual growth for the last seven quarters. The strategists' forecasts point to a 2024 year-ending target of 5,500 for the S&P 500 (current 5,235) and 540 for the Stoxx 600 (current 518).

Overall, our economists and strategists are relatively optimistic. Even in this bullish year so far, the narrative has changed many times, with futures going from pricing in almost seven Fed cuts in January to falling to just over one as we go to print. This back and forth in rate expectations, where the market has been too dovish, has been a constant narrative for the last couple of years and suggests that this cycle is struggling to conform to models the market relies on. Given that backdrop, it does feel that it pays to be flexible and to have some contingencies for the unexpected.

*Jim Reid is Deutsche Bank's global head of economics and thematic research; and David Folkerts-Landau is the bank's chief economist and global head of research. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

Otton Solis

## Protectionist measures could backfire on EU carmakers

Major Western economies are engaged in a race to hinder China's exports. After sanctioning Chinese telecommunications conglomerate Huawei, and restricting the imports of Chinese-made batteries, steel and critical minerals, the United States and the European Union have announced tariffs of up to 100 percent and 38.1 percent, respectively, on electric vehicles (EVs) imported from China.

The core argument of the US and the EU for imposing the tariffs is that



EV-makers in China benefit heavily from government subsidies, and China's overcapacity in EV batteries is the result of the Chinese government's industrial policy and subsidies.

The protectionist path chosen by the Joe Biden administration was laid by the Donald Trump administration and threatens to drastically slow the growth of global trade and the development of global value chains, affecting the international division of labor. This will impinge on the likely advantages of fair competition and free market on which Western economic theories rest.

In such a situation, China is bound to take countermeasures. But even if it doesn't, the Western economies' protectionist measures against Chinese exports will hurt Western companies which have manufacturing units in and export their products from China. Highlighting this fact recently, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said half of the EVs imported from China are manufactured by Western companies.

As a matter of fact, no less than German Transportation Minister Volker Wissing expressed concerns over the tariffs, saying the EU's move will deal a blow to German companies and their products, adding that cars must become cheaper through more competition, open markets and significantly better business conditions in the EU, not through trade war and market isolation. Several German carmakers, including Mercedes-Benz and Volkswagen, too, have spoken against the tariffs.

And the president of the German Association of Automotive Industry (VDA), Hildgard Muller, has said tariffs will not solve the problems facing the auto industry, stressing that instead of imposing tariffs, efforts should focus on making the EU more attractive for manufacturers.

Given its economic strength, China can disrupt the free flow of global trade in ways that would hurt Western carmakers. But it won't do so because that could lead to a full-fledged trade war, which incidentally some Western leaders want as it would help them decouple their countries' economies with China's, resulting in losses for all economies, including the US, the EU, Japan and China.

The West has adhered to the theory of comparative advantage with almost religious zeal since British economist David Ricardo propounded it in 1817. The theory is at the heart of the aspirations that, for instance, shape the rules advocated by the World Trade Organization, which until

recently was strongly supported by the Western economies. But now that the comparative advantages have shifted eastward, the Western economies are out to defy the theory.

The question that arises is: Which economies would be the losers and which the

winners if all economies resorted to protectionism? Before that question is answered, it ought to be mentioned that the US has made strenuous efforts to unify the Western economies against a supposed "common enemy", in order to maintain its global hegemony. But this strategy has almost

never proved successful. What would happen in a hypothetical situation of the US succeeding in containing China? Without a perceived common enemy, the Western economies most probably would be locked in fierce competitions, leading to fierce trade wars.

To know which economies would end up as the losers and which the winners, we need to know which economies have a market large enough to achieve a high rate of growth, excel in competition and benefit from the international division of labor so as to compensate, even if partly, for the de-globalization of the world economy.

China has a massive and still growing domestic market. It has a high rate of savings and investment. It has demonstrated capability to further enhance R&D, realize technological diversification, and boost its national strength. These factors place China in a relatively advantageous position to minimize the negative impact of a world without free and fair global trade.

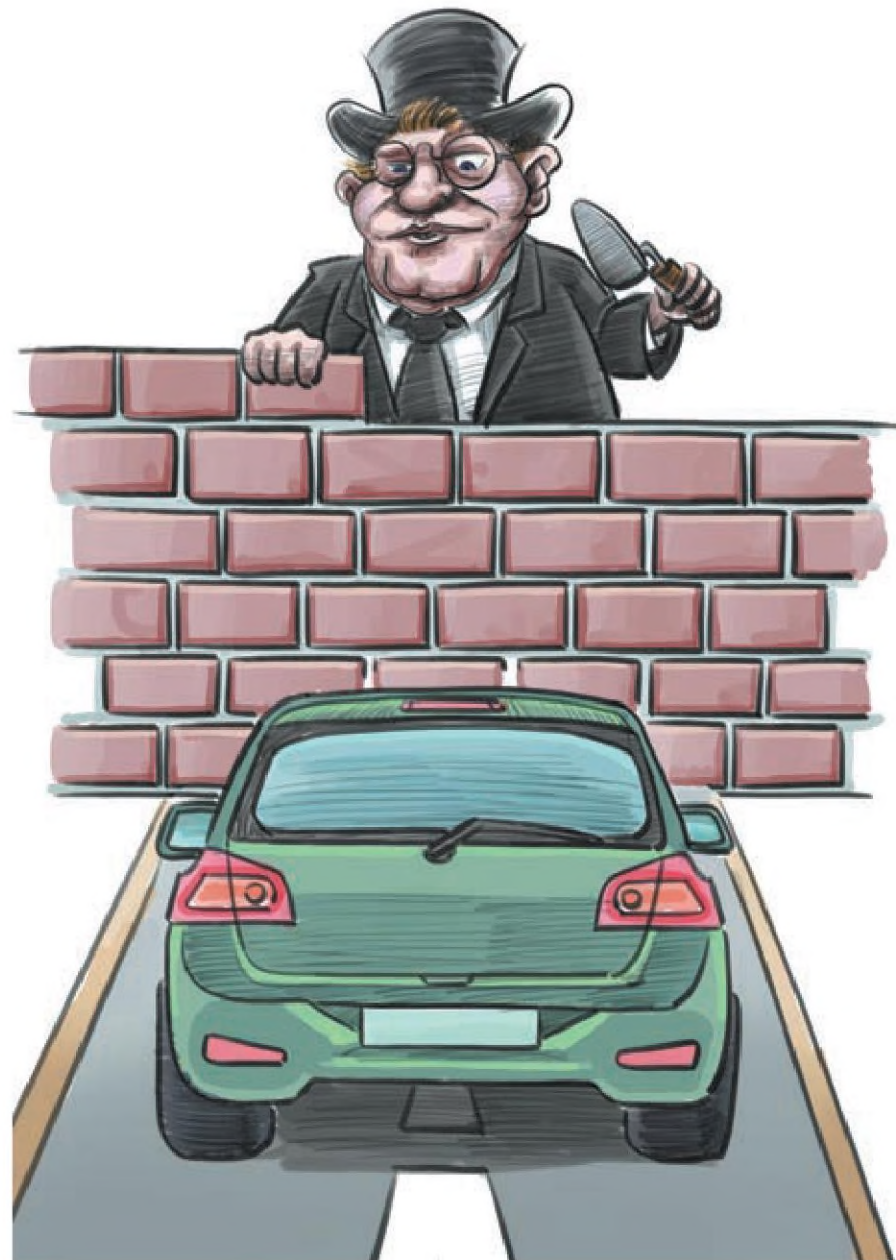
China wants to prevent the global economies from engaging in a protectionist war. But to at least win the intellectual debate on the issue, the Chinese government ought to take the initiative to resolve the issue. Asking the relevant questions is one way of showing that the core reason behind the current situation is that China's companies are more efficient and competitive than their Western counterparts in most fields.

Further proof of Western hypocrisy can be found in their agricultural policy. The agricultural sector in both the US and the EU is heavily subsidized — by tens of billions of dollars a year. The two economies also impose punitive tariffs on imports from quite a few countries.

For instance, the EU imposes a heavy tariff on imported bananas to protect uncompetitive farmers from the Canary Islands. The EU cannot justify imposing the tariffs on farm produce from countries such as Costa Rica, Ecuador and Honduras, because banana producers in those countries do not get any subsidies. The only reason why the EU imposes tariffs on banana imports is that banana producers in the EU cannot compete with their Latin American counterparts.

In short, the tariffs imposed by the EU and the US on Chinese-made EVs are a means to protect their domestic car industry from the more competitive Chinese carmakers. In the eyes of the EU and the US, China's sin is not that it has robust industrial policy, but because it exhibits a high degree of efficiency and competitiveness.

*The author is a professor at Instituto Empresarial University in Spain, a senior fellow at the Beijing Club for International Dialogue and was special adviser to the president of Costa Rica from 2018-2022. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

# GLOBAL VIEWS



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

ERIK SOLHEIM

## Fool's errand

'Overcapacity' claims target China's green industries which are producing exactly what the world wants and needs

In March, I visited Wuwei in Gansu province. I had to keep pinching myself. There were solar panels covering the desert with only the horizon interrupting my view. China Three Gorges Corporation and the Elion Resources Group of Inner Mongolia, the companies that have established the solar farm, have also developed a lot of wind energy.



I may be naive, but I thought this was exactly what the world desires. Massive investments in renewable energies, bringing down the price, and scaling green energies to new heights to enable China to achieve its carbon peak target well ahead of the 2030 deadline.

The visit of United States Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen to Beijing around the same time, prompted me to think differently. From the US perspective, the massive Chinese roll out of green technologies is not an enormous service to the world, but instead a problem. In Yellen's view, China has overcapacity in the green sector.

But how can that be a problem? I recall vividly when we left the climate talks in Copenhagen in 2009, some environmentalists were desperate, they saw almost no solution. Yes, former US president Barack Obama was there with then Chinese premier Wen Jiabao, along with German chancellor Angela Merkel, prime minister Manmohan Singh of India and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. But

the outcomes were meager. What no one contemplated departing from Copenhagen was that the price of solar energy would fall almost 80 percent and that of offshore wind energy by almost 70 percent in the next decade. This is largely, but, for sure, not solely, thanks to China. I thought this was what we all dreamed of. Some governments, including the Joe Biden administration, have argued that we need a green shift in production and that it has to be innovative, at scale and cheap.

The argument about "overcapacity" is against common sense. Interestingly it is also contrary to all economic theories, starting from Adam Smith. My nation, Norway, has huge "overcapacity" in oil and in fish. We sell a lot more oil than we can consume at home and we catch a lot more cod and salmon than we can eat ourselves. That "overcapacity" makes it possible for us to buy cellular phones from the US, wine from France and electric cars from China.

No nation in modern history has benefited more from overcapacity than the US. In the middle of the 20th century, the US accounted for nearly half the global economy. The nation had overcapacity in nearly all sectors and it made the US very strong. Today Silicon Valley has an enormous overcapacity in digital products. If Silicon Valley only produced for California or for the US, no one would ever have heard of that little valley.

China is now dominant in nearly all green sectors. The nation accounts for 60 percent or more of the solar, wind and hydro technolo-



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

gies produced today, as well as electric cars and batteries. China is the indispensable nation for the green shift. It is possible to go green without China, but it will be a lot more expensive and thus much slower.

The West should get up early in the morning and respond to China's lead by pursuing innovation and green competition. Protectionism is a race to the bottom. Green competition is a race to the top.

China invited Tesla to make its gigafactory in Shanghai, to bring a

"catfish" into the Chinese electric vehicle market. It forced many smaller Chinese competitors to swim faster. It worked, and BYD, Geely, Xpeng, Nio and many others are now strong contenders. Tech companies such as Huawei and Xiaomi are also joining the contest.

The West should similarly invite BYD and CATL, LONGi and Tongwei, Goldwind and Envision to invest in Europe and America. That may tempt Western companies to run faster.

Last year I visited CATL. It is located in the small town of Ningde in Fujian province. It is the world's leading electric battery maker, providing batteries to Tesla and many others. CATL was full of praise for Germany's BMW who they repeatedly said had helped them off the ground, by being a demanding customer and sharing technology and expertise.

Such partnerships can be replicated, only with Chinese companies in the lead.

It takes two to tango. The West needs to respond constructively to the competition from China. China can also help this process, through dialogue and partnerships.

Of course all nations want jobs in their own country. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched his "Make in India" strategy. French President Emmanuel Macron is concerned about jobs in France, and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz with the future of the German car industry. It is highly unlikely that China will be able just to export green products from home. Chinese companies will be called upon to create jobs in Europe and America, in Africa and Asia. It's great to see BYD investing in Brazil, CATL in Hungary and LONGi in Vietnam. We need a lot more of this.

China should also look favorably into companies complaining about a level playing field in the Chinese market. There is for instance hardly any outside wind power equipment makers left in China. Maybe they are not able to compete? But a dialogue to assure there is fair mutual access to markets, will calm the skeptics.

China was also responsible for 38 percent of the total global clean tech spending in 2023, investing an impressive \$676 billion. Last year, China invested \$890 billion in clean energy sectors and it added 300 gigawatt of solar and wind energy to the grid, that is 10 times the total hydro production in Norway which keeps all its inhabitants warm in winter, with plenty of electricity available for any demand.

Chinese "overcapacity" in green sectors should be admired, not criticized. But there should be a profound dialogue to make sure all nations benefit.

*The author is vice-president of the Green Belt and Road Coalition and former executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

JU JIANDONG AND FENG LU

## Room to grow

'Overcapacity' should be viewed from a global, dynamic perspective

The Joe Biden administration recently announced new tariffs on a variety of imports from China, particularly on electric vehicles and lithium batteries. Prior to that, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen mentioned the issue of so-called overcapacity in China during her



Ju Jiandong



Feng Lu

recent trip to the country. The issue of alleged overcapacity in China's green industry has once again become a widely discussed topic. Industrial overcapacity is not a new topic. Many scholars have discussed its causes. They generally believe that it's a result of reckless investment by businesses amid incomplete market information, undue government interventions in microeconomic activities, a sudden fall-off in market demand caused by domestic or overseas factors, and economic cycles. But these views are based on a static analysis, which only factors in the causes of industrial overcapacity at a given point in time, instead of analyzing industrial overcapacity from a dynamic perspective that includes changes to the industrial structure.

Economic growth requires continuous upgrading of the industrial structure. Each industry has its own life cycle. Its share of the overall national economy will rise at the beginning, and then it begins to decline after reaching its peak. During the decline period, the share of emerging industries will rise. The industrial structure is upgraded amid the trade-off between one industry and another, driving sustained economic growth.

Our research team has recently collected carbon intensity data (carbon emissions per unit of export volume) and China's export data from 2002 to 2021 to examine the

relationship between the carbon intensity of Chinese products and China's export structure.

We have reached three conclusions. First, the share of China's product exports in China's total exports and destination markets shows an inverted U-shaped curve of first increasing and then decreasing. Second, the products with higher carbon intensity reach their export peaks earlier than those with lower carbon intensity. Third, this non-linear relationship is mainly caused by changes in the comparative advantages of industries due to an increase in the cost of carbon emissions in China.

Thus, changes to the industrial structure based on carbon intensity are in line with the general law of industrial change. Industries with different levels of carbon intensity have their own life cycles. Products with higher carbon intensity will be gradually phased out, while greener products with lower carbon intensity will gradually account for a larger and larger share of the national economy. As a result, the overall carbon intensity and carbon emissions of the national economy will decline.

The above findings provide a new way of thinking: to determine whether an industry has excess capacity, we should not only exam-



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

ine the current state of supply-demand balance, but also consider which stage of the life cycle the industry is currently in.

If the industry has entered a downward trajectory, the industry's oversupply relative to market

demand will continue to exist as the market demand will continuously shrink in the future. Against this backdrop, if backward businesses cannot be eliminated from the market due to market distortions and improper interventions

by the government, excess capacity will come into being.

If an industry is on an upward trajectory, the future demand will continue to expand and the new market demand will absorb more production capacity. Under this circumstance, even if the supply exceeds demand in the short run, the industry shouldn't be deemed as having excess capacity from a dynamic perspective that includes the whole life cycle of the industry, as long as the industry can continuously improve its production technology and enhance production efficiency.

Specifically, due to the low-carbon nature of green industries, most of them have not yet reached the peak in their life cycle and are on an upward trajectory, so the judgment of whether there is excess capacity in these industries should factor in future demand.

In terms of domestic demand, achieving the carbon neutrality goal calls for greater efforts to promote new energy in the years to come, which provides a broad market and huge growth space for China's new-energy industry.

From a global perspective, the supply of and demand for green industries are both globalized. The development of green, low-carbon and environment-friendly new

energy is an important part of the global efforts to tackle climate change. The global demand for new energy products has been growing, creating huge growth potential for the new-energy industry.

According to the estimates of the International Energy Agency, electric car sales reached 14.65 million units in 2023, about 42 times the sales figure in 2014. To accomplish the goal of carbon neutrality, the global EV sales will need to reach 45 million units by 2030, which is more than three times that of 2023. It is expected that by 2030, the global demand for power batteries will reach 3,500 GWh, four times the global shipments in 2023. These demands far exceed the current global supply capacity.

Finally, from the global development trend, the photovoltaic industry will maintain high-speed growth. The IEA has been upgrading its forecasts on installed capacity for 2030. It is expected that annual solar PV additions will expand more than fourfold to 650 GW by 2030. Therefore, in the face of the carbon peaking and carbon neutrality goals and the hefty global demand, the "new three" (solar cells, lithium-ion batteries and electric vehicles) production are far from experiencing overcapacity, but rather in serious under capacity.

In a nutshell, the issue of overcapacity should be viewed from a dynamic and global perspective. China's green industries are still on an upward trajectory, with great market potential. Supply exceeding demand is a short-term phenomenon. Policy governance should focus on improving efficiency rather than only limiting capacity.

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# LIFE



Measuring 6 meters wide and 1.8 meters high, *An Operatic Mood* by Han Shuo, depicts a daily scene at a Peking Opera garden with more than 30 performers in exquisite costumes, singing, reciting, acting and practicing. With rich expressions and diverse demeanors, the panoramic painting vividly showcases the profound and extensive Chinese opera culture. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Ink artist draws on imagination

Han Shuo in a solo exhibition shares more than 100 works that highlight his studies of historic figures and stage characters, **Lin Qi** reports.

Ink artist Han Shuo says painting demands the ability to coordinate smartly. He says that if you compare a painting to a stage play, the painter assumes several roles, including director, performer, and designer of the stage set and lighting.

In his works, Han, who was born in 1945 and has long been committed to figure painting, presents vivid theater plays in which he arranges these characters living in the past, or from fairy tales and folklore. His paintings aim to show the weight of history and the beauty of simple but elegant brushwork.

More than 100 ink figure paintings from Han's industrious output since the 1980s are now on display at his solo exhibition *The Pursuit of Pure Perfection*, which is set to run through to Sunday at the Art Museum of the Beijing Fine Art Academy. Several of the works being shown have won important accolades, including the National Exhibition of Fine Arts, the top prize in art held by the China Artists Association every five years since 1949.

Of the three main kinds of Chinese ink painting, figure painting took shape and matured before the other two categories — mountain and water (*shanshui*), the flower and bird (*huaniao*) — which can be traced to the Warring States Period (475-221 BC) when early examples of figure painting genre were made on silk.

Han's work shows an accumulation of his studies of these great historical figure artists whose brushwork focused greatly on attention to detail while favoring a minimalist tendency. Han has been exploring that style to convey rich meanings out of simple lines and fewer layers of color, to assume a pure, aloof perspective.

Wu Hongliang, head of the Beijing Fine Art Academy, says, "Han has been endeavoring in the depiction of figures of various social backgrounds and motifs. Whether it is the personas of luminosity in the commissions he undertakes, with a grand historical theme, or the ordinary ones earning a living, he can address the aesthetic needs of the

time while integrating his personal style."

Han believes that one of the most important criteria of a good piece of work is if one can change the fixed rules — "If he shows individuality, creates a new language of art, offers a different perspective, addresses the needs of the time, or presents artistic appeal — in summary, makes something with soul."

"For example when I make a portrait of Lu Xun, a foremost writer of the 20th century, the point is to present his moral strength. But it is not as simple as to just add wrinkles to his face — that may make him look like an old man, instead of a righteous scholar," he says. "Neither would I reinforce his integrity by making him look tall and strong — it is far from the real image of him and would be improper."

Han's work shows his preference for characters in classical novels. By giving life to these characters on paper, he hopes to accentuate a "beautiful and concise" style similar to that of Tang Dynasty (618-907) poetry.

He has also painted several characters from traditional operas in which he is fascinated by the "supreme beauty of theatrical structures and the surrealistic, imaginative sides of the plots".

He views such works as an endeavor to enliven Chinese opera with the carefree and expressive strokes of the ink tradition.

Han attributes his accomplishments in ink partly to his early experiences as a creator of *lianhuanhua*, Chinese comic books that are often palm-sized. He says that painting in this miniature form was a unique way of training to achieve progress in technique.

He adds that even today, before he works on a painting, he likes to first make a smaller version. "It constitutes an essential part of my work. It brings me the joy of deliberating on details and gradually entering a state of perfection."

"Don't push too much. (Make sure that) every stroke is required. Every detail counts," he says.

"I feel lucky that I chose painting as my profession so that I could set



*Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove* shows an iconic scene, during the early Western Jin Dynasty (265–316), of seven literati secluding themselves in a bamboo grove. Their story became legend and is a frequent subject of painting in China. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



I feel lucky that I chose painting as my profession so that I could set myself free in the world of art, enjoying its richness and broadness ... For me, creation is with no end."

Han Shuo, ink artist



Left: *Zeal* won Han the gold medal at the 9th National Exhibition of Fine Arts in 2009. Right: A traditional opera scene from *Journey to the West* is depicted in an ink painting. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



myself free in the world of art, enjoying its richness and broadness. Painting gives happiness and there are also regrets to make me think more. For me, creation is with no end."

Han's exhibition also inaugurates a long-term collaboration between the Beijing Fine Art Academy and the Shanghai Chinese Painting Academy — Han directs the latter's art council. The two institutes will

deepen their exchanges by showing the works of each other's resident artists.

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### What's on

#### Art of jingtai'an

Emperor Jingtai of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) had a short-lived reign. He ascended to the throne after his brother, Emperor



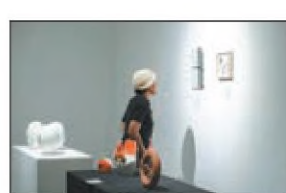
Zhengtong, was captured in battles against a Mongol tribe, but a few years later was disposed of by Zhengtong and his supporters. Two days after he was overthrown, Jingtai died at the age of 30. Today, *jingtai'an* is more familiar to people as part of the term *jingtai'an*, which refers to a type of Chinese cloisonné enamelware of which the complicated technique — combining painting, firing, embedding and smelting — achieved maturity during the reign of Jingtai, and has been passed on as an item of cultural heritage.

The Chinese Traditional Cultural Museum is displaying dozens of such objects by Zhong Liansheng, a veteran artisan in the field, and his pupils until July 16. Zhong has been a craftsman in the world of cloisonné enamelware for some 46 years, pushing this unique form of artistry and workmanship

to a new level. His works are not only aesthetically pleasing to everyday people but also have been presented as State gifts at international events. 9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 16 Hujing East Road, Chaoyang district, Beijing. 010-87991766/1866.

#### Ceramics collaboration

*Walk with the Light* is a ceramics exhibition now showing in Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province. The exhibition brings together artists from different countries and cultural backgrounds as a shared language of expression. It teams artists who live and work in Jingdezhen, a centuries-old hub of ceramic production and the former home to imperial kilns, who seek to bring modern renewal to Jingdezhen's traditions through



their work with local workshops that have inherited the technique for generations. The exhibition also features artists who had a brief working residence in Taoxichuan, a former ceramics factory that is now an art exhibition center with residence programs and other cultural activities. It shows how these artists have integrated their respective experiences and cultural backgrounds with the history of Jingdezhen and its vibrant life. It is a show to inspire discussions on the creation of ceramics as part of

the contemporary art scene. The exhibition is held at the Qiumo Art Gallery until July 30. 9 am-9 pm, closed on Mondays. Ceramic Art Avenue, Taoxichuan, 150 Xinchang Xi Lu, Zhushan district, Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province.

#### New campus gallery

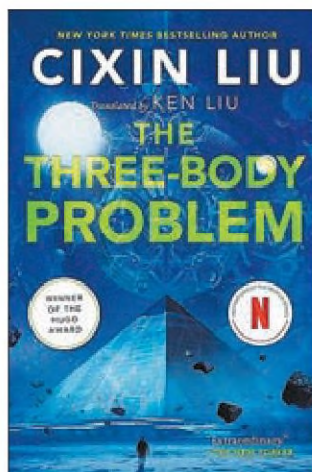
The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Guangdong province, marks its 10th anniversary with the opening of a second art space on campus, five years after its University Arts Centre opened. The new gallery was inaugurated with the exhibition *Where Mountains Meet the Sea*, which reviews the history of exchanges of human society, trekking mountains along the waters, and sailing through the ocean, anticipating a future even more open and inclusive. The exhibition, running at the Grav-

ity Field Art Gallery until Sept 23, brings paintings, installations, image works and performance art by 14 artists whose works have blurred the boundaries between tradition and modernity and combined the expressions of China and the West. 10 am-5:30 pm, Monday to Friday. Teaching Complex D101, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen, 2001 Longriang Boulevard, Longgang district, Shenzhen, Guangdong province.

CHINA DAILY



## LIFESHANGHAI



Left and right: Stage shows that shine at the opening ceremony of the 26th Shanghai International Film Festival on Saturday. Middle: Cover of the first volume of the English version of the Three Body trilogy. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

# Major sci-fi work set for big screen test

Companies join forces to adapt the Three Body series for cinema audiences, **Zhang Kun** reports.

Beijing Enlight Media revealed that the company has joined hands with the Three Body Universe Cultural Development to work on the movie adaptation of the Three Body trilogy, which will be directed by Zhang Yimou, the international award-winning filmmaker who also directed the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.

Wang Changtian, president of Beijing Enlight Media, revealed the project during the forum New Horizons in Film: Embracing Innovation and Diversity, an important part of the ongoing 26th Shanghai International Film Festival where insiders around the world meet to share their insights about the future of the industry and reveal their upcoming projects.

"We have started the preliminary work on the movie and believe it will be a big-budget production," Wang said during the opening session of the forum on Sunday. "I hope it will achieve breakthroughs in the international market."

The trilogy is arguably China's most celebrated science-fiction creation through the past decades. The novel by Liu Cixin won the prestigious Hugo Award and has been made into an animation series and TV series in China. Earlier this year, Netflix released a TV series adaptation, which received more than 123,000 ratings on IMDb.com, a leading worldwide resource platform for movie and TV productions.

Wang spoke about the project after sharing his findings that some genre films popular in the global market have not taken an adequate market share of the box office in China.

For example, he says, animation films take up more than 15 percent of the total box office in the United States while in China they take an average of 7 to 8 percent. Sci-fi movies are faced with a similar situation. This convinced him that more efforts should be made in the crea-



French director and writer Tran Anh Hung (6th from right), as the jury president, leads members of the judging panel of the 26th SIFF Golden Goblet Awards' main competition onto the red carpet during the ceremony held in Shanghai on Saturday. FANG ZHE / XINHUA

tion of animation and sci-fi films in China.

Wang believes that sci-fi movies represent the industrial height of a country and China still has a long way to go in this field.

Wang Jian'er, president of Shanghai Film Group Co, says that an effective way to increase the earnings of animation films in China is to create spinoff shows for popular productions and have commercial collaboration for the most beloved characters.

Last year, Shanghai Animation Film Studio, a branch of Shanghai

Film Group, released an eight-episode cartoon series named *Yao — Chinese Folktales*. It featured stories inspired by Chinese folklore involving immortals, elves and other mythical creatures known as "yao", presented in diverse and individualized aesthetic styles for each episode. The series was popular among viewers as soon as it was released on bilibili.com, a streaming platform.

Shanghai Animation Film Studio is working on a spinoff feature film for the hero of the first episode — a half-human, half-piglet creature

with a kind heart. "It will be released next summer," Wang Jian'er says.

But one challenge is that by the time the movie comes out, people may lose interest in a character, as pointed out by Li Jie, president of Alibaba Pictures Co. He found that the public's interest in particular subjects and film genres can fade quickly.

"It usually lasts for no more than 12 months, while the production of a new film usually takes at least 24 months," Li says.

"This means we have to reach beyond the duration of public inter-

est and focus on creating quality films that give people reasons to go to the cinema, to see big-budget films that provide a unique audio-visual experience ... I believe that in the coming 10 years, bigger investments will be made in China's film industry and big rewards will be achieved."

While Chinese movie productions are taking a larger share of the domestic box office volume, industry insiders agree it is important to participate in the global market.

Ying Xujun, deputy president of CMC Inc, shared the company's expe-

rience producing *The Meg* and its sequel in 2018 and 2023, respectively.

The action movie featured an international production team led by CMC Inc in collaboration with Warner Bros. "We believe such a model of international collaboration will work well with sci-fi movies in the global market," she says. The company is confident in furthering its exploration in this field, leveraging international resources and creating movies with multilingual dialogues and fewer cultural barriers.

She also points out that Chinese filmmakers need to actively participate in the global filmmakers' community. "Only when you are a player in the global movie industry will you be able to understand its structure and ecology."

International resources can be an important asset for film productions targeting the Chinese market, she says, citing the example of the company's new thriller *Decoder*. The spy drama involving decoders from China and the US will be directed by Chen Sicheng, who is also the scriptwriter, alongside co-writer Christopher MacBride.

New technology is another important element for development in the film industry worldwide, such as artificial intelligence. AI not only provides handy tools but is a "creative partner" capable of generating unexpected and brilliant ideas, according to Wang Jian'er. He says that the company founded an AI creative center in Shanghai's Songjiang district to explore new possibilities in the film industry.

Yu Dong, founding director of Bona Film Group, reveals that in the company's upcoming film *A Legend*, which is a sequel to the 2005 fantasy film *The Myth*, an AI-generated version of Jackie Chan in his youth will be fighting alongside real actors and "you can hardly tell one from the other".

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# Documentary shines light on heroic wartime saga

By **WANG XIN** and **ZHANG KUN**  
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The Chinese-made documentary *The Sinking of the Lisbon Maru* celebrated its world premiere on June 14 as the first film of the 26th Shanghai International Film Festival.

Directed and produced by Fang Li, the film spotlights a human story between British prisoners of war and Chinese fishermen during World War II (1939-45).

The *Lisbon Maru* was a freight vessel that was converted into an armed troop carrier by the Japanese Army. In October 1942, it was carrying more than 1,800 British POWs from Hong Kong to Japan when it was torpedoed by the US navy, sinking off the Zhoushan Islands in East China's Zhejiang province.

As the ship sunk, nearby fishermen carried out a great humanitarian rescue, saving 384 prisoners from drowning.

Even though survivors and rescuers in the *Lisbon Maru* incident have passed away, the kindness of the Chinese fishermen has never been forgotten. Their stories have been passed on from generation to generation, both in China and in England.

Tony Benham, a Hong Kong-

based British historian, wrote the book *The Sinking of the Lisbon Maru: Britain's Forgotten War Tragedy*, which provided a solid foundation for the documentary.

"When I started writing that book more than 20 years ago, nobody was interested apart from the families themselves and the survivors. I found it was a forgotten story. I would never have dreamed that this journey would take me to Shanghai 20 years later. The small book I wrote ... has turned into one of the most emotionally draining documentaries I've seen in my life," says Benham after the film's premiere in Shanghai.

This unknown story shocked Fang as well, making him instinctively seek out survivor families and dig into the story's details.

Fang, also a veteran marine technology expert and geophysicist, spent years studying the incident and decided to make the documentary after successfully locating the sunken ship in 2016.

"There are so many touching stories about love, family affection, friendship among comrades, and more. It was a disaster and carnage that happened at our doorstep and a heroic feat by the most ordinary of Chinese people ... of course, the sto-



Left: Descendants of the war prisoners on the *Lisbon Maru*, at the premiere of *The Sinking of the Lisbon Maru* on June 14. Right: Vince Andrew Hawkins Davies (right) visits the memorial hall in Dongji islands, Zhejiang province, on Tuesday. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ry should be told by us Chinese," said Fang after the premiere.

Brian Finch, who was commissioned into the UK's Middlesex Regiment in 1960 and served with one of the survivors of the *Lisbon Maru*, has helped Fang in contacting soldiers' relatives for the documentary.

He told China Daily in an interview earlier this year: "Everyone who knows about the story remembers it and the relatives are very keen to participate, but the vast number of people in the United Kingdom do not know about it. We need to give the story maximum publicity within the UK and internationally to get the story widely known."

This echoes Fang's expectations. "I hope everyone can remember *Lisbon Maru* as they remember the *Titanic*. Also, we hope the brave and kind acts of the Chinese people during the war will be remembered," says Fang.

Gathering at the film's premiere, a group of family members of the British soldiers who survived or lost their lives in the *Lisbon Maru* incident visited the Zhoushan Islands for memorial events from Sunday to Tuesday.

Vince Andrew Hawkins Davies, a 46-year-old family member of a *Lisbon Maru* survivor, is also hoping the story will become better known worldwide with the release of the film.

Davies' great uncle was among the prisoners rescued by the Chinese fishermen. He managed to make his way back home to the UK years later and lived until 2014, passing at the age of 94. His voice appears at the beginning of the film.

"He told his stories many times before he died, saying everybody was so friendly and kind to help look after him. I wanted to come, meet the people and see the site where it all happened," says Davies.

Nyree Penycate, whose grandfather was a survivor on the ship, brought her 14-year-old son George Penycate along on the trip.

"For people my age, it (the film)

might sound boring but the majority isn't. It is quite good and worth watching," says George, who first heard the story when he was five.

"I suppose the main message is that war is not good as it rips families apart and ends generations. It is far happier to get along with everyone — be kind and look for the good in everyone," Penycate adds.

Davies shared similar sentiments: "Don't hold an opinion or judge or blame (when watching the film) — just watch it and see what people can do to help each other. It is natural human instinct that comes through. People are different all around the world but maybe deep down, we are all very similar."

Benham agrees to put the focus on the individuals and families, regarding it as "a different type of history" and a very powerful story.

"The big history is great for teaching textbooks in school but for people to understand what the experience means, we have to focus on the individuals. That's such an approachable human way of explaining history. I think it has far more power than any big Hollywood blockbuster creation," says Benham.

Xing Yi contributed to this story.

## LIFE

**B**o Shining, a 49-year-old chief physician from the Intensive Care Unit of Peking University Third Hospital, arrived at the interview on a hot summer afternoon after a night shift. With an iced Americano in hand, he answered the questions with a doctor's sobriety and reason.

But when he recalled the medical case that inspired him to become a doctor specializing in intensive care, a teardrop slid down from the corner of his right eye.

More than two decades ago, Bo chose clinical medicine as his university major because "it's difficult to get into," he says.

In his fifth year of university in 1997, Bo, a curious intern at a hospital, came across a very important patient — his 20-year-old younger brother, also a university student, who was critically ill as his kidneys were failing quickly due to unidentified reasons.

Without a pathological examination basis, and judging from the symptoms, Bo believed that the cause was rapidly progressive glomerulonephritis, a dangerous disease in the kidneys with a mortality rate of 80 to 90 percent within six months without proper treatment. Even if some patients survived, they would have to rely on renal dialysis for the rest of their lives.

Considering such a terrible prognosis would happen to such a young man who was otherwise very healthy, and seeing his father, a tough man who served in the army, crying, tears rushed from Bo's eyes.

Desperate to save his younger brother, Bo misjudged the cause of the disease. Luckily, a reputed doctor corrected his mistake, saying that it might be epidemic hemorrhagic fever but they needed a test to confirm the diagnosis.

Bo took his brother's blood sample to a provincial center for disease control that was 3 kilometers away by bicycle. On the second day, it was raining heavily. When Bo took the test result that confirmed the expert's diagnosis, he rushed back in the pouring rain, forgetting his bike.

Soon his brother fully recovered from the disease without any long-term effects.

"This is the first critical case that I encountered in my career. I realized that illnesses can quickly devastate a family and intensive care medicine can save many people's lives," he says, which is how he decided to become an ICU doctor.

In 2001, after graduating from the Peking University Health Science Center, Bo entered the ICU at PKU Third Hospital.

As he has strived to keep critically ill people alive and experienced life and death every day for more than two decades, he began questioning how to improve people's ability to cope with diseases.

"After all, the number of people that doctors can save is limited. If you wait until an illness becomes severe before going to the hospital, even the most skilled doctors will find it difficult. But if people can gain a comprehensive understanding of medicine and grasp basic medical knowledge, perhaps by attending a 'concise medical college' through reading, then we won't be so helpless when faced with diseases," writes Bo in the preface of the book *Bo Shining Yixue Tongshi Jiangyi* (Medicine in a Nutshell), published in 2019.

# Stories of humanity at the closing of the light

Doctor offers readers a better understanding of medicine at its most critical point, **Yang Yang** reports.



Bo Shining, a 49-year-old chief physician from the Intensive Care Unit of Peking University Third Hospital, and his award-winning book about life and death at the ICU.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

To not let go when it's incurable is perhaps the ultimate comfort humans can offer to one another."

Bo Shining, ICU doctor and author

"This book gives readers a good lecture about life and death, allowing people to know that treating diseases and saving lives are not only scientific issues but also an issue of humanistic care, which is what common readers need to learn about," Wei says.

Reading the 19 cases is like watching the US TV drama *Doctor House*, in which the prestigious Doctor House detects the cause of a series of unidentified illnesses, saving lives and exposing human nature.

In the book, a case that has touched many people is that of a "stubborn" old man who refused to give up on his wife, whose brain was dead due to an oxygen shortage caused by heart attack.

Every time Bo came to the ward, the husband followed the doctor around, suggesting possible treatments he read about or questioning the doctor about why he had not tried this method or that. Young Bo understood that the old man blamed himself for not saving his wife in time, but sometimes he lost his patience.

"In 2005, it was easy for me, a young doctor who mastered some knowledge, to be arrogant and cold," he says.

Half a year after the heart attack, on his wife's birthday, the old man dressed up and sang a song to his wife in front of all the doctors and nurses, who seemed to hear the song as two teardrops slid down from the corner of one of her eyes and then she immediately died.

"I was touched that day when the old man sang a song for his wife, but at that time I had not fully understood the whole thing," he says.

Bo wrote a long essay about this case. When he showed the essay to the couple's son, who lived abroad and arrived several days after his mother died, the son knelt in the corridor and burst into tears.

Many people are touched by the deep love between the couple, but Bo says the case gave him some other inspiration.

"Everyone aims for healing but they forget that we all have to experience one incurable case, that is, death. When that happens, how should we treat the patients?" Bo says, adding that "this case answers that question."

"The case reveals the essence of medicine," he says.

"Healing is a comfort. When patients suffer too much, relieving his or her pains is also a comfort. The treatment process is a comfort. However, every person will experience an incurable case. To not let go when it's incurable is perhaps the ultimate comfort humans can offer to one another. This kind of comfort allows the dying to do so peacefully and the living to live without regret," he writes.

That is, Bo says, the essence of medicine, which determines how one understands the definition of a good doctor.

To be a good doctor, "you need to be knowledgeable and intelligent, you need a strong mind to face complicated and urgent situations, and after you become more and more skillful and tough, you still need to be able to hear the weak cries of the common people, their hidden pains," he says.

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The book was one of the first of its kind in China, in which Bo summarized his understanding of health, disease, life and the medical profession based on his 18-year work experience.

By reading the book, people can have a quick understanding of the essence of medicine as well as doctors' diagnostic and treatment methods. About 310,000 copies of the book have been sold so far.

Last year, his second book, *Mingxuan Yixue Wo Bufangshou* (Never Let Go, Life and Death at the ICU) was released. So far, more than 100,000 copies have been sold and in

April, it won the Wenjin Book Award, China's top book award.

Unlike the first book, the latest one focuses on another side of medicine — humanity, because "medicine is not only a science but a study of humanity," he says.

"That is, how to comfort your patients. Often, comforting and caring for your patients can have the same effect as medication," he says.

Based on his 22 years of experience during which he was involved in about 10,000 intensive care cases, Bo chose 19 for this book.

The 19 real ICU stories include a

terminally ill wife who was abandoned by her parents, husband and mother-in-law, and an elderly woman who wanted to go back home at the end of her life.

"The books explore many topics such as saving money or saving a life, how to build trust between doctors and patients and how to say goodbye to loved ones. To better understand the patient's feelings and choices, Bo flew to many locations to interview them," says Wei Ling, editor-in-chief of Xiron, a Beijing-based publishing company that published Bo's book.

Each story showcases a theme that

Bo says he wants to explore — how to inspire and protect patients' "will to live" at critical junctures, what is rational love, what is "a good death" for terminal patients, and more.

The book also talks about sympathetic doctors whose strong desire to save people may cause misjudgment and their continuous improvement in medical skills, risky choices and strong minds.

On Douban, a major Chinese review platform, nearly 1,200 readers rated the book 8.9 points out of 10. Many readers are deeply touched.

## Alliance celebrates cultural achievements as cooperation grows

By **WANG RU** in Qingdao, Shandong [wangru1@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:wangru1@chinadaily.com.cn)

More Asian countries are working together to protect cultural heritage and promote communication and mutual learning among civilizations.

Uzbekistan and the Maldives became new member states of the Alliance for Cultural Heritage in Asia during its 2nd council meeting in Qingdao, Shandong province, on Wednesday. Honduras also became an ACHA partner state and signed an agreement with China to increase cooperation in the cultural heritage field the same day.

This means the alliance now has 15 member states, four observer states and one partner state.

In 2021, during the Asian Dialogue for Cultural Heritage Conservation co-hosted by China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the National Cultural Heritage Administration, 10 Asian countries, including China, collectively launched the ACHA.

The council meeting this time brought together some 150 repre-

sentatives from 23 countries and two international organizations to examine last year's achievements and propose future plans.

The meeting announced the alliance's change in status from intergovernmental cooperation mechanism to intergovernmental organization, making it the first regional IGO in the cultural heritage field initiated and led by China.

Li Qun, chairperson of the ACHA Council and director of the National Cultural Heritage Administration, says that since last year, China and other Asian countries have carried out practical collaboration in areas such as the exhibition of cultural artifacts, joint archaeological excavations, and heritage restoration within the framework of the alliance.

For example, solid progress is being made in advancing collaborative projects like the restoration of the Thatbyinnyu Temple in Myanmar, and archaeological excavations of the temple complex of Nateshwar in Bangladesh, Li says.

"We are delighted to see that over the past year, the ACHA has been growing in the right direc-



Li Qun (left), director of the National Cultural Heritage Administration, signs an agreement with Gloria Annarella Velez Osejo, Honduran minister of culture, arts and heritage, to enhance cooperation in cultural heritage, in Qingdao, Shandong province, on Wednesday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

tion, with significant development and effective cooperation. The alliance's influence continues to rise, with member and observer states accounting for nearly half of Asian countries. Its influence has also reached countries and international organizations out-

side Asia," Li says.

During the ACHA general assembly last year, the Asian Fund for Cultural Heritage Conservation was launched and opened for applications from organizations and individuals across Asia related to restoration, joint archaeological

projects, exhibitions and displays, training and academic research.

The meeting announced 15 projects to be funded by the Asian Fund for Cultural Heritage Conservation, benefiting countries such as Iran, Syria, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and the United Arab Emirates. They were carefully chosen by experts from 155 projects submitted according to strict procedures.

"Through collective effort, the ACHA has become an integral part of the global network for dialogue and cooperation among civilizations," says Kong Vireak, ACHA secretary-general.

He says his home country of Cambodia has benefited from cooperation. For example, on a project to protect and restore Chau Say Tevoda, a temple at Angkor, Chinese heritage professionals have applied their expertise to the specific characteristics and restoration needs of the site to devise suitable plans and have achieved notable results.

Phinij Jarusombat, president of Thai-Chinese Cultural and Relationship Council, says Thailand has

extensive and in-depth cooperation in the field of the conservation of cultural heritage with China.

"The cultural heritage resources of Thailand, like the Historic City of Ayutthaya, the Ancient Town of Si Thep and its Associated Dvaravati Monuments, and the Historic Town of Sukhothai and Associated Historic Towns are treasures of Asia and humanity, just like China's Great Wall and Palace Museum," he says.

He adds that joint archaeological efforts enable both sides to share research progress and deepen understanding of Asian history and culture. Collaboration in organizing exhibitions, academic seminars and cultural communication activities showcases the diversity and charm of Asia's cultures, and enhances mutual understanding and friendship among people.

He urges more practical cooperation on underwater archaeological studies, especially shipwrecks related to the ancient Maritime Silk Road, the restoration of cultural relics, and the exchange and exhibition of artifacts in the future.