

Pandas back in US

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Female captain braves the seas to carry out rescue missions

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CHINA DAILY

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Retrieving precious cargo



Researchers open the returner of the Chang'e 6 lunar probe on Wednesday at the China Academy of Space Technology in Beijing. The weight of the samples collected from the far side of the moon by the Chang'e-6 mission will be made public on Friday, the China National Space Administration said. JIN LIWANG / XINHUA See more, page 3

Meeting set to unveil package of key reforms

Third plenary session of 20th CPC Central Committee to open on July 15 in Beijing

By CAO DESHENG
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The Communist Party of China will convene the third plenary session of its 20th Central Committee from July 15 to 18 in Beijing, a highly anticipated meeting that will unveil wide-ranging reforms.

The decision was made on Thursday at a meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, which was chaired by Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee.

In the past, the third plenums of the CPC Central Committee have often launched major reforms. For instance, during the Third Plenum of the 11th CPC Central Committee in 1978, former leader Deng Xiaoping ushered in policy changes that paved the way for decades of rapid economic growth and opening to the outside world.

This year's third plenum carries historical significance given the structural economic slowdown, global geopolitical tensions and an increasing emphasis on coordinating development and security, observers said.

On the top of the agenda of the plenum is that the Political Bureau will report its work to the CPC Central Committee with a focus on studying the issues of further comprehensively deepening reform and advancing Chinese modernization.

Thursday's Political Bureau meeting heard a report on the solicitation of opinions from within and outside the Party on the draft decision of the CPC Central Committee on further comprehensively deepening reform and advancing Chinese modernization, according to a statement released after the meeting.

It was decided that the draft document would be revised based on the discussions at the meeting, and submitted for deliberation at the third plenary session, the statement said.

The meeting's participants stated that the draft provides a thorough analysis of the new situations and problems in advancing Chinese modernization, and scientifically maps out the overall arrangements for further deepening reform.

It was noted at the meeting that the draft serves as an overarching document guiding the deepening of reform across the board on the new journey, and demonstrates the resolve of the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at the core to open up broad prospects for Chinese modernization through further deepening reform.

Regarding the goals and objectives for further reform, the statement said that China will complete the building of a high-standard socialist market economy by 2035.

The system and capacity for governance will be basically modernized and socialist modernization will be basically achieved by 2035, it added.

The plenum comes as China faces challenges in its structural economic readjustment as well as risks arising from mounting international geopolitical competition.

Experts said it offers the CPC leadership an opportunity to outline how it plans to manage the structural slowdown following a period of rapid economic growth, and will provide indications as to the future direction of the Party's key priorities, including technological self-reliance and innovation, national security and economic growth.

At the session, the CPC leadership is likely to map out the policy adjustments it will use to address an increasingly uncertain economic outlook, with policies and reforms that could alleviate the uncertainties affecting both consumers and investors, they said.

Participants at the Political Bureau meeting laid out principles for further deepening reform, including adhering to a systemic perspective to handle major relationships such as between the economy and society, government and market, efficiency and equity, vitality and order, development and security, and enhancing the systemic, holistic and coordinated nature of reform.

They also highlighted that the Party's leadership is the fundamental guarantee for further deepening reform and promoting Chinese modernization.

It is necessary to adhere to the centralized and unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee in further deepening reform, they said.

WORLD WATCH
By Busani Ngcaweni

Will public servants help coalition in South Africa function well?

Following the national and provincial elections on May 29, South Africa found itself facing an unexpected power-sharing arrangement. The ruling African National Congress, which prides itself on being Africa's oldest liberation movement, lost its three-decade-long electoral majority in the country with its vote share falling from 57.5 percent in 2019 to 40.2 percent in 2024. Nearly a month after the elections, 10 parties joined hands to form the Government of National Unity.

The short-lived post-Apartheid GNU arrangement and its related experiences have completely faded from public memory, thus making it difficult to serve as a reference point. Instead, the complex and challenging local government coalitions produced by the last two elections serve as a benchmark for an unknown future.

Some public service mandarins in the country are viewing this period of change and uncertainty with trepidation. Section 197(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 states that: "Within public administration there is a public service for the Republic, which must function, and be structured, in terms of national legislation, and which must loyally execute the lawful policies of the government of the day."

This section in Chapter 10 of the Supreme Law is rarely cited in public discourse. Even in debates on public servants being accused of being partisan, the following provision in Section 197(3) remains muted: "No employee of the public service may be favored or prejudiced only because that person supports a particular political party or cause."

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Peru's president seeks stronger ties

By MO JINGXI
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Visiting Peruvian President Dina Boluarte Zegarra has expressed her hope to further strengthen the bond between Peru and China, which began in the 19th century, and seek more investment and cooperation opportunities with the world's second-largest economy.

In a written interview with China Daily, Boluarte said the South American country has great interest in further promoting people-to-people exchanges with China through the opening of direct flights and offering of scholarships.

Boluarte started on Tuesday her first state visit to China since taking office in 2022. Accompanied by a delegation including five ministers, the Peruvian president visited Shenzhen and Shanghai, where she met with business leaders, learned about China's achievements in science and technology innovation, and experienced related technologies.

On Thursday evening, she arrived in Beijing, the last leg of her five-day visit, for meetings with President Xi Jinping and other Chinese leaders.

"I want to highlight that China was the country that provided the

“Peru trusts in the resilience of the Chinese economy.”



Dina Boluarte Zegarra, president of Peru

most support to Peru during the pandemic by donating 1 million vaccines, and we are very grateful to China for that cooperation," she said.

Regarding trade and investment, one of the issues high on her agenda during the visit, Boluarte said Peru seeks to promote the diversification of exports to China, especially those with higher added value, and aims to increase Chinese investment in her country, which is crucial for economic growth and job creation.

China is Peru's largest trading partner and its largest export destination, with bilateral trade exceeding \$37.6 billion last year. According to the Ministry of Commerce, the two sides concluded the latest round of negoti-

ations last week on upgrading their bilateral free trade agreement, which was signed in 2009.

"We have heard about the projections of certain Western institutions, but Peru trusts in the resilience of the Chinese economy. We believe that the strengths and determination of its people will help mitigate Western projections about China's future," the Peruvian president said.

According to Boluarte, her country and China enjoy a historical relationship, thanks to the migration of more than 100,000 Chinese nationals during the 19th century, significantly contributing to Peru's gastronomy, music, science and culture.

"Today, the population of Chinese descent in Peru represents approximately 8 percent of our total population," she said, noting that Chinese words have influenced the vocabulary of Peruvian people's daily lives, such as *kion* (ginger), *sillao* (soy sauce), *taupa* (abundant), *chifa* (Chinese-Peruvian cuisine), and *chauifa* (fried rice).

Last month, Peru's Congress adopted a decision, with 108 votes in favor and zero against, to designate Feb 1 each year as Peru-China Fraternity Day.

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US STUDENTS HOPE TO OPEN MINDS BACK HOME TO REAL CHINA

One of first groups to visit under Xi's initiative dispels misconceptions, builds trust

By ZHAO YIMENG and YIN WEIHAO

China's initiative to invite 50,000 young people from the United States to visit the country over the next five years is a smart move and will improve China-US relations, according to one of the first groups of US students to participate in the program.

President Xi Jinping proposed



the initiative to invite US youths to experience exchanges and study programs during his visit to San Francisco, California, in November.

Fourteen students and a teacher from Indiana University of Pennsylvania were among the

first to take part in the program, visiting China from mid-May to late May.

Organized by the Beijing Foreign Studies University, the group visited technology companies such as Xiaomi, experienced Chinese culture in Beijing and Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, and played sports with their Chinese counterparts.

See Students, page 2

Free at last



WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange (center) hugs his wife, Stella, after arriving in the Australian capital Canberra on Wednesday. The 52-year-old Assange is set to start life as a free man for the first time in 12 years, after pleading guilty to obtaining and publishing military secrets of the United States. WILLIAM WEST / AFP

INSIDE
Peaceful coexistence principles key for stability
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After the trip's closing ceremony on May 26, Caroline Bianco said she was grateful to be a part of the 2024 BFSU Discover China Program.

"I think the initiative is really smart," she said. "Even if our two governments have different positions on core issues, like how they should run their countries or how they govern their people, youth can be the bridge."

Before arriving, Bianco's perception of China was simply of a country with a large population, crowded and busy places, and terrible pollution.

However, the visit changed her mind, and she has saved images of what she saw and experienced on her smartphone. She said she will go back home and tell everyone how her experiences differed from her expectations.

"If I show people photos about how these cities are greener than ours, explain about how they cared about the environment or (people's) health, I think some people may understand what I experienced and change their minds," Bianco said.

She was impressed by the hospitality of Chinese people and recalled an experience in a rural area of Hangzhou, where villagers at a tea garden they randomly stopped at served them tea and allowed them to use the toilet in their house.

"It was something we have never experienced in the US. We wouldn't think about inviting strangers into our houses. It seems like they are really trusting and treat guests with hospitality," she said.

Most of the students had never been to an Asian country before, and they witnessed different aspects of life and culture in China. The eye-openers included the ancient architecture of the Forbidden City, the natural beauty of West Lake as well as modern advances such as the widespread use of mobile-phone payments and the country's high-speed railway network.

Despite the differences, the US students said what are truly important are the similarities both people shared.

"We learned by coming here that people are very similar, even though our cultures are very different. You find you have more in common with someone from a different country like China," Bianco said.

Emma Monday said the initiative is about making a difference in relations between two countries that currently have political tensions. "I think the fact that China is stepping up to take this initiative really shows their efforts to try to repair the relationship," Monday said, adding it is a positive move.

"We are going in the right direction. I implore US citizens to open their eyes, welcome this initiative, and meet China halfway," she said.

Kamir Walton said he was a little nervous about coming to China, and was worried that he would get in trouble if he said anything considered improper. "But being here, the first day I knew I had it wrong, or Americans had it wrong," Walton said.

His China experience had made him believe that people-to-people exchanges are what the two countries need and he would like to be part of that bridge, he said.

"This is the first step, and 50,000 young people saying how China is may be enough for a small movement in China-US relations," Walton said.

Ordinary folk

Professor Liu Shijuan, a Chinese teacher at IUP, invited the students to take part in the tour program as she knows most of them through Chinese-language or cultural courses at the university.



Students from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, the United States, learn about the interior structure of the Xiaomi SU7 electric vehicle at the company's industrial park in Beijing on May 17. PHOTOS BY ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

Students: Journey of discovery, understanding

"Most of them are interested in learning Chinese," Liu said.

As IUP and BFSU had been working on cooperation on post-graduate programs, they had the idea of inviting undergraduate US students to come to China and experience the country in person.

Participants had to meet certain conditions, such as having a passport, being able to afford the flight tickets, and a willingness to explore China.

The students, with an average age of 20, are all from "ordinary families" in small cities and some of them had never been on a plane before, Liu said.

"Unlike Chinese parents who may be more supportive in funding their children for exchange programs overseas, many of these American students had to earn their own plane tickets through part-time jobs," she said.

The majority of them found a job near the university. "Most of them had little idea of China — a country far away from their homes," Liu said.

Some of the students flew more than 24 hours to get to Beijing, and one of them only obtained her travel visa on the morning she left.

Monday said she was excited about the trip from Beijing to Hangzhou as it was her first time traveling on a high-speed train.

"I thought it was really convenient because you don't have to pay as much as the airplane. We kept looking at the map and said it was this far from Beijing. We were so amazed by how fast we got there," Monday said.



Students from Indiana University of Pennsylvania try on Peking Opera costumes at Jixiang Theatre in Beijing on May 17.

During their visit to Xiaomi, some of the students said that a Xiaomi SU7, the company's first electric car, which was on display, was the most amazing vehicle they'd ever seen.

Walton kept asking questions about charging the car, but the software engineering student was especially impressed by its striking color. "When I was told the color was scientifically taken from the ocean, I thought I would really like to buy it," Walton said.

A similar vehicle would sell for over \$150,000 in the US, while it costs only about 290,000 yuan (\$40,000) in China, he added.

Computer science student Kenneth Au said he was curious about

how China had been able to shift to an electric vehicle system while its infrastructure still supported fuel vehicles.

"It seems like China can fully convert to a whole electric car system, much better than any American system," Au said.

The cheaper prices of advanced electronic products such as smartphones and laptops also drew the

US students' attention.

However, it was the ancient architecture in the Forbidden City and how it fits in with Beijing's modern landscape that got the visiting students most excited.

"As a young country, we don't have ancient structures in the US. It's amazing that one emperor lived in a place literally the size of a city," Walton said.

Kayla Kristchil, who has traveled to Europe, was impressed by the combination of the modern and ancient in Beijing.

She took a picture in the Forbidden City, with the palace in the foreground and skyscrapers in the background.

Bianco was impressed by the architecture and Chinese people's appreciation of history.

"The Summer Palace is really beautiful and the Great Wall is crazy to see in person. It's hard to believe how it was built. The people really appreciate the country's history and where they came from," she said.

Chinese counterparts

Huo Yi volunteered to be the team leader of the program and spent a large amount of time with the US students while taking care of them during the tour. A doctoral candidate at Dong-A University in South Korea, Huo was in Beijing preparing his thesis defense when he learned about the program from a friend who was one of the visit organizers.

"Their behavior challenged some of my perceptions about American youth," Huo said.

While young US people are often stereotyped as being rebellious, Huo said he found the young visitors to be orderly and on time, and willing to follow all regulations.

A memorable experience was watching a soccer match with them at the Workers' Stadium in Beijing, Huo said.

"Despite rarely watching soccer games in the US, they were extreme-

ly engaged and captivated by the live match. This made me deeply appreciate cultural exchange as an excellent way to foster mutual understanding," he said.

Huo said his involvement had allowed him to observe the diverse behavior of young people from different cultural backgrounds.

Some of the US students have deeper connections with China that went beyond an interest in learning the Chinese language. Kenneth Au's father emigrated from Hong Kong to the US in the 1980s, while Emily Schumacher was adopted by a US family in Zhuhai, Guangdong province, when she was three years old.

"Au showed traditional Chinese traits of humility and politeness because of his family background," Huo said. "On the other hand, Emily, affected by her upbringing, would straightforwardly express her views on perceived injustices."

Xie Tao, dean of the School of International Relations and Diplomacy at BFSU who gave a lecture about China-US relations to the US students, said he was impressed by their extremely positive feedback about their experiences in China. All of them said they would recommend to their friends and family to visit the country.

"I firmly believe exchanges between Chinese and American students will help reduce misunderstandings and stereotypes about China that are widespread among American people," Xie said. "Face-to-face conversation and learning will undoubtedly make American students better appreciate the real China."

Optimistic outlook

While interacting with the students during his lecture, Xie asked them a serious question: "Are you more of a pessimist or optimist when it comes to Beijing-Washington relations?"

Walton said after the class that he was pessimistic about relations, but not because of the Chinese people.

"The problem is when we experience stuff and try to make a change after going back, we are criticized. And then we are part of the 'enemy,'" he said.

Monday said she is in the minority back home when it comes to attitudes toward China. "I had a difficult time talking about what I observed in China because people who have never experienced the culture are so set on thinking that those who come here are being brainwashed," she said.

"I'm optimistic about the way China is handling this, but as far as the way the US can receive it, I just don't know," she added.

Despite the challenges, the younger generation is more open-minded and willing to embrace ideas, the students said.

Monday said at college, "the majority of people would be very open to strengthening the relationship. In general, younger people are more open to it than older people who already have their mindset."

Tu Xiliang, one of the program organizers from BFSU, said the exchange in May is the first phase of the Discover China Program, which aims to open a window for international students to experience China.

As the number of US students studying in China has decreased in recent years, Tu said he hoped the program would attract more international students to pursue further education in China and discover the country for themselves.

Apart from BFSU, several high schools and universities in China are planning exchange programs under the initiative during the upcoming summer vacation.

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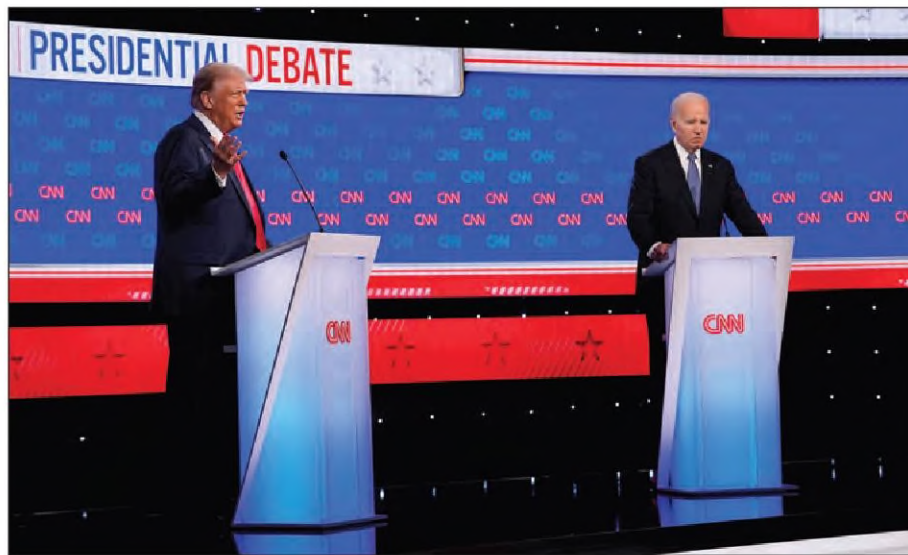
Left: Kenneth Au (left) and Kamir Walton (right) from Indiana University of Pennsylvania learn about car engine components while visiting Xiaomi's industrial park in Beijing on May 20. Middle: Students try out Xiaomi smartphones in the industrial park. Right: Wang Juan, a PE teacher at the Beijing Foreign Studies University, shows baduanjin exercise movements to US student Emma Monday at the university on May 20.

TOP NEWS

Squaring off

US President Joe Biden listens as the Republican presidential candidate, former President Donald Trump, speaks during a debate hosted by CNN on Thursday in Atlanta.

GERALD HERBERT / AP



Confident in China's growth

By OUYANG SHIJIA and ZHANG XIAOMIN in Dalian, Liaoning

China is poised to meet its annual growth target of around 5 percent this year, given strong policy stimulus and the gradual recovery in confidence and expectations, experts and global entrepreneurs said on Thursday at the 15th Annual Meeting of the New Champions, also known as the Summer Davos.

The world's second-largest economy is a key source of global demand, playing a significant role in driving the world's economic growth and offering growing opportunities for global stakeholders, they said at the event held in Dalian, Liaoning province.

Despite pressures and mounting uncertainties at home and abroad, they said they believe that China has the capabilities and conditions to deal with structural issues and foster new quality productive forces in the long run.

Peng Sen, president of the China Society of Economic Reform, said he is fully confident that China will achieve its annual growth target of around 5 percent this year, given the support of the adopted macroeconomic policies and the country's accelerated push for fostering new quality productive forces.

"China's economy is on the

upswing," Peng said on Thursday at a subforum whose theme was the country's economic outlook. However, "the recovery process doesn't yet have very firm foundations amid insufficient demand, still-weak expectations among the public, and uncertainties, particularly from the external environment," he added.

Advancing reforms will be key to tackling the issues facing the economy, Peng said.

More efforts should be made to provide policies supporting the innovative development of the private sector, accelerate the push for building a unified national market, deepen market-oriented reforms of production factors such as land, capital, labor, technology and data, and address institutional improvements in the market economy system, he added.

Data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed on Thursday that industrial enterprises with annual revenue of at least 20 million yuan (\$2.75 million) saw their total profits increase 3.4 percent year-on-year in the first five months of 2024, compared with 4.3 percent in the first four months.

In May, China's industrial profits rose 0.7 percent year-on-year, compared with 4 percent year-on-year growth in April.

In an exclusive interview with China Daily, Joe Ngai, chairman of management consultancy McKinsey

at consultancy Marsh McLennan, said, "The Chinese economy got off to a pretty good start in the first quarter and has some positive factors that have been laying a foundation for achieving its annual growth target.

"China's pursuit of high-quality drivers of production and China's economic development have created greater cooperation space for companies around the world to work together in a more harmonious way," he added.

Tyldum noted that China is Marsh McLennan's second-largest operation in Asia, and the company is committed to the China market, with more investment plans.

US-based smart building solutions provider Johnson Controls expressed strong optimism about the Chinese economy and opportunities in China, saying that the company has benefited from the country's steady economic growth over the past few decades.

Anu Rathinde, president of Johnson Controls Asia-Pacific, said: "We appreciate the continuous opening-up in China, and we appreciate the continuous reforms and the support and welcome for foreign enterprises. As China's economy grows, the foreign enterprises grow and benefit equally."

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Meanwhile, Ngai said China's 2024 annual growth target of around 5 percent is achievable amid a steady recovery in confidence, and the country is poised to contribute around one-third of global economic growth.

Zhang Xiaoyan, associate dean of Tsinghua University's PBC School of Finance, said the Chinese economy is gradually shaking off the impact of COVID-19.

Technological innovation, notably artificial intelligence and green industries, will serve as new growth drivers boosting China's growth, Zhang added.

NBS data showed that the equipment manufacturing sector registered rapid profit growth with advanced, intelligent and green development. In the first five months of the year, profits recorded by equipment manufacturing enterprises surged 11.5 percent year-on-year, which was 8.1 percentage points higher than the figure for overall industrial profits.

Svein Tyldum, CEO for North Asia

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Service: State needs officials with exceptional set of skills

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Section 195 (1) of the Constitution outlines the "basic values and principles governing public administration (government)", which apply to all spheres of government, organs of state and public enterprises. A further provision is that a public administration must be governed by democratic values and principles characterized by high standards of professional ethics, efficiency, economic and effective use of resources, impartiality, inclusivity, accountability and transparency. The basic proposition is that we have a firm legal foundation to manage current and unfolding realities.

The term "mandarins" is invoked because the state requires a cadre of executives with exceptional leadership and managerial skills to navigate political dynamics, deploy human and capital resources, interpret political mandates and diligently lead the execution of plans that improve the socioeconomic conditions of society. The responsibility of a patriotic mandarin is to faithfully execute the government's policies and ensure that service delivery is sustained, even in the face of political changes. The supreme structure that commands the bureaucracy is the Cabinet, where the government's program of the day is adopted.

The essence of the public servant is that there is a proactive embrace of uncertainty by exercising capabilities and agency to navigate complexity and mobilize people and resources for what lies ahead. Adopting the National Framework Toward the Professionalisation of the Public Sector by the Cabinet in October 2022 served to effect the constitutional obligation by providing better guidance on managing shocks such as the current exceptional circumstances. The framework provides agency to the mandarins by emphasizing the importance of maintaining higher standards of professionalism, regardless of personal affiliation with a political party or cause.

As with counterparts in other parts of the world who have been through coalitions, South African mandarins should continue to advance the national development agenda. As the country enters the era of significant changes in public positions, they are understandably concerned, as coalitions have inherent problems. Some officials have expressed concerns that because a coalition government includes additional layers of bureaucracy, different parties may claim control of specific institutions. Public servants receive contradictory directives from political principals of coalition parties, causing confusion, frustration and inefficiencies.

Coalition partners may exert political pressure on public servants to align with their respective party agendas, possibly jeopardizing the civil service's neutrality and professionalism. Again, the mandarins should manage this at the departmental level by ensuring that reference is always made to the Cabinet's national development agenda.

Job insecurity is a genuine concern, particularly among senior public servants. Disagreements over budget allocation to government departments and entities may compromise funding for long-term projects and consequently affect service delivery. Despite all these perceived and potentially genuine challenges, experiences in other countries have shown that GNUs and coalitions provide opportunities for constructive change and are a vital component of further professionalizing the public sector. Coalition governments can promote public policy innovation by bringing together the perspectives and ideas of different political parties. Such political joint ventures also intrinsically promote collaborative governance practices, with departments and ministries working together to develop and implement integrated policies.

To navigate this dynamic political landscape, public servants must be adaptable and resilient to their mandate of serving the public effectively and efficiently. Now is the moment for public servants to embrace coalition arrangements to broaden their horizons by learning and adapting policies and strategies to a changing political landscape. A GNU or coalition agreement would reinforce the Cabinet as the primary policy direction and decision-making source.

Coalition governments can have a multidimensional impact on professionalizing public service, influencing various aspects such as recruiting, training, performance management and overall efficiency.

In Germany, for example, the Grand Coalition (2005-09 and 2013-21) aimed to modernize the public sector through training programs that would rapidly adapt to new policies.

In Belgium, coalition administrations have prioritized capacity-building within public service to deal with the complexity of a multilingual and multicultural society. For example, their training initiatives aimed to ensure that public servants were fluent in Dutch and French, thereby boosting communication and service delivery. In India, coalition governments have recognized the importance of a professionalized public service to effectively implement diverse policy objectives.

A practical further example is coalition arrangements in Italy, where the 2009 Brunetta Reform was adopted, which aimed to boost public sector efficiency and accountability by implementing performance-based compensation and rigorous performance evaluations for public servants.

In the Netherlands, coalition governments have promoted professionalization through collaborative training programs that bring together public servants from different ministries.

These programs seek to build a cohesive and well-trained public service capable of working across political divides.

To navigate this dynamic political landscape, public servants must be adaptable and resilient to their mandate of serving the public effectively and efficiently.

While coalition administrations can introduce complexity and obstacles, they also provide opportunities for professionalizing the public service. They can contribute to building a more capable and professional public service better equipped to implement diverse and sometimes conflicting policy agendas by prioritizing training, performance management and ethical standards. We must soothe the concerns of our officials by urging them to fully embrace the new opportunities and possibilities provided by the new concept of cooperative governance.

As dedicated mandarins, we owe it to South Africans to respond proactively to the growing realities of coalitions and work relentlessly to build a better, stable and prosperous South Africa. Now, more than ever, we must take the initiative to display the diligence and resilience demonstrated during significant events such as the 2010 FIFA World Cup and the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only have we navigated potentially disruptive changes caused by past Cabinet reshuffles and other unprecedented events, such as the start of new administrations, but we have also helped stabilize and sustain public institutions' successful operations to ensure business continuity. Again, I must restate that the mandarins are expected to act as the "Talented Tenth". We are expected to lead institutions of the state per the constitutional provisions, instead of rushing to carry handbags to endear ourselves with the new principals.

The ethic of development and work distinguishes this advanced detachment from the rest of the officials who are largely measured by showing up and completing the tasks for the day while being kind to the public and not stealing. We must earn the trust and respect through leadership and diligent execution. As we proudly proclaim: *! ke e; /aarra/ /ke*, literally meaning diverse people unite, we must all work toward the noble objective of eventually establishing a single public service, which exists in countries of both the Global North and the Global South.

The author is director-general of the National School of Government of South Africa and a visiting professor at Fudan University. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Nation to launch asteroid probe Tianwen 2 next year

By ZHAO LEI zhaolei@chinadaily.com.cn

China plans to carry out a series of massive space programs in the near future, according to a senior official of the China National Space Administration.

Bian Zhigang, deputy director of the space administration, said on Thursday at a news conference in Beijing that the administration is working on two new lunar expeditions and three deep-space exploration missions.

"We are developing the Chang'e 7 and Chang'e 8 robotic probes. Chang'e 7 will be sent to the lunar south pole region to conduct environmental and resources surveys, while Chang'e 8 will undertake technology demonstrations for in-situ resources utilization," he told Chinese and foreign journalists attending the news conference, which was hosted by the State

Council Information Office.

Bian did not mention when the two lunar probes are scheduled for launch, but information published by the space administration indicates that Chang'e 7 will be launched around 2026 and Chang'e 8 around 2028.

Meanwhile, the Chinese government has approved three new deep-space exploration missions to enable scientists to advance their research on the origins and evolution of the solar system, the impacts of small celestial bodies and solar activities on Earth, the possibility of extraterrestrial life, and other such significant scientific issues, according to the senior official.

"Tianwen 2 will be a robotic mission to retrieve samples from a near-Earth asteroid. It is scheduled for launch next year. Tianwen 3, scheduled for (launch) around 2030, aims to land on Mars, collect and bring samples back to Earth. Tianwen 4

will be sent to explore Jupiter around 2030," Bian said.

Currently, scientists and engineers are working on mission plans and key technologies for Tianwen 3 and Tianwen 4, he added.

The Tianwen missions, named after an ancient Chinese poem, cover China's interplanetary exploration endeavors.

Tianwen 1 was launched in July 2020 and it successfully touched down on Mars in May 2021. The probe deployed a rover, named Zhurong, to explore the Red Planet. Zhurong was the sixth rover on Mars, after five from the United States. It traveled more than 1,900 meters and obtained a great deal of data and images before ceasing operations.

According to mission planners and scientists, Tianwen 2 will target 2016 HO3, the smallest and closest quasi-satellite to Earth. The basic plan is to use a large carrier rocket to

send a probe comprising two parts — an orbiter and a reentry module — toward the asteroid.

After approaching 2016 HO3, the unmanned spacecraft will orbit around the asteroid and then fly very close to it to use a mechanical arm to scoop dust from the surface.

Tianwen 2 will fly back to the Earth's orbit and release its reentry module, allowing the latter to fall back to the ground, carrying the samples. The orbiter will then travel toward a main-belt comet called 311P to continue its scientific exploration tasks.

So far, scientists have identified about 1 million asteroids in the solar system, with more than 20,000 traveling near Earth.

The 2016 HO3, also known as 469219 Kamo'oalewa, was first spotted in April 2016 by an asteroid survey telescope at the Haleakala Observatories in Hawaii, the United States.

Peru: Leader pushes for more student exchanges

From page 1

Boluarte said she believes that one way to promote cooperation between Peru and China that benefits both peoples is to further promote the exchange of students by providing more scholarships to each other's citizens.

"Using this scholarship cooperation as an example, this initiative could be extended to our partners in the Pacific Alliance, thus strengthening not only the relations

between China and Peru but also between other countries in the region," she said.

The Peruvian president also said that it is the responsibility of Peru and China, as defenders of peace, to work together and solve the great conflicts that divide the world.

"I believe our work should focus on preserving peace, avoiding a Cold War mentality, and proposing real solutions to global issues that affect all of humanity, such as climate change, famines and natural disasters. These issues will persist if we do not work together on global solutions," she said.

Boluarte said China's leadership in the development of solar panels, electric mobility and renewable energy is fundamental to solving many of the global challenges facing humanity.

Coup plot unravels



Police detain Juan Jose Zuniga (second from right), former general commander of the Bolivian army, on Wednesday in the city of La Paz after a failed coup attempt against President Luis Arce. Zuniga reportedly led the rebellion, which saw hundreds of soldiers trying to storm the presidential palace earlier on Wednesday. JUAN KARITA / AP See story, page 5

CHINA

University set to focus on rehabilitation

300 undergraduates to enroll in five majors at Qingdao institution this year

By WANG XIAOYU
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China recently unveiled its first university dedicated entirely to rehabilitation studies. Located in the eastern coastal city of Qingdao, Rehabilitation University aims to address the growing demand for rehabilitation professionals in a rapidly aging society and spearhead advances in the field.

Unveiled on Saturday, Rehabilitation University was founded by Shandong's provincial government with support from the Ministry of Education, the China Disabled Persons' Federation and the National Health Commission. It comprises five colleges and three affiliated hospitals.

The university plans to enroll its first batch of 300 undergraduate students across five majors: rehabilitation physical therapy; rehabilitation occupational therapy; clinical medicine; biomedical engineering; and bioinformatics.

"We have established cooperation with top-tier colleges, research institutes and leading rehabilitation companies to jointly nurture talent," said Wang Zhongyan, head of the university's development and planning department.

For instance, students majoring in rehabilitation occupational therapy — a branch of medicine that helps people regain or enhance function and independence in daily living skills — will spend their freshman year on the campus in Qingdao and undergo training and internships for the remaining three years at China Rehabilitation Research Center in Beijing, Wang said.

Zhang Yiru, who recently took the national college entrance exam in Weifang, Shandong, said she had been keeping a close eye on the establishment of the university and was excited to learn that it will begin

enrollment this year.

"I visited the campus with my parents a few days ago and was satisfied with its environment, infrastructure and faculty," she said. "I am most interested in the occupational therapy major and find the arrangement of one year in Qingdao and three years in Beijing appealing."

"Initially thought of rehabilitation only as helping people with disabilities, but later learned that the sector involves a variety of research in neurology, orthopedics and the development of medical equipment. Our society is now in need of rehabilitation professionals, and I think entering the industry is very meaningful."

Official data shows that China has about 85 million people with disabilities, 44 million seniors with self-care disabilities and 300 million people living with chronic illnesses. By next year, the number of elderly people is expected to reach 430 million.

"The international standard is to have at least 30 rehabilitation professionals per 100,000 population, and China aims to increase the ratio to 12 per 100,000 by 2025," Wang said. "But the rate only stands at 3.1 at present."

"The establishment of the university will play an important role in cultivating more top talent in rehabilitation, promoting health and the well-being of the public and proactively helping the nation tackle an aging society."

By the end of 2020, over 230 universities and colleges across the nation had set up programs related to rehabilitation.

The idea of a university solely focusing on rehabilitation studies was first proposed by the China Disabled Persons' Federation in 2015. In June 2019, the Ministry of Education approved the building of the university in Qingdao and construction of the campus began in March 2020.

Suspected US submarine detection condemned

By JIANG CHENGLONG
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The Ministry of National Defense denounced on Thursday what it called provocations by the US Navy, the report cited an expert as saying.

At a news conference on Thursday, Ministry of National Defense spokesman Senior Colonel Wu Qian said, "China firmly opposes the provocative actions of US military aircraft and vessels in the South China Sea."

He emphasized that it is "completely legitimate and lawful for the Chinese side to carry out operations, including rights protection, law enforcement, identification and verification activities, in waters adjacent to Ren'ai Reef."

accordance with relevant laws and regulations. The devices bore labels from Ultra Electronics, a company specializing in submarine detection services that provides support to the US Navy, the report cited an expert as saying.

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He emphasized that it is "completely legitimate and lawful for the Chinese side to carry out operations, including rights protection, law enforcement, identification and verification activities, in waters adjacent to Ren'ai Reef."

Carbon fiber metro train unveiled

China has unveiled the world's first commercially operational metro train built with carbon fiber materials, marking a significant leap in eco-friendly urban transportation technology.

Developed by CRRC Qingdao Sifang and Qingdao Metro, the CETROVO 1.0 train boasts reduced weight and energy consumption, paving the way for a greener future for subways.

The innovative train utilizes carbon fiber composites, revolutionary materials known for their strength-to-weight ratio.

"By using this 'king' of new materials, the train achieves an impressive 11 percent weight reduction compared to traditional metal models," said Liu Jinzhu, a senior designer at CRRC Qingdao Sifang.

That translates to a lighter body,

with the weight savings directly translating into a 7 percent reduction in energy consumption, leading to an annual decrease of 130 metric tons of carbon emissions. The environmental benefit is equivalent to planting roughly 6.7 hectares of forest.

Despite its lighter frame, the carbon fiber construction doesn't compromise on strength. Liu said the components offer superior resistance to impact and fatigue compared to traditional metals, ultimately extending the train's life span. The reduced weight also translates to less wear on wheels and rails, minimizing maintenance requirements.

The CETROVO 1.0 also incorporates advanced digital twin technology through an intelligent operation platform called SmartCare. The system enables the train to self-diagnose and detect potential problems, ensur-



Staff members set up the venue for the opening ceremony of the Shenzhen-Zhongshan Link in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, on Thursday. The link is scheduled to hold its opening ceremony on Sunday morning, with trial operations commencing at 3 pm the same day. PARKER ZHENG / CHINA DAILY

Bay Area cross-sea passage to begin trial operation

By QIU QUANLIN
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The Shenzhen-Zhongshan Link, a cross-sea passage integrating bridges, islands, tunnels and underwater interchanges in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, will begin trial operations on Sunday, transport authorities said.

After the passage is opened, the journey from Shenzhen, in the eastern of the Pearl River estuary,

to Zhongshan, in the western part, will be reduced from two hours to just 30 minutes.

"Various mechanical, electrical, communication and other equipment and facilities of the passage have completed testing, and the road management personnel, engineering maintenance teams and road network information center teams are all in place for the trial operation," Zhang Changliang, deputy director of the Shenzhen-Zhongshan Link Management Center, said at a news

conference in Zhongshan on Thursday.

Guangdong Transportation Group said on June 16 that the passage had passed construction acceptance after seven years of preparatory work and challenging construction.

Located approximately 30 kilometers south of the Humen Bridge and 31 kilometers north of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, the link starts at the Shenzhen airport interchange, crosses Lingdingyang Bay to the west and lands

at Ma'an Island in Zhongshan, Guangdong province.

The toll rates for vehicles passing through the link have been finalized, with a standard fee of 66 yuan (\$9) per vehicle for the entire route, Ma Ershun, the deputy director of the passage's management center, said.

Ma said the passage will help to "greatly boost economic and social interactions, especially in the flow of goods from the eastern and western parts of the Pearl River estuary".

New Alzheimer's drug prescribed

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai
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The first new treatment for Alzheimer's disease in two decades fully approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration was prescribed for the first time on the Chinese mainland at Shanghai Huashan Hospital Affiliated with Fudan University on Wednesday.

Experts said Lecanemab, which was approved in the US in January last year and in China this January, will provide more efficient and personalized treatment plans that are expected to benefit more people in the early phase of the disease.

The first batch of six patients aged between 55 and 75 and diagnosed with early-stage Alzheimer's at Huashan Hospital, which is home to the National Medical Center for Neurological Diseases, will receive an 18-month cycle of treatment with infusion of the drug twice a month.

Lecanemab is an intravenous antibody that targets and removes beta-amyloid — an amino acid that plays a central role in Alzheimer's — from the brain. For patients with early Alzheimer's, the therapy helps reduce cognitive and functional decline and allows

"We'll combine this new treatment and a symptom-improving drug to see if they can work to treat both the symptoms and the root cause of the disease."

Yu Jintai, head of the division of cognitive disorders in the neurology department at Huashan Hospital

them to have more time to participate in daily life and live independently.

Nearly 39 million people in China aged 60 and above have mild cognitive impairment and about 15 million suffer from dementia. They include 13 million with mild cognitive impairment originating from Alzheimer's and 9.83 million with dementia related to Alzheimer's, according to the China Alzheimer Report 2022 published in the journal *General Psychiatry*.

Data from the phase 3 clinical trial of Lecanemab, published in

the *New England Journal of Medicine* at the end of 2022, showed that after 18 months of treatment, patients in the Lecanemab group exhibited 27 percent less decline in their cognitive and memory functions compared with the placebo group.

A simulation published in *Neurology and Therapy* in April last year showed that the combination of Lecanemab and a drug that inhibits a type of glycoprotein delayed the progression of Alzheimer's by an average of two to three years.

"After the new drug is put into use clinically, we'll launch a new clinical study at the hospital," said Yu Jintai, head of the division of cognitive disorders in the neurology department at Huashan Hospital. "We'll combine this new treatment and a symptom-improving drug to see if they can work to treat both the symptoms and the root cause of the disease to maximally benefit patients."

Yu's team led the development of the world's first international guidelines for evidence-based prevention of Alzheimer's in 2020. It pointed out that at least 40 percent of Alzheimer's onset can be prevented through 21 methods, including vascular risk factor control and a healthy lifestyle.

Briefly

Funds allocated for flood response work

China has announced the allocation of 496 million yuan (\$69.6 million) from the natural disaster relief fund to assist flood control efforts across a broad swath of the country. The emergency funds were jointly allocated by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Emergency Management, the Ministry of Finance said in a statement released on Thursday. The new funds will be used to support flood and disaster control work in the provinces of Zhejiang, Anhui, Fujian, Jiangxi, Hubei, Hunan, Guizhou and Guangdong, and the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region.

Former Shanghai lawmaker stands trial

Dong Yunhu, a former senior legislator in Shanghai, stood trial at the Hefei Intermediate People's Court in Anhui province on Thursday, where he pleaded guilty to charges of corruption. Dong, who previously served as secretary of the leading Party members' group of the Standing Committee of the Shanghai Municipal People's Congress and as chairman of the committee, faced allegations of abusing his positions from 2002 to 2023. Prosecutors said Dong leveraged his authority to assist various organizations and individuals in matters involving financing, loans, land transfers, business operations, and personnel arrangements. In exchange, he accepted illegal payments totaling over 148 million yuan (\$20.8 million) in money and valuables.

Direct flight links Guangzhou, Budapest

A new direct air route linking Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong province, with Budapest in Hungary, was launched on Thursday. The inaugural flight, CZ649, departed Guangzhou at approximately 1 am, carrying over 200 passengers, marking the first direct flight between the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and Hungary.



Residents of Qingdao, Shandong province, check out the carbon fiber metro train developed by CRRC Sifang Co on Wednesday. DENG WANGQIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

China's metro train technology to new heights," Lyu said. "This innovation is crucial for promoting the green transformation of urban rail

transit and achieving the industry's dual carbon goals."

WORLD

San Diego Zoo welcomes two giant pandas from China

By RENA LI in Los Angeles
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After a 7,300-mile flight, two pandas — 5-year-old male Yun Chuan and 4-year-old female Xin Bao — arrived at the San Diego Zoo on Thursday, ushering in a new chapter of "panda-monium".

As the first pandas to enter the United States in 21 years, their return is part of a 10-year research and conservation agreement between San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance (SDZWA) and the China Wildlife Conservation Association (CWCA).

The pandas were accompanied by nutritionists and veterinarians to ensure the pandas enjoy "carefully prepared fresh bamboo, bamboo shoots, fruit, vegetables and specially made steamed buns" during their flight.

Chinese experts will remain at the zoo for approximately three months to assist the pandas through their quarantine and adjustment period, according to a statement from the China Conservation and Research Center.

Yun Chuan is the son of Zhen Zhen, who was born at the San Diego Zoo in 2007. Zhen Zhen's parents were Bai Yun and Gao Gao. The relocation of giant pandas to the zoo has ignited excitement and anticipation among zoogoers.

"It's awesome! They are so adorable, and I cannot wait to see them with my kids," Heather, a Los Angeles resident, told China Daily.

"Do pandas eat a lot of bamboo? I like their spots around their eyes. I will bring a gift for them," added Heather's 7-year-old daughter, Emily.

Although the San Diego Zoo has not hosted pandas since 2019, they are still on many people's minds.

"We were super excited that they are coming back to the city," a San Diego resident told the media, adding that it was sad when the previous pandas left.

As part of a new round of conservation efforts, more pandas will arrive at other American zoos, including a pair in Washington DC later this year.

Some visitors at the San Diego Zoo told the media that the pandas' return is a great opportunity for everyone and "doesn't have to do with politics".

A farewell ceremony took place in China on Wednesday for the US-bound pandas. San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria and representatives from the SDZWA attended the event in Sichuan province, according to the zoo's statement.

Yun Chuan and Xin Bao won't be immediately viewable to the public upon arrival. They'll acclimate to their new home behind the scenes for several weeks. Once the wildlife health and care teams deem them ready, the SDZWA will announce a debut date and provide details on how to see the pandas.

Paul Baribault, president and CEO of SDZWA, expressed excitement in welcoming two giant pandas, saying that it highlights their collaboration with China on vital conservation efforts.

"Our partnership with CWCA has been crucial for giant panda conservation, and we're committed to working together to ensure the survival and thriving of this iconic species," he said.

The San Diego Zoo was the first in the US to have a cooperative panda conservation program. In an interview with China Daily, Megan Owen, vice-president of conservation science at SDZWA, who has been involved with giant pandas' program for more than 25 years, emphasized the importance of collaboration between the two countries.

"I've had the great fortune of traveling to China many times to work with our colleagues in Chengdu, Wolong and other breeding centers," she said. "Through these collaborations, we've developed a number of initiatives that have meaningfully contributed to giant panda preservation, and we've also developed strong friendships along the way."

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the conservation partnership between the SDZWA and the CWCA. Through the collaboration, significant strides have been made in giant panda conservation. Notably, the giant panda's status was downgraded from endangered to vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature in 2016, according to the zoo. The World Wildlife Fund also considers pandas vulnerable.

Officials from both nations stated that the pandas' relocation is part of ongoing efforts to protect the species.

China first sent pandas to the US in 1972, when two arrived at the National Zoo in Washington DC. The goal of lending pandas to American zoos included aiding breeding programs and boosting the panda population.

The conservation efforts have successfully increased the giant panda population from fewer than 1,000 to over 1,800 in the wild and in captivity.

Much-needed nourishment



Displaced Palestinians, including children, taking shelter in the city of Deir al-Balah due to the months-long attacks of the Israeli army on the Gaza Strip, receive hot meals distributed by a charity organization in Deir al-Balah on Wednesday. ASHRAF AMRA VIA GETTY IMAGES

Bolivia's Arce wins support after failed coup

By JIMENA ESTEBAN
in Buenos Aires, Argentina
For China Daily

While Bolivians contemplate their country's future after the failure of an attempted military coup, President Luis Arce found support at home and abroad, as leaders of neighboring countries condemned the military.

Arce urged his countrymen for support, as he rejected the demands of the coup plotters led by army commander Juan Jose Zuniga on Wednesday.

Soldiers led by Zuniga stormed the presidential palace in the city of La Paz on Wednesday afternoon, demanding a broad range of changes to government policies. Zuniga claimed the government's actions were destroying the fabric of the country.

In video images, Arce and his ministers were seen facing off against Zuniga and other military leaders amid the short-lived takeover of government buildings by the military. Tanks broke down the gate of Plaza Murillo, which connects the Palacio Quemado, where the central government is located.

Arce called on the people to take to the streets and fight for democracy. He vowed to stand firm and

sacked Zuniga. He then named Jose Wilson Sanchez as the new army commander, who immediately ordered the troops to stand down.

Zuniga was later arrested by police and seen heading outside the city in a police vehicle.

Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro called on Bolivians "to defend their democracy, their constitution and their president". Chile's President Gabriel Boric denounced "the unacceptable use of force".

Uruguay's President Luis Lacalle Pou said the events "threatened the democratic and constitutional order" in Bolivia.

Colombia's President Gustavo Petro said the country's embassy in Bolivia would offer shelter to anyone being persecuted by the military.

"Today, it has been confirmed: a coup d'etat is underway in Bolivia," Anyelo Cespedes Miranda, a national deputy, told China Daily.

"Everything began around 3 pm when (Arce) denounced 'unusual movements' of military personnel in Plaza Murillo," Paola Zubieta, news chief at local television station Red Bolivision Cochabamba, told China Daily.

Military personnel, led by Zuniga, entered with tanks and weapons of war, took over the entire plaza, evict-

ed civilians and media, and later entered the government palace.

Zuniga entered the government palace and remained inside for about 14 minutes. After that, he left the premises at around 4 pm and took shelter in a heavily guarded tank, Zubieta said.

Local media reported that Zuniga demanded the dismissal of Minister of Defense Edmundo Novillo and set a 20-minute deadline to implement the request.

"The coup must be condemned," Miranda said. The coup, which goes against the armed forces' subordination and adherence to the constitution, "is harmful to the country".

"We deeply regret having reached this situation. The armed forces are not meant to carry out coups in the 21st century. They are supposed to defend the country," Miranda said.

"We hope that the Bolivian population, united, will overcome this situation."

Juan Carlos Huarachi, top leader of the union Central Obrera Boliviana, announced the start of an indefinite strike and condemned the military actions as a coup d'etat.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

Rallying cry

Protesters chant slogans during a rally opposing the Republic of Korea-US-Japan military alliance near the United States embassy in Seoul on Thursday. Protesters demand to stop the trilateral military drill called "Freedom Edge". LEE JIN-MAN / AP



Warning sign



The rate of the yen against the US dollar is displayed in the trading room at a foreign exchange brokerage in Tokyo on Thursday. The yen fell to the weakest level since 1986, fanning speculation that authorities may soon be forced to support the currency again in a bid to stem the worst sell-off in the developed world. KIYOSHI OTA VIA GETTY IMAGES

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Hearing on Pentagon disinformation helps public health

By PRIME SARMIENTO
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An inquiry of the Philippine Senate into a secret US military propaganda operation in the Philippines that aimed to discredit China's vaccines at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic can clear disinformation and help future decisions on public health, analysts said.

Tuesday's inquiry was led by Senator Imee Marcos, head of the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee and elder sister of Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

Reuters reported on June 14 how the Pentagon ran a clandestine influence campaign in 2020 and 2021 to sow doubt about Sinovac vaccines and other pandemic-related aid from China across the developing world.

Obstructing China's assistance to the Philippines in vaccines and anti-epidemic supplies, the United States military even resorted to impersonating Filipinos on the

internet and using all means to spread rumors and smear Chinese vaccines, the report said.

Imee Marcos said the disinformation campaign against Sinovac — one of the more accessible vaccines at the time — discouraged Filipinos from getting vaccinated and left them more vulnerable to COVID-19, local media reported.

"Disinformation had its malign effects. The numbers are shocking. We're talking about millions, hundreds of thousands," she said.

The hearing by the Philippine Senate is "a welcome development," said a spokesperson of the Chinese embassy in the Republic of the Philippines on Wednesday.

The Pentagon's moves were to serve the US geopolitical self-interest of containing and suppressing China, while disregarding the lives and health of the vast majority of the Filipino people, the spokesperson said.

Anna Rosario Malindog-Uy, vice-president for external affairs of the Asian Century Philippines Strate-

gic Studies Institute, said the outcome of this investigation could set a precedent for how the Philippines and other countries handle similar issues in the future.

"Depending on the findings, there could be long-term consequences for managing vaccine procurement and distribution, potentially leading to greater emphasis on transparency and independence in public health decisions," she said.

Malindog-Uy said the Philippine Senate investigation broadly made the Filipino public aware that the Pentagon's actions not only compromised their health and safety, but also set a dangerous example for future global health crises and international cooperation.

The Senate has a crucial role in shaping national policy, she said, that is why the outcome of the May 2025 election race will have long-term implications for future elections, including the 2028 presidential race.

In a separate development, Vice-

EU leaders to decide future path at summit

By EARLE GALE in London
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A crucial two-day European Union summit kicked off in Brussels, Belgium, on Thursday, with leaders of the bloc's 27 member nations set to decide its future direction and the people to fill its top jobs for the next five years.

In the aftermath of European-wide elections from June 6 to 9 where the far right made significant gains, the summit could feature a power struggle between nations wanting to continue the status quo and those wanting a corresponding shift to the right in the bloc's ethos.

Defense presents a big issue at the gathering, with national leaders signing a security agreement with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky that sets out the bloc's continued support for his nation amid the Russia-Ukraine conflict and this includes a commitment to lend Ukraine 50 billion euros (\$53.4 billion) generated from assets seized from Russia's central bank.

Key issues

The 27 leaders also plan to talk about bolstering the bloc's military preparedness and improving economic competitiveness.

The summit, where the bloc's direction during the 2024 to 2029 term will be decided, will also feature a discussion on who should lead the EU during the coming five years, with Ursula von der Leyen widely expected to be offered a second term as president of the European Commission. Antonio Costa, a former premier of Portugal, is likely to be named chief of the European Council of EU leaders. Estonia's Prime Minister Kaja Kallas is tipped to become the bloc's next foreign policy chief.

All three are centrists and moderates, suggesting the bloc is resisting a shift to the right demanded by a significant minority of its 373 million voters.

However, Italy's Prime Minister Gorgia Meloni and Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban have both said they would push for more representation for the far right.

German broadcaster Deutsche Welle quoted Meloni as saying: "It does not seem to me that a willingness to take into account what the citizens have said at the ballot box has emerged so far."

The Associated Press said von der Leyen was likely to try to win Meloni's support at the summit by offering Italy an important EU commissioner position, but it remains to be seen whether a gulf between the far right and the rest of the EU will widen at the summit.



From left: Taihang is one of the most spectacular mountain ranges in North China. The Sakyamuni Pagoda in Yingxian county is the largest and oldest wooden structure in the world. The Tianlong Mountain is an example of the greening efforts in the city of Taiyuan. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Shanxi shines as beacon of tourism

Province offers visitors myriad of world-renowned historical sites and natural wonders for enriching travel experience

By YUAN SHENGGAO

From the gorgeous Yellow River gorges to the spectacular Taihang Mountains, from the Great Wall and the Yungang Grottoes to the ancient city of Pingyao, the North China province of Shanxi has some of the best sites in the country to offer to tourists.

As a famed tourist destination in China, Shanxi's unique charm is a perfect combination of natural wonders and cultural attractions. And in recent years, its appeal has been further enhanced with the integration of cultural and tourism industries, as well as the empowerment of modern and smart technologies.

The attractions of Shanxi as well as its latest development in culture-tourism integration and technological empowerment will be highlighted at the 10th Shanxi Tourism Development Conference to be held in the near future.

Shanxi is often referred to as *biaoli shanxi* by its locals, a term that literally means it is a land between the Yellow River and the Taihang Mountains.

The Taihang Mountains

The Taihang Mountains in the east of Shanxi are renowned for their precipitous peaks, steep cliffs, strange rocks, lush forests and clean waters.

Located in the southeast of Huguan county, Taihang Mountain Grand Canyon, for instance, is one of the 10 most beautiful canyons in China, because of its unique landforms and its rare animals and plants.

And the best part of this grand canyon is Baquan Gorge, or Eight Springs Gorge.

Known as the most imposing gorge in the Taihang Mountains, Baquan Gorge snakes its way along 13 kilometers of the middle section of the Taihang Mountain Grand Canyon scenic area, with altitudes from 600 to 1,400 meters and a maximum drop of 1,100 meters.

Home to more than 300 springheads and 30 waterfalls, the natural landscape of Baquan Gorge forms a delightful contrast with the modern world.

However, recent updates in tourism development are offering new and modern experiences to tourists in Baquan Gorge. In addition to traditional sightseeing and mountain climbing, tourists are offered a variety of options like cruise ship tours, transparent elevator sightseeing, camping, geological studies and a range of leisure tours.

Within the entire Taihang Mountains range, which stretches about 400 km from the north to the south, local tourism operators are trying their best to enhance tourist experiences by enriching service portfolio and integrating tourism with culture.

The Zhuozhang is a large river in North China originating from the Taihang Mountains. In the scenic area in Pingshun, the river starts its journey as murmuring springs and brooks flowing out of deep valleys. It becomes a torrential stream in the lower reaches until it is tamed by a huge reservoir. After flowing out of the reservoir dam, the river presents an outlook similar to those in the south of the Yangtze River, with flocks of ducks and wild birds floating on the tranquil watercourse, both banks shaded by rows of willow trees and ancient villages scattered along the waterway.

With such advantageous resources, the local authorities are planning to develop the Taihang Riverside Town into an ecological and cultural tourism destination with both national and international fame.

In addition to Baquan Gorge and the riverside town, there are numerous sites in the Taihang Mountains that are offering worthwhile tours for visitors to tap into natural wonders and local cultures.

The Taihang Mountains are a source of pride for the people of Shanxi because it is where the name of Shanxi province comes from. Shanxi — which means "to the west of the mountains" — is called so because it is located to the west of Taihang.

The Yellow River

Also boasting a similar cultural significance is the Yellow River. In ancient times, Shanxi was called Hedong, which means "to the east of the (Yellow) River".

The Yellow River marks both the western



The live show staged in the Jinyang Lake scenic area is an example of culture-tourism integration in Shanxi.

and southern borders of Shanxi. But in the west of Shanxi, the river has a course much longer than that in the south.

The Yellow River is the mother river of China. It has nurtured the culture and economy of the nation for thousands of years. In Shanxi, the river has ushered in a farming culture lasting around four millennia, making it one of the sources of Chinese civilization.

If there is one destination that visitors should not miss when touring the Yellow River, that is the Hukou Waterfalls, a site where people can feel the mighty force of the river.

Located in an area bordering Jixian county in Shanxi province and Yichuan county in Shaanxi province, it is the second-biggest waterfall in China. It is also the most spectacular yellow waterfall in the world.

After finishing a journey of about 3,500 km from its source in Qinghai province, the Yellow River enters Shanxi province in Pianguan county. From there, it serves as the border of Shanxi and Shaanxi provinces and starts a journey of 725 km between the mountains of both provinces. This section is called Jinshan — or Shanxi-Shaanxi — Grand Gorges, which was rated as one of the top 10 beautiful gorges in China in 2005.

When the Yellow River flows through the gorges, it becomes torrential, as its course is restricted by the gorges and narrows to a width of about 300 meters.

In Hukou, the water course further narrows to about 50 meter, falling more than 20 meter into a deep riverbed. The tremendous mass of water strikes the rocks, creating piles of foam, a shroud of mist and a thundering sound that can be heard from miles away.

Hukou, which means kettle spout, is so named because the waterfall resembles an enormous kettle spout with rushing water pouring down.

At Hukou, the water falls to the deep riverbed, stirring the mist which rises high into the air like heavy smoke surging from the river. Tourists can see various shapes of rainbows formed by the rising mist, refracted by the sunshine from different angles.

The water in Hukou is extremely powerful, so the boats from the upper and lower reaches must be pulled out of the river and onto the bank when they arrive. These boats will have to detour around this section, carried by trucks or tractors, before they can be put into the river again.

The Hukou Waterfalls, as a bottleneck to the navigable Yellow River, have also led to a



The maiden statue in Taiyuan's Jinci Temple was crafted in the Song Dynasty (960-1279).

prosperous transshipping business in several locales in its upper and lower reaches since ancient times.

One such locale is the ancient town of Qikou in Linxian county, on the upper stream of the Hukou Waterfalls.

Historical records state that it reached the peak of its prosperity during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties as a transport hub for the renowned Shanxi merchants.

It is said the Shanxi merchants — or Jinshang — dominated commercial circles for more than five centuries by trading with regions in North Asia and Europe.

Qikou, which literally means "port by a torrential river", is located on the eastern bank of the Yellow River.

In the past, the Shanxi merchants used the Yellow River as a channel to transport cargo. However, cargo ships were disrupted by the Qikou Torrent, as well as the Hukou Waterfalls.

To solve the problem, a transshipment port was developed in Qikou town. Receiving more than 150 ships a day at its peak, Qikou became a transportation hub for the Shanxi merchants.

Home to more than 400 companies during that period, Qikou was called the "No 1 town by the Yellow River".

In modern times, with highways and rail-



The colorful standing statues in the second cave are one of the highlights of the Yungang Grottoes in Datong.

ways taking over the Yellow River as the major means of transport, the town has developed into a destination for tourists. Major attractions in the town include well-preserved historical residences, commercial properties, piers and temples.

Nowadays, tourists to Qikou can also have a deeper understanding of the ancient town and the Shanxi merchants with the help of a live show called *Dreamy Qikou*, showing how the ancient town achieved prosperity in different historical periods.

While the Yellow River has nurtured the culture and economy in Shanxi, it has on occasion brought disasters to the region throughout history, as it destroyed land and properties and even took lives during severe floods.

Improving environment

For millennia, the residents in Shanxi have come to a consensus that the improvement of the Yellow River is crucial to the well-being of the region and the entire nation. But it was only in recent decades that they realized that curbing soil erosion and improving the environment can eventually change the river for the better.

As Shanxi is located on the Loess Plateau, soil erosion has been a challenge to the Yellow River for thousands of years. In the early 1950s, the area of soil erosion in Shanxi was 108,000 square kilometers, of which 67,600 sq km was in the Yellow River drainage basin.

Shanxi has implemented campaigns to curb soil erosion and improve the environment for the Yellow River and its tributaries in recent decades. By the end of 2022, about 56 percent of the land suffering soil erosion had been curbed. In the 1950s, nearly 70 percent of Shanxi's total area, was subject to soil erosion.

The improvement in environment is made possible with the locals' greening efforts.

The Fenhe River, for instance, is the largest tributary of the Yellow River in Shanxi and is known as the mother river of the province.

The Taiyuan section of the Fenhe River stretches 188 km, with 43 km passing through the urban area. This river is now a point of pride for the people in Taiyuan, the capital city of Shanxi province, as it is a scenic belt that draws in millions of visitors every year and an ecological corridor protecting the environmental well-being of Taiyuan.

The Fenhe was a scenic river in historical times with eight famed scenic attractions in its Taiyuan section. However, it lost its historical glory in the last century as a result of

environmental deterioration — growing industrial pollution and decreasing vegetation coverage.

Changes began to take place in the 1990s, when Taiyuan launched environmental improvement projects for the river, with local authorities focusing their efforts on controlling pollution, greening the land and increasing water supply to the river.

As a result, the river has regained its charm in recent years. In Taiyuan, the river is surrounded by more than 30 forest parks.

The Fenhe River scenic belt has now formed a pleasantly unique ecosystem for both humans and wildlife. More than 230 varieties of plants have been growing along the river, and the pedestrian paths and the cycling roads have helped to make the area increasingly appealing as a place to relax, exercise and see the sights. The wetlands along the river are also the habitat for more than 160 species of wild birds.

New landscaping projects have also been developed along the river, with 23 bridges across the rivers becoming new landmarks of the city.

Another valuable asset that Shanxi people can take pride in is its rich historical and cultural legacy.

Cultural legacy

The region is widely recognized as one of the cradles of Chinese civilization and this reputation is supported by the rich varieties of historical relics discovered in the province.

Archaeological discoveries in recent decades show that the Xihoudu site in Ruicheng county is the earliest known site dating to the early Paleolithic Age — some 2 million years ago — in China. Antlers with cuts and burned animal bones unearthed from the site are the earliest evidence of human use of fire in China.

The Taosi site in Xiangfen county points to the earliest establishment of the 24 zodiac terms some 4,000 years ago with 13 compressed earth columns discovered and identified as observation tools used to measure the sun's beam angle and determine the 24 zodiac terms of a year.

Benefiting from a rich wealth of historical relics, Shanxi is now one of the national leaders in the number of tangible cultural heritage items.

Shanxi province is always remembered by tourists from all across the world for its three World Cultural Heritage sites — Yungang Grottoes, Mount Wutai and Pingyao Ancient City, as well as its 531 places recognized as relics sites on the national list of protection.

Shanxi is indeed one of the worthwhile destinations in China for tourists to tap into the brilliant past of the nation. And in recent years, tourists' understanding of its history and culture has been further enhanced with digital technologies and culture-tourism integration projects.

The emerging live shows in popular tourist destinations such as Jinyang Lake, Mount Wutai, and Pingyao Ancient City are prime examples of culture-tourism integration, which helps tourists better understand Shanxi with vivid presentations.

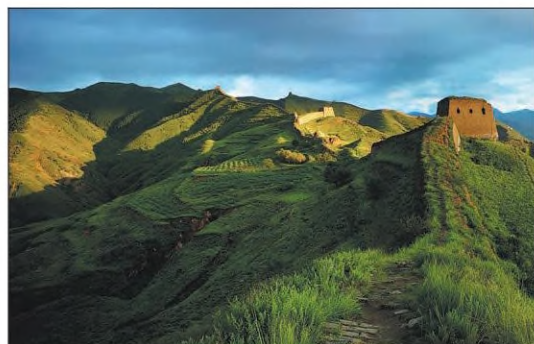
The famed World Cultural Heritage site of Yungang Grottoes in Datong city, has made its new efforts to reach people in the wider world with the empowerment of 3D printing and high-fidelity digital technologies.

Since the first mobile 3D-printed 1:1 replica cave of the Yungang Grottoes made its debut in June 2020 at the Museum of Art and Archaeology in Zhejiang province, the cultural heritage site has been accessible for a wider range of audiences worldwide, both online and offline.

In addition to digitalization, the substantial improvement in infrastructure is also playing a crucial role in increasing Shanxi's appeal to tourists at home and abroad.

Over recent years, Shanxi has built three sightseeing highways to link to scenic sites along the three landmark attractions of the Yellow River, the Taihang Mountains and the Great Wall. A total of 112 scenic sites at or above the national A level, 315 sites below the A level and 508 rural tourism sites have benefited from this project.

Li Yao contributed to this story.



From left: The Great Wall is one of the landmark attractions in Shanxi along with the Yellow River and Taihang Mountains. Cruise ship tours are a new option for tourists in Baquan Gorge.



GLOBAL LENS



A local resident and her children wait on the quay for their transfer from Panama's Carti Sugtupu island to its mainland on June 3.

LIFE GOES ON

Panamanians displaced by sea level rise head to new homes



Local youngsters carry belongings during their relocation at Panama's Nuevo Carti area, Guna Yala Comarca, on June 3.



An aerial view of Panama's Carti Sugtupu island on the Caribbean coast on June 3.
PHOTOS BY MARTIN BERNETTI / AFP

Alberto Lopez prepared breakfast while water lapped at his ankles. The day began with rain, and his ramshackle home on the Panamanian island of Carti Sugtupu was flooded, not for the first time.

Lopez is one of 1,200 indigenous residents of the island being relocated to the mainland, as sea level rise due to global warming threatens to permanently devour their ancestral home.

The community is the first in Panama to be displaced by climate change.

Since early June, residents have been packing and moving their belongings by boat to the Nuevo Carti (New Carti) settlement built for them by the government in the Guna Yala indigenous region on Panama's Caribbean coast.

On the island, Lopez lives in a small house with a dirt floor, no toilet and intermittent electricity.

In preparation for the move, his family is stacking clothes and other meager belongings on a small table at the front door, along with cleaning supplies and a Bible.

Their destination, Nuevo Carti, boasts houses that each have two bedrooms, a living and dining room, kitchen, bathroom and laundry — all with potable water and electricity.

Each house is about 41 square meters on a plot of 300 square meters, and there are common cultural spaces and facilities for people with disabilities.



A motorboat carries local residents from Panama's Carti Sugtupu island to its mainland on June 3.

“We are sad because if this island disappears, a part of our heart, of our culture, disappears with it.”

Alberto Lopez, Carti Sugtupu resident

The conditions are undoubtedly better, but the community has mixed feelings nevertheless.

“We are sad because if this island disappears, a part of our heart, of our culture, disappears with it,” said Lopez, who was born on Carti Sugtupu 72 years ago.

As a child, he fished there, as do most islanders, and worked in the fields on the mainland.

His mother sent him to study in Panama City, where he lived for more than 30 years before returning home.

“I came back because my heart wanted me here, and this house is the one my family left me,” Lopez said.

“My grandmother, my grandfather and my aunt died here ... it's not going to be the same, but I have to move on because life goes on,” he said.

Lopez will live in house number 256 with three sisters and a daughter.

He said he hopes to grow crops such as pumpkins, cassava, pineapples or bananas to sell, and is planning where the furniture and appliances will go — and even contemplating a possible extension to his new house.

“Here we have everything to bathe ... there (on the island) we don't have that,” he said.

“Of course, everyone is happy, but it's a brutal change.”

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



From left: Local residents board a motorboat from Panama's Carti Sugtupu island to its mainland on June 3.



A motorboat transports local residents from Panama's Carti Sugtupu island to its mainland on June 3.



Clothes are left to dry in the sun at Carti Sugtupu island on June 2.

BUSINESS

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SUMMER DAVOS IN DALIAN

Generative AI safety prioritized

By FAN FEIFEI and ZHANG XIAOMIN in Dalian, Liaoning

As generative artificial intelligence is increasingly applied to a widening range of sectors, more efforts are needed to ensure the safe application of the fast-growing intelligent technology through global governance and cooperation, said renowned experts and entrepreneurs at the 15th Annual Meeting of the New Champions, also known as the Summer Davos Forum, in Dalian, Liaoning province.

The application of large language models in industries is key to the development of generative AI technology in China, said Zhu Min, former deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund, adding that China's AI models are more vertical and application-oriented due to the country's abundant application scenarios.

Generative AI refers to computer algorithms trained with huge amounts of data capable of generating content such as images, text, audio and video in a humanlike fashion. It is the key technology underpinning US-based research firm OpenAI's ChatGPT.

Xue Lan, dean of Schwarzman College and dean of the Institute for AI International Governance at Tsinghua University, emphasized that people's willingness to use AI, research capabilities and the establishment of an AI ecosystem led by businesses are critical elements driving the growth of the AI-powered economy.

Although AI generates huge benefits, it also brings about various problems, so Xue called for efforts to supervise or regulate the use of such



Participants interact with an AI-enabled robot during the Summer Davos Forum in Dalian, Liaoning province. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

fast-developing technology to guard against potential risks.

Noting that technological advances in AI are much faster than changes in regulations related to AI, he said China and the United States should strengthen cooperation to promote the safe and healthy development of AI.

Aparna Bharadwaj, managing director and partner at global consultancy Boston Consulting Group, said in an interview with China Daily during the forum that Chinese consumers are the most positively inclined toward AI, adding they are very open and willing to embrace the possibilities of AI technology, which presents an incredible opportunity for Chinese businesses.

Bharadwaj said the most important competitive advantage that China owns in applying generative AI technology lies in consumer acceptance levels, which are much higher than the global average.

"Chinese consumers are very digi-

tally savvy, digital technology evolves in China much faster, and Chinese businesses have been bringing digital innovation much faster in the market," she said.

According to a report released by BCG, 86 percent of interviewed Chinese consumers are aware of generative AI, compared with nearly 80 percent globally.

About 56 percent of these Chinese respondents are very positive toward AI, while less than 10 percent are concerned about this disruptive technology. Meanwhile, 43 percent of global consumers say they are excited about generative AI, but more than 25 percent expressed reservations.

"China has always been an innovation leader in the world. And there's a very high possibility for that innovation also coming from the space of generative AI," Bharadwaj said, adding that she is optimistic about the development potential of such technology in China.

Moreover, Chinese companies are

always early adopters of digital technologies and have applied such technologies in a wide range of fields much faster, she said.

Bharadwaj also underlined the significance of protecting user privacy and data security.

"This technology is evolving rapidly, and governments are learning how to regulate it, and they have to be ahead of the curve with the private sector to be able to regulate it."

Wang Guan, chairman of Learnable.ai — an AI startup — said AI-powered models could be applied in the education sector and are playing a role in assisting teachers to mark various types of exam papers.

Wang said the company's large language models have been used in various sectors, such as education, energy, aviation, manufacturing and transportation, to help businesses improve efficiency.

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China, EU expedite talks on EV tariffs

Both sides hope to reach win-win solution given vast scope for green ties

By ZHONG NAN and LIU YUKUN

China and the European Union are expediting consultations on the latter's anti-subsidy investigation into Chinese electric vehicles, and aim to reach a mutually acceptable solution by addressing the reasonable concerns of both sides, said China's Ministry of Commerce on Thursday.

As China and the EU agreed last week to start consultations, He Yadong, spokesman for the Commerce Ministry, said the essence of China-EU cooperation lies in complementary advantages and mutual benefits. Both sides have vast potential for collaboration in the field of green transition.

He said the EU is encouraged to work with China to expedite consultations, achieve positive progress and reach mutually acceptable solutions to prevent trade frictions from escalating, which could affect China-EU economic and trade relations.

Even though Chinese EVs account for just a small share of the EU's EV imports, the European Commission, which represents the interests of the EU as a whole, in mid-June unveiled additional provisional tariffs ranging from 17.4 percent to 38.1 percent for Chinese EV manufacturers despite widespread market concerns and China's objections.

Additional provisional EU duties of up to 38.1 percent on imported Chinese-made EVs are scheduled to take effect by July 4, with the tariffs expected to be finalized on Nov 2.

With some time remaining before the EU's final decision on imposing tariffs on Chinese EVs, government officials and business leaders said that initiating talks can be an effective approach to prevent further escalation and resolve differences.

During his meeting with Chinese Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao in Beijing on Wednesday, Wille Rydman, Finnish minister of economic affairs, said both the EU and China have successful experience in resolving trade and economic disputes, the Ministry of Commerce said in a statement released on Thursday.

Finland supports addressing differences through dialogue and consultation within the frame-

work of World Trade Organization rules, said Rydman.

Cui Fan, a professor specializing in international trade at the University of International Business and Economics and director of research at the China Society for WTO Studies, said that globally, the development of new energy in various countries involves some level of policy intervention to address market imperfections.

Relying solely on market forces could take 20-30 years longer to develop the new energy industry, which is inconsistent with the pace of global green transformation. China's supportive policies in this sector are scientifically based and comply with WTO rules, said Cui.

Jin Ruiting, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research under the National Development and Reform Commission, said currently the US still offers subsidies to support the construction of vehicle charging facilities within the country.

Peter Merker, director of the German Chamber of Commerce in China for Tianjin, said that sanctions as a tool have significant side effects.

Merker, who is also CEO of Schlotte Tianjin, a subsidiary of German industrial parts manufacturer Schlotte Group, said the automotive industry strongly opposes tariff increases and sanctions, and most ordinary people share that view.

China-EU trade declined 1.3 percent year-on-year to 2.23 trillion yuan (\$307 billion) in the first five months, statistics from the General Administration of Customs showed.

The Ministry of Commerce also announced on Thursday that it will initiate an expiry review of the anti-dumping measures on imports of toluidine from the EU. Toluidine is a chemical used in the production of dyes, pharmaceuticals and pesticides.

In response to an application from the domestic toluidine industry, the ministry has decided to initiate this expiry review probe, effective from Friday, said the ministry in an online notice.

This investigation will commence on Friday and conclude by June 28, 2025.

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PepsiCo retains full confidence in Chinese market

By CHENG YU and ZHANG XIAOMIN in Dalian, Liaoning

China presents "pockets of opportunities" for PepsiCo's growth, as the US multinational food and beverage company has been stepping up investments in the domestic market, a top executive said on Thursday.

Anne Tse, CEO of PepsiCo Greater China Region and chief consumer officer of PepsiCo Asia-Pacific, said China is one of the most important markets for PepsiCo, as proven over the past few years, and is also one of the fastest growing markets globally.

"It is also a market that, because of its dynamic nature, has proven itself to be a source of inspiration for a lot of innovations, which present pockets of opportunities for multinationals like PepsiCo," Tse said in an exclusive interview with China Daily during the 15th World Eco-



Anne Tse

Forum Annual Meeting of the New Champions, also known as the Summer Davos Forum, that concluded in Dalian, Northeast China's Liaoning province, on Thursday.

Amid a global economic slowdown, Tse said the company still sees China as a huge, single market that is highly unified, and the company "remains committed" to the Chinese market.

"The temporary economic cycle that we are facing won't change the company's confidence and commitment here. Instead, we have accelerated our growth pace in the past couple of years in China," she noted.

Tse said that over the past five years, PepsiCo has stepped up

investments in the Chinese market, "with a record of five new plants over five years."

Earlier this month, the US food and beverage giant broke ground on its first food production base in Xi'an, Northwest China's Shaanxi province, with a projected total investment of \$180 million. It is also PepsiCo's 10th food plant in China.

The facility is designed to meet international "net-zero emission" standards and is expected to begin trial operations in September 2025, with an anticipated production capacity of around 25,000 metric tons to cater to growing market demand in Northwest China.

"Not only that, we are investing behind the brands, including our capability in consumer insights, research and development, and talent to really drive product and brand experience here in China," she added.

As for opportunities, Tse said that the silver economy is pronounced in China, which represents a huge market for multinational firms.

Currently, China's demographic development has entered a "new normal" of moderate population aging. According to data from the United Nations, the proportion of Chinese people aged 65 and above will reach 21 percent by 2034.

She added that the rate at which the silver economy group will get into the market and their needs will be very different in China than their counterparts in other markets.

"So, these pockets of opportunities in China are waiting to be disrupted and waiting to be innovative, which will naturally present opportunities for companies like us to better develop ourselves," she said.

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Beijing and other big cities set tone for housing recovery

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

Cuts to down payment ratios and mortgage rates in Beijing, along with the policy optimizations in some of China's largest cities, will create a better environment for homebuying sentiment in the second half of the year, help boost market confidence and stabilize the entire property market, said realty experts on Thursday.

After Beijing eased homebuying requirements on Wednesday, Shanghai and Guangdong province's Shenzhen and Guangzhou announced their own comparable policies on Thursday.

The measures will likely drive market demand in accordance with the unparalleled supportive gesture from Chinese authorities on May 17, said Yan Yuejin, director of Shanghai-based E-house China Research and Development Institution.

On Wednesday, the housing, finance and provident fund management authorities of Beijing jointly announced a set of favorable policies for homebuyers. The new measures included lowering the minimum down payment ratio for first-time buyers to 20 percent from 30 percent.

For buyers of second homes, the ratio is adjusted down to 30 percent for areas outside Beijing's Fifth Ring Road and to 35 percent for areas within.

The lower limits for home loan interest rates have also been decreased based on the tenor of the benchmark loan prime rate, according to the notice.

"Like all supportive measures, Beijing's version is hoped to free up potential demand from previous restrictions," said Li Yujia, chief researcher at the Guangdong Planning Institute's residential policy research center.

"Particularly for the young gen-



Potential homebuyers look at a property model in Beijing. JIANG QIMING / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

eration and people newly settling down in and around the national capital, the lower down payment requirement will greatly encourage them to purchase a home," said Li.

Prior to Beijing, the metropolis of Shanghai, and Shenzhen and Guangzhou had issued policies to boost homebuying. The three cities' housing markets have seen evident recovery in both new and pre-owned home segments, said Chen Wenjing, director of research with the China Index Academy.

Chen said Beijing's supportive

policies have created favorable conditions for potential homebuyers. "The measures have sent positive signals that local authorities are striving to shore up market expectations and create a better environment for trading in the housing market," said Chen.

"Beijing did not lift any homebuying restrictions, which means policymakers have plenty of tools in the toolbox for further optimization. The concerted action in key Chinese cities will likely lead to gradual stabilization of the housing market."

Briefly

PBOC conducts CBS valued at \$701 million

The People's Bank of China, China's central bank, has conducted a central bank bills swap operation to improve the liquidity of perpetual bonds. The three-month CBS, valued at 5 billion yuan (\$701.56 million), is open to primary dealers for bidding at a fixed rate of 0.1 percent, the PBOC said in a statement. The CBS scheme allows dealers to swap the perpetual bonds they hold for central bank bills. Perpetual bonds are fixed-income securities with no maturity date and are not redeemable, but pay a steady stream of interest in perpetuity.

Renminbi weakens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, weakened 22 pips to 7.1270 against the US dollar on Thursday, said the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day. The

central parity rate of the yuan against the greenback is based on a weighted average of prices offered by market makers before the opening of the interbank market each business day.

China to elevate gasoline, diesel prices

China's top economic regulator announced that retail prices of gasoline and diesel will increase from Friday. The decision was made on Thursday and came in response to recent changes in international oil prices. Gasoline and diesel prices will increase by 210 yuan (\$29.47) and 200 yuan per metric ton, respectively, the National Development and Reform Commission announced in a statement. Under China's current pricing mechanism, the prices of refined oil products are adjusted following changes in international crude oil prices. China's major oil companies and oil refineries have been directed to maintain oil production and facilitate transportation to ensure stable supplies.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

BUSINESS

Danaher steps up AI push in life sciences

US company applauds China's progress in pharmaceuticals, medical devices

By ZHENG YIRAN in Tianjin
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Acknowledging the rapid development of the artificial intelligence sector in China, US life sciences company Danaher Corp is expecting further cooperation in combining AI with life sciences and will continue to invest in the country, a senior executive said.



Lan Jun

Lan Jun, general manager of Agela & Phenomenex China, an operating company of Danaher, said during a recent forum in Tianjin: "China Speed" never goes out of style.

Over the last two decades, China has been a pioneer in manufacturing. Now, in the era of new technology, the country is still playing a leading role."

In recent years, China has made significant progress in the smart industry, particularly in the pharmaceutical and medical devices sectors, he said.

AI technology is widely used to enhance productivity. For example, JD Health utilizes AI to optimize supply chain management, improving the efficiency and accuracy of pharmaceutical distribution.

"The development of AI+BI (business intelligence) can drive reductions in the drug development cycle as well as costs. For our Danaher Life Sciences Platform, AI+BI has reduced the time and cost of drug development by 50 percent," Lan added.

According to the seventh edition of the AI Index report released by



Employees of US life sciences company Danaher Corp examine chemicals at an innovation center in Shanghai. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Stanford University in April, which highlighted the significant role of AI in advancing scientific discovery, the United States leads China, the European Union and the United Kingdom as the leading source of top AI models. However, in terms of AI patents, China is far ahead.

In 2022, China led the global AI patent source market with 61.1 percent, far exceeding the US, which accounted for 20.9 percent. In 2010, the US accounted for 54.1 percent, the report from Stanford showed.

"During my eight years at Danaher, I have participated in and witnessed the company's investments and relentless efforts in AI and technological innovation. Our development in China is also the result of that."

"Currently, Danaher has 14 research and development teams and nine manufacturing bases in China, including the Agela factory in Tianjin. These teams and bases play a crucial role in driving technological innovation, improving pro-

duction efficiency and meeting customer needs," he said.

Wang Hongwei, a professor at the School of Life Sciences and vice-president of Tsinghua University, said: "With the rapid development of AI, we have seen an increasing number of pharmaceutical multinational corporations working with emerging biopharmaceutical companies in China, in early drug development, as well as diagnosis and treatment. This kind of collaboration has already been formed as an

innovative ecosystem in China."

Lan said the company views China as a fertile soil for innovation.

"China's smart industry is poised to play an increasingly important role on the global stage, with numerous investment opportunities waiting to be tapped into. Looking ahead, we expect to bring more investments and opportunities to AI-empowered life sciences sector in the country, generating sparks of innovative ideas in China, and hopefully for the world," he said.

Lilly eyes addressing geriatric ailments

By ZHU WENQIAN
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US pharmaceutical company Eli Lilly and Co said a vast patient population in China has yet to tackle medical issues such as diabetes, obesity and Alzheimer's disease, all of which align with the drugmaker's therapeutic areas, so it is sanguine on its growth prospects in China.

In the first quarter, Lilly's global sales revenue grew 26 percent year-on-year. China, a market with strategic priority, contributed to this growth with double-digit revenue expansion, supported by its product portfolio of diabetes, oncology and immunology therapeutics.

China has 140 million people who have been diagnosed with diabetes, according to the International Diabetes Federation.

The prevention and treatment of diabetes have been strengthened at the national level in China. By 2030, the awareness rate of diabetes among residents aged 18 and above is expected to reach 60 percent, and the standardized management rate of diabetic patients is expected to reach 70 percent, said the National Health Commission.

"We are confident in Lilly's growth potential in China, underpinned by a deep understanding of the local disease landscape and demographic

shifts that align with our therapeutic strengths," said Ilya Yuffa, executive vice-president of Eli Lilly and Company and president of Lilly International.

China is becoming an increasingly aging society with a growing population of seniors. By the end of last year, people aged 60 and above reached 296.97 million, or 21.1 percent of the total population, said the National Bureau of Statistics.

In China, 10 million people have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's, accounting for one-fourth of the global total. By 2050, the number of such patients is expected to grow to 40 million, according to a cross-sectional study published in Lancet Public Health.

Yuffa said the rapid aging of China's population indicates a rising demand for treatments in geriatric care and age-related ailments like Alzheimer's, metabolic diseases and cancer. This trend highlights significant unmet patient needs and growth opportunities for the company.

"We are collaborating with local partners to improve the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of Alzheimer's disease, and promoting the development of a comprehensive healthcare ecosystem," he said.

"Only with early diagnosis can we have the ability to treat in the most meaningful way and try to slow the progression of the disease. So, that's an area of importance not only for us, but we think also for the entire system addressing a population that has significant unmet need," he added.

In recent years, Lilly also announced some new initiatives and partnerships with AI-driven biopharma companies, and the industry has shown interest in its pioneering R&D initiatives.

Regarding research and development in China, Yuffa said the company is fully committed to the country as a key part of its global R&D strategy. Lilly has established cooperation with about 1,000 clinical trial centers in China, ensuring support for its research initiatives. Investing heavily in R&D, the company has launched over 30 medicines and indications in China over the past six years. In addition, Lilly Asia Venture has invested in 147 companies across the nation, also including some AI-driven pharmaceutical companies.

The company said its innovative medicines that can help meet demand of different health priorities are consistent with the Healthy China 2030 initiative, which aims to improve the overall health and well-being of the population.

Green electricity bringing benefits to Ningxia farmers

By ZHUANG QIANG and PANG BO

In the prefecture-level city of Guyuan in southern Ningxia Hui autonomous region, Zhang Zhibu is very pleased with how photovoltaic power has improved his livelihood.

In his native Taoshuwan in Jiqiang town under Xiji county, Zhang said some of the villagers' land has been rented out for solar power stations in a bid to boost local green power.

"With the land transfer fee for the photovoltaic power station and working in a public welfare position in the village, I can earn more than 10,000 yuan (\$1,404) each year from these two sources alone," he said.

Zhang said Taoshuwan's photovoltaic poverty alleviation power station sells each kilowatt-hour of electricity at a grid price of 0.26 yuan, with a government subsidy of 0.39 yuan.

"The village collective can net an annual income of 197,000 yuan from the PV power station, providing villagers with stable incomes," he said.

So far, Guyuan has built 202 village-level PV poverty alleviation power stations, with a total grid-connected capacity of 68.489 megawatts and an annual average power generation income of 20.8 million yuan, Zhang said.

He added that each village can increase its collective economic income by more than 100,000 yuan per year, ensuring stable incomes for 20 years.

In early June, Liupan Mountain was adorned with fluttering red flags amid gusty winds, as the Huineng Xiji Piancheng Township 50 MW wind power project was successfully connected to the local power grid.

Zhao Rongxing, head of the marketing department at State Grid Guyuan Power Supply Co, said the project was connected to the Zhangyi 110 kilovolt substation through a 110 kV line, making it the first wind farm in Zhangyi.

Once operational, total installed capacity of centralized new energy in the Guyuan area will reach 658 MW, Zhao said.

Spanning the townships of Jiqiang, Xiaoheng and Piancheng in Xiji county, the project has a total installed capac-

ity of 50 MW, using 10 wind turbines each with a capacity of 5 MW, he said, adding that it also includes a 5 MW (or 10 MWh) energy storage station.

"Annual power generation is approximately 137.696 million kWh, which can help save some 4.2 metric tons of standard coal and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by about 113,000 tons annually," he said.

Zhao noted that as the Liupan Mountain area has abundant wind and solar resources suitable for building new power systems, State Grid Guyuan Power Supply Co has closely adhered to national new energy industry policies in recent years to actively promote the implementation of solar and wind power facilities.

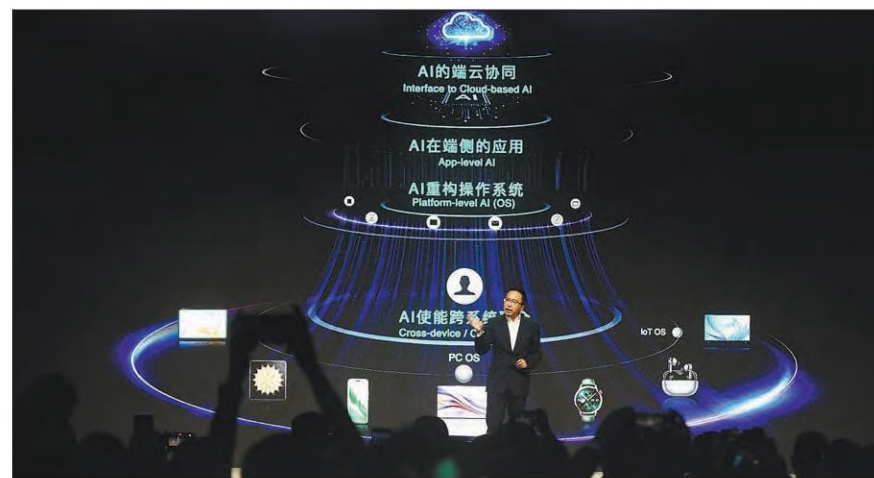
"By 'green power' we mean that during the power generation process, carbon dioxide emissions are zero or close to zero, and compared to thermal power, it has a lower environmental impact. This usually includes wind and photovoltaic power," said Zhao.

These green power resources come from wind power bases in places like Liupan Mountain and Moon Mountain, and from photovoltaic power bases in Pengyang and Sanying, he said, adding that his agency can "scenery" of Liupan Mountain can now illuminate thousands of homes in Guyuan.

By the end of 2023, Guyuan had 11 new energy power stations and 1,345 new energy users connected to the grid, with an installed capacity reaching 673 MW, accounting for 50.59 percent of the total installed power capacity — equivalent to carbon reductions of approximately 865,400 tons, Zhao added.

Currently, Guyuan has built one energy storage station, with three more under construction with a total investment of some 2.8 billion yuan, aiding the city's high-quality development, he said, adding that his agency will further tap the resource advantages of the Liupan Mountain area, and conduct research on "wind, solar, storage, charging and microgrid" development, in a bid to enhance the optimized utilization of clean energy.

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Zhao Ming, CEO of Honor, addresses delegates at the Mobile World Congress in Shanghai on Wednesday. LONG WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Honor to release tool against AI fraud

By SHI JING in Shanghai
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Chinese handset maker Honor will release an anti-fraud technology powered by artificial intelligence to examine content made with technologies such as Deepfake, said company CEO Zhao Ming.

Zhao made the announcement during the three-day Mobile World Congress, which began in Shanghai on Wednesday.

By incorporating AI into Honor's devices, the technology can autonomously identify image elements in users' video calls. It will send a risk alert to users if it detects any AI face swapping in video content.

According to Beijing-based cybersecurity services provider QAX, the number of fraud cases using Deepfake, an AI-based technology that can stitch a person in an image or video into an uninvolved scenario, spiked 3,000 percent globally in 2023.

Honor also released on Wednesday its AI-powered eye protection technology, which can turn mobile phone screens into user-tailored "defocus lenses" by adjusting the screen to suit the user's habits and surrounding environment.

While this feature is not for medical use and does not have therapeutic functionality, laboratory data show that the transient myopia — or nearsightedness — index is reduced by an average of 13 degrees after using such a screen for 25 minutes. The technology can reduce the transient myopia index by a maximum of 75 degrees.

Zhao said this is the first time that device makers have made the leap from preventing myopia to mitigating myopia symptoms by improving screen performance.

This AI-powered eye protection technology will be applied to Honor's new foldable Magic V3 smartphones, which will be released in China soon, the CEO added.

The new handset will be thinner than its previous edition, which already set a record of 9.9 millimeters when folded. The Magic V3 will be launched in Europe after its debut in China, he said, adding that device companies have a duty to empower the public with AI-enabled hardware.

Compared to cloud-based AI, device-based AI enjoys the advantage of being closer to end users. Therefore, device-based AI can offer real-time recognition of users' locations and physiological indicators, he said.

Meanwhile, device-based AI can process more complicated data thanks to its computing capability which works round the clock. Device-based AI is also superior to cloud-based AI in terms of personal

privacy protections, as the former can provide a more personalized, ergonomic and privacy-preserving intelligent experience, added Zhao.

During a news conference held later on Wednesday, he said software, smartphone applications and internet services can be significantly reshaped by applying AI.

"By understanding and recognizing the consumer's intention, software can provide consumers with complete services. For example, software can complete a series of actions such as booking air tickets, hailing cabs and recommending local restaurants and tourist destinations when one travels. These services can be made possible in smartphones after AI is better integrated."

Public data show Honor invested about 11.5 percent of its annual revenue in research and development in 2023. This ratio will be above 11 percent this year, Zhao said, adding that, "The thing is, AI will empower all the devices we make in the future, including smartphones, personal computers, tablets and wearables."

Derived from MWC Barcelona — an annual gathering of the mobile tech industry, MWC Shanghai has been held since 2012. AI, 5G and intelligent manufacturing are the three major topics at this year's MWC Shanghai.

BUSINESSFOCUS

CHINA UP-CLOSE

Rescue work key part of low-altitude biz

Leveraging drones to transport critical medical supplies gains ground in nation

By ZHENG YIRAN
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The low-altitude economy, highlighted for the first time in the country's Government Work Report for 2024, is gradually gaining momentum in the medical rescue field in China.

With strategic policies and targeted development plans, provinces and cities are applying drones to transport critical medical supplies like first-aid kits, transfusions and biological samples.

On June 13, a low-altitude logistics drone carrying test specimens took off from the Da'an campus of the Affiliated Yongchuan Hospital of Chongqing Medical University. Following a set route, it flew for 13 minutes and landed smoothly on the Xuanhua campus of the hospital, successfully completing the air transport mission.

The successful maiden flight marks the application of low-altitude drones in medical scenarios in Chongqing. Technicians said that low-altitude logistics drones are like flying 'couriers', with fully autonomous L4-level aerial driving capability and a maximum load capacity of 9 kilograms.

"They have significant advantages in dispatching biological samples including emergency blood and testing apparatus across regions. Reports show that drones have real-time monitoring and temperature control functions, which can take care of blood materials such as red blood cells and platelets that require specific temperature ranges, ensuring specimen safety," said technicians from Yongchuan Hospital.

Some 1,468 kilometers away at the Nanjing Red Cross Blood Center (NRCBC), healthcare practitioners receive requests for emergency blood supplies from Nanjing Pukou People's Hospital. Soon after, a drone carrying some 9 kg of blood products takes off from Gulou district, soaring through a 14.625-km flight route, and arrives at its destination in just 16 minutes.

This is a typical scenario for certain hospitals in Pukou district, Nanjing. Currently, the district has developed two normalized drone routines for critical medical supply transport.

According to the NRCBC, for nor-

mal operations, the two routines have four flights per day on average, cutting delivery times by half and greatly improving treatment efficiency.

The drones are capable of carrying medical supplies weighing 10 kg, with a wind resistance level of seven and a flying range of 20 km. They can fly in rainy weather and at night, and come with a parachute for emergency backup. At the same time, they rely on 5G networks for precise navigation and can fly autonomously according to established routes with strong anti-interference ability, thus achieving stable and safe execution of blood transport missions under changing and complex meteorological conditions, said experts from the NRCBC.

According to International SOS, a world-leading health and security services company, a key component of prevention and duty of care is preparing for rare instances when prevention is not possible. Having a safe and executable evacuation plan can make a difference in saving lives. Standards and quality of aviation and aeromedical operations vary significantly across the globe.

"Evacuations often entail accessing both poorly regulated and resourced aviation environments, introducing potential risks. The right provider will have a comprehensive credentialing and accreditation program that is essential to mitigating risks," said the International SOS's spokesperson.

Lin Xianping, secretary-general of the institute of culture and creation at Hangzhou City University, said, "China's low-altitude economy has a wide application and practical value in emergency rescue, as the use of drones provides a safe, flexible and efficient means to save lives."

In terms of blood and test samples, drone deliveries greatly reduce delays and improve treatment efficiency. In addition, drones can serve as mobile communication relay platforms, providing temporary air communication capabilities. Especially during circumstances of ground communication facility damages, they can provide critical communication links, Lin said.

"Unmanned aerial vehicles equipped with lighting equipment



Above: Medical staff members load supplies onto a drone in Chongqing on June 13. CHEN SHICHUAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Below: A drone loaded with antivenom doses takes off from a hospital in Taizhou, Zhejiang province, in August 2022.

PAN KANJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY



can provide lighting support for night rescues, help locate trapped individuals and guide rescue teams. Meanwhile, UAVs equipped with a delivery system can accurately deliver rescue supplies — such as water, food and medicine — to designated locations, providing necessary survival support for disaster victims.

"Firefighting drones can carry high-definition cameras and thermal imaging devices to monitor the situation of the fire in real-time, quickly transmit fire data, and improve the response speed and firefighting efficiency of firefighters," he added.

The development of China's low-altitude sector is gathering steam. The low-altitude economy is now viewed as a strategic emerging industry and a new growth engine for the country.

A report by market research firm CCID Consulting, a think tank affiliated with the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, said China's low-altitude economy was worth nearly 506 billion yuan (\$69.8 billion) last year, up 33.8 percent year-on-year, and its value is expected to surpass 1 trillion yuan by 2026.

Speaking of future development trends, Yuan Shuai, executive vice-president of the Rural Revitalization Committee, said that with the continuous maturity and popularization of technology, drones can be applied in more and more emergency rescue scenarios, such as fire rescue, earthquake rescue and other calamities rescue.

"By carrying different equipment and sensors, they can achieve vari-

ous functions such as aerial reconnaissance, material delivery, and personnel search and rescue. In addition, with the integration of new-generation information technologies such as 5G, the internet of things and big data, a new intelligent rescue system is expected to emerge in the low-altitude economy, further improving the response speed and efficiency of emergency rescue," Yuan said.

Hong Yong, an associate research fellow at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation's e-commerce research institute, said that as promising as the future may look, challenges in technology, safety, regulations and other areas cannot be underestimated.

"Drone technology requires con-

tinuous innovation and progress to meet complex and ever-changing mission requirements. Specifically, in the field of emergency rescue, efforts are needed to ensure flight safety and prevent accidents. The formulation and improvement of relevant regulations are also essential, so as to ensure the legitimacy and standardization of the application of drones in the field of emergency rescues.

"These challenges require the joint efforts of the government, enterprises and research institutions," he said.

On Jan 4, the Ministry of Emergency Management and the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology jointly issued guidance on the development of emergency-use robots. According to the guidance, efforts are needed to break through key technological barriers of collaborative operation in equipment clusters such as drones and robots, as well as human-machine collaborative operation technology.

Meanwhile, it emphasized the importance of strengthening the innovative application of cloud computing, artificial intelligence, big data, and other technologies in emergency robots to enhance their intelligence level.

Key research areas — including UAV group flight technology, cluster control technology, disaster rapid assessment technology, disaster perception ability rapid deployment technology, pre and post-disaster accurate comparison scanning technology — are highlighted, according to the guidance.

Apart from Chongqing and Pukou district in Nanjing, Zhanjiang in Guangdong province, Shijiazhuang in Hebei province, Hefei in Anhui province and others are also taking related actions one after another.

Homegrown eVTOLs showing huge potential

By ZHENG YIRAN
and PENG CHAO

Chinese electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) companies have demonstrated strong competitiveness compared with their counterparts in the United States and the European Union amid flourishing development of the low-altitude economy, or advanced air mobility, thanks to strong market demand, policy support and China's solid manufacturing foundation, industry experts said.

Commonly known as air taxis, eVTOL aircraft don't require traditional airports, runways or heliports, which makes them a promising option for short trips in urban settings.

Morgan Stanley expects the emerging sector to be worth some \$1.5 trillion by 2040, and in anticipation of this rapid growth, many countries have set aggressive timetables for the rollout of AAM services.

Jiang Dagang, deputy dean of the school of aeronautics and astronautics at the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, said eVTOL aircraft have huge

application potential as they are safer and more environmentally friendly than traditional helicopters. Moreover, they are naturally suited for intelligent and unmanned operations.

"They can be widely used in fields such as business travel, medical emergency services and disaster relief," Jiang said.

He said China has become a top player in the field of unmanned aerial vehicles — or drones — thanks to its strong manufacturing capability and the integration of the entire industry chain from basic research and key technologies to complete products.

"Although China lags behind some developed countries in the field of traditional general aviation, the rise of China's new energy electric vehicles has provided strong support for the research and development, and production of eVTOLs and their key components including batteries, motors and electronic controls," he said.

Aerofugia, a Chengdu, Sichuan province-based eVTOL aircraft developer and a subsidiary of Chinese automaker Geely Technology Group, completed Phase-2 flight

tests for its self-developed AE200 for airworthiness technology validation on June 23. This was also the first public demonstration of the AE200's tilt transition flight test.

The AE200 is a five to six-seat manned tiltrotor eVTOL aircraft with a range of 200 kilometers. It is designed for commercial passenger transport in densely populated areas, as well as for scenarios such as air tourism and emergency rescue, the company said.

Previously, Aerofugia announced on June 12 that the AE200 had completed the full-size, full weight and full-envelope tilt transition flight tests, making it the first eVTOL company in China and the second worldwide to complete such tests.

On the heels of Aerofugia's announcement, Archer Aviation, a

leading eVTOL company based in the US, announced on the same day that its uncrewed Midnight model had also completed a full transition to wing-borne flight. The company posted a nine-minute video of the flight, with the lift/cruise propellers tilting 90 degrees forward to horizontal.

Fei Lan, marketing director of Aerofugia, said the company is strengthening cooperation with its partners, including Sino Jet, one of the largest business aircraft operators in the Asia-Pacific region, and CITIC Offshore Helicopter Co Ltd, to accelerate the commercial application of eVTOL aircraft and contribute to the formation of a three-dimensional urban transportation ecosystem.

In early April, Guangzhou, Guangdong province-based eVTOL

maker EHang Holdings Ltd obtained a production certificate for its EH216-S passenger-carrying pilotless eVTOL aircraft from the Civil Aviation Administration of China. It is said to be the first production certificate issued in the global eVTOL industry.

As the two-seater EH216-S had earlier obtained type certificate and standard airworthiness certification from the CAAC, this step marks a significant leap toward the mass production stage and follow-up commercial operations, the company said.

Jiang said China's eVTOL industry is expected to see a boom in growth in the coming years as authorities attach greater importance to the low-altitude economy.

Revenue from China's eVTOL sector surged 77.3 percent year-on-year to 980 million yuan (\$135 million) last year, according to a report released by market research firm CCID Consulting. The report estimates that the eVTOL sector will maintain rapid growth in the next few years, with the market scale hitting 9.5 billion yuan in 2026.

"A key task at present is to accelerate the pace of airworthiness certification so as to lay the foundation for the commercial application of eVTOL aircraft," Jiang added.

Cao Baolin, a researcher at the

Institute of New Economic Development, echoed Jiang's view.

"By fully leveraging China's spillover advantages in the new energy vehicle industry chain, the country's eVTOL industry is expected to transform from a follower to a leader, becoming another global calling card for China after NEVs," Cao said.

He said eVTOL products developed by Chinese companies feature various configurations and technological approaches, showing the vitality and potential of China's eVTOL industry. However, there is still a considerable gap between Chinese and advanced foreign peers in terms of commercial operation.

"Overseas companies, such as Joby Aviation, Archer Aviation, Volocopter and Beta Technologies, have launched urban air traffic demonstration projects in several cities, demonstrating more mature business models," Cao said, adding that China's current eVTOL models mainly focus on urban air tours at dedicated takeoff and landing sites.

"The range and scope of commercial applications for eVTOL aircraft in China still need to be further expanded," he said.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Beijing and Hanoi united in their desire to ensure stable regional environment

President Xi Jinping's meeting with visiting Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh in Beijing on Wednesday again sent a strong message to the outside world that Beijing and Hanoi are intent on consolidating their unity and friendship.

Chinh is on a four-day working visit to China starting Monday, and his itinerary includes attending the 15th Annual Meeting of the New Champions in Dalian, Liaoning province. His visit is the latest in a series of recent high-level exchanges between the two neighbors, and underscores their mutual efforts to continuously inject fresh vitality into bilateral ties and stand together in the face of the complex and challenging global situation.

In December last year, during a visit to Hanoi, President Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, and Nguyen Phu Trong, general secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee, announced the building of a China-Vietnam community with a shared future, elevating bilateral ties to a new stage.

Since then, relations between the two parties and the two peoples have taken big strides in many fields. With their economies highly complementary, the two countries also have broad prospects for expanding their economic and trade cooperation, not least the digital economy, so as to bring more tangible benefits to the two peoples.

It is also commendable that Hanoi, deeming its relations with Beijing as the top priority and a strategic choice in its foreign policy, has consistently supported China's position on the Taiwan question and firmly adheres to the one-China principle and opposes the politicization of economic, trade and sci-tech issues.

Against the backdrop of the profoundly changing international landscape, stable and robust China-Vietnam ties not only cater to the modernization needs of the two socialist countries but also help contribute to maintaining peace and stability in the region and beyond.

Sharing similar views on regional and global issues, the two countries have everything to gain from setting a good example in properly handling their differences and jointly safeguarding peace and stability in the South China Sea and the region at large. This is especially true given the current rising tensions in the waters because of the Philippines' provocative antics with the encouragement of the United States.

Needless to say Vietnam occupies a special niche in the US playbook in the Asia-Pacific. Thanks to its special geopolitical position in Southeast Asia and its close ties with big countries including China and Russia, the country has long been perceived by Washington to be of strategic importance.

That may well explain why the US, despite old grudges stemming from the Vietnam War, has increasingly tried to solicit Vietnam as a participant in its geopolitical maneuvering. Washington has repeatedly tried to cozy up to Hanoi in recent years in the hope that Vietnam will act as a US bridgehead in its geopolitical confrontation with China.

But by trying to use the maritime disputes in the region to its advantage and making waves over them, the US is damaging the very fabric of peace and stability in the South China Sea and the region at large. The US' attempts to manipulate the South China Sea disputes for its own ends pose a threat to not only China's external environment, but also that of other countries in the region, Vietnam included.

Hence, it is crucial that Beijing and Hanoi join hands to actively promote mutually beneficial cooperation at sea, prevent external forces from meddling in the South China Sea issue and help accelerate regional efforts to make it a sea of peace and cooperation for all.

Principles retain their relevance today

At a time of grave and complex global challenges, the 70th anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence provides the world with a good opportunity to reflect on that shared aspiration and explore ways to better put these principles into practice.

It is no coincidence that the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence were born in Asia, because they embody the Asian tradition of cherishing peace and harmonious relations.

Seven decades ago, then Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai put forward these principles in full for the first time — mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual nonaggression, noninterference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.

The series of commemorative events being held on Friday shows the tremendous significance China attaches to these principles, which are a succinct expression of the propositions and goals of the United Nations Charter and a means to facilitate their implementation. The Five Principles embody the values of peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy, and freedom for all humankind that are common pursuits today. More important, they are applicable to relations between all countries, regardless of size, political and social system, or development level.

After being put to the test for 70 years, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence have demonstrated strong vitality. Today, the Five Principles are endorsed by a host of international organizations and integrated in international instruments, and are widely supported and observed by the international community, particularly countries of the Global South, which were the first to embrace them amid the wave of postwar decolonization.

Upholding the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence is particularly important in the face of some countries' attempts to sabotage international solidarity, backpedal on economic globalization and break global industry and supply chains to fish for their own narrow gains. The rising trend of protectionism, unilateralism and hegemony that is prevalent today is a vestige of colonialism and goes against the trend of the times, giving rise to crises in various parts of the world.

The Five Principles eschew the law of the jungle that is manifest in the pursuit of hegemony and the practice of unilateralism and protectionism. Instead, they serve as a path for the peaceful resolution of disputes and historical issues between countries, create a good environment for mutually beneficial cooperation and common development, and promote the establishment of a more just and reasonable international order.

China has always been an active advocate and firm practitioner of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and it is a staunch advocate for countries to join hands to build a world of lasting peace, universal security, common prosperity, openness, inclusiveness, cleanliness and beauty.

To that end, Beijing has fleshed out the principles by successively proposing the Belt and Road Initiative, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative as the means to build a community with a shared future for mankind.

To this end, it continues to strive to develop friendly relations with all countries on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, and it is doing its part to help address the challenges that have the world on the rack.

Committed to upholding fairness, justice and equity, China promotes the building of a new type of international relations based on mutual respect. In doing so, it is setting an example of how countries can promote common development and maintain world peace.

Enhancing friendship and cooperation among peoples and promoting world peace and development are noble endeavors and common aspirations that embody the values of justice, democracy and rule of law. Those values demand concrete actions to uphold, not just the lip service of some who are vociferous champions of their cause. The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence are the fundamental rights, obligations and responsibilities entailed to fulfill those endeavors and all countries should uphold them.

Luo Jie

Which one is overcapacity?



Opinion Line

US could learn a thing or two from its own diplomacy failings

In his op-ed, "What the United States Can Learn from China", published on the Foreign Policy website last week, Stephen Walt, a professor of international relations at the Harvard Kennedy School, has apparently tried to offer US policymakers some food for thought on how to improve the United States' foreign policy.

The two political parties in the US have technically downgraded the otherwise most testing challenge, if not an art, of handling the most consequential bilateral ties with China into a containment strategy that is devoid of flexibility, wisdom and foresight.

The great lengths that Washington has been going to in its efforts to coerce US allies and other countries to jump on its anti-China bandwagon at the cost of bending international laws and rules actually backfires on the US itself. Not to mention the moral burden and material inputs its policy requires.

The world sees clearly that the US is using the unfair means that it accuses China of employing, including state subsidies, protectionism, tariff wars and dumping overcapacity, to maximize the US' hegemonic interest over other countries, including its allies.

While China is helping underdeveloped countries improve their infrastructure,

public services and governance, the US is trying to instigate domestic unrest in them to persuade the people to embrace the US, smearing Chinese engagement as a geopolitical tool of Beijing. While the US is dictating to other countries on the nobleness of human rights and trying to weaponize human rights issues to justify its interventionism, China is taking down-to-earth actions to put meat on the bones of the human rights that the US professes to uphold, implementing one project after another to enhance people's livelihoods around the world.

China avoids plunging itself into costly geopolitical quagmires as the US has done over the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict and the Middle East crisis. Washington has never explained to the US people in which way the country has benefited from its 20-year "democracy experiment" in Afghanistan, and an equally protracted process in Iraq where thousands of US lives were squandered.

Although the US seems to boast a much larger network of allies in the world, which requires its input to maintain the network's specious cohesion, that limits its international space to some extent, as the US divides countries into those that are members of the US club and those that are not. China's diplomatic outreach is broad-

er as it strives to have good relations with all countries and regions in the world based on equality, mutual respect and win-win cooperation, all of which form the bedrock of international laws and the norms of international order. The zero-sum game the US peddles naturally pales in contrast with Beijing's proposal to make the cake bigger for all, given the latter's pertinence to countries' practical needs.

In many cases, particularly to the vast majority of countries of the Global South, it is China's noninterventionist approach to foreign relations, which is centered on respecting state sovereignty, that puts Beijing on a higher moral ground than Washington, whose "America-first" practices and exceptionalism seriously depreciate the value of the US' diplomacy.

Last but not least, like any other country, except the US, China regards war as the option of last resort, recognizing that it is the most harmful means, in both strategic and economic terms, to resolve conflicts of interest between countries. So while China is trying its best to use diplomatic means to avoid wars, the US is doing the opposite.

The only thing Washington has omitted lashing out at China for is copying US diplomacy.

— LIYANG, CHINA DAILY

Discharge of nuclear-contaminated water sets bad precedent

Japan will release 7,800 metric tons of "treated" nuclear-contaminated water into the Pacific Ocean, starting from Friday, in the seventh discharge round.

Despite the Tokyo Electric Power Company calling the nuclear-contaminated water stored in the damaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant reactor "ALPS-processed water" and its release into the ocean part of their "Decommissioning Work", the risk such water with high radioactivity poses to the world is undeniable. There is growing consensus that among

the options available, Japan chose the cheapest way of dealing with the water as well as one that poses the greatest risk to the world. The discharge process is expected to last for more than three decades.

Worse than the pollution itself is the fact that the international community failed to stop one country from putting mankind at risk only to save its own costs of dealing with the nuclear-contaminated water. From the time Japan made public its plan to release the water into the ocean, China made umpteen pleas to Japan to reconsider but all its pleas fell on

deaf ears. The United States, another Pacific nation, openly supported Japan's move. The International Atomic Energy Agency, despite entreaties from various nations, gave the go-ahead, producing a report saying Japan's nuclear-contaminated water "met the standards".

A dangerous precedent has been set. If any other country faces a similar situation in the future, there is a danger of it following Japan's lead by rallying support from the powerful nations and international agencies.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Reform and opening-up still key to advancing modernization

Editor's Note: The following are excerpts of an interview of Zheng Yongnian, a professor of politics at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Shenzhen), with the media on the upcoming third plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee.

Each third plenary session of the CPC Central Committee in the past has held a special meaning for China, having profoundly changed the course of the country. In December 1978, late leader Deng Xiaoping presided over the third plenary session of the 11th CPC Central Committee, which confirmed the shift of China's work focus from class struggle to socialist modernization, kicking off its reform and opening-up process. The third plenary session of the 14th CPC Central Committee in 1993 formulated the basic framework of the socialist market economic system and proposed the establishment of a modern enterprise system. The third plenary session of the 18th CPC Central Committee in 2013 set

the overall goal of comprehensively deepening the reform.

The world is entering a period of profound changes and facing many new and systemic challenges. World over, there is growing speculation about China's future development trend and policy direction, and even a feeling that China's reform has come to a standstill. In this sense, the third plenary session of the 20th CPC Central Committee will point out the direction for China's development and calm people's misgivings.

China's reform has entered a "deep water zone", with easy reforms having been done, and those left undone being the ones difficult to implement. With the deepening of reform, more complex and structural problems began to emerge, such as the reform of State-owned enterprises and the reform of the social security system. It is the same with the reform

of the political system and social governance. For example, how to further combat corruption and how to promote the coordinated development of urban and rural areas are complex policy issues that remain to be addressed.

For a long time, China's development focused on material modernization. But if institutional modernization always lags behind, some big problems will emerge. China must pursue a balanced development of economic modernization, institutional modernization and human modernization, and the upcoming third plenary session is expected to map out some effective initiatives.

From a realistic perspective, China's development faces a lot of internal and external pressures, but this cannot stop its reform and opening-up steps. This is not only for China's own sake, but also for the stability and prosperity of the world.

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COMMENT

Wang Fan

Chinese diplomacy upholds peaceful coexistence

This year commemorates the 70th anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. Grounded in these principles and guided by the policy of peaceful development, China has played a significant role in fostering global stability. These principles harmonize with China's Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, and Global Civilization Initiative, alongside the vision of constructing a shared future for humanity through the concept of building a community with a shared destiny.

In the past more than 10 years, Chinese diplomacy guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy has garnered heightened effectiveness due to its burgeoning national prowess, propelling China into a more pivotal position within the global governance framework. China actively engages in the political resolution of major regional hot-button issues such as the Korean Peninsula security, the Iranian nuclear situation, Afghanistan, and the Israel-Palestine conflict. It endeavors to uphold the authority and unity of the UN Security Council, supporting mediation efforts authorized by the council. China actively promotes the establishment of a security mechanism in the Gulf region and facilitated the historic diplomatic reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Regarding the crisis in Ukraine, China consistently bases its stance and policies on the merits of the situation itself, maintaining an objective and impartial position to actively encourage peace talks and mediation, injecting positive energy into global and regional peace and stability.

The world is taking notice of China's stance and policies regarding the resolution of pressing regional and international challenges, underscoring the need for more nations and regions to heed its insights and approaches.

The concept of "self-discipline for the benefit of others" is deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture, focusing on the relationship between oneself and others. In international politics, this mindset involves contemplating the dynamics between "self" and "others." China advocates for "mutual benefit and assistance," balancing self-interest with the interests of others to achieve a win-win outcome. The concept of "self-discipline for the benefit of others" transcends the Western philosophy of self versus others, offering insightful approaches to addressing regional hot-button issues. Within the context of benefiting others, the notion of "fulfillment" is noteworthy. Traditional Chinese philosophy advocates for mutual benefits, nurturing the beauty in others and mutual empowerment. This profound ideological foundation underpins China's approach to resolving contentious issues. From an international security perspective, a country must accurately assess and consider the security of others to ensure its own genuine security.

China believes in taking into consid-



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

China is devoted to employing the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative to help build a community with a shared future for mankind.

eration other countries' security concerns while safeguarding its national security. It has always upheld the international order based on the United Nations Charter, and insists that disputes and differences be settled through peaceful negotiations and that the settlements are acceptable to all parties involved.

China has always adopted an objective stance on regional and global issues while ensuring that the concerns of all disputing parties are addressed. In contrast to some Western countries, China believes in inclusiveness and mutual learning, and encourages countries to resort to dialogue instead of engaging in confrontation, in order to maintain the world order.

It also advocates for countries to appropriately handle their differences and disagreements, and cooperate with each

other without compromising their core interests and values. China's idea of seeking common ground while reserving differences encourages countries to cooperate on issues of common interest despite their differences, and resolve their differences through dialogue.

By doing so, countries can safeguard their interests, expand their common interests and address the uneven distribution of benefits, because the common interest of countries is development.

China's principles for dealing with hotspot issues are derived from long-term diplomatic experience and based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.

First, China is increasingly involved in mediations to resolve hotspot issues. