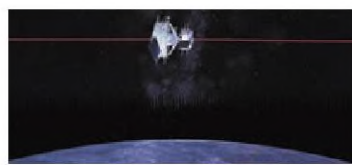


Lunar diplomacy?

Chang'e-6's successful moon trip spurs talk of cooperation with US

WORLD, PAGE 6



Study tours see summer surge in bookings

BUSINESS FOCUS, PAGE 16



Prosperous path

Lhasa's Barkhor Bazaar a bustling center of commerce, cultures CITY TALES, PAGES 8-9

CHINA DAILY

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Beijing, Hanoi to expand cooperation

Xi calls for embracing new opportunities while meeting with Vietnam PM Chinh

By MO JINGXI
mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping said on Wednesday that Beijing and Hanoi will embrace new opportunities in expanding their cooperation in areas such as trade and economy, as well as interconnectivity and digital economy, as China continues deepening reform across the board and advancing Chinese modernization.

He made the remarks when meeting in Beijing with Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, who is in China for the 15th Annual Meeting of the New Champions, also known as the 2024 Summer Davos, which is held in the coastal city of Dalian, Liaoning province.

Noting that China always sees Vietnam as a priority in its neighborhood diplomacy, Xi said China is ready to work with Vietnam to strengthen strategic guidance of bilateral ties, firmly support each other and deepen mutually beneficial cooperation, to jointly march toward modernization.

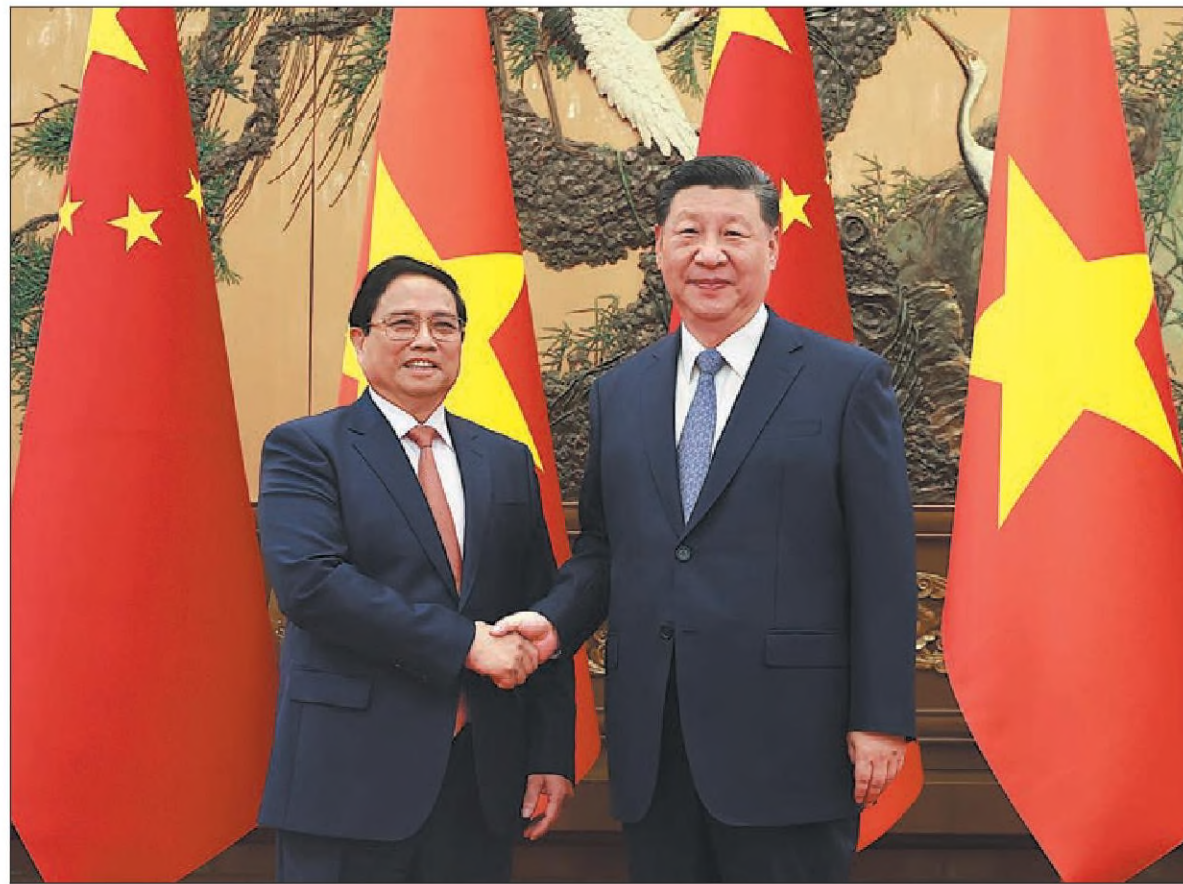
While China will encourage more of its enterprises to expand their investment in Vietnam, it is hoped that Vietnam will provide a fair, just and nondiscriminatory business environment for them, he said.

China is Vietnam's largest trading partner and its second-largest export market, while Vietnam is China's largest trading partner within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Bilateral trade has expanded from about \$2.4 billion in 2000 to exceed \$229.7 billion last year, official statistics showed.

Chinh's visit comes after the two nations announced the building of a China-Vietnam community with a shared future that carries strategic significance during Xi's visit to Vietnam in December.

Xi said that for more than half a year since then, high-level exchanges between the two countries' political



President Xi Jinping meets on Wednesday with Prime Minister of Vietnam Pham Minh Chinh in Beijing. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

parties and governments have been frequent and cooperation in various fields has witnessed progress, which has brought concrete benefits to their peoples.

"We are quite pleased with it," he told the Vietnamese prime minister, vowing to join hands with Vietnam to make greater contributions to world peace, stability, development and prosperity.

To consolidate public support for China-Vietnam friendship, Xi called on the two countries to strengthen communication between border provinces, implement projects in agriculture, education and health-care aimed at improving people's well-being, and make good use of

platforms promoting people-to-people and youth exchanges.

He also stressed the need for the two neighboring countries to appropriately handle their maritime issues, speed up joint exploration at sea and jointly safeguard regional peace and stability.

The Vietnamese prime minister, who spoke highly of China's significant role as an important engine and bedrock for global economic growth, said his country supports China's accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, to which Vietnam is a party, and opposes the politicization of trade and tech issues.

He added that Vietnam supports China's position on the Taiwan question and firmly adheres to the one-China principle.

Noting that it is the top priority for his country to deepen strategic mutual trust and practical cooperation with China, Chinh said that Vietnam will make the construction of the China-Vietnam community with a shared future that carries strategic significance its strategic choice and this will not be affected by external instigation and interference.

Xu Liping, a senior researcher on Southeast Asian studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said that strengthening coop-

eration between China and Vietnam, both socialist countries advancing modernization, is a win-win choice.

Xu said cooperation at the sub-national level will be one of the new areas of growth for China and Vietnam as the two countries, connected by land and sea, have witnessed rapid development in border trade in recent years and are working on promoting interconnectivity through Belt and Road cooperation.

Wang Huning, chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, also met with Chinh on Wednesday.

Nation steps up efforts to promote data reforms

By FAN FEIFEI
and ZHANG XIAOMIN
in Dalian, Liaoning

China is accelerating steps to promote reforms related to the market-oriented allocation of data elements and put such assets into the balance sheets of enterprises, as data has become a new type of production factor and plays an increasingly vital role in bolstering industrial revolution, according to the country's top data governance regulator.

More efforts are needed to speed up the establishment of basic systems for data, facilitate the circulation, transaction and utilization of data, and boost the construction of digital infrastructure, in order to fully unleash the value of massive data resources, said Liu Liehong, head of the National Data Administration.

Liu made the remarks on Wednesday during the World Economic Forum's 15th Annual Meeting of the New Champions, also known as the 2024 Summer Davos, which began on Tuesday in Dalian, Liaoning province, and runs through to Thursday.

Liu said that China is stepping up efforts to put data resources to better use as well as establish a data property rights system, a circulation and trading system and a revenue distribution system.

The purpose of allowing companies to include data resources as "intangible assets" in their financial statements is to further encourage them to develop and make use of data, promote the circulation and trading of data resources, and empower social and economic development, Liu noted.

He also called for efforts to ensure data security and protect personal privacy and commercial secrets by leveraging cutting-edge digital technologies such as blockchain.

China's total data output reached 32.85 zettabytes in 2023, an increase of 22.4 percent year-on-year, while the added value of core digital economy industries accounted for 10 percent of GDP, according to the National Data Administration.

The top regulator has unveiled a guideline to expand the application scenarios of data elements in 12 key fields such as industrial manufacturing, modern agriculture, trade circulation, transportation and financial services.

See Davos, page 3

Blaming China for all intl crises speaks poorly of G7

The recently concluded G7 summit in Italy was much about blaming China for all international conflicts and geostrategic questions ranging from the Russia-Ukraine conflict, South China Sea, climate crisis to cybersecurity and "overcapacity". It was the United States promoting its fabricated international consensus that China should be held accountable for all crises.

It seems that electoral pressures and blind submission to the whims and wishes of the US have significantly dented the abilities of coun-



tries to think logically. The posturing in Italy was an attempt to redirect the dissatisfaction of the public and voters in their own countries toward China.

The official communique revealed the G7's hypocritical agenda and the US' hype against China, which is mentioned at least 25 times in the communique text.

The theories of "containment", "collapse" and "overcapacity" only promoted notions of bloc mentality and the Cold War. It was the US laying the groundwork for future camp confrontation, protectionism, economic isolation and hegemonic policies in the world.

Ironically, the G7 politically pursued its global divide-and-rule policy by engaging and inviting the Global South countries. Thus leaders from India, Brazil, South Africa, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, Argentina, Algeria, Kenya and

Mauritania were invited.

The communique seems to be heavily influenced by the US' strategic power politics objectives to counter China and Russia, raising concerns about the G7 being used as a tool for US geopolitical dominance.

It is nothing but a "responsibility-shifting" joint statement, which has proved G7 members' inability to think and act independently, and it is a handy tool for the US to engage in global geopolitical competition. Thus it vividly reflects perpetual camp confrontation,

always creating disorder, destruction and disharmony instead of law-based world order, development, peaceful coexistence and multiculturalism.

Critical analysis reveals that the G7's attempt to smear China in the context of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict is a ploy of the US to gain a competitive edge globally. China has nothing to do with the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Rather its constructive neutrality tried its best to resolve the issue through rigorous track-II diplomacy. Thus the G7's accusations against China are completely unreasonable and fabricated.

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INSIDE
Govts need to tailor growth forces to local conditions
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EURO 2024 SPONSORSHIP DEALS DRIVE CHINESE BRANDS DEEPER INTO EUROPE

Flagship companies widen markets, highlight product innovations, burnish international reputations

By FAN FEIFEI
fanfeifei@chinadaily.com.cn

Although China's national soccer team is not taking the field at Euro 2024, the country's flagship companies are filling stadiums and television screens through hefty sponsorship deals and with advertising billboards.

Chinese companies account for more than one-third of the 13 top-tier sponsors at the ongoing UEFA



European Championship in Germany, making the country the single-biggest source of sponsorship for the event.

The strong sponsorship demonstrates the rising technological prowess and competitiveness of Chinese brands on the global stage and

their commitment to expanding into overseas markets, experts said.

Financial technology company Ant Group, home appliance giant Hisense, e-commerce platform Ali-Express, smartphone manufacturer Vivo and EV maker BYD are among the official sponsors for the championship, which began on June 14 and will run through July 14, according to UEFA's website.

See Expansion, page 2

Cultural ambassadors



Visitors watch a performance on Wednesday at the 8th China-Eurasia Expo that opened in Urumqi, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. The expo, which will run through Sunday, has attracted over 1,900 participants from around the world. LI XIONGXIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

PAGE TWO



Expansion: Chinese firms take center stage

Nico Williams of Spain takes a selfie with his Vivo Player of the Match trophy after the Euro 2024 group stage match between Spain and Italy on June 20 in Gelsenkirchen, Germany. GETTY IMAGES

From page 1

As the official payment sponsor of Euro 2024, Alipay+, the cross-border mobile payment platform owned by Ant Group, announced plans to expand cross-border digital payment acceptance, and provide convenient payment services and special benefits for global soccer fans and travelers through its merchant network during the tournament.

Together with the company's two other international brands — Antom merchant payment services and international payments business WorldFirst — Alipay+ has appeared on LED billboards at tournament stadiums and on 50 TV channels across Europe.

The UEFA top scorer trophy, sponsored by Alipay+, will be awarded at the Euro 2024 final in Berlin.

Huge exposure

The company is accelerating steps to expand its presence in the United Kingdom and EU countries including France, Italy, Switzerland, Spain and Germany as globalization is one of its core strategies.

As of this month, over 400,000 merchants in Europe accept mobile payments through Alipay+ from 14 international e-wallets and banking apps, according to a news release from the company.

Users of Alipay+ partner wallets can make mobile payments at department stores, supermarkets, convenience stores, airports, duty-free stores, restaurants and tourist attractions by just scanning an Alipay+ QR code.

Alipay+ expects this summer to be busier than usual as sports fans travel from around the world to watch Euro 2024 and the upcoming Paris Olympic Games. The company said it will enable more merchants to benefit from the expected influx of fans, athletes and tourists via its mobile payment technology and digital solutions.

In 2018, Ant Group's digital payment arm Alipay and UEFA announced an eight-year global partnership for all UEFA national team soccer competitions from 2018 to 2026, including Euro 2020, Euro 2024, and the UEFA Nations League finals. Before the partnership, major global sporting event sponsorship had for decades been provided by international bank cards like Mastercard and Visa.

This year's European Championship is expected to draw a global audience of more than 5 billion, according to the marketing director of UEFA.

Other global sponsors of the event include Adidas, Booking.com, Coca-Cola and Qatar Airways.

UEFA estimates Euro 2024 will generate 2.4 billion euros (\$2.6 billion) in revenue,

mainly from broadcast and sponsorship deals, ticket sales, hospitality, and licensing fees for official tournament merchandise.

The tournament presents an important opportunity for companies to reach new consumers, increase brand exposure, and expand their businesses in overseas markets, industry insiders said.

In the 1980s and 1990s, it was common for Japanese and South Korean companies, such as Sharp and Samsung, to be major sponsors of international sports events, but in recent years they have been absent from top-tier sponsorship.

Chinese brands are now leading the change of sponsors, with their names seen in commercials and on billboards at global sports competitions.

It is the third consecutive UEFA European Championship for which Hisense has been a sponsor. The company is the official screen provider for the video assistant referees during this year's tournament, and it is providing display technology support for the central VAR room in Leipzig, Germany, to help on-field referees make decisions.

"Continued investment in world-class sporting events represents Hisense's determination to become a global brand, and it helps us build stronger relationships with global consumers and accelerates the company's globalization process," said Jia Shaoqian, chairman of Hisense.

In 2016, the company became the first Chinese sponsor of the UEFA soccer championship. It also sponsored the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia and the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

European advances

Shipments of Hisense TVs in Europe surged 35.9 percent year-on-year in the first quarter of 2024, data from market consultancy AVC Revo shows. The company accounted for 13.6 percent of global TV shipments during the same period, ranking second in the world, according to market research company Omdia.

Hisense, based in Qingdao, East China's Shandong province, has ramped up its efforts to expand its footprint in the European market in recent years. The company has set up six research and development centers and five major manufacturing bases, with sales revenue on the continent rising 19.5 percent year-on-year to 3.8 billion euros last year.

Hisense's total revenue surpassed 200 billion yuan last year, while its overseas sales reached 85.8 billion yuan, accounting for 43 percent of total revenue.

The company is also stepping up its investment in product research and development and technological innovation to target high-end overseas markets and improve its customers' viewing experience.

Fang Xueyu, president of Hisense's inter-



An increasing number of Chinese enterprises, especially those gaining a competitive edge in frontier sectors including digital payments, cross-border e-commerce, smartphones and NEVs, are seeking new development opportunities in overseas markets..."

Ouyang Rihui, assistant dean of the Central University of Finance and Economics' China Center for Internet Economy Research

national marketing unit, said localization is at the core of globalization, and companies need to satisfy local consumers' demands as well as provide products suitable for local markets.

"Chinese companies sponsoring the Euro 2024 soccer tournament highlights these enterprises' determination in going global and leveraging major sports events to showcase their latest products, technologies and achievements in innovation to a global audience," said Hong Yong, an associate research fellow at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation's e-commerce research institute.

Hong said sponsorship of important international sporting events is conducive to connecting with consumers across the globe, helping Chinese enterprises speed up global business plans, and significantly enhancing brand recognition and a company's international standing.

Sports marketing is an important way for Chinese brands to increase their global competitiveness, expand their footprint abroad and boost sales in overseas markets, Hong added.

Electric avenues

For the first time, BYD is an official partner of the European Football Championship, and has replaced German automaker Volkswagen as the event's official vehicle supplier. "This prestigious event will enable us to showcase our latest advancements in electric vehicles to a far-reaching audience," BYD said on its website.

The company is providing a diverse range of new energy vehicles during the tournament. It is also presenting its latest new energy vehicle models and cutting-edge technologies at the competition venues,

which help show soccer fans BYD's commitment to greener and more intelligent motor- ing solutions.

BYD exported over 242,000 vehicles last year, surging 334 percent year-on-year. It has entered the markets of more than 70 countries and regions, including 19 European nations.

In December, the company announced it plans to build a new EV production base in Hungary as it steps up efforts to make inroads into the European market. The facility, the first of its kind to be built by a Chinese auto company in Europe, is expected to create thousands of jobs. Hungary will be the center for BYD's European production operations, it added.

Ouyang Rihui, assistant dean of the Central University of Finance and Economics' China Center for Internet Economy Research, said, "An increasing number of Chinese enterprises, especially those gaining a competitive edge in frontier sectors including digital payments, cross-border e-commerce, smartphones and NEVs, are seeking new development opportunities in overseas markets fueled by the rise of China's economic strength and industrial upgrade."

Sponsoring Euro 2024 shows Chinese enterprises want to expand their sales channels and increase their voice on international cooperation, Ouyang said. The sponsorship will help more overseas consumers learn about China's technological advantages in some emerging and strategic forward-looking sectors, he added.

Vend it like Beckham

Cross-border e-commerce has become an important driving force for bolstering the steady growth of China's foreign trade.

Alibaba's cross-border online marketplace AliExpress is the exclusive e-commerce platform partner for Euro 2024, and is investing millions of euros in discounts, deals and other promotions during the tournament.

"As football enthusiasm spreads across Europe, we will bring fans even closer to the action, with great deals on a vast selection of popular and trending products, as well as interactive games and the chance to win fantastic prizes," said Gary Topp, European commercial director of AliExpress.

The company has signed former English soccer star David Beckham as its global brand ambassador. Beckham helps fans participate in the "Score More with AliExpress" promotional campaign with exclusive discounts and prizes, including match tickets.

AliExpress and Cainiao Group, Alibaba's logistics arm, have expanded their global five-day delivery service to encompass several prominent markets. Consumers in Spain, Portugal, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and the UK can now

receive their parcels within five working days after placing an order on AliExpress.

Sales of soccer equipment soared 80 percent year-on-year in May, according to data from the group. Spain and France saw the highest sales of soccer balls, while the number of parcels sent to Europe from Cainiao's cross-border warehouses skyrocketed more than 300 percent in May from a year earlier.

Vivo, the official partner and smartphone provider for Euro 2020 and Euro 2024, said the sporting event provides an exceptional opportunity for the company to showcase its cutting-edge smartphone technology on the global stage and connect with soccer fans.

The company is committed to expanding its global presence and reaching consumers in more markets across the world.

Global smartphone shipments grew by 6 percent year-on-year to reach 296.9 million units in the first quarter, according to global consultancy Counterpoint Research. Vivo accounted for 7 percent of the market share and is among the top five smartphone makers.

Building brand image

Beyond financial sponsorship, Chinese companies have brought products and technological support for the tournament, said Jiang Han, a senior analyst at market consultancy Pangoal.

"Chinese enterprises can participate deeply in all aspects of Euro 2024 through the sponsorship, and establish a closer cooperation relationship with the event," he said.

This will not only help build brand image, reach more potential consumers and boost the visibility of Chinese enterprises in Europe, but also create more business and cooperation possibilities to boost revenues and nurture new profit growth points, Jiang said.

"With the rapid development of China's economy and improvement of its international status, Chinese enterprises have begun to seek opportunities for international expansion," he said. "Sponsoring world-leading sports events will enable enterprises to make forays into overseas markets and enhance their global operation capabilities."

Zhan Junhao, founder of Fujian Huace Brand Positioning Consulting, said sports sponsorship allows Chinese companies to demonstrate their technological strengths and innovation capabilities. This is conducive to further consolidating and enhancing their positions in industries. It also enhances a brand's popularity and influence in the international market.

Enterprises should pay close attention to market dynamics and changes in consumer demand during the tournament, and adjust marketing and product strategies in a timely manner, Zhan added.



From left: Chinese auto brand BYD is the official vehicle supplier for Euro 2024 in Germany. IMAGO/BEAUTIFUL SPORTS Billboards of China's home appliance giant Hisense and the official payment sponsor of Euro 2024 Alipay+ (right) are seen during a match between Germany and Switzerland on Sunday in Frankfurt, Germany. BERNADETT SZABO / REUTERS AND KAI PFAFFENBACH / REUTERS

TOP NEWS



Students from the United States try their hand at calligraphy on Wednesday during the Chinese Bridge Flying Tigers Summer Camp in Beijing. The participants will embark on cultural and historical tours of Beijing and Yunnan province for two weeks. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Summer camp helps boost Sino-US relations

Youngsters learn history of Flying Tigers, experience Chinese culture

By ZHAO YIMENG

zhaoyimeng@chinadaily.com.cn

A unique summer camp got underway in Beijing on Monday, aimed at fostering cultural exchanges and historical understanding between young people from China and the United States.

The Chinese Bridge Flying Tigers Summer Camp has invited 70 students and teachers from the US to explore China's history and its wartime partnership with the US over the next two weeks.

The camp revolves around the story of the Flying Tigers, a group of US volunteer pilots who fought alongside the Chinese forces during World War II.

These pilots, officially known as the American Volunteer Group of the Chinese Air Force, played a critical role in China against Japanese aggression from 1941 to 1942. Their bravery and expertise earned them the iconic nickname "Flying Tigers" from the Chinese people.

In a reply letter in September last year to two veterans and Jeffrey Greene, chairman of the Sino-American Aviation Heritage Foundation, President Xi Jinping said the hope of Sino-US relations lies in the people and the future lies in the youth. He also expressed his hope that the spirit of the Flying Tigers would be passed down to the next generation.

Last November, during his meet-

ing with US President Joe Biden in San Francisco, President Xi announced that China would invite 50,000 young people from the US for exchange programs and study over the next five years, to increase exchanges between the peoples, especially the younger generation.

The summer camp, organized against such a backdrop by the Ministry of Education's Center for Language Education and Cooperation, began on Monday and runs through July 7. The opening ceremony of the camp was held on Wednesday.

Camp participants will take part in cultural and historical tours of Beijing and Southwest China's Yunnan province over the next two weeks, visiting scenic spots and

museums to learn about the real China and Sino-US military and civilian cooperation during World War II.

Greene from the Sino-American Aviation Heritage Foundation encouraged American students to share their experiences and their feelings for Chinese people with their friends when they return to the US.

"While they are here, they will learn the history of Flying Tigers and how important the story is for Chinese people," he said while delivering a speech at the opening ceremony.

Lesly Ibarra, a student from the University of Texas at Austin and a summer camp participant, said she applied for the program because she had never been to a country that is so far from home and also because she is interested in Chinese culture.

"We know a lot about Flying Tigers because they united with the Chinese army to help during World War II. I think it's really important to keep the friendship, and we are here to represent that and keep the connection," she said, adding that she hopes to make friends and learn the Chinese language during the trip.

Marco Yerena, a student from the Rivera Early College High School in Texas, said he was amazed by the story of the Flying Tigers which was told by Greene during the speech because his curriculum didn't cover this part of history that is significant for both China and the US.

"After hearing the brief history of the Flying Tigers, I was amazed about how Chinese people really hold on to the spirit and carry it forward," Yerena said.

Before the opening ceremony, participants of the summer camp experienced traditional Chinese culture by learning paper-cutting and playing chess with their Chinese counterparts from Beijing Bayi School.

This is the first group of American students to visit China under the Chinese Bridge Flying Tigers Summer Camp program, Greene said.

A total of five sessions of the program are expected to invite 100 US students to China each year over the next five years.

Extreme weather hits the world in full force

By CHEN YINGQUN and YANG RAN

When Hellen Yao moved to Athens three years ago, she expected a pleasant Mediterranean climate in the Greek capital. However, ever-intensifying extreme weather conditions across Europe dashed all her hopes.

"Last summer, many parts of Greece experienced wildfires as heat waves swept across Europe. The wildfires burned for days on the island of Rhodes, a famous tourist attraction, and many restaurants and houses burned down," she said.

Greece experienced the first heat wave of the year in early June, with the high temperatures proving fatal for some tourists. To cope with the extreme heat, the government implemented localized lockdown measures, closing schools, allowing civil servants to work from home and suspending delivery services. Wildfire prevention and response efforts were also initiated early, Yao said.

As summer arrives in the Northern Hemisphere, the specter of extreme weather looms. The intensity of extreme weather is on the rise, and heat waves, floods and droughts are becoming frequent, said Ma Jun, director of the Beijing-based Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs, an environmental research organization.

"Last year was the hottest year on record, and the extreme high temperature trend will continue in the future. The fundamental reason for this is climate change and global warming," Ma said.

Many countries in the Northern Hemisphere have recently experienced historically rare high temperatures. India faced its hottest summer in 120 years, with temperatures in the capital, New Delhi, reaching a record 53 C. Average temperatures in some parts of Europe have been 10 degrees higher than usual, leading many cities to close tourist attractions and schools. In the United States, more than 115 million people across the country are under extreme heat alerts.

Research results released recently by economists Adrien Bilal, from Harvard University, and Diego Kanzig, from Northwestern University in the US indicate that a one-degree rise in global temperature could result in a 12 percent reduction in the world's gross domestic product.

According to the European Environment Agency, in the past four decades, extreme weather has been

responsible for economic losses to the tune of half a trillion euros (\$533.89 billion) and 85,000 to 145,000 human fatalities.

Climate-related shocks were the main drivers in 18 countries, where almost 72 million people faced high levels of food insecurity. This is an increase from 12 countries with 56.8 million acutely food-insecure people in need of urgent humanitarian assistance in 2022, according to the Global Report on Food Crises 2024 issued by the World Food Programme.

Twelve of these countries are in Africa, with 47.8 million people requiring urgent help, and five in Latin America and the Caribbean, with 12.2 million. In Pakistan, 11.8 million people faced high levels of acute food insecurity primarily due to weather extremes, the report said.

Monika Tothova, an economist at the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, said that extreme weather events and shifting weather patterns are impacting and will continue to impact the global economy.

Extreme weather events primarily affect those dependent on agriculture. Larger farms may have greater resilience and the ability to diversify, whereas smallholder farmers dependent on a single crop may lack the capacity to withstand such impacts.

"Thus, what remains important is to keep trade open — trade allows moving goods from surplus to deficit areas," she said.

However, she also pointed out that weather events can disrupt shipping. For instance, in 2023 and part of 2024, severe drought led to reduced water levels in the Panama Canal, which relies on freshwater to operate its locks, thereby limiting the number of vessels that could pass through.

Ma from the Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs said that currently, the world has developed far more technologies and capabilities to address climate change than before. However, various factors such as geopolitical influences and local trade protectionism hinder the global effort to expand renewable energy and tackle climate change.

He urged countries to act based on the common interests of humanity and to take joint actions to decarbonize for the 1.5-degree target set by the Paris Agreement and address the threat of climate change.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at chenyingqun@chinadaily.com.cn

Beijing, Washington start new round of panda bonds

By YAN DONGJIE

yandongjie@chinadaily.com.cn

Giant pandas Yun Chuan and Xin Bao set out on their journey to the United States on Wednesday evening, marking a new round of China-US cooperation on the conservation of the protected species.

A vehicle carrying the pandas departed from the Ya'an Bifengxia Base of the China Conservation and Research Center for the Giant Panda in Sichuan province. They will board a chartered flight from Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport to San Diego, California.

The pandas are accompanied by five experienced caretakers and veterinary experts from China and the US. To ensure the health and safety of the animals during the long-haul flight, Chinese experts have provided food,

such as fresh bamboo, bamboo shoots, fruits, vegetables and specially made bread, and drinking water.

After Yun Chuan and Xin Bao settle in at the San Diego Zoo, Chinese experts will stay there for about three months to see them through the quarantine period, helping them to quickly adapt to their new living environment. Panda enthusiasts in both China and the US will have various means of learning about the pair's daily lives and adjustment process, according to the National Forestry and Grassland Administration.

Since the 1990s, China has collaborated on giant panda conservation with 26 institutions in 20 countries, including the US, Spain, Japan and France.

The San Diego Zoo was one of the first institutions in the US to engage in cooperative research on giant pandas with China. Over more than 20 years, the two sides have cooperated and solved a series

of technical challenges in key areas such as captive panda breeding, habitat protection and panda supplemental nutrition, according to the Sichuan center.

On the same day that Yun Chuan and Xin Bao set out for the US, the China Wildlife Conservation Association and the Schoenbrunn Zoo in Vienna, Austria, signed an agreement on a new round of international cooperation on giant panda conservation. This means another pair of pandas will move to the European country, initiating a 10-year international cooperation on giant panda conservation.

Giant pandas Yuan Yuan and Yang Yang, who are currently in Austria, will return to China once the previous cooperation agreement expires this year. Austria will renovate the Vienna zoo's panda enclosure and make other necessary arrangements to welcome the new pair to a more comfortable and safer living environment.

To ensure the well-being of the giant pandas, Chinese experts visited Austria at the start of this year and provided technical guidance on venue preparations, specifying standards for panda enclosure facilities, feeding management, food supply, healthcare and other requirements.

The China Wildlife Conservation Association and the Schoenbrunn Zoo, which is renowned as one of the most beautiful zoos in Europe, started their first phase of cooperation in 2003, with the arrival of giant pandas Yang Yang and Long Hui at the zoo. The pair set a European record by mating naturally and breeding four times to become the parents of five cubs.

Over the past two decades, both sides have achieved fruitful results in giant panda conservation, breeding, scientific research, technical exchanges, personnel training and public education, according to the Sichuan center.

Summit: China-proposed initiatives win hearts of majority

From page 1

The G7 does not represent the whole world because it represents only 10 percent of the world's population. Its total share in the global economy has been in constant decline and its combined contribution to global economic growth is less than that of China. Interestingly, BRICS has already surpassed the G7 in terms of GDP, industrial growth, supply chain system, economic sustainability and innovations.

Additionally, the G7 further widened the gap between the Global North and Global South by drawing lines in terms of self-centered ideology and values, self-assessed parameters of democracy, inflaming bloc confrontation and creating regional conflicts. The G7 keeps on sending military vessels and aircraft into the Asia-Pacific region to create tensions and arming Taiwan to threaten peace and

stability in the Taiwan Strait, showing its sick and defeatist mentality.

In recent years, the US has continuously aggregated the concept of national security, economic protectionism and unilateral imposition of sanctions, and intensified its crackdown on Chinese companies, which clearly demonstrates its lower capacity. It has dishonored the principles of free market economy, fair competition and equal opportunity, destabilizing international economic and trade order.

In fact, the G7's "overcapacity" hype about China is unsupported by facts or the laws of the economy. It is just an excuse for protectionism and weakens the global effort for green and low-carbon transition and cooperation on climate response.

Thus the G7's communique is another attempt to make a scapegoat out of China, which is

the real champion of peace, stability, sustainability and manufacturing in the world. It fears that mere politicizing and weaponizing trade will achieve nothing but reverse the process of globalization.

The G7 summit has also exposed the intrinsic conflicts, contradictions and challenges within the group, particularly its configuration with US' premeditated plans and the resulting drastic divisions among members. The movement for "European sovereignty" is dying with each passing day unfortunately.

It seems that the G7's DNA has been abruptly decomposed. At past summits, the West's biggest economies talked often about teaming with Beijing to fight climate change, terrorism and nuclear proliferation, but this time all blamed China for international problems, which is surprising. This shows the real

color of global politics shifting from international cooperation toward bloc formation, from economic globalization toward economic protectionism, from global green efforts to tariff increase on EVs and solar panels, qualitative industrialization toward wrong notions of overcapacity, rule of international law to military misadventures, and from multiculturalism to so-called white supremacy.

The global development, security and civilization initiatives raised by China are winning the hearts of the global majority, as they are the real guarantors of world peace, political stability and economic sustainability.

The author is president of Pak-China Corridor of Knowledge and executive director of the Center for South Asia and International Studies. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Davos: Value of data yet to be fully tapped

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Lee Xiaodong, founder and CEO of Fuxi Institution, a domestic consultancy focusing on internet and the digital economy, said at the forum that the utilization of data elements in the country is still in its initial stages and the immense value of data is yet to be fully tapped.

China has unveiled a set of accounting rules for corporate data resources. According to the Ministry of Finance, corporate data can be classified as "intangible assets" when they meet relevant requirements in accounting standards, while data held for sale in daily business activities can be recognized as inventories.

Ouyang Rihui, assistant dean of the China Center for Internet Economy Research at the Central University of

Finance and Economics, said, "With the rapid development of the data elements market, an increasing number of enterprises have attached great importance to the accumulation, development and application of data assets, and begun to incorporate data into their balance sheets to better reflect the real value and asset status of enterprises."

Data elements own the attributes of commodities, which could be effectively allocated through market evaluation and trading, in order to create huge economic and social value, Ouyang said.

More efforts should be made to promote the confirmation of data-related rights as well as explore a data pricing mechanism and value assessment system, in order to give full play to the value of data and boost the development of the country's digital economy, he added.

Statistics from the National Industrial Information Security Development Research Center show that revenue derived from China's data elements market is projected to rise to 198.9 billion yuan (\$27.4 billion) in 2025.



People take a dip in the Euphrates River to cool down on Friday amid a heat wave in Najaf, Iraq. Several provinces in Iraq have been reeling under temperatures of 50 C. ALAA AL-MARJANI / REUTERS

CHINA

Chongqing night school provides life lessons

CHONGQING — Southwest China's Chongqing has long been renowned for its bustling and lively nightlife, with restaurants, bars, clubs and shops open until the early hours of the morning.

However, a new "quieter" lifestyle has recently emerged in the city, as young people choose to head back to school for night classes.

As one of the exemplary urban renewal programs in Chongqing, the "campus at night", also known as the Cooperation Units, is not a real school. Instead, it is a creative and cultural park renovated from a factory complex built in the 1950s.

The night school works as a bridge linking shops in the park with students and customers. This is because shops in the park double as night school classrooms, and some shop owners are even teachers.

In one coffee shop named City Walk, young barista Wang Haoran is not only an employee, but also a latte art teacher at the night school.

"Teaching students at night is quite time-consuming and exhausting for sure, but sharing coffee knowledge with people from all walks of life is also meaningful," said Wang.

Even though Chongqing has a long-standing tea culture, coffee culture has recently been booming here. In addition to having thousands of coffee shops, Chongqing has also held coffee festivals for several years.

Just next to the coffee shop, a pottery art shop is also a classroom that has trained more than 100 night school students. The shelf set at the door's entrance displays all kinds of student pottery products such as vases, plates and figurines.

"After I quit my job, I opened the pottery art shop here because this old factory complex exudes a tranquil, soothing vibe. Our shop was among the first to join the night class program," said Yanzi (pseudonym), the shop owner.

She added that to her surprise, many people are interested in this art. She finds it meaningful that her shop is not just a spiritual habitat for her, but also a potential window for young people to learn about traditional culture.

In addition to serving as characteristic classroom settings, other shops in the park also provide a space for outside teachers. Chunxiao (pseudonym), a Korean language teacher, works as a college teacher during the day and comes to a shop to teach Korean language, public speaking and other courses at night.

"I can feel night school students have stronger interest in learning. Also, some treat it as a good social opportunity," said Chunxiao. His wife is also a teacher at the night school and his cousin is a student here.

Since October, the Cooperation Units has launched over 100 courses ranging from acting to calligraphy, and attracted more than 4,000 students with both favorable prices and quality content.

"Without the night school, I would lie on the sofa and watch short videos at the end of the day. The night school is a great nutrient in young people's daily lives, making them feel both relaxed and purposeful," said a student participating in the Korean language class. "If I have more time in the future, I will surely sign up for more classes."

Wang Chao, head of the Cooperation Units, said that the building complex had been open for more than two years, but before the night school boom, few knew about it. Now, the night school is a good model that not only brings vibrancy to the local community, but also helps deepen genuine connections among young people.

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Zhang Zhijuan checks a child's teeth at a clinic in Gaofa village in Dali Bai autonomous prefecture, Yunnan province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Rural doctor strives to boost health in villages

'Like a tortoise', Zhang Zhijuan who can speak four dialects has slowly crafted a career serving patients in Yunnan

By WANG XIAOYU

wangxiaoyu@chinadaily.com.cn

Zhang Zhijuan, a rural doctor in Yunnan province, speaks four ethnic dialects and is entrusted to not only manage illnesses but also mediate disputes between villagers.

As versatile and competent as she is, Zhang only sees herself as a tortoise inching toward the goal of advancing the health of local residents in her hometown of Gaofa village in Dali Bai autonomous prefecture.

"I love medical science, but I am not smart and could not afford a formal education growing up. So over the years, I have been learning like a tortoise and improving myself at a slow but steady pace," the 50-year-old said.

Zhang's passion for medicine stems from her father's abrupt death when she was 13 years old. "I was driven by a very simple goal — to help patients, especially those living in remote and mountainous areas like my father," she said.

The kindness of fellow villagers was imprinted in her memory.

"I remember them helping my mom do farmwork and gifting clothing and food to us in the most difficult times, which cemented my determination to be a doctor and cure illnesses for them when I grew up."

In 1994, Zhang graduated from a nursing program at a prefecture-level vocational high school and immediately returned to the village to work at the rural clinic.

As one of the three workers at the clinic meant to serve about 2,000 residents nearby, Zhang has an all-encompassing job. She visits pregnant women at home to check their conditions and deliver babies, shares health knowledge with villagers — especially with children and the elderly — and sometimes accompanies sick patients to seek treatment at larger hospitals and help them apply for subsidies.



Zhang treats a senior resident of the village.

Gaofa is home to five indigenous ethnic groups. Local officials said that only 3 percent of local villagers can speak four dialects like Zhang.

"Many villagers live deep in the mountains and very far away from urban hospitals. It is very inconvenient for them to travel outside the area, so I have decided to come back and help them as much as possible," she said. "My goal is to help them spend the least amount of money on medical treatment and prevent minor ailments from developing into severe diseases."

Although Zhang was trained in Western medicine, she has always been fascinated by ethnic practices.

"When I was young, I often saw seniors in the village steeping plantains in water and adding sugar or honey to them, and they would use the concoction to treat urinary tract infections," she said.

Zhang learned a little about traditional Chinese medicine at the vocational school and gradually applied her skills and knowledge to aid ailing local farmers.

"Many villagers make a living through farming and suffer from arthritis and pain in their lower backs and legs," she said. "So acupuncture and TCM massage are very useful and have quickly gained popularity among them."

In July 2019, Zhang earned an opportunity to enroll in a TCM training program in the Dali prefecture because of her experience offering TCM treatment in rural areas.

"I was the only rural doctor in the class, and my classmates were either college students or senior doctors at larger hospitals," she said. "I could not even speak Mandarin fluently."

Zhang said that she overcame her shyness and intimidation by partnering with a young student around her son's age.

"He helped me summarize one day's worth of teaching into bullet points so that I could memorize things more easily and communicate with fellow classmates the next day," she said. "Gradually, I became accustomed to talking with others in a relaxed way and refined my skills."

The program not only introduced more advanced TCM treatment tools to Zhang, but also led her to reaffirm her conviction to increase their use in her hometown.

In late April, Zhang was awarded the May 1 Labor Medal by the All-China Federation of Trade Union. A total of 1,088 such medals were granted to worker models and organizations nationwide.

At 50 years old, Zhang said that she has set a new goal for her work — to prioritize disease prevention and health promotion.

"I hope that villagers will not only visit me when they feel sick, but also learn how to boost their immunity and build a healthy lifestyle," she said.

Passion fruit ripens prosperity in Fujian

FUZHOU — Luo Qiliang was recently pleased to see his orchard full of vitality, with passion fruit vines producing lush foliage and climbing trellises.

This is the eighth year that Luo has grown passion fruit in his home county of Wuping in the city of Longyan, Fujian province.

"I planted more than 4 hectares of passion fruit, with an average profit of about 225,000 yuan (\$31,052) per hectare last year," he said.

Located in a mountainous area, Wuping has less than 0.07 hectares of arable land per capita, and local farmers previously

earned a living by planting cash crops and raising pigs.

However, small-scale pig breeding has caused pollution in the surrounding rivers. Around 2014, the local government began encouraging farmers to change their livelihoods and start planting passion fruit.

Wuping's climate, which features ample sunshine and abundant rainfall, is suitable for growing golden passion fruit, a popular variety in the market, according to Lin Wenming from the county's agriculture and rural affairs bureau.

"So we organized farmers to visit major passion fruit producing areas such as the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region and Hainan province and started to plant the fruit," Lin said.

Wuping's passion fruits are of high quality and have proved popular in the market, a fact that has encouraged the rapid development of the industry in the county. Eight standardized seedling-raising bases have been built in the county, along with more than 30 fruit processing centers, forming a complete industrial chain.

Last year, the county's passion

Old millet given modern twists in Inner Mongolia

HOHHOT — From delicious mooncakes and crispy snacks to millet-themed museums, Aohan Banner in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region — known for discovering the world's oldest millet — is transforming this ancient grain into trendy, modern products.

According to Ma Lin, a resident of Aohan, millet was traditionally used in porridge and other recipes, but now it's in mooncakes, which is a very new practice.

"My family and friends love them," Ma said.

Ma is among a growing number of health-conscious Chinese consumers who increasingly favor coarse grains such as millet, sorghum, black rice and buckwheat over refined grains such as white wheat and polished rice.

This shift has presented enticing opportunities for companies in Aohan Banner. Two years ago, Inner Mongolia Huixiangyuan Food Co started developing millet mooncakes.

"We encountered various challenges, including selecting the right millet variety and refining the milling process," said Zhang Fengying, manager of the company. "After years of efforts, we successfully launched our millet mooncakes."

The mooncakes have become popular as more people become aware of the nutritional value of millet, which is often referred to as a "coarse cereal" due to the rough surface of the seeds, Zhang said.

In addition to mooncakes, Aohan Agricultural Millet Industrial Development Group Co has collaborated with experts from Nankai University in Tianjin to develop a millet powder believed to restore acid-alkaline balance. In recent years, the company has launched over 80 millet products.

Beyond the development of new items, new business models centered around millet are emerging.

Restaurants and rural homestays featuring millet cuisine have become hotspots. The Aohan Millet Museum, which displays 8,000-year-old carbonized millet grains and over 500 ancient farming tools, has been a major tourist destination since its opening in 2020, receiving over 300,000 visitors so far.

"Visiting the millet museum was a fascinating experience," said Chen Cailing, a local resident. "It's amazing to see the history and the innovative ways millet is being used today."

The local government has rolled out various measures to ensure the high-quality development of the millet industry. They include preserving traditional varieties, screening for high-yield, high-quality new varieties and documenting traditional farming practices and local cus-

toms related to millet.

Acknowledging the historical significance of millet, the Aohan dryland farming system was designated as one of the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 2012. Two years later, Aohan was designated China's "hometown of millet."

"During prehistoric times, Aohan millet served as a staple food for northern Chinese ancestors before spreading westward," said Liu Guoxiang, vice-president of the Chinese Academy of History. "It has unique cultural and agricultural value."

At present, Aohan's millet cultivation area covers approximately 66,700 hectares, with an annual output of around 300 million kilograms. The millet industry, involving nearly 80,000 farming households, has already become a cash cow for local residents.

Wang Yuzhuo, a local villager, established a rural cooperative in 2013. Last year, Wang began promoting millet via livestreaming and received 1,000 orders in just 30 minutes during his first session. To date, he has filled 28,000 orders, amounting to 1.2 million yuan (\$168,800) in sales.

In the future, Aohan plans to continue its innovative approaches, combining traditional practices with modern techniques to further enhance the millet industry and strengthen its place in the market.

"For nearly 8,000 years, millet cultivation has been continuous in Aohan Banner," said Zhang Hongfeng, director of the banner's agriculture and animal husbandry bureau.

"Today, it not only supports local livelihoods but also stands as a symbol of the region. Despite the passage of time, Aohan millet continues to thrive, embodying the vibrant spirit of agricultural heritage and innovation."

In many regions of China, local specialties have evolved into iconic industries.

In Liuzhou, an industrial city in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region renowned for steel and automobile manufacturing, exports of *luosifen*, a noodle soup known for its pungent aroma, surpassed 3,167 metric tons last year, up 19.4 percent year-on-year. The total value of the exports was 87.27 million yuan, a 28.5 percent increase compared to the previous year.

In Shanxi province, a region that has been making vinegar for over 3,000 years, mature vinegar is exported to over 30 countries and regions, including the United States, Canada, Australia and Japan.

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A farmer harvests millet in Aohan Banner, Inner Mongolia autonomous region. LIU LEI / XINHUA

fruit planting area amounted to 1,920 hectares, with an output of 35,000 metric tons.

"The river used to be quite dirty and smelly, but now it's clear," Lin said, while noting that this is a result of the county developing its industry in line with local requirements.

Wuping's passion fruit industry is also riding the wave of e-commerce. According to Wang Xiuzhen, head of Fujian Youxuan Agricultural Development, a local enterprise specializing in planting and selling passion fruit, the company saw its fruit orders on e-commerce platform Alibaba exceed 200,000 in a single day last year, hitting a record.

According to Wang, the compa-

ny has also introduced more production lines to turn out additional products, including dried fruit and yogurt.

"Passion fruit can be made into biological feed, and it also has medicinal value, representing its huge potential market," Wang added.

In recent years, the local government has made efforts to promote the Wuping passion fruit brand by monitoring the production process to ensure quality. Related events have been organized to boost local tourism, promoting the integrated development of primary, secondary and tertiary industries.

XINHUA

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

Giant pandas rack up air miles

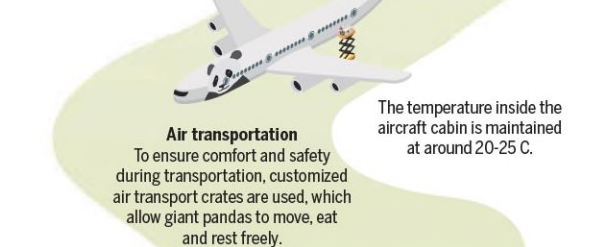
Overseas cooperation assists in conservation, breeding of protected species

By YAN DONGJIE
yandongjie@chinadaily.com.cn

01 Overseas transfer of giant pandas

Selection criteria
Considerations are made concerning age, gender, genetic characteristics and genetic lineage for greater genetic diversity.

Quarantine
Once the pandas are identified, they are isolated in quarantine enclosures according to the customs regulations of the destination country for approximately one month or longer.



02 Receiving giant pandas

Indoor and outdoor enclosures are prepared with temperature and humidity control systems. Considerations are made for caring for potential giant pandas should they come along. The enclosures are enriched with climbing structures, logs and other items to replicate the natural habitat of giant pandas.



03 Selection criteria for cooperative partners

Facilities and care
The zoos included in the scope of cooperation are globally renowned or top-tier zoos in their respective countries, equipped with facilities, food sources, technical conditions and personnel capabilities required for panda care, breeding, public education, disease prevention and treatment, and scientific research.

Health control
They provide monthly health reports and annual medical examination reports for giant pandas. Chinese experts analyze the health status of giant pandas monthly, and regular exchanges and summaries of project progress are conducted.

Research cooperation and sharing
The details of scientific research cooperation need to be studied and determined in advance. Scientific research involving giant panda breeding and rearing, disease treatment, disease prevention, genetic preservation and other aspects require consent from the Chinese side. Both parties participate in scientific research and share achievements.

Last year, the center inspected all 63 domestic enclosures for giant pandas and 23 cooperating institutions abroad. From the evaluation results, each cooperating institution meets the requirements, and the giant pandas are overall in good health, according to the center.

Huang Shan always carries some apples and carrots with him when he flies with giant pandas, as he knows they like sweet snacks.

As a giant panda breeder at the China Conservation and Research Center for the Giant Panda in Wolong, Sichuan province, Huang has accompanied giant pandas on flights to countries such as Thailand, Japan, Singapore and Finland in the past decade. This month, he'll fly with Yun Chuan and Xin Bao to San Diego in the United States.

"We usually prepare bamboo, bamboo shoots and special steamed bread for the pandas on the plane. The snacks are for comforting them if they get anxious," Huang said.

Even before they board the flight, Yun Chuan and Xin Bao have had to go through more than two months of quarantine, and Huang has been alongside them every step of the way to provide compassionate care and behavioral training.

"Through compassionate care, which means I stay with them every day, feeding and interacting with them, the pandas become more familiar with me and trust me more. This means that when I accompany them to go abroad, I can help them get used to the new environment, food and new breeders easier," he said.

The well-being of China's giant pandas overseas is a great concern of the panda center's experts, and Huang is pleased that San Diego Zoo has renovated the enclosure for Yun Chuan and Xin Bao according to the suggestions of Chinese experts, who visited the site in March.

"Chinese experts always inspect the overseas enclosures to make sure they are comfortable and safe for the giant pandas to live in," said Li Desheng, deputy director of the conservation and research center.

"The total number of giant pandas and their descendants involved in international cooperation exceeds 240, contributing significantly to the development of the current captive population of 728 giant pandas," Li said.

Giant panda cubs born overseas are required to be brought to China before they reach the age of 4.

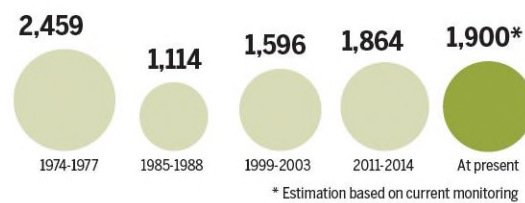
This year, China is actively advancing a new round of giant panda conservation cooperation with countries such as the US and Spain.

"Through international cooperative research projects, China has achieved significant success in the field of wild giant panda conservation, nurturing a large number of talent. The accumulation of these basic research results and talent cultivation has further propelled China's efforts in wild giant panda conservation," said Liu Dingzhen, a professor from the School of Life Sciences at Beijing Normal University.

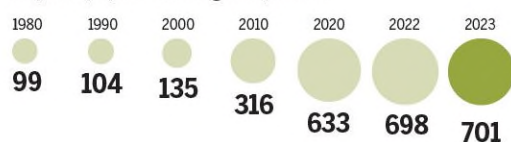
"Meanwhile, the international conservation funds raised through panda cooperative projects have played a positive role in China's wildlife conservation. They have promoted the establishment of panda conservation areas in China, advancing the protection and restoration of the giant panda's wild population and habitat."

Wild giant panda population

Results of national wild giant panda population surveys



Captive population of giant pandas



After returning to China, giant pandas need to readapt to the environment, including the food, caretakers, enclosures and other aspects of their care.

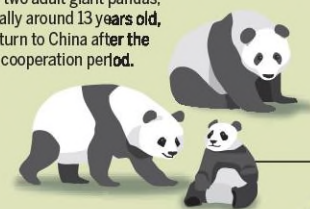


As of May 2024, China has established scientific research cooperation with 26 zoos in 20 countries.

04 Completion of cooperation

The giant panda overseas exchange period is typically 10 years.

The two adult giant pandas, usually around 13 years old, return to China after the cooperation period.



Any cubs born during the giant pandas' stays abroad are sent to China before reaching adulthood (before age 4).

Worldwide cooperation research



Sources: China Conservation and Research Center for the Giant Panda, National Forestry and Grassland Administration

GRAPHIC BY JORGE CORTES AND LIXIAOTIAN; TEXT BY YAN DONGJIE / CHINA DAILY

WORLD

Chinese firms in US upbeat amid dropoff

Business survey on Chinese enterprises shows revenue optimism after profits fall

By YIFAN XU in Washington
yifanxu@chinadailyusa.com

Despite facing a "significant performance downturn" last year, Chinese companies operating in the United States expect rising revenue trends in the long term, according to a survey.

The 11th Annual Business Survey on Chinese Enterprises in the United States was launched Monday at an event hosted by the China General Chamber of Commerce-USA (CGCC) on the sidelines of the SelectUSA Investment Summit, an annual US federal government program aimed at attracting foreign direct investment.

The CGCC conducted the survey in April and May of some 100 Chinese enterprises, including financial institutions, industrial firms and consumer discretionary companies, about their revenue in the US market in the past year and their future outlook.

According to Hu Wei, the chairman of the CGCC, who is also the CEO of Bank of China USA, the survey shows the following key trends: "Surveyed companies' negative perceptions of the business and investment environment in the United States have increased, investment intentions have somewhat declined, but the goal of engaging in the US market remained clear."

"Chinese companies experienced a significant performance downturn in the United States last year, similar to the initial year of the pandemic, 2020, with an increase in the number of companies reporting declining profit margins. Pessimism about the future of US-China bilateral and trade relations continues to rise, but the overall expectations for long-term revenue trends remain optimistic," the survey said.

"The overall revenue trend in 2023 continued the clear decline that began in 2022. This trend marks a notable shift from the strong rebound year seen in 2021."

The survey found that 21 percent of the respondents saw revenue declines exceeding 20 percent last year, compared with 13 percent in 2022. It also found that the number of companies with losses in 2023 was 32 percent, similar to the 33 percent in 2020, which was the largest number in six years.

However, "a notable degree of long-term optimism persisted, with the majority expressing positive future revenue expectations."

The survey showed that nearly 60 percent of Chinese enterprises in the US aimed to maintain stable investment levels, with 30 percent planning to increase investment. Only about one-seventh of companies intended to reduce investment.

Hu said, "Chinese companies have demonstrated outstanding resilience ... adapting to the US market and achieving sustainable developments ... regardless of prosperity or adversity."

Jing Quan, the chargé d'affaires of the Chinese embassy in the US, said that some people are now advocating a "new Cold War" between China and the United States, while

both sides should "firmly and loudly say no" to this concept.

"Efforts should be made to stabilize the general direction of the relationship between the two countries, provide more confidence, certainty and predictability for the people of the two countries and all walks of life, and set up positive expectations for the China-US relationship," Jing said at the event.

"The Chinese embassy will continue to play a bridging role and work hard to serve the business community of the two countries and create a sustained good and stable business environment. I hope the US side will also move in the same direction," he added.

Marisa Lago, under-secretary for international trade at the US Department of Commerce, said that the first meeting between the working groups she co-led with Chinese Vice-Minister of Commerce Wang Shouwen in April was an important milestone. Lago's team is planning a second meeting in China later this year.

She said that resuming regular intergovernmental communications and exchanges "reduces the risk of misunderstandings and prevents escalation of irritants."

"This direct communication allows both of our countries to raise very specific business issues that affect our businesses and workers and invest in them," Lago said.

Johnson Qin, the chairman of the board and CEO of Shenzhen Capchem Technology Co Ltd, a battery manufacturer, told China Daily that it is normal for there to be cyclical fluctuations in the US-China commercial relationship.

Although there have been more challenges in recent years, he said he is encouraged by China and welcomed by the US overall.

"We brought technologies, capital and jobs to the US," he said. "I'm still optimistic for the future."

During a panel at the event, Bella Tu, the vice-president of MINISO Group, a company focused on the retail and wholesale of lifestyle products and toy products, said that her company is energized by the passion for "interest consumption" in the US.

"We went through a lot of market research and adjusted our strategy according to the characteristics of the US market, positioning our store as a global IP-collection store," said Tu. "We plan to open more than 100 stores in the US by the end of 2024."

Yujia Gu, the vice-president of HEYTEA USA, said that it is good news that US consumers are willing to pay for higher-quality tea beverages. "We would accelerate our store openings in the US and promote the localization of our business with consumer recognition at the core," Gu said.

The survey offered some suggestions to Chinese companies in the US and Chinese companies entering the US, respectively, including looking at the environment objectively, finding comparative advantages, building long-term confidence, being well-prepared and utilizing multiple sources of support,

Mourning their loss



Palestinians mourn for a female relative killed in an Israeli bombardment in Deir al-Balah, central Gaza Strip, on Tuesday. ABDEL KAREEM HANA / AP

China's lunar mission generates hope for collaboration with US

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco
lizhu@chinadailyusa.com

Excluded from US space projects, China's historic feat of successfully retrieving the first-ever samples from the far side of the moon has ignited discussions about the US approach, which experts said should focus on inclusion rather than exclusion.

The Chang'e-6 lunar probe returned to Earth on Tuesday, bringing back rock and soil samples from the far side of the moon, which always faces away from Earth.

The probe landed on the moon on June 2 and lifted off again on June 4 to start its journey back to Earth. The far side of the moon presents unique technical challenges for landing and returning. Yet, China managed to land the probe, collect samples and bring them back safely.

The retrieved soil samples are anticipated to shed light on the origins of the solar system, while the potential for tapping lunar resources offers a promising path for collaboration between the US and China, particularly in advancing artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, according to an editorial by a Silicon Valley-based think tank and consultancy Sinotalks.

"Prior to the Chang'e-6 mission, China published the world's first high-definition lunar geologic atlas to, among other goals, facilitate scientists' identification of a proper site for a potential lunar station. New knowledge acquired from analyses of samples brought back by the Chang'e-6 probe will enrich the content of the atlas, making the establishment of a lunar station more promising," Mei Gechlik, founder and CEO of

Sinotalks, told China Daily.

Once the station is in place, in-depth studies of lunar resources, the moon's evolution and the solar system can be conducted more effectively, which may lead to the discovery of new lunar resources that can be used to develop AI hardware more powerful than existing semi-conductors, she explained.

"In addition, innovative AI applications that will help take the moon exploration to another level can also be tested in the station, under conditions unavailable on the Earth. These long-term and expansive benefits should motivate China and the United States to collaborate by contributing the financial capital and human capital needed to pull off this feat," said Gechlik.

Taylah Bland, a fellow with the Asia Society Policy Institute's Center for China Analysis, echoed the potential for cooperation.

"China's latest achievement as the first country to land on the far side of the moon reinforces its space exploration strengths and capabilities," Bland wrote in a newsletter. "Despite an ongoing space race with the United States, China's collaboration with the European Space Agency on the Chang'e-6 mission highlights the potential for cooperation, not competition," she said.

However, a major hurdle stands in the way of such collaboration between the US and China: the ongoing tensions between the two countries.

The US has actively excluded China from the projects of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) since 2011 and has intensified restrictions to limit China's access to US-developed technologies to contain

China's AI development.

This exclusionary approach, according to Sinotalks, is meant to weaken China's space technology advancement but might be backfiring by barring participation in China's space missions.

"Unlike their counterparts from France, Italy and Sweden engaging in moon-related research supported by payloads carried by the Chang'e-6 probe, US scientists have missed these opportunities because US restrictions have also excluded them from participating in China's space projects," said Sinotalks.

The think tank's editorial board further questioned whether the restrictions would genuinely hinder China's AI development, given its ability to overcome obstacles and continue its space exploration.

The current US restrictions are unlikely to be dismantled soon, said Gechlik, but China's historic lunar mission presents an opportunity for a shift in stance, with the moon samples serving as an olive branch extended toward the US scientific community.

The 4 billion-year-old lunar samples brought back by the Chang'e-6 probe are 1 billion years older than samples brought back by the United States and Soviet Union decades ago, said Gechlik, and China has "a good opportunity to extend an olive branch" to the United States by inviting US scientists to study these samples together.

The US scientists' determination to stay competitive in the moon exploration may prompt them to urge US authorities to accept China's olive branch, she said. "If this occurs, a new era of 'moon diplomacy' will begin."

Ruto rejects tax bill and returns it to parliament

NAIROBI — Kenya's President William Ruto on Wednesday declined to sign a finance bill that has sparked nationwide deadly protests, and has sent it back to parliament for amendments, Kenya's Star newspaper and KTN News reported.

Police opened fire on crowds who massed around parliament on Tuesday and later broke into parliament buildings, minutes after lawmakers had voted through tax hikes seeking to raise an additional \$2.7 billion.

Kenyan protesters vowed on Wednesday to keep up their demonstrations against new tax hikes, a day after violent clashes outside parliament and across the country left at least 23 people dead and scores wounded.

Aid group Medecins Sans Frontieres said its staff members were left hurt and traumatized when stones were thrown at one of its ambulances during Tuesday's unrest. The Kenya Red Cross also said its staff and vehicles were attacked, without going into further detail.

The Star newspaper reported it had been informed by sources in Ruto's office the president has proposed a raft of amendments which members of parliament will have to consider.

Ruto termed Tuesday's street protests as "treasonous", noting that his government will soon provide an expeditious response to the situation.

In his televised address to the nation on Tuesday night, Ruto said the government has mobilized all resources to ensure the situation does not occur again "at whatever cost." He directed security organs to use all means possible to thwart any threats to the national security.

African Union Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat on Tuesday expressed "deep concern" over the deadly violence in Kenya.

In a statement, the AU chief said he is following the outbreak of violence after the public protests in Kenya, which has resulted in a loss of life and damage to property.

He also urged national stakeholders to engage in constructive dialogue to address the issues that led to the protests in the interest of Kenya.

During Tuesday's protests, demonstrators in Nairobi also raided the City County Government, vandalizing property and setting ablaze some offices.

The protests in the capital brought businesses to a standstill, with all the shops in the central business district remaining shut.

Public transport was disrupted across Nairobi, and many operators of commuter buses grounded their vehicles, leaving office workers stranded, with many of them opting to walk for kilometers away from the central business district to try to get vehicles home.

The lawmakers on Tuesday morning passed the finance bill 2024, seeking to raise an additional 346.7 billion shillings (\$2.67 billion), by such measures as increasing the railway development levy from 1.5 percent to 2.5 percent, as well as the import declaration fee from 2.5 percent to 3.5 percent.

Ruto, who won the elections in August 2022 on a platform of helping the poor, has been under pressure to raise additional revenues amid rising government debt repayments.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

Indonesia struggles as dollar strengthens

JAKARTA — Indonesian industries that depend on imported raw materials are grappling with the depreciation of the Indonesian rupiah against the US dollar.

The strengthening of the dollar drives up the cost of raw materials and logistics tariffs, raising manufacturing expenses. While adjusting prices is challenging due to low domestic purchasing power, worker efficiency may be the last option.

In line with a downward trend in recent months, the value of the rupiah in relation to the dollar on Tuesday is 16,513.15 for the purchasing

rate and 16,348.84 for the selling rate. The exchange rate was about 15,000 in April last year but has consistently exceeded 15,000 since the US Federal Reserve raised interest rates to 5.25 to 5.50 percent.

Hardest-hit industry

The pharmaceutical industry, which imports 90 percent of its raw materials, is significantly affected. "This makes the pharmaceutical industry very vulnerable to fluctuations in the rupiah exchange rate," Executive Director of the Indonesian Pharmaceutical Association

Elfiano Rizaldi said on Friday.

Since the pharmaceutical industry typically stocks raw materials for four months, production has not yet halted, nor have product prices changed.

"But given that the rupiah has declined since April, if this situation persists, say until August, perhaps a price adjustment is unavoidable," Rizaldi added.

Similarly, the medical equipment industry relies 70 percent on imported raw materials, with only 30 percent sourced domestically, according to Febie Yuriza Poetri,

vice-chairwoman of the Indonesian Medical Equipment Manufacturers Association.

Should price adjustments be implemented, the government, as the primary purchaser of medical equipment products for state hospitals, will be the hardest hit.

The food and beverage industry continues to import key raw materials like wheat, soybeans, milk, sugar and maize.

"In addition to the rising cost of raw materials, logistics expenses have also gone up three or four times," according to Adhi Lukman, the chairman of the Indonesian Food and Beverage Producers Association.

XINHUA

Blast off



South Korean marines fire a Spike anti-tank missile into waters off the island of Yeonpyeong on Wednesday during a drill. YONHAP NEWS AGENCY

ACROSS ASIA

Editor's note:

In this weekly feature China Daily gives voice to Asia and its people. The stories presented come mainly from the Asia News Network (ANN), of which China Daily is among its 20 leading titles.



Couples from around the world attend a mass wedding ceremony at the Cheong Shim Peace World Center in Gapyeong, South Korea, in 2017. AHN YOUNG-JOON / AP

TIED UP IN KNOTS

Young South Koreans pick pragmatism over passion amid marriage challenges

“Why is it so hard to find someone to marry?” The pressing question tormented 28-year-old Kim Jeong-sik (not his real name) from South Korea, who has invested significant time and money in his search for a suitable partner.

For Kim, it is not all about love or destiny but about finding someone to help build a “decent family”, ideally someone from a similar or higher economic and social status.

“While I used to fall for romance and attraction based on instinct in the past, now I think about whether the person is competent, financially stable and suitable to develop a future with,” he said.

“I do not even initiate dates with people I cannot picture the future with even though I am attracted to them. In that sense, I currently have the perfect girlfriend, but that doesn't mean that I am attracted to her.”

Although he has a “perfect girlfriend”, Kim is still contemplating the most fitting partner for a successful marriage — a struggle shared by many young South Korean adults navigating the “marriage market” in search of an eligible spouse.

Kang, a 28-year-old office worker in Seoul, who has been actively seeking a boyfriend with the intention of marriage, has received brief introductions of a man's height, residence, company name and alma mater almost daily.

It is an unspoken rule among young South Koreans in their 20s and 30s to prepare such descriptions, often accompanied by two to three pictures, to facilitate blind dates arranged by acquaintances, Kang said.

Rather than meeting random people from online dating apps or aimless gatherings, they prefer strangers introduced by friends, as “the person is better vetted and there is a lower chance of meeting swindlers or someone weird”, she said.

These profiles are sometimes exchanged “like cards”.

“If an introduction of a person I get is not satisfactory or not what I'm looking for, I toss it to my friends and if they both want to be introduced, their contacts are exchanged,” Kang said.

Despite finding it emotionally draining to meet new people every week, she feels compelled to continue the process to achieve a successful marriage.

“Everything feels like a business, having to mull over all the conditions. But the fear that if I don't find a boyfriend to marry now, I will miss out on this marriage market and be left with only a few choices of eligible men makes me keep searching,” Kang said.

“I feel like I am in a race competing with other women my age — racing to find a good boyfriend



A tuxedo vendor speaks with a couple during a bridal fair in Seoul on May 18. South Korean marriages last year ticked up for the first time in more than a decade in a country with the world's lowest fertility rate. JEAN CHUNG VIA GETTY IMAGES

before everyone takes them all.”

Both Kim and Kang, who identify as part of the “MZ generation” — known for being more liberal, self-expressive and inclined toward personal pleasure — view a “successful marriage” as more than just a union based on affection.

Born in the 1990s, when South Korea reaped the benefits of economic growth and technological advancements, members of this generation have also faced significant pressures and challenges in a highly competitive and rapidly changing society. Observers note that these social changes have influenced their approach to making crucial life choices in early adulthood, including the pursuit of marriage.

Kwak Keum-joo, professor emeritus of psychology at Seoul National University, pointed to the widespread perception in South Korea that marriage is one of the keys to a “successful life”, which is why people are more inclined to an “artificial match”.

“(South) Korea is a society that strongly encourages individuals to strive for improvement, earn more, and achieve promotions. The country's rapid and condensed development placed a premium on success and advancement, intensifying materialism and consumption,” she said.

This is why prospective partners are often meticulously evaluated on factors such as occupation, salary, physical appearance, age and lifestyle. Even family backgrounds, including parents' jobs, education level and pension coverage, are considered.

Checking lists

The “market” is one thing, but what has now become a “race” to marry the most ideal person is attributed to the tendency in South

15.3 percent
of the population aged over 13 said in a survey that “marriage is a must” in 2022, showing a decline from 20.3 percent in 2012.

of things based on social consensus, such as schools and companies. And because (South) Korea was a hierarchical society, even though there are no formal classes among people nowadays, unseen classes still define individuals,” Kwak said.

Rather than finding a compatible partner, people often seek those who rank highest in economic and social aspects, like by graduating from a prestigious university or working at a major conglomerate, she said.

According to major matchmaking business Duo Information, the “ideal husband” is typically 178.7 centimeters tall, earns 60.67 million won (\$43,800) annually, possesses 335 million won in assets, is 2 years older than the woman, a university graduate and an office worker.

The ideal wife is 164.2 cm tall, earns 44 million won annually, has 217 million won in assets, is 2.3 years younger, a university graduate and an office worker.

These trends were highlighted in the recent TV reality program *Couple Palace*, which provided insights into the 2024 marriage market in South Korea.

The most popular scene from the couple-matching show was a woman rejecting a man for “not being able to afford a house in Gangnam”, an upmarket area in Seoul, adding that she “favored living in Gangnam over the male contestant” despite showing a strong attraction to him.

Reviewers found the show successful in presenting the paradoxical phenomenon of a boom in matchmaking despite all-time low births and marriages.

The number of marriages in South Korea has steadily decreased over the past decades from some 435,000 unions in 1996 to below 200,000 in 2021, witnessing a record low of 192,000 marriages in 2022, according to recent data by statistical agency Statistics Korea.

Though the country witnessed a slight increase of 1 percent last year, with about 194,000 couples tying the knot, experts pointed to delayed marriages during the COVID-19 pandemic as not being a clear indicator of a shift in declining marriages.

A survey by Statistics Korea also showed that 15.3 percent of the population aged over 13 responded that “marriage is a must” in 2022, showing a decline from 20.3 percent in 2012. This sentiment was particularly strong among women and even more so among the unmarried, with a mere 29 percent of teenagers viewing marriage as a necessity.

Getting realistic

Matchmaking businesses in South Korea are thriving due to an increase in clients looking for the ideal partner based on their profiles and assets.

Duo Information reported a record-high revenue of 38.2 billion won last year, up 5.2 percent from the previous year, according to the Financial Supervisory Service's electronic disclosure system.

The firm's revenue hovered around 28 billion won until 2020 but surged as more people outsourced the partner-finding process.

“Rather than spending time and patience on normal dates, our clients hope to find a partner with matching conditions quickly. Our job is to shorten the process, revealing crucial details like family background and income early on, which are usually considered rude to ask about initially,” an employee at a matchmaking firm told *The Korea Herald*.

A 29-year-old named Jang, who is using a matchmaking firm to find a wife himself, said he prioritizes the status of a potential partner because he believes marriage could be a “social ladder” toward higher economic and social tiers.

“Let's be honest. Though it is snobbish, it's true people want to marry someone who is better than themselves so they can level up their economic and social status through a partner,” he said.

Kwak, the psychology professor, also noted that fear of failure is another factor for such a phenomenon.

“Marriage is now a choice, not a necessity in (South) Korea. Young people are cautious and calculative, trying to avoid losses when marrying someone,” she said.

THE KOREA HERALD

Skills mismatch, tech disconnect hit youngsters

Almost 10 million Indonesians of Generation Z, which includes those born in the late 1990s and first decade of this century, are unemployed and not enrolled in education or training, according to statistical agency Statistics Indonesia.

About 5.72 million women and 4.16 million men find themselves in such a state of limbo, which experts said could push some of them into crime to make ends meet.

University of Indonesia demographer Dewa Wisana has identified some of the challenges these young Indonesians encounter that contribute to their plight and cause many to remain inactive.

The first of these, he noted, was the structural transition from a manufacturing-based economy to one dominated by the service sector.

Second, many of the young Indonesians have struggled to enter the workforce due to unpredictable events including the COVID-19 pandemic.

Third, there was a growing demand for qualifications that they often failed to bring to the job market.

“Many business sectors, particularly service-oriented ones, rely heavily on technological expertise. Unfortunately, a significant number of individuals struggle to acquire proficiency in these particular skills and technologies,” Dewa said.

“For instance, if we look at workplaces, they are starting to demand that people have computer skills including coding, data analytics and internet use ... People are using the internet of things, because the business world has moved toward automation. Yet, not all Gen Zers have mastered this.”

Dewa added that a shortage of soft skills, including basic tasks such as presenting and communicating within teams, further eroded the young Indonesians' employability.

A gap in leadership, presentation and communication is problematic considering that they typically have to work together in teams, he said.

Their socioeconomic status sometimes keeps the young Indonesians from developing skills,

including soft skills, Dewa said.

“Some have privileges, some have access to superior education, technology, etc, others don't, and some are far from the business centers — the job offers aren't that great,” he said.

According to Eko Listiyanto of the Institute for Development of Economics and Finance, industrial sectors were growing too slowly, leaving a large number of the young Indonesians unemployed.

This is exacerbated by what is seen as a lack of vocational training, with employee training a costly undertaking that many businesses skimp on and they are particularly reluctant to train Gen Z staff because they see them as too prone to changing jobs.

When the economy is only slowly growing, like it is now, businesses may not always want to take on inexperienced staff because of costs, such as in the form of recruitment costs, Eko said.

He said businesses, the central government and regional governments should all be involved in training. Those who live far from business and industry hubs should be able to get the training they need to achieve the skills the market requires.

Since Gen Z members are fast learners, especially if they are digital natives, they offer real, new opportunities that businesses currently may not be aware of, Eko said.

The Indonesian government is working to help Gen Z members find employment, said Susiwiyono Moe-giarno, secretary of the Office of the Coordinating Economic Minister.

Several programs have been launched to encourage investments in sectors that “require a lot of labor. We have implemented an upskilling and reskilling program,” Susiwiyono said.

“There are various instruments available in different countries, such as the ones offered by us and Singapore. We have a long list of tasks ahead of us, with numerous projects that can be tackled,” Susiwiyono said.

THE JAKARTA POST



Civil service candidates take a test in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, on Sept 14, 2021. CHAIDEER MAHYUDDIN / AFP

Thai elephant gives birth to unique twins

according to media reports.

Male-female elephant twins are even more rare. The Ayutthaya Elephant Palace & Royal Kraal, home to the newborns, said that it was a first for the area, while a statement from the Thai government said the pachyderms were the third such pair in the world.

Laithongriam Meephan, owner of the establishment and president of the Phra Kochaban Foundation for elephant care, said on June 8 that the area had witnessed some twin births in the past but the calves were either both males or females.

The latest twins are the area's 94th and 95th births in 27 years of operation, he said.

Their father is 29-year-old elephant Plai Siam, which has been a star in several cultural shows in the area, Laithongriam said, adding that this is the mother elephant's fourth pregnancy.

“Twin birthing is one of the miracles in this auspicious year, when His Majesty the King will celebrate his 72nd birthday on July 28,” he said.

“We are praying that both babies are healthy and grow up fast.”

THE NATION



Newborn elephant twins, a female (right) and a male, with their mother at the Ayutthaya Elephant Palace in Ayutthaya, Thailand, on June 10. MANAN VATSAYANA / AFP

Editor's note: An array of Chinese cities have maintained their cultural memories in the form of historical neighborhoods that have only added to their multilayered charm and vigor with the passage of time. China Daily is taking readers on a journey to some of these timeless areas, where President Xi Jinping has left his footsteps and remarked on the preservation and vitalization of heritage. In this installment, we follow local people's pious steps along Barkhor Bazaar, which encircles the sacred Jokhang Temple, where a traditional Tibetan lifestyle flourishes alongside a modern vibe.

A TRULY EXHILARATING TASTE OF TEA AND UNITY

Centuries-old Barkhor Bazaar traces an eye-catching path through shared tradition of commerce and culture, **Lin Qi** and **Daqiong** report in Lhasa.

Drop in on the Woser Ganchung Tea House on the first floor of a four-story compound building on popular Barkhor Bazaar in the old town of Lhasa in the Xizang autonomous region at around 2 pm, and you may be surprised to find that the time-honored spot, known for its Tibetan sweet tea, is still bustling with customers.

Some are tourists, curious to have a cup of two of sweet tea, while the rest are local residents addicted to this traditional brew, and who stay for hours, chatting, and ordering one cup after another to accompany plates of local delicacies.

Among the staff busy serving and greeting loyal customers is Penba, manager of the Woser Ganchung Tea House.

"There are even more people on weekends," he says, raising his voice a bit to be heard above the hustle and bustle. "We sell up to 11,000 cups a day."

Tibetan sweet tea, which is made using black tea and powdered milk, is a must for many local residents as they begin or complete their day, and many of them visit tea houses of repute, such as the one Penba manages.

He says when the tea shop opened in 1978, it only served between 30 and 40 people a day and some customers described it as being "as small as a box".

Business began to grow about 20 years ago as increasing numbers of tourists, business owners, migrant workers and other customers also began to drop in and join local residents for a cup of sweet tea. Consequently, the tea house had to expand.

"Today, a relaxing moment and a cup of sweet tea at the Woser Ganchung is on the to-do list for many spending their time on the 1,300-year-old street, the evolution of which was linked to the construction of another landmark, the Jokhang Temple."

First built in the seventh century, the temple has undergone numerous renovations and expansions to become the complex it is today.

In 821, the central government of the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and the

Tubo regime, which ruled the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau from the seventh to the ninth centuries, formed an alliance. Two years later, that alliance was recorded on a stele in both Chinese and Tibetan script that was erected outside the Jokhang Temple. The Tang-Tubo Alliance Monument, as it is known, chronicles the history of that alliance between the Han and Tibetan ethnic groups.

A circumambulation path for pilgrims formed around the Jokhang Temple and gradually expanded into prosperous Barkhor Bazaar. Throughout the ages, the extended area has been a bustling center of commerce, and is home to multiple cultural, artistic and religious venues, as well as residential compounds.

The area centered on Barkhor Bazaar and its neighboring alleys and courtyards is known as the Old City of Barkhor.

Meanwhile, Barkhor Bazaar has been marked by the stamp of joint development among the different ethnic groups of Xizang.

In July 2021, President Xi Jinping visited the street during his tour of the autonomous region, during which he inquired about the development of tourism, cultural and creative industries, and the protection of Tibetan cultural heritage in specialty stores.

"I visited this street 23 years ago. Today it is truly flourishing. The (more than) 1,000-year-old Barkhor Bazaar was jointly built by China's various ethnic groups. Cultures of different ethnic groups have come into contact, communicated, and blended here. It is a place where all members of the Chinese nation have realized happy and harmonious relations," President Xi said.

In addition to the Tang-Tubo Alliance Monument, the street is also home to dozens of examples of historical architecture, including the former office of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) government's grand minister in Xizang.

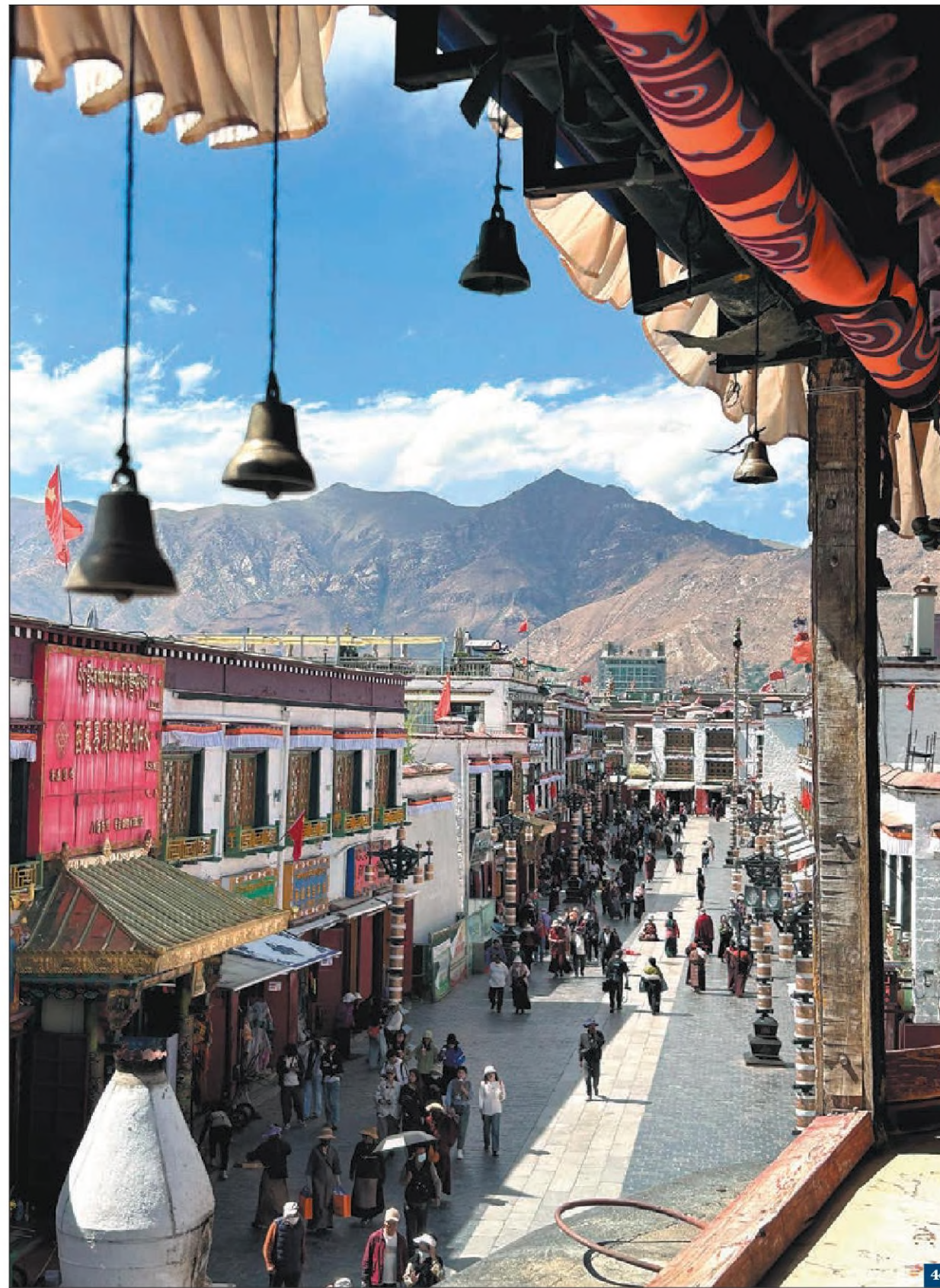
The 300-year-old Tibetan-style compound is now a public museum, and Sonam Drolkar, the venue's director, says the cultural relics, photos and other objects on display show how Xizang has been an indivisible part of China since ancient times.

She says the museum also serves as a community center for elderly residents living along Barkhor Bazaar to spend time together.

"This is much the same situation at the Woser Ganchung Tea House. Having worked there for many years, Penba has become friends with many of the regulars, and as he goes about his business, he sometimes stops to



1. A corner of the 1,300-year-old Barkhor Bazaar in Lhasa, Xizang autonomous region, a bustling center of commerce, and home to multiple cultural, artistic and religious venues, as well as residential compounds. LHAMO / FOR CHINA DAILY 2. A Tibetan couple enjoy their neighborhood in June 2019. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY 3. The Jokhang Temple at the center of Barkhor Bazaar, originally a circumambulation path for pilgrims around the temple. LI HENG / FOR CHINA DAILY 4. A view along Barkhor Bazaar. LHAMO / FOR CHINA DAILY 5. Women dressed in traditional Tibetan attire pose for photos in front of the temple in March 2023. LI LIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE 6. A rich display of traditional Tibetan architecture adorns the street. LI HENG / FOR CHINA DAILY 7. The former office of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) government's grand minister in Xizang is now a public museum and community center for elderly residents. LHAMO / FOR CHINA DAILY



sit and chat with them for a bit. He says winter is the busiest time, as people need hot sweet tea to keep warm.

Home delivery is also popular, and different volumes of sweet tea can be purchased. Penba says that, once, the tea house received 200 requests for the maximum 3.6 kilogram order amount in a single day.

The tea is normally served in a glass cup.

"In the past, a glass cost 1 jiao, a tenth of a yuan, now it is 1 yuan (80.14)," he says.

Placing orders and paying is done in the traditional way and constitutes an essential part of the sweet tea culture in Xizang. A customer places 1 yuan on the table, then staff come with a glass, fill it, and retrieve the money. When the customer wants more, they place another 1 yuan on the table, and wait for the staff to refill the cup and take the money.

"Those used to e-payment must go to the front desk to purchase banknotes and coins before taking a seat and ordering in the traditional way."

The way people enjoy milk tea is changing in Lhasa, where modern milk tea brands have opened, offering many new flavors and blends.

"It is still very fine," Penba says. "We are sticking to our tradition, and they are doing business in their own way."

Xu Meng, an urban planner at the China Academy of Urban Planning and Design, says Barkhor has set an example for the integration of different ethnic groups and cultures, especially since the Tang Dynasty.

He says it was also an important commercial hub where commodities transported along major trade routes like the Tea Horse Road were traded, and that today the area is home to a dozen ethnic groups, who live and do business in the area.

Zhang says that seeing people praying, reciting scripture, or prostrating themselves along the circumambulation path around Jokhang Temple was a striking experience. "I felt that the culture and history (of Xizang) was so vividly presented before me."

After reaching Lhasa, their final destination, Zhang remained in the city for three days after his friends flew back. "Lhasa maintains a balance between modern structures and an authentic feel."

His hotel was close to Barkhor Bazaar, and he spent time there every day.

"One of the most fruitful experiences here is people doing what few back. Lhasa maintains a balance between modern structures and an authentic feel."

He says it was a pity that some shops and restaurants, including the Woser Ganchung Tea House, were closed at the time because of the New Year celebrations.

"Still, I had the best yak milk at

another tea house. It tasted quite smooth."

Zhang says he was impressed by the people's optimism. "They were so into dancing and singing together, and they always wanted to share the joy and blessings with us."

The harmonious atmosphere of Barkhor Bazaar binds people of different ethnic groups and those of different cultural backgrounds, among them Ratna Kumar, the Nepali owner of the Syamkapu Nepali Shop, which sells Buddhist statues.

Ratna Kumar says his family opened the shop on Barkhor Bazaar about 140 years ago. Born in Kathmandu, he came to Lhasa when he was 28 to take over the family business. He says he planned to stay for three years and has ended up staying for four decades and starting family in Lhasa after marrying a Tibetan woman.

"When I first arrived in Lhasa, and I visited Barkhor Bazaar and the Potala Palace, there were not many people and only few tourists," he says.

Customers to his shop at the time were primarily local residents and monks, but now he welcomes visitors from across China and abroad.

"Lhasa has become my home now. I like my home on Barkhor Bazaar a lot. I like what I have experienced here in the past 40 years."

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Xu Meng, an urban planner at the China Academy of Urban Planning and Design, says Barkhor has set an example for the integration of different ethnic groups and cultures, especially since the Tang Dynasty.

He says it was also an important commercial hub where commodities transported along major trade routes like the Tea Horse Road were traded, and that today the area is home to a dozen ethnic groups, who live and do business in the area.

Zhang says that seeing people praying, reciting scripture, or prostrating themselves along the circumambulation path around Jokhang Temple was a striking experience. "I felt that the culture and history (of Xizang) was so vividly presented before me."

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CULTURAL HERITAGE



The box cover that serves as evidence of the Zidanku silk manuscripts' circulation in the United States is presented at a handover ceremony in Qingdao, Shandong province, on June 20. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Silk manuscripts give hope to academia

For eight decades, scholars follow the journey of the relics through the US, **Wang Ru** reports in Qingdao, Shandong.

In 1942, a long-sealed tomb from the Warring States Period (475-221 BC) in the Zidanku (literally "bullet storehouse") area on the outskirts of Changsha, Hunan province, was plundered by grave robbers who stole the earliest silk manuscripts ever found in China.

Eight decades later, they are still the only known silk manuscripts of the Chu state from the Warring States Period excavated in China.

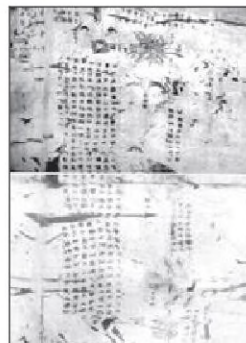
Not long after they were unearthed, they were collected by Cai Jixiang (1898-1979), a local dealer in antiques and amateur historian who studied them. In 1946, John Hadley Cox (1913-2005), an American teacher at Yali High School in Changsha, is said to have cheated Cai and illicitly took the silk manuscripts to the United States.

The artifacts then passed through many hands in the US and were finally housed in the Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art. At the same time, Cai attempted to retrieve them but never succeeded.

More than 80 years later, hope has resurfaced of reuniting the precious artifacts with China from the return of a box cover that is viewed as evidence of their circulation in the US handed over from the University of Chicago to China. The box was used to hold the manuscripts, with labels from Fogg Art Museum that can prove the manuscripts were collected at the museum on Sept 16, 1946, an important piece of the evidence chain of the manuscripts' complex journey in the US.

The returning ceremony was held at the International Conference on the Protection and Return of Cultural Objects Removed from Colonial Contexts in Qingdao, Shandong province, on June 20 as part of the 2nd council meeting of the Alliance for Cultural Heritage in Asia.

"Since its unearthing in Changsha in 1942, the Zidanku silk manuscript story has spanned 82 years. It's a fragmentary story with bizarre plots that make people feel heartbroken," says Li Ling, a veteran archaeology professor at Peking University,



Above: The box cover was used to hold the manuscripts. **Left:** Parts of the Zidanku manuscripts describe the relationship between humans and heaven with writings and pictures of mythical gods. They have three parts — the former two are about traditional Chinese almanacs and the third part is about the application of *shushu*, or ancient China's occultism in military affairs, Li says. One of the highlights is the "ordinances

coexisted with *jiandu*, or bamboo and wooden slips, as writing materials before the wide use of paper.

Studies show that the Zidanku manuscripts describe the relationship between humans and heaven with more than 900 Warring States Period characters and pictures of mythical gods. They have three parts — the former two are about traditional Chinese almanacs and the third part is about the application of *shushu*, or ancient China's occultism in military affairs, Li says.

Li says from the Warring States Period to the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), silk

of the five agents", an ancient way of dividing a year into 30 solar terms and five parts, each lasting 72 days based on *wuxing*, or five agents, the five elements in ancient Chinese philosophy. This is different from the systems now followed dividing a year into four seasons, 12 months and 24 solar terms.

"Zidanku manuscripts are important not only as the earliest silk manuscripts in China written with Warring States Period characters but because they reflect the outlook on the universe, philosophy and religion of ancient China," Li says.

He says Zidanku manuscripts are just like China's version of the Dead Sea Scrolls, one of the oldest surviving manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible. "The scrolls, dating back to 200-100 BC, were unearthed five years later than Zidanku manuscripts, which date back to 300 BC. Just as the Dead Sea Scrolls are important for the study of Western and Christian culture, the Zidanku manuscripts open a door for us to glimpse into the ancient Chinese world of occultism," says Li.

He says people often have the impression that ancient Chinese people highlighted liberal arts more than technologies, but it has been found not true. For example, in *Yiwenzhi*, a section of the *Book of Han* authored by historian Ban Gu (32-92), more than half of the content is about the art of war, *shushu* and technology.

"Ancient Chinese cared a lot about natural law, the universe, the human body, medicine and military affairs. These things occupy half of ancient China's academic studies," says Li. "This half is often ignored, but unearthed discoveries like the manuscripts help us open the door to this world."

Li has traced every part of the manuscripts' journey from China to the US and published his famous collection *Zidanku Silk Manuscripts* in 2017, elaborating on his investigation of how the artifacts were unearthed, transported to the US and their circulation.

Archaeologist Lothar von Falkenhausen at the University of California, Los Angeles, says although the manuscripts have been in the US for eight decades, they have only been seen by the people over two days — once in 1968 and the other in 1990.

"Since they are fragile and cannot be exhibited for a long time, they have rarely been showcased. And ordinary people can hardly understand their significance," says Von Falkenhausen.

"The manuscripts should be returned to China's academia as soon as possible, since almost all scholars who can understand and study the manuscripts are in China," he adds.

Li also mentions the tomb that yielded the Zidanku manuscripts was re-excavated by the Hunan Museum in 1973, uncovering another big discovery of a silk painting depicting a man riding a dragon. It is one of the only two Warring States Period silk paintings preserved to date.

"Half of the cultural relics from the same tomb are in China and the other half are in the US. I hope they can be brought together for academic research," says Li.

Sinologist Donald John Harper, a professor at the University of Chicago, has also been involved with studying the manuscripts for decades. He highlighted the cooperation between Chinese and US scholars in the research of the artifacts.

"I have been acquainted with Li for four decades. We are colleagues and good friends and I think highly of our friendship. Chinese and US Sinologists have had good cooperation for nearly half a century, which is good for our research and protection of such relics," says Harper.

Li says silk manuscripts have only been found in the Zidanku tomb and the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24) Ma-wangdui tombs in Changsha. The latter has been known for the discovery of a perfectly preserved female body in 1972.

Contact the writer at wangru@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese cultural treasures recently returned from the United States

In 2009, China and the United States signed a key intergovernmental agreement on combating the theft and illegal trade of cultural relics. The document has been extended every five years since.

In the past decade, the US has returned over 440 cultural relics to China thanks to close cooperation between the two countries in related fields. Here is a list of important cultural repatriations in the past year or so.



Two panels of stone funeral beds (between the 4th and 7th centuries)

The two panels with decorative patterns in reliefs were painted in different colors and adorned with gold foil. They were transferred back to China from New York in May 2023.

The relics were seized by the Manhattan District Attorney's Office and US Homeland Security Investigations as part of a criminal case. The National Cultural Heritage Administration cooperated with the US to launch the repatriation process in April last year and soon reached an agreement.

The panels are of high historical, scientific and artistic value. They are considered to be originally from North China and installed on the front side of a stone bed. They demonstrate exchange among various civilizations along the ancient Silk Road. Its decorative patterns show a mixture of traditional Han Chinese elements and those of Zoroastrianism, a monotheistic religion from ancient Persia, like the exotic altar with flames. The panels were exhibited in the Palace Museum in Beijing last year.

Feng Xingshu Gui from the Western Zhou Dynasty (c. 11th century-771 BC)
The 2,800-year-old bronze ware was sent from San Francisco to Beijing in January. The vessel, known as *gui*, is 18 centimeters tall and 21 cm in diameter and weighs about 6 kilograms and is composed of a large bowl that has double handles in the design of a coil-nose animal face, resting on three feet shaped like those of an animal.

An inscription cast in the interior of the vessel reveals its identity — it was "crafted by (nobleman) Xingshu of the Feng (vassal) state, dedicated to his wife". It was excavated from a cellar in Fufeng county, Shaanxi province, in 1978 and was later housed in a local museum but was stolen in 1984 by burglars.



Decades later, Raymond King, an entrepreneur based in Portland, Oregon, found the relic in a New York apartment when he helped his mother clear out her belongings. When he referred it to Sotheby's auction house, he was told it was stolen from China.

Since the theft 40 years ago, China had never given up looking for it, and Interpol listed it as stolen art in 2017. The London-based Art Loss Register then put the item in its database. Consequently, when Sotheby's researcher contacted the register about the vessel, the register informed the Chinese embassy in London and was later connected with the National Cultural Heritage Administration in Beijing, which later initiated its repatriation from the US.

38 relics, mainly Tibetan Buddhist items from the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties

The artifacts were returned to China from New York in April. In March, the National Cultural Heritage

Administration was informed that the Manhattan District Attorney's Office had seized 38 cultural relics while solving a smuggling case. These relics were believed to have come from China.

Among the returned relics are Buddha statues, ritual tools and religious ornaments. They are made of various materials such as bronze, clay, ivory and wood, and are crafted using techniques such as carving, sculpting and painting. Experts believe the objects demonstrate diverse subjects, varied craftsmanship, rich content and exquisite production techniques, and are thus of significant historical, cultural and scientific value.

A Qing Dynasty official robe

A crimson silk robe was recently donated by US citizen Paul Hollister to the National Cultural Heritage Administration. On June 19, the administration allocated the robe to Shandong University Museum in Qingdao, Shandong province, to commemorate the enduring friendship between the Chinese and American people.

The robe once belonged to Hollister's great-grandfather, US missionary Watson McMillan Hayes (1857-1944), who was instrumental in the establishment of what is now Shandong University in 1901, where he served as a teacher.

Hayes dedicated his life to education in China, enduring hardships during World War II when he was captured by Japanese forces and



interned in a concentration camp in what is now Weifang, Shandong, in 1942. Despite being offered the opportunity to leave the camp and return home by the International Committee of the Red Cross, Hayes chose to give that chance to younger individuals. He passed away in the camp in 1944, expressing his unwavering commitment to the education cause in China and his willingness to be laid to rest in a foreign land.

The robe is typical attire worn by ordinary officials during festive occasions in the late Qing Dynasty. Adorned with intricate embroidery featuring an array of decorative motifs, such as auspicious clouds, cranes, bats and longevity characters, the robe is a testament to the rich cultural heritage of the era.

WANG KAIHAO AND WANG RU

COMMENT

Editorials

EU should take a step back so it can see that it is barking up wrong tree

In yet another blow to the China-EU comprehensive strategic partnership, the 27-member bloc imposed sanctions on 19 Chinese companies on Monday, alleging that they have supplied components and equipment to Russia's military industry.

A list published in the European Union's Official Journal includes several Chinese companies located in Hong Kong as well as two global satellite giants, which are now subject to strict restrictions over sales of "dual-use goods and technology" that the European Union claims could be used for the "enhancement of Russia's defense and security sector".

The unilateral move the EU has made targeting Chinese companies, which has no evidence to justify it and has no legal basis in international law, undermines the trust that has been the foundation for ties, and creates more uncertainties for the already fragile bilateral relations.

The mutually beneficial China-EU trade relationship is experiencing a difficult time as politicians in Brussels are turning to protectionism to safeguard European industries, with the bloc deciding recently to impose extra duties of up to 38.1 percent on imported Chinese electric cars from July on the grounds that they have received excessive and unfair government subsidies.

By pushing ahead with more punitive measures against Chinese enterprises rather than seeking constructive dialogue to properly handle their differences, the EU has shown it is intent on pursuing short-term political gains in disregard of long-term and stable relations with China.

That Head Aerospace Technology, one of the 19 Chinese companies hit by the latest EU sanctions, was already placed on a United States sanctions list in 2023 for allegedly selling satellite images to Russia, reflects the readiness of the EU to toe Washington's anti-China line in cracking down on Chinese high-tech companies using their unsubstantiated links to the Russian military as an excuse.

China, which is not a direct party to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, has actively worked to promote talks for a political settlement. The Chinese government has always strictly monitored the exports of dual-use articles in accordance with the laws and regulations, and has never fanned the flames of the hostilities or sought selfish gains in the ongoing conflict.

Thus the EU is barking up the wrong tree by trying to smear the normal exchanges and cooperation between Chinese and Russian businesses and pointing an accusing finger at China for allegedly supporting Russia's military-industrial complex.

China and the EU, as two major forces advancing multipolarity and two major markets in support of globalization, are important trading partners to each other. Over the past two decades, the two sides have developed broad-based and all-dimensional cooperation, with two-way trade having grown by six times and two-way investment more than fivefold. Their daily trade volume is about 2.3 billion euros (\$2.46 billion) on average, delivering tangible benefits to people on both sides.

As Ursula von der Leyen, who is poised for a second term as president of the European Commission, has previously said, the China-EU relationship "is far too important to be put at risk by failing to clearly set the terms of a healthy engagement".

Hopefully, Brussels will be rational, exercise strategic autonomy and work with China to manage their relationship, which has a direct bearing not only on the interests of the people on both sides, but also concerns global prosperity and security.

The EU should not let its concerns about Russia cloud its judgment or lead to paranoia. It should give full play to the role of dialogue to resolve any issues it may have with China instead of adopting the US' discriminatory approach, which after all is intended to diminish China to the detriment of all.

Blame game burns another hole in ties

With his long career in US diplomacy serving six presidents and nine secretaries of state and his long-term academic interests and achievements in studies of diplomacy history, US Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns should know better than most China-bashing politicians in Washington the root cause of the strained Sino-US ties these years. Also, having been confirmed in the post in December 2021, he should know what has been behind the ups and downs.

However, his lashing out at Beijing for various "underhand" actions that make it "impossible" to boost ties between ordinary Chinese and American people in a strongly worded interview published by The Wall Street Journal on Tuesday just serves to show how distanced Washington's view of China is from the reality.

Responding to the report, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said that Burns' remarks are not in line with the facts, deviate from the important consensus reached by the two heads of state during their meeting in San Francisco on the correct way for China and the United States to get along with each other, and are not conducive to the healthy and stable development of bilateral relations.

It is the US side that has left no stone unturned in seeking to scupper engagement between the two peoples, hindering and preventing academic research, business, technology, finance and industry exchanges. Not to mention the unfair restrictions that it has imposed on the activities of Chinese diplomats, reporters or any individuals in the US and its allies that it deems to be connected with the Communist Party of China or the Chinese military.

One thing that Burns shied away from in his interview is the major motive driving such remarks, which is that the Chinese people should be addressed separately to create a distinction with the CPC, in a bid to erode the national and social cohesion of China.

With all that happening, it is Burns — whose stay in China should have provided him first-hand experience on the impacts of the US' systemic strategy to contain China on the Chinese society and economy — who should appreciate that he and his colleagues are still enjoying a comparatively cordial working environment in China.

The smiling and friendly faces showing goodwill to him during his travels around the country, as shown in his appearances on CBS's *60 Minutes*, which have been seen by the world including the US people, belie Burns' allegation that Beijing has been cultivating anti-US sentiment in Chinese society.

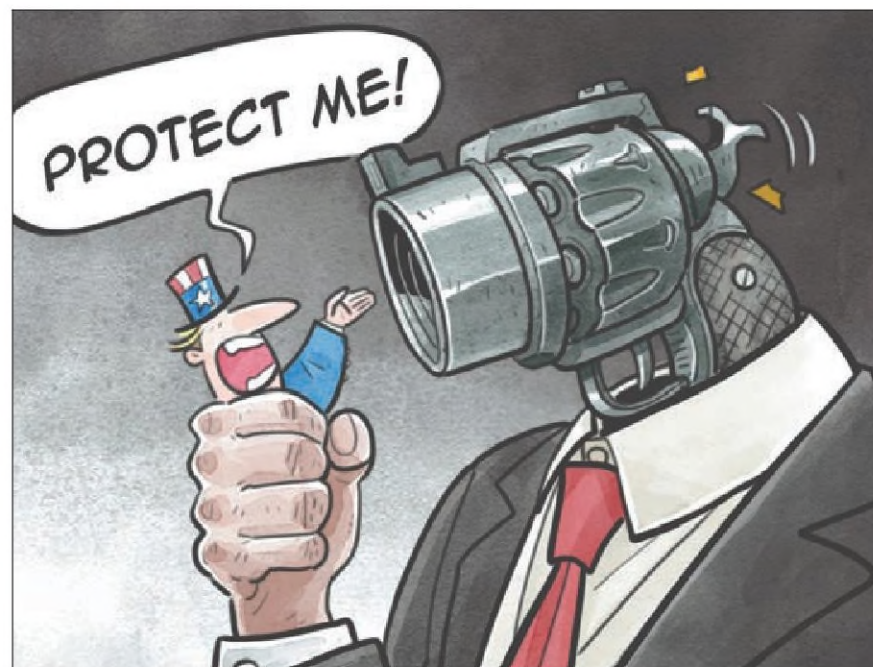
If so, Chinese students would not have made up the largest foreign student body in the US in the 2022-23 academic year, nearly 290,000, despite the US' discriminatory practices against them.

The racism against Chinese living, working and studying in the US has not receded since the former US administration openly fanned it during the COVID-19 pandemic. By inheriting and further reinforcing its predecessor's anti-China stance, the Biden administration has never sought to do anything to address that, only going further in saying one thing and doing another in dealing with China.

The image of the US in the minds of the Chinese people depends on the US itself. It is to be hoped that the US will work with China to promote cultural exchanges between the two nations through practical actions and promote the healthy and stable development of China-US relations.

If Burns really worries about the state of US-China people-to-people relations and wants to do his part to repair the ties, he should do more to tell Washington what China is really like and the harm its curbing of interactions has done to Sino-US relations, rather than trying to teach China what to do to make Washington happy.

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Closure for Assange, but not for human rights violations by US

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange left a British prison on Monday after 1,901 days following a tentative deal with the United States Justice Department in which he agreed to plead guilty to a single felony count of violating the Espionage Act in exchange for time served.

Since it was founded in 2006, WikiLeaks has released hundreds of thousands of classified documents about the US' wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, exposing the torture of prisoners, human rights abuses and the killing of civilians. It was one of the biggest ever leaks that brought shame to the United States, the self-proclaimed guardian of human rights in the world. The revelations made the world see clearly the hypocrisy and true nature of

the so-called guardian of human rights.

The US government says the leaks of classified military documents by WikiLeaks were reckless, damaging US' national security and endangering the lives of intelligence workers while Assange's supporters claim he has spent years in prison because he exposed atrocities committed by the US.

Since his arrest, people and organizations from around the world had called for Assange's release. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese was lobbying with the US government to drop the charges against Assange, and a group of 60 Australian lawmakers sent a signed letter to the US government calling for an end to the case against Assange. In

February, a motion in Australia's Federal House of Representatives calling on the US and Britain to "let Assange come home" was supported by 86 of 151 lawmakers.

Obviously, the deal with Assange is a way for the US to save its lost face amid mounting international pressure, from the Australian government in particular, to free him.

The deal seems to have brought closure to the Assange case. However, the human rights problems that WikiLeaks revealed are far from solved, and US surveillance of foreign and domestic citizens is only the tip of the iceberg of its human rights problems, which will continue.

— BEIJING NEWS

Cross-border e-commerce pick-me-ups

The General Administration of Customs estimates that in 2023 the total import and export volume of the nation's cross-border electronic commerce reached 2.38 trillion yuan (\$327.7 billion), up 15.6 percent. Cross-border e-commerce is the new engine driving foreign trade growth.

Yet it should also be noted that there are many shortcomings in the domestic cross-border e-commerce sector. The digital infrastructure, which includes online service platforms, is still far from satisfying. Besides, there are still some difficulties and bottlenecks in customs clearance, while the cultivation of overseas brands and intellectual property protection are still insufficient.

These issues need to be addressed to accelerate innovation and sustain pros-

perity in foreign trade development.

First, product quality improvement and brand building need to be strengthened. Proper policies can be introduced to encourage cross-border e-commerce enterprises to focus on technology, quality, service, culture and other brand connotations, so as to build a new image of Chinese brands in the global market featuring high product quality and trustable after-sale services.

Second, the building of digital infrastructure can accelerate. Technologies such as blockchain, big data and artificial intelligence can be more widely applied to promote the construction of global e-commerce infrastructure to support warehousing, logistics, payment and data, and form a digital trade closed loop covering the entire process

of goods import and export.

With mature digital infrastructure and cultivated brands, other measures can also be taken, such as simplifying the foreign exchange procedures for small and micro cross-border e-commerce enterprises to minimize their economic and manual costs, improving financial service networks and encouraging all types of financial institutions to increase credit support to grant them easier access to their needed funds. Making use of the internet and social networks, e-commerce catches the trend of the times and it is imperative on the nation to rally more policy support so that Chinese consumers can buy globally and Chinese businesses can sell globally more conveniently.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

What They Say

Editor's Note: The third plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee is scheduled to be convened in Beijing in July. According to the main agenda of the session, the Political Bureau will report its work to the CPC Central Committee, and the session will primarily study issues concerning further comprehensively deepening reform and advancing Chinese modernization. The following are excerpts from a People's Daily comment on reform.

Reform an inexhaustible driver of modernization

If China is to move forward, it must comprehensively deepen reform and opening-up. Deepening reform is essential to uphold and improve the socialist system with Chinese characteristics and to modernize China's governance system and capacity. The central leadership has put forward a series of original new ideas since 2012, among which, many have prompted historical changes and the reshaping of the governance system, and overall reconstruction in some crucial fields.

Focusing on the problem of unbalanced and inadequate development, the authorities have carried out regional coordinated development strategies and household registration system reforms. Aimed at enhancing the endogenous driving force of business

entities, the authorities have deepened the reform of the fiscal and taxation system to reduce taxes and fees, as well as the reform of the science and technology system to promote innovation.

By carrying out medical care and health system reforms, the authorities have tried to resolve the difficulties and high costs people face in seeing a doctor. And to meet the people's higher demand for fairness and justice, the authorities have continuously deepened comprehensive reform of the judicial system.

To enhance the efficiency of governance, the authorities have carried out systematic institutional reforms of the Party and the government, and are making all-out efforts to enforce strict Party discipline.

The reforms always adhere to a problem-solving approach, seek to break through the constraints of entrenched ideas and concepts, break through the barriers of vested interests, and resolutely address the drawbacks in various sys-

tems and mechanisms.

The nation should continue to carry out reforms to consistently improve the institutional mechanisms to advance the country's modernization along the Chinese path.

The current and future periods are critical for building a strong country and realizing national rejuvenation on all fronts through a Chinese path to modernization. China's reform efforts must continue in the face of the complex international and domestic situations and the latest round of the scientific and technological revolution and the new demands of the people.

Opening-up is also reform. Believing that opening-up brings progress, while closure leads to backwardness, China will continue to promote high-level opening-up by opening its door wider and wider.

To further comprehensively deepen reform, attention must be paid to the effectiveness of reforms, as reform requires not just planning but also implementation.

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Contact us at:

China Daily
15 Huijixin Dongjie Chaoyang District,
Beijing 100029
News: +86 (0) 10 6491-8366
editor@chinadaily.com.cn
Advertisement: +86 (0) 10 6491-8631
ads@chinadaily.com.cn
Subscription: +86 400-699-0203
subscription.chinadaily.com.cn
App: www.chinadaily.com.cn/mobile/daily.html

China Daily UK
90 Cannon St, London EC4N 6HA, UK
+44 (0) 207 398 8270
editor@chinadailyuk.com

China Daily Asia Pacific
China Daily Hong Kong
Unit 1818, Hing Wai Centre, 7 Tin Wan
Praya Road, Aberdeen, Hong Kong
+852 2518 5111
editor@chinadailyhk.com
editor@chinadailyasia.com

China Daily USA
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,
New York, NY 10036
+1 212 537 8888
editor@chinadailyusa.com

China Daily Africa
P.O. Box 27281-00100, Nairobi, Kenya
+254 (0) 20 242 8589 (Nairobi)
editor@chinadailyafrica.com
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

COMMENT

Jia Kang

New productive forces should suit local conditions

New quality productive forces comprise two main elements. The first is science and technology, which constitute the primary productive forces, and facilitate the multiplier effect in high-tech innovations, leading to a new level, new realm and new quality of productivity with qualitative changes. This applies mainly to new and high-tech industries.

The other element is step-by-step upgrading driven by the multiplier effect, which results from the optimization of the supply-side factors such as technology, institutions, data, labor, capital and natural resources that together constitute total factor productivity. This applies to all industries.

China needs to view new quality productive forces from the global perspective, because its "artificial intelligence-plus" sector lags behind those of developed economies. Fortunately, the central government has taken measures to catch up with global cutting-edge development through the complete rectification of leading platform enterprises.

The rectification aims to promote the healthy development of leading internet companies, so they can lead the country's high-tech enterprises and industrial clusters to write a new chapter in new high-tech development.

At the same time, we need to explain why the recent increase in unicorn companies is shrinking in China. To begin with, the support for original and major innovations in the digital field, and for developing a high-standard and legalized business environment has been inadequate in recent years. Given this fact, local governments should have employed performance evaluation mechanisms to produce better results, but they failed to do so due to a lack of experience and regulation.

Besides, there is a lack of high-quality talents in cutting-edge industries. Although the central and local governments have invested huge amounts in recent years to improve the infrastructure and other facilities of schools and universities, they have failed to cultivate enough leading talents.

Hence, it is necessary to solve these problems by integrating innovation in institutions, management, syllabuses and the high-tech sector. In this regard, the Third Plenary Session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee scheduled for next month may release new guidelines on major reform measures, which may help local governments to find new ways to bolster the digital economy and enhance talent cultivation.

For the time being, local governments should tailor new quality productive forces to local conditions, meaning they should take measures to promote innovation in accordance with the reality of the situation and find high-quality solutions for supply-side structural problems.

Against this backdrop, some local governments should adopt a cautious approach while implementing the central government's policies. For instance, new and old infrastructure projects can be developed well together by integrating digital technology in the real economy. At the same time, local governments need to develop their own unique and innovative projects.

The central government began issuing ultra-long-term national bonds from May. Compared with ordinary government bonds, including short- and medium-term bonds, the ultra-long-term bonds can ease the debt repayment burden of local govern-



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ments to a certain extent. As a matter of fact, the ultra-long-term national bonds can help solve some major problems of local governments as the bonds are not suitable to be used to directly support the development of some cutting-edge technologies, a problem which should be handled by enterprises themselves.

Yet the local governments can take advantage of land planning to improve public facilities and infrastructure, whose costs can be covered by the ultra-long-term

bond funds, and thus boost domestic demand and inject new vitality into the economy. The bonds can also be used to optimize the industrial structure and increase employment in the medium and long term.

Many local governments invest in business incubators, entrepreneurship parks and "artificial intelligence-plus" projects. However, since local governments cannot be the major entities in handling such high-risk cutting-edge technologies, non-govern-

ment investment and venture capital need to play a bigger role in the development of high-tech.

There is no singular path to developing new quality productive forces; local governments should explore tailored approaches based on their unique conditions.

The author is the former director of the China Academy of New Supply Side Economics. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Mei Xinyu

US tariffs a sign of weakness, not strength

The United States has imposed tariffs of up to 100 percent on imports from China, encompassing electric vehicles (EVs), EV batteries, and battery parts. This move has spurred a chain reaction among its allies, leading to the European Union's recent imposition of preliminary additional tariffs of up to 38.1 percent on Chinese EVs, with Canada now also deliberating on potential actions.

But the aggressive stance does not reflect the United States' strength; instead, it highlights its relative decline and waning confidence. The tariffs will burden US consumers and businesses with higher costs, weakening the US' economic outlook.

Trade protectionism is a chronic disease the US is afflicted by, particularly during election years. Politicians seeking re-election often resort to protectionist measures to appease key voter blocs and industries. This strategy is well-documented, notably by economist Mancur Olson in his book, *The Logic of Collective Action*. According to Olson, industries that derive benefits from protectionist measures, such as tariffs, have a stronger incentive to lobby for these measures than the dispersed consumers who actually bear the costs.

Historical patterns show the political nature of the US' trade protectionism. For example, in late 2000, the Bill Clinton administration targeted steel imports from China, India and Ukraine amid a contentious election battle between Democrat Al Gore and Republican George W. Bush, both of whom aimed to win the votes of steelworkers and other labor groups in crucial swing states. And in 2002, former US president George W. Bush imposed steel tariffs to gain the favor of the steel industry ahead of the midterm elections.

Biden, despite his economic advisers understanding the irrationality of additional tariffs, has been succumbing to the same political pressure. During his last campaign, Biden criticized the then US president Donald Trump's tariffs, arguing that they were ultimately paid by US consumers, not China. Yet given his falling ratings in key battleground states, Biden has resorted to trade protectionism.

The Cold War mentality, which views China as the US' primary global strategic competitor, fuels US trade protectionism and sanctions. The US administration's push and emphasis on EV production have not closed the gap between US and Chinese manufacturing. On the contrary, China's EV industry has surged ahead, leaving US competitors struggling to catch up. This gap has prompted the Biden administration to resort to protectionist measures rather than engaging in open market competition, which reflects the failure of Biden's economic policy.

Despite the new tariffs, China's industries, particularly its EV sector, are likely to continue their upward trajectory. At present, China exports relatively few EVs to the US, minimizing the immediate impact of the tariffs. Plus, China's automotive industry, both in terms of production and sales, has already surpassed that of the entire European Union and US markets combined.

China's production scale ensures that its industries will maintain their competitive edge through economies of scale, even without access to the US market. Since this advantage will only increase over time, it's unlikely that the US' protectionist measures will significantly hinder China's industrial progress.

The US, once a champion of global free trade, has increasingly adopted protectionist and politically-motivated trade policies, which have undermined the global economic system and hindered innovation by prioritizing domestic political gains over broader economic benefits.

China, as a leading advocate for free trade, must offer a more compelling vision for the global economic order. By championing development-oriented trade rules and opposing the protectionist policies of the West, China can lead the world toward a more prosperous and equitable future.

Therefore, China's response to US tariffs should be measured and strategic, targeting the protectionist factions without antagonizing the US people or trade partners, while Chinese enterprises should navigate these challenges by mitigating risks and finding alternative channels to the US market. Simultaneously, China should continue to promote global economic cooperation and development, countering the regressive trends of protectionism and excessive regulation.

The author is a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Renato Baumann

China, Latin America justified in bolstering ties

Economic exchanges between Latin America and China have gained momentum after the COVID-19 pandemic, especially through trade between China and Latin American countries on the Pacific coast but have gradually spread to, and intensified in, other areas.

China is the main trading partner of several Latin American countries, and direct investment from China in Latin America and the Caribbean has remained above \$4.5 billion a year. This has made the region an important destination for Chinese investment. The region now attracts resources similar to those destined for the United States and the European Union.

Another dimension of Sino-Latin American ties is the amount of loans provided by China for the Latin American and Caribbean economies. According to Boston University Global Development Policy Center, from 2005 to 2022, China lent \$136 billion to these countries, about 82 percent of which was invested in the energy sector mostly in Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador and Venezuela.

Even though the energy sector has attracted by far most of the loans, Chinese interest in Latin America is diversified in terms of sectors. For example, Brazil intends to jointly develop semiconductors



with China. Also, Chinese companies are building subways in Bogota, and China is buying lithium mines in Argentina, as well as renewing its swap agreements with the country. Recently, Chinese-made electric vehicles have found a potentially big market in South America.

Chinese investment in transportation infrastructure, too, has increased. The \$3.6 billion mega-port in Chancay, Peru, built by COSCO and to be inaugurated later this year, is bound to become an important export and import hub for South America, especially for trade between South American countries and China and other Asian countries. The port will reduce transportation time by one-third, benefiting exporters from countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Bolivia, Venezuela and Guyana. Those that stand to especially benefit from this new facility are producers of soya, corn, meat and different types of minerals.

This increase in Chinese presence in Latin America has often led some analysts to gauge the reaction of the US, given the frequent reference to the so-called Monroe Doctrine ("America for the Americans").

At least until recently, the official position of the US was one of favoring competition, as it believed more players are good for healthy competition. But that has changed somewhat after Chinese investments increased in the energy sector and some strategic minerals. The rise in the trade of minerals has evoked reactions from the US Army Southern Command, which has raised concerns over the possibility of China getting easier access to strategic minerals in the region.

Furthermore, the potentially important role the Chancay port, after completion, seems set to play has raised some Western countries' worries that the Chinese navy may use the port not only for commercial purposes but also as a geostrategic tool. This assumption, needless to say, is ridiculous.

Yet such fears have not prompted Latin American countries to boost trade relations with their traditional major trading partner. Instead, the Latin American countries have simultaneously maintained good economic and diplomatic relations with both the US and China, and there is no indication of any change in their position in the near future.

One cannot say there has been no pressure on the Latin American countries, given that the US often refers to security issues related to Chinese products or com-

panies, and says that there should be an orchestrated movement against China's human rights policy.

Most Western states remain committed to the international mechanisms for human rights protection, because they view them as a source of morality and legitimacy, and believe states can be "punished" for violating the agreed parameters classifying policies on human rights.

China's policy on human rights is a bit different. It views human rights not only in legal terms, but also accords priority to socioeconomic rights and the right to development, and insists that laws to protect human rights be enforced according to each country's national conditions.

Latin America accepts that there may be differences on specific issues due to the peculiarities of each society, and hence opts for non-interference, whereas China does not seem to be trying to convince other states of its position. Acting separately on such sensitive matters has allowed the two sides to strengthen their partnership and seek common development.

The author is coordinator of External Economic Relations at the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA), Brazil. The views don't necessarily reflect those of IPEA or China Daily.

GLOBAL VIEWS

ZAHARI ZAHARIEV

Unfading relevance of five principles

Seventy years have passed since China put forth the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. Their importance cannot be overemphasized even though the international situation has changed dramatically.



They not only form the basis for China's independent foreign policy of peace, but also constitute important principles in regulating state-to-state relations, transcending social systems and ideologies for most countries in the world.

The five principles are mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual nonaggression, mutual noninterference in each other's internal affairs, equality and cooperation for mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. These ideas were first put forward by then Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai and formally proposed as the norms for handling international relations.

In 1955 the Asian-African Conference convened in Bandung, Indonesia issued ten principles for conducting international relations, among which the five principles were included. Hereafter, in the process of the developing countries seeking a fairer international political and economic order, the five principles have been accepted and adopted by the overwhelming majority of developing countries, and have had an increasing impact all over the world.

Today, however, we are witnessing a global, not only ideological confrontation, but also a psychological war, which is assuming the proportions of a Cold War between the East and the West. More, there is a conscious effort, especially by those who aim to remove China as a fac-

The China factor contributes to the overall process of building new social relations, which the world increasingly needs



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

tor in world affairs, to try and erect a new Iron Curtain as well. The West is inventing China as its imaginary enemy, despite China's economic achievements and prosperity being an example of successful development and of finding successful answers to the challenges of the new civilizational phase.

In the 1990s, it was officially declared that the Cold War was finally over. Today, however, we are witnessing not only the repetition

of some of the strategies that were used then, but also the injection of new content into efforts to isolate China.

What we are observing today, unfortunately, does not have a short historical horizon. It is a long-term strategy of the United States and NATO, which carries enormous risks. The world will not only witness a geopolitical, ideological, geo-economic confrontation unseen in the past, but also come dangerously

close to its own self-destruction. With enormous resources and forces being thrown into this new Cold War, accompanied by military confrontation and psychological aggression, it carries the constant danger of approaching a global thermonuclear conflict.

When we talk about China, we must keep in mind that we are talking about the scientific and technical potential of a country that is the most prosperous in terms of the

discovery of a new page in the digital age of humanity. That is, we cannot try to remove China in any of these areas and not affect the stability of the world as a whole.

The vast majority of the modern world lives by the laws of civilizational development and sees its prosperity precisely in the direction of peaceful construction and the objective processes of internationalization — starting from the economy, passing through the spiritual

sphere and reaching the field of political dialogue. Political dialogue that is cordial and sensible and which seeks to build, rather than destroy. Dialogue that can unite all humanity.

Another thing that should also not be forgotten is that despite all the psychological warfare efforts being waged against China by the West, the vast majority of people in these countries are in favor of reasonable, constructive dialogue and the all-round development of relations with China.

An interesting paradox here is that despite the efforts of imperial circles, above all in Washington, and by the political elites in many West European countries, who are largely subservient to Washington, we also have a countervailing line of behavior from the business side. There is a deep division between political elites and economic interests.

Despite calls made to US companies to stop investing or to cease having economic cooperation with China, no serious economic structure followed these "suggestions" or has succumbed to this political pressure. This confrontation between economic interests and the strategy of military-political opposition on the part of the West toward China leads to deep cracks in the sociopolitical stability of these countries. The China factor, without being officially present contributes to the overall process of building new social relations, which the world increasingly needs.

This also explains the unfading relevance of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.

The author is president of the Bulgarian National Association for the Belt and Road. 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.

LI XING AND LI QING

Cornerstone of harmony

The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence have had an enduring impact in the diplomatic strategies and foreign policies of the Global South

This year commemorates the 70th anniversary of the formal codification of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence in a treaty between China and India in 1954. These principles are mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. The five principles, exerting a pivotal role in the Bandung Conference in 1955 amid decolonization and the Cold War, constitute a significant milestone in international relations. Their enduring impact is evident in diplomatic strategies and foreign policies today, especially among the nations of the Global South.



Li Xing



Li Qing

consists of three main components: Sovereignty: every state has the right of self-rule over its people and territory and only sovereign states can enter into formal and legal relations; legal equality: all states, regardless of size or power, are equal as sovereign members of the international community; and non-intervention: no interference in the internal affairs of another state. For centuries the Westphalian structure has sought to effectively manage the relationships among major powers.

Simultaneously with the Treaty of Westphalia, world history witnessed the expansive era of European colonialism spreading across Africa, Asia, the Americas and other parts of the world. Since then, through the slave trade, colonization, "free trade" and the world wars, a world economy emerged, gradually integrating multiple sociocultural systems into a single economic framework. This historical process laid the foundation for our contemporary world economy characterized by a historically evolved unequal structure of economic stratification and division of labor.

Since the end of the Cold War, the international order has been marked by globalization, economic liberalization, political democratization, and the expansion of international institutions and regimes. However, it has also been characterized by regional conflicts, terrorism, rising inequalities, and a deficit of global governance, etc. The Westphalian principles suffered a serious setback with the interventionist foreign policy of the United States, ranging from "humanitarian interventions" at the cost of state sovereignty to increasingly frequent interventions in states' internal affairs. Under the banner of "responsibility to protect human rights", the US legitimized "armed humanitarian intervention" based on its own interpretation of "violations of state

responsibility". This has led to the overthrow of legitimately elected governments and leaders, as well as the instigation of various "color revolutions" during the early 2000s. These actions resulted in significant political changes and turmoil in numerous countries, particularly in the post-Soviet states and other regions.

Ironically, and even more seriously, under the international law enshrined by the Westphalian principles, NATO's intervention in Kosovo in 1999 and the US invasion in Iraq in 2003 were illegal actions conducted without UN authorization. The US has long accused China of not adhering to the "rule-based international order and law". The US has long been holding the banner of "freedom of navigation" while it does not even ratify the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. This refusal is driven by its desire to maintain hegemonic sovereignty, protect geopolitical interests, and avoid potential legal constraints. The US' current emphasis on Russia's breach of Ukraine's sovereignty, while rejecting Palestine's right to statehood, demonstrates its double standard in its foreign policy norms and value. The European Union's top diplomat, Josep Borrell, has admitted that such double standards are causing the US and Europe to lose the support of the Global South in the Ukraine War.

Although formulated in different historical contexts, both the Westphalian principles and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence emphasize the importance of sovereignty, non-interference and peaceful relations among states. While the former laid the foundation for the modern state-centric international order, the latter was aimed at supporting the peaceful and cooperative relations among newly independent nations in the mid-20th



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

century. The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence embody the cultural traditions of Asian communities in their non-universalist and no-value-driven approach to international relations and their respecting of political, economic and cultural diversities.

Meanwhile, the ascent of China and its complex relationship with the US-led international order has frequently sparked discussions among scholars and policymakers alike. An interesting debate emerged in one of the 2011 editions of Foreign Affairs magazine, centered on whether China actually embodied the Westphalian principles more than the US and Western countries, and whether China is indeed more of a Westphalian state, particularly in its adherence to the principles of state sovereignty, non-interference and territorial integrity. The crux of the debate revolved around deter-

mining whether a framework based on multilateral inter-state "conventions" (rules and agreements) should take precedence over the West-centered "convictions" (norms and values) as the guiding principle for an international order. The Chinese perspective posits that a framework on conventions and agreements shaped by the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence is more enduring than one based on the norms and values defined by a select group of powers. Adhering to these principles will be the best response to the thesis that "a rising power (China) must seek hegemony". Such a thesis, rooted in Western classical realist thinking and often applied in the context of power transition theory, portrays a bleak picture of China's rise within the existing US-led international order.

China will continue to respect and follow the Five Principles of Peaceful

Coexistence as the long-standing cornerstone of its foreign policy. In contrast to the West's divisive and assertive norm-based foreign policy, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence serve as a guiding framework that promotes solidarity, cooperation and mutual respect among countries in the Global South, fostering relations between China and other Global South nations.

Li Xing is a Yunshan leading scholar and professor at the Guangdong Institute for International Strategies and a professor at the Department of Politics and Society of Aalborg University. Li Qing is a professor and executive president of the Guangdong Institute for International Strategies. The authors contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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SUMMER DAVOS IN DALIAN

Share new energy, say speakers

Experts, officials see fresh scope for renegotiating EU-China investment pact

By CHENG YU and ZHANG XIAOMIN in Dalian, Liaoning

New energy development should be shared and the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment should be renegotiated for mutual benefit, said prominent industry experts and former top government officials at the ongoing 15th World Economic Forum Annual Meeting of the New Champions, also known as the Summer Davos Forum.

Their remarks come at a time when China, the world's second-largest economy, has been subjected

to protectionist policies by its major trade partners, including the United States and the European Union, in the new energy sector.

Zeng Yuqun, founder of Contemporary Amperex Technology Co Ltd, the world's largest electric vehicle battery maker, said countries can benefit from new energy by sharing the industry chain.

He proposed what he called a sharing model. Companies can expand their production capacity intelligently, by installing it across the world — for example, 30 percent in Africa that boasts resources, 40 percent in China that has the most intense technology and investment efficiency, and the rest in the US or Europe, which have big markets.

"Through such a sharing model, all countries and regions would benefit and the geopolitical tensions like the tariffs would be left behind ... Because, climate change and sus-

tainability are so important for each one of them," he said.

Zeng said CATL has already taken some measures to diversify its overseas market share and is willing to share its technology with every country in the world, including those in the EU, South Korea and the US.

The European Commission said earlier this month it would impose additional duties of up to 38.1 percent on imported Chinese electric vehicles from next month.

As the EU and China have agreed to negotiate, Wan Gang, former minister of science and technology, suggested that the EU should also consider renegotiating the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment with China, instead of going ahead with the proposed higher tariffs.

The EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment was reached in December 2020 to facilitate

trade and investment between European and Chinese companies. Under the agreement, EU firms can get better access to emerging sectors like new energy in China. But the European Parliament voted to freeze the agreement's ratification in May 2021.

"It is necessary for the two sides to negotiate properly to move forward together toward economic globalization. Renegotiating the CAI could be an opportunity," said Wan, who is also the president of the China Association for Science and Technology.

The Chinese authorities said at the Summer Davos Forum on Tuesday that given the current bleak global economic growth scenario, countries that prioritize maximizing their own interests without considering the interests of others, or even backtrack by promoting decoupling and erecting barriers, will drag the world into a vicious cycle of compet-



John Quelch, executive vice-chancellor of Duke Kunshan University, speaks at a forum on the development of new energy vehicles during the Summer Davos Forum in Dalian on Wednesday. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

ing for a diminishing pie.

Wan said there is "common consensus" all over the world on developing NEVs, and such a trend is unstoppable. "China will not slow down the development of NEVs just because of some twists and turns. China's auto market is already highly globalized."

According to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers,

China exported 1.2 million NEVs in 2023, up nearly 78 percent.

Among such NEVs, around 30 percent are from Tesla's Shanghai factory, Wan noted, adding that a large number of the cars produced last year were from joint ventures of Chinese and foreign companies.

Contact the writers at chengyu@chinadaily.com.cn

JinkoSolar firm on operations abroad

By ZHENG XIN and ZHANG XIAOMIN in Dalian, Liaoning

JinkoSolar, the world's largest solar panel producer by shipments, said it will press ahead with overseas expansion plans despite the current geopolitical and "overcapacity" challenges, and actively develop its energy storage business to further facilitate a global energy transition.

Even though concerns persist over so-called solar panel overcapacity, which has trimmed the returns of Chinese solar firms, the company believes the most advanced capacity will always remain in demand, while low-end overlapping capacity will always be

in surplus, said Qian Jing, vice-president of JinkoSolar, on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum's 15th Annual Meeting of the New Champions, or 2024 Summer Davos.

Qian said the government's recent commitment to limit "low-end" solar panel manufacturing following a representation by industry leaders earlier this month, will better regulate the industry toward a more sustainable development.

The National Energy Administration has vowed to guide capacity expansions and avoid redundant investments, monitoring solar factory utilization and expansion plans to help improve market conditions, in response to solar companies' requests seeking

Beijing's intervention after a surge in capacity.

The growth of solar power over the past two decades has been phenomenal, from a niche sector to the world's dominant source of new energy. China and the global market still show strong demand prospects for clean energy, prompting the solar industry's top players to further expand high-efficiency capacity in the long term.

Qian attributed the recent "overcapacity" to investments in the previous years and capital market enthusiasm. Over the long term, she sees an industry shake-out — which is expected to eliminate lagging low-end capacity — as being beneficial for JinkoSolar, as

the company has been stepping up efforts in research and development, investing billions of dollars in technological innovation.

With low-end capacity set to be eliminated, the company is confident about its market share rising to 20 percent in 2024 from last year's 15 percent, further consolidating its position at home and abroad, she said.

The company currently operates three overseas factories, in Malaysia, Vietnam and the United States. It is in the process of evaluating its fourth plant abroad, which is most likely to be located in the Middle East, as it enjoys better credit, sufficient financing resources, stable conditions, policy support and an ambitious market, she said. JinkoSolar's commitment toward long-term strategic overseas expansion

remains unchanged, while it will also stay cautious when choosing the site, taking into consideration technological standards, costs and competitiveness, she said.

According to Qian, while the current cost of solar power has fallen below that of coal-fired power, the renewable energy source will only become absolutely competitive when the combined cost of solar and energy storage is equal to that of coal-fired electricity.

"Renewable energy's intermittency can only be fully addressed when energy storage costs are on par with coal-fired power. JinkoSolar is significantly investing in energy storage, which is the company's second-largest growth sector," she said.

New energy storage, or energy storage using new technologies such as lithium-ion batteries, liq-

uid flow batteries, compressed air and mechanical energy, is an important foundation for building a new power system in China, enjoying the advantages of quick response, flexible configuration and short construction periods.

JinkoSolar aims to become the world's leading energy storage company within the next three to five years.

The nation's energy storage capacity further expanded in the first quarter of 2024 amid efforts to advance its green energy transition, with installed new-type energy storage capacity reaching 35.3 gigawatts by end-March, soaring 2.1 times year-on-year, according to the National Energy Administration.

Contact the writers at zhengxin@chinadaily.com.cn

China to push ahead with 5G-A deployments

By MA SI masi@chinadaily.com.cn

China will step up efforts to commercialize 5G Advanced, or 5G-A, technologies, which will help accelerate the application of artificial intelligence in more sectors and pave the way for identifying key 6G technologies, officials and company executives said on Wednesday.

The comments came as 2024 marks the commercial launch of 5G-A technology, which is a crucial upgrade to the 5G network in functionality and coverage. For instance, 5G-A features 10-gigabit peak download speeds to meet increasingly diverse service requirements.

Zhao Zhiguo, chief engineer of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, said at the opening ceremony of the 2024 Mobile World Congress Shanghai that it is highly important to deepen the integration of 5G with new-generation information technologies, especially AI.

He also highlighted the need to leverage 5G to empower emerging industries such as intelligent connected vehicles and the low-altitude economy. The deployment of integrated sensing and passive internet of things technologies is essential for scenarios involving ubiquitous connectivity and high-end manufacturing.

Meanwhile, Zhao also called for more efforts to accelerate the research and development of key 6G technologies, laying a solid foundation for future 6G standards and industry development.



A visitor tries out VR products at the 2024 Mobile World Congress in Shanghai. CHEN AIPING / XINHUA

As of end-May, China had made remarkable strides in 5G infrastructure, with a total of 3.837 million 5G base stations, accounting for 60 percent of the global total. These advancements have positioned China as a global leader in 5G technology, with over 50 percent of mobile communication users in the country now utilizing 5G services, according to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

Meanwhile, China has achieved over 94,000 5G application cases in industries such as manufacturing, mining, power, ports and healthcare, the ministry added.

Chen Zhongyue, chairman of China Unicom, emphasized the importance of building a smart computing network, advancing the next-generation integrated intelligent sensing and computing internet, and maximizing computing power value.

Enhancing core capabilities of its self-developed large language model, roughly translated as Yuanjing, is also a key objective, Chen said.

The company has developed 30 industry-specific Yuanjing models

with professional skills, he added.

These models have significantly benefited urban governance, economic operations, information consumption and industrial manufacturing. For example, the Yuanjing clothing model can reduce design time from three days to three seconds, he said.

"We aim to introduce AI tools that are both technologically advanced and user-friendly, providing intelligent services that resonate with human values," Chen said.

Yang Jie, chairman of China Mobile, underscored AI's potential to become a new information service gateway and said the company plans to integrate expertise from various fields to launch AI intelligent systems in healthcare, education and entertainment.

Moreover, the company is set to develop AI solutions for key industries like manufacturing, energy and transportation, fostering intelligent and green industrial advancements, Yang said.

Collaborating with industry partners, China Mobile aims to accel-

erate the development of humanoid robots and brain-computer interfaces, enhancing the future needs of the economy and society, he added.

Wang Tao, executive director of Huawei Technologies Co, said over 60 telecom operators and partners globally have announced the arrival of the 5G-A commercial year, with over 30 devices supporting 5G-A set to launch this year, marking a significant milestone in the digital era.

Wang emphasized that 5G-A is a definitive industry path that protects existing investments while creating new business opportunities. He called for continuous enhancement of 5G-A technology to sustain the health and vitality of the 5G industry, realizing the vision of 5G transforming society.

As 5G-A accelerates its commercial deployment, AI brings new opportunities for the telecommunications industry. Wang said that "2024 marks the convergence of the 5G-A commercial year and the AI-to-device year, heralding the mobile AI era where intelligent services become ubiquitous."

'Patient capital' seen as key to sci-tech self-reliance

By ZHOU LANXU zhoulanxu@chinadaily.com.cn

With more policy support on the horizon, State-backed funds are expected to play a leading role in China's efforts to develop "patient capital" that is needed to strengthen technological self-reliance, officials said on Wednesday.

"We will first nurture State-owned enterprises' funds and government investment funds into 'patient capital', which will play a leading role by setting an example," said Li Chunlin, deputy head of the National Development and Reform Commission.

"Patient capital" refers to investment that generates healthy returns over the long run rather than taking quick profits. The term has become a buzz phrase after a top-level meeting in April stressed that it is essential to actively develop venture capital investment and strengthen patient capital.

At a news conference on Wednesday, Li stressed that patient capital is crucial for sci-tech self-reliance as many disruptive innovations do not generate fast investment returns in the early stage.

To develop patient capital, it is important to both fully respect the role of the market and leverage the government's function, Li said, adding the State Council, China's Cabinet, has called for measures to assist investment funds that are funded by the government and SOEs in acting as patient capital.

The General Office of the State Council unveiled a document on June 19 containing 17 sets of measures to promote the high-quality development of the venture capital sector. The document required efforts to improve fund perform-

ance evaluation and introduce fault tolerance for VC funds that are funded by the government and SOEs.

Wang Hailin, an official from the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council, said the anticipated measures will include relaxing fund size limits, raising the proportion of investments by centrally administered SOEs, focusing on the evaluation of long-term investment return and defining conditions for exemption from liability for due diligence.

She said the commission will also encourage centrally administered SOEs to fully utilize existing policies and make long-term investments in early-stage, small-size, high-tech companies to aid the development of strategic emerging industries and nurture new quality productive forces.

Official data showed that China's centrally administered SOEs so far have managed 126 VC funds with a total size of 52.9 billion yuan (\$7.28 billion), having invested 31.3 billion yuan in sectors like advanced manufacturing, energy, electronics and information.

Li said China will also strengthen patient capital by encouraging insurance companies to invest more in VC funds and expanding the pilots where banks' financial asset investment companies can make equity investment.

Wu Meng, head of the China Securities Regulatory Commission's Department of Market Supervision II, said the commission is supporting the VC sector through measures such as facilitating mergers and acquisitions, piloting return distribution to VC investors in kind instead of in cash and ensuring smooth channels for overseas listings.

Briefly

Bohai Oilfield has a new deep well

Bohai Oilfield, China's largest offshore crude oil production base, has

completed drilling of a new 6,088-meter-deep well, China National Offshore Oil Corp Tianjin branch said. The well, Bohai 19-6-D1, will be used for oil and gas recovery of the

Bozhong 19-6 Condensate Gas Field, the first gas field with proven reserves of over 100 billion cubic meters of natural gas in the Bohai Sea.

PBOC adds liquidity via reverse repos

The People's Bank of China, China's central bank, conducted 250 billion

yuan (\$35.2 billion) of seven-day reverse repos at an interest rate of 1.8 percent on Wednesday. A reverse repo is a process in which the central bank purchases securities from

commercial banks through bidding, with an agreement to sell them back in the future.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

BUSINESS

INFRASTRUCTURE

Urban rejuvenation in Shanghai gathers pace

By WANG YING in Shanghai
wang_ying@chinadaily.com.cn

Shanghai has undertaken a regeneration campaign that includes transforming urban villages and renovating blighted areas.

By turning the city's largest urban village in its downtown area into an iconic project, China State Construction Engineering Corp, or CSCEC, has shown how urban renovation can reshape the city, sources said.

Gui Zhihua, head of Hongqi village's economic organization, said he never imagined that the smelly and messy market through which he had to wear rain boots and hold his nose to pass every day during his childhood could become a bustling business district of high-rises one day.

Hongqi village is one of Shanghai's largest urban villages situated in northwestern Putuo district, and it had all the problems of a poor-quality settlement about a decade ago.

Occupying an area of 586 mu (39.1 hectares), Hongqi village used to be home to nine large primary markets (including a fruit market and wet market), 90 printing houses, 207 cold storage warehouses, more than 1,000 stalls, and a mobile population of more than 60,000 people, said Zhao Weimao, project director for Hongqi village at the Shanghai company of China Overseas Land and Investment Ltd (COLI).

While Gui and his villagers thought they would have to live in the filthy and messy place forever,



An aerial image shows Max City, an urban lifestyle complex developed by China Overseas Land and Investment Ltd, in a redeveloped area of Shanghai. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

rapid changes started to take place in 2018 as COLI, a subsidiary of Beijing-based CSCEC, decided to invest some 30 billion yuan (\$4.13 billion) to regenerate this area.

In five years, a mega complex with a gross floor area of about 1 million square meters was erected, consisting of residential properties, office buildings, shopping malls, theaters, parks and long-term rental apartments.

The successful renewal of Hongqi village represents a microcosm of Shanghai's rapid urban renovation over the past few years.

Among the 49 urban village renovation projects approved between 2014 and 2020, 40 have been completed, benefiting 23,815 households, and four out of the 13 new projects approved from 2021 to 2022 have completed renovation, improving the living conditions of 2,900 households, according to local news portal Shanghai Observer.

A further 30 new transformation projects will be launched in three years from 2023, and are projected

to benefit at least 13,000 households.

Amid the rapid urban renovation, COLI announced a grand plan to turn one of the city's old downtown neighborhoods into a new landmark.

The project, known as East Jianguo Road project, is located in Shanghai's Huangpu district in the city center.

Taking up an area of 147,500 square meters, the project involves the relocation of 8,500 households and about 40,000 people.

"Before the relocation, this area was the largest old neighborhood in Huangpu district, housing about 10,000 families without modern toilets, which means people had to clean the wooden toilet every day," said Jin Tian, general manager of COLI Shanghai.

Sitting in the core area of Shanghai's Huangpu district, the project is close to the site of the First National Congress of the Communist Party of China and adjacent to the city's landmark Xintiandi in the north.

Apart from the giant redevelopment area of about 400,000 square meters (gross floor area), another challenge of the project was to preserve and renew 13 historical buildings, which requires protection of the urban fabric and inheriting the historical culture while renovating, said Jin.

Since 2020, COLI has invested nearly 60 billion yuan in the project, trying to rebuild the area into a landmark equivalent to Xintiandi, Jin said.

Shanghai is among the first batch of cities nationwide receiving financial support from the Finance Ministry for urban regeneration, according to a notice on the official website of the ministry.

The cities will receive a certain amount of subsidies in accordance with their location, and Shanghai will receive a total subsidy of no more than 1.2 billion yuan, according to the notice jointly issued by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development in April.

Infrastructure investment to speed ahead in Q3

By ZHUANG QIANG
zhuangqiang@chinadaily.com.cn

Investments in infrastructure are expected to accelerate in the third quarter, supported by increased local bond issuances, market analysts said.

The comments came as the finance department of Fujian province said recently its government debt quota would increase by 182.4 billion yuan (\$25.1 billion) this year, or 3.7 percent higher than the previous year. This signifies the allocation of the second batch of new government debt quotas for 2024.

Of the increase, 168.4 billion yuan has been earmarked for special bonds and will be used to achieve faster completion of major existing projects, the finance department said in an online statement.

According to market tracker Wind Info, as of Tuesday, local governments have issued a total of 3.3 trillion yuan in government bonds this year, including 1.35 trillion yuan in new special bonds.

"With the national quota for new local government special bonds being 3.9 trillion yuan — an increase of 100 billion yuan from the previous year — the issuance progress in the first half of the year has been less than 50 percent. The second half will hence see faster and more frequent issuance by local governments," said Long Chaocan, an

investment consultant with China Galaxy Securities Co Ltd.

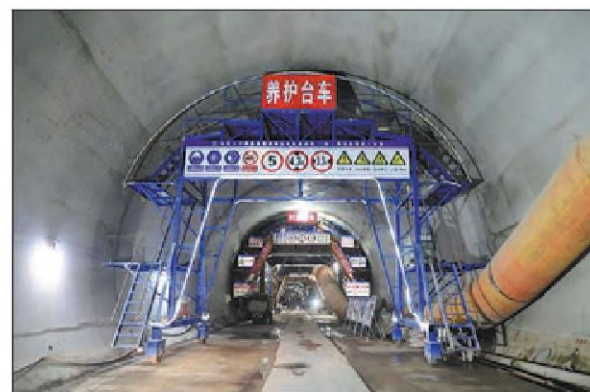
According to plans that have so far been released by multiple local governments, effective investment is highlighted in enhancing the efficiency of bond fund usage. Authorities are promoting investment for key existing projects that "can quickly translate into tangible work after relocation" to stabilize growth momentum amid the nation's pursuit of high-quality development, Long said.

"Under-construction infrastructure projects, such as railways and major water conservancies, are receiving major fund support during the rest of the year, considering their role is still fundamental in driving the nation's economy amid headwinds," he added.

China has scaled up investment in railway construction since the beginning of the year, the country's railway operator said.

During the January-May period, fixed-asset investment in the country's railway sector reached 228.47 billion yuan, marking a 10.8 percent increase from the same period last year, according to China State Railway Group. The investment is up from 184.9 billion yuan in the first four months of this year.

Heading the nation's call to boost integrated regional development, railway construction nationwide continued to gather steam nationwide, as



A view of the Wubailing Tunnel on the Jinhua-Jiande High-speed Railway in Zhejiang province that was bored through by China Railway 24th Bureau Group Corp recently. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

reflected by the latest project milestones reported by State builders.

China Railway 24th Bureau Group Corp (CR24G), a unit of China Railway Construction Corp, said it had started drilling the foundations for two major bridges across the Dongyang River and Wuyi River in Jinhua, Zhejiang province, marking the start of substantial construction for the Jinhua railway hub expansion project.

This expansion is Jinhua's largest-ever local railway investment and aims to alleviate capacity issues on the Jinhua-Yiwu sector along the Shanghai-Kunming High-speed Railway and boost regional transport infrastructure.

Also in the East China province, the Wubailing Tunnel on the Jinhua-Jiande High-speed Railway was bored through recently by CR24G construc-

tion workers. Successful digging of the 2.4-kilometer tunnel marks a significant progress toward its scheduled opening, the State builder said.

Located in Jiande, Zhejiang, the dual-track tunnel, with its maximum depth reaching 185 meters, is built for trains running at a designed speed of 250 kilometers per hour. Overcoming complex geological challenges, the project team employed advanced geological forecasting and strict safety measures to ensure controlled, high-quality construction.

Connecting the three cities of Jinhua, Lanxi and Jiande with China's major railway network, the Jinhua-Jiande High-speed Railway, which is scheduled to open before October 2025, aims to help cities further develop tourism and provide a faster link between Zhejiang and inland provinces.

project and is expected to see continuously growing demand in the months ahead, Owen said.

Currently, Cathay cargo connects 16 Chinese mainland destinations with Hong Kong. Fueled by growing demand in cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing and Zhengzhou, Henan province, the carrier has been increasing flight frequencies over the past six months and will continue to do so.

With a fleet of 20 Boeing B747 freighters, coupled with bellyhold cargo capacities from 190 passenger aircraft, the carrier has announced the purchase of six new Airbus A350F freighters, and signed a purchase option for 20 more A350F freighters.

"The new freighters are expected to be put into long-haul routes connecting the Chinese mainland and

3-way FTA talks back on agenda

China-Japan-S. Korea pact may hinge on navigating geopolitical challenges

By WANG KEJU
wangkeju@chinadaily.com.cn

After a hiatus of over four years, negotiations for the China-Japan-South Korea Free Trade Agreement have returned to the table, with the focus on a higher level of liberalization that goes beyond the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement, particularly in areas such as automobiles and key components, analysts said.

However, closing the three-way trade pact might not be an easy feat as the three nations will have to navigate the complexities and challenges stemming from geopolitical tensions and other issues, they cautioned.

Negotiations for the FTA have stalled since 2019, but the elusive trade deal was cast into the spotlight again in late May at a trilateral summit — the first in four years — attended by leaders from China, Japan, and South Korea in Seoul.

"We will keep discussions for speeding up negotiations for a trilateral free trade agreement," they said in a joint statement after the summit, stressing a deal that would be "free, fair, comprehensive, high-quality, and beneficial for all."

The FTA, first proposed in 2002, represents one of the most substantial economic partnerships China engages in, with a high proportion of China's foreign trade involved. The negotiations began in November 2012 and lasted for 16 rounds until 2019.

Trade between the three countries has surged from some \$130 billion in 1999 to nearly \$800 billion in 2022, with China emerging as the top trading partner for both Japan and South Korea.

China is the primary source of imports for Japan and South Korea, and stands as the largest export destination for South Korea and the second largest for Japan.

While China and South Korea signed a bilateral FTA in 2015, no FTAs have been reached between China and Japan or between Japan and South Korea, said Cui Fan, a professor at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing.

This has resulted in a trade ratio within the China-Japan-South Korea region that has struggled to surpass 20 percent, significantly lower than the 64 percent within the European Union, 50 percent within the region under the North American Free Trade Agreement, and 24 percent within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Cui added.

The RCEP pact has been fully implemented for a year, heralding the first-ever free trade agreement in which China, Japan, and South Korea participate. Alongside these three nations, the mega trade pact includes the 10 member states of the ASEAN, as well as Australia

and New Zealand.

The three nations, during the 14th round of negotiations in 2018, proposed to build upon the achievements of the RCEP and explore ways to further enhance the levels of trade and investment liberalization within the region.

The ongoing negotiations for a trilateral trade agreement are primarily centered around surpassing the levels of tariffs and rules established by the RCEP, said Ni Yueju, a research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of World Economics and Politics.

Under the RCEP framework, 86 percent of products exported from Japan to China and 88 percent of products exported from China to Japan will eventually attract zero tariffs, Ni said.

While this represents a substantial improvement compared to previous levels, the figures still fall short of the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership, which boasts a 98 percent zero-tariff ratio, and also fall behind the 95 percent zero-tariff ratio achieved under the China-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement, Ni added.

Additionally, the negotiations aim to address areas that RCEP does not cover, such as the automotive sector and certain automotive components, Ni said, adding that the agricultural sector will emerge as a sensitive area due to the strong agricultural lobbies in Japan and South Korea cautious about opening their domestic markets to increased competition.

The high degree of interconnectivity within the industrial chains and strong economic complementarity among China, Japan, and South Korea is paving the way for a three-way trade pact, said He Yadong, spokesman for the Ministry of Commerce.

Once achieved, this agreement is expected to further expand market openness, reduce trade barriers, enhance trade and investment, and improve the business environment, bringing tangible benefits to businesses and people across the three nations, He added.

That said, in recent years, competition between China and Japan, as well as South Korea, has intensified, particularly in the fields of high-end manufacturing and advanced technology. Negotiations in these areas involve the core interests of each country, making coordination more challenging, analysts said.

The global and regional geopolitical landscape, including factors such as the shifting dynamics of power, the China-US trade conflict, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and US restrictions on Chinese technology, have all contributed to the challenges faced in reaching a consensus in the negotiations, said Ni.

Cathay flying high on air cargo surge

By ZHU WENQIAN
zhuwenqian@chinadaily.com.cn

Hong Kong carrier Cathay Pacific Airways said it will continue to increase cargo capacity of flights connecting the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and overseas destinations, fueled by continuously growing demand for transporting e-commerce products.

The primary driver of its cargo business growth has been transporting e-commerce products from Guangdong province and Shanghai to overseas markets, and about 50 percent of cargo revenue comes from the Guangdong-Hong Kong-

Macao Greater Bay Area, the carrier said.

With more overseas customers buying products from Chinese e-commerce platforms, transporting e-commerce products now accounts for 50 to 60 percent of the cargo business from Hong Kong to other destinations, significantly higher than the 20 percent seen not long ago.

"We believe that demand for transporting e-commerce products from China will continue to grow, and it is expected to become a long-term trend. Such demand in other parts of the world is softer," said Tom Owen, director of cargo at Cathay Pacific Airways.

"Cathay cargo's future is tightly con-

nected with China, and we are very optimistic about the future growth potential. China's economy is still growing at a strong rate compared with the rest of the world. As people get more wealthy, they want to get better products, and it will make air cargo more important," Owen said.

With a facility in Dongguan, Guangdong, Cathay cargo has made it less expensive and more efficient for Chinese mainland customers to transport goods overseas, as they can clear Customs in the Chinese mainland without having to complete anything in Hong Kong.

The facility, in its first year of pilot operations, stands as a long-term

Hong Kong with the United States, Europe and Australia," Owen said.

Hong Kong International Airport, the world's busiest cargo transportation hub, is expanding into a three-runway system, which will increase its passenger and cargo capacity to handle 120 million passengers and 10 million metric tons of cargo annually.

In the first five months, Cathay cargo saw total demand, measured in cargo ton-kilometers, up 10 percent year-on-year. Its cargo transportation capacity has recovered rapidly and resumed to 85 percent of pre-COVID levels, and the capacity of Cathay Group is expected to fully rebound in the first quarter of 2025.

Meanwhile, as Chinese consumers have been pursuing increasingly high-quality lifestyles and premium products, inbound demand for fresh

products like flowers and imported fruits has been growing, especially in Guangdong, Cathay Pacific said.

Asia-Pacific airlines saw 14 percent year-on-year demand growth for air cargo in April, the strongest of all regions, according to the latest data from the International Air Transport Association.

Demand within the Asia market grew by 13.2 percent compared to April 2023, and the Asia-Europe route grew by 17.7 percent. The Middle East-Asia route rose by 10.4 percent, the IATA said.

"Air cargo demand started the second quarter with a solid 11.1 percent increase globally. While many uncertainties remain, it appears that the roots of air cargo's strong performance are deepening," said Willie Walsh, IATA's director-general.

BUSINESS FOCUS

By ZHU WENQIAN

zhuwenqian@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese parents are booking more domestic and outbound research as well as study tours this summer compared to the same period last year, and the market is set to embrace a golden period of growth, industry players said.

However, parents have become more cautious while choosing research and educational travel products, and are paying more attention to quality, said Qunar, a Beijing-based online travel agency.

The United Kingdom, the United States and Singapore are the most popular destinations for research and study tours. Such trips mainly include taking international classes abroad, and in-depth tours of museums and famous universities.

In addition to time-tested experiences of visiting renowned universities in Europe and the US, some niche destinations in northern Europe that focus on natural landscape sightseeing, such as Finland and Norway, have also become popular for research and learning trips this summer, Qunar found.

More parents are choosing routes that emphasize humanities, history, nature, and aesthetic education, as well as projects that are highly experiential and interactive.

People born in the 1980s and 1990s — young parents now — are the main consumer groups in the parent-child travel market, and they are more willing to pay for high-quality parent-child travel experiences, industry observers said.

"For example, participating in a turtle conservation project in Bali, Indonesia, and an elephant conservation project in Thailand, have seen significant increases in bookings this year. Since children can do something by themselves, this makes it more meaningful," said Yan Lanru, director of research and study tours at Qunar.

"For domestic study trips, several travel agencies have launched cultural tours equipped with experienced research mentors and experts in Xi'an, Shaanxi province. They will help children deeply experience and understand the culture and historical heritage of the ancient capital," Yan said.

The per capita cost of domestic research tour products has declined by 10 percent this summer compared with the pre-pandemic level of 2019, but the per capita cost of such tours overseas has increased by about 40 percent over 2019, data from Trip.com Group, China's largest online travel agency, showed.

Summer vacation is the peak season for parent-child travel. Last summer, Chinese consumers undertook trips amounting to some 1.84 billion person-times, significantly higher than during the same period of 2019, or before the COVID-19 pandemic, and many scenic spots received a record number of tourists, according to the China Tourism Academy.

Based on summer travel product orders so far, nearly half of the tourists who plan to travel domestically are families with children, and this group accounts for 53 percent of the total for outbound travel, according to Trip.com.

Among those that have booked travel products this summer, consumers born in the 1980s and 1990s form the backbone, and each accounts for 50 percent and 18 percent of the total, respectively, Trip.com said.

"Bookings made by those who were born after the year 2000 grew the fastest, and the booking volume has jumped about 80 percent year-on-year, indicating that students are playing an increasingly important role in the summer tourism market," said Fang Zexi, an industry analyst at the research institute of Trip.com.

Parent-child tourism takes off in big way

Bookings for domestic and outbound research as well as study tours surpass levels seen last year



Top: Visitors flock to Marina Bay in Singapore in April. ZHENG ZHIWEI / XINHUA

Above: Tourists check out the Macao Special Administrative Region's famous tourist spot, the Ruins of Saint Paul's, in May. ZHANG JINJIA / XINHUA

For instance, taking a 12-day tour of the UK and Ireland has been popular this summer. This includes tours of Cambridge University and Oxford University, the British Museum and Windsor Castle, according to Tuniu Corp.

"For short-haul outbound products, taking a study and research tour in Hong Kong and Macao has been sought after. It will include a visit to renowned colleges in the two cities and the Hong Kong Palace Museum," said Fan Dongxiao, director of short-haul outbound tours at Tuniu Corp.

Parent-child cultural and tourism products related to theme parks, museums, and science museums have been the most popular, followed by natural and cultural landscapes such as visiting historical sites and Chinese classical gardens.

Next in popularity are farm tours and shopping, according to a survey by the China Tourism Association.

Parent-child travel has taken on more diverse forms.

Faced with higher demand from parents of the 1980s and 1990s generation, hotels that focus on parent-child accommodation are no longer satisfied with upgrading hardware such as setting up cartoon-themed decorations and beds with slides.

They have also begun to develop diversified educational and recreational functions, combining interactive experiences and educational entertainment.

This summer, booking volumes for parent-child accommodation have jumped 25 percent year-on-year with prices falling by 18 percent on a yearly basis, and half of hotel bookings have been for four-star and five-star luxury hotels, Trip.com found.

Shanghai Haichang Ocean Park, a theme park in Shanghai, recently launched the first penguin science popularization resort nationwide near the park. Combining the natural advantages of the ocean park, the hotel features a panoramic penguin exhibition pool.

Tourists can watch penguins, participate in feeding them and take part in other ocean science popularization activities such as lectures by science experts who share their Antarctic exploration journeys.

The first group of consumers who checked in at the hotel also have a chance to adopt penguins remotely and receive photos and videos of the adopted penguin regularly, according to the hotel.

"With Chinese consumers' demand for travel evolving continuously, the parent-child tourism market is also constantly evolving. Past products and concepts may have become outdated, and domestic tourists are willing to invest in parent-child travel while also demanding higher standards," said Fang of Trip.com.

"After meeting the basic requirements of room types, the upgrading of hardware and software facilities like cartoon decorations, the demand for various amusement options, interactive experiences, and educational entertainment will become increasingly common," she said.

A booming travel market has also driven demand for air transportation this summer.

During July and August, domestic airports are expected to handle 1.08 million takeoffs and landings, up 12.65 percent year-on-year, and 13.87 percent higher than the pre-pandemic level of 2019, according to an estimate by aviation data provider VariFlight.

In addition, more than 2,100 international and regional flights are expected to take off and land in China each day this summer.

This is expected to grow 62.42 percent year-on-year, and is forecast to rebound to 80 percent of the pre-pandemic level seen in 2019, according to VariFlight.

Trips to Europe hot draws in summer season

By ZHU WENQIAN

Chinese travelers have shown great enthusiasm for trips to Europe this summer, fueled by sporting events like the UEFA Euro 2024 and the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, industry players said.

In fact, travel to Paris is forecast to accelerate in the coming weeks, they said.

Following a strong surge in visits during the May Day and Dragon Boat Festival holidays, China's outbound tourism market is expected to show greater resilience.

Bookings to France and Germany have shown the highest year-on-year growth, according to data from online travel agencies.

Search volumes for travel to Germany for 2024, which began on June 15, have tripled this month over the levels seen in May. In particular, search volumes for travel to Berlin, the host city of the UEFA Euro 2024 finals that will be held on July 14, have

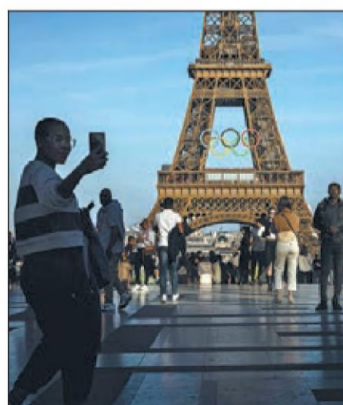
climbed week by week, according to Qunar, a Beijing-based online travel agency.

Booking volumes for international flights to Germany during the UEFA Euro 2024 have doubled over the same period last year, Qunar found.

Besides, booking volumes for hotels in Germany have jumped 150 percent year-on-year, and average room prices have climbed 25 percent on a yearly basis. Specifically, bookings for hotels in Berlin have surged 400 percent year-on-year, followed by that for Munich and Frankfurt.

"The football matches have also driven the popularity of Chinese travelers visiting other European countries. Till the end of July, hotel bookings for Italy have tripled over last year, and France, Spain, and the United Kingdom have seen their hotel booking volumes double year-on-year," said Xiao Peng, a researcher with the big data research institute of Qunar.

"Europe has always been a popular desti-



People photograph and film the Olympic rings displayed on the Eiffel Tower in Paris on June 7.

AURELIEN MORISSARD / FOR CHINA DAILY

nation for summer travel by Chinese tourists. This year, Germany's hosting of the UEFA Euro 2024 has attracted more sports and tourism fans," Xiao said.

Prices of international flights to Europe and local hotels are expected to increase by 30 percent to 40 percent from July.

Meanwhile, Paris will host the Olympic Games from July 24 to Aug 11. This period coincides with the peak season for outbound travel in China and is set to significantly hike the popularity of tourism in France, industry players said.

Paris and other major cities in France, as well as Berlin, London, and Madrid have seen the highest increases in travel product bookings in Europe, according to Tongcheng Travel, an online travel agency based in Suzhou, Jiangsu province.

As of the first two weeks of June, booking volumes of flights from major Chinese cities to Paris for July had jumped more than 70 percent year-on-year, and hotel bookings in

Paris for next month had surged 150 percent on a yearly basis, data from Tongcheng Travel showed.

Most Chinese tourists who plan to visit Paris this summer are from Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Guangdong province, Chengdu, Sichuan province, and Hong Kong.

Family travel is forecast to grow significantly, and the Paris Olympics will be the first choice for many Chinese families.

Some popular options for group tours of 10 to 12 days to Europe this summer carry price tags of over 30,000 yuan (\$4,132) per person. Boosted by strong demand, some travel routes have been sold out, according to Tongcheng Travel.

Besides, some Chinese travelers are choosing to fly to Paris and join a local tour group for three to seven days. The demand for Mandarin-speaking tour guides and chartered car services in Paris has also been growing.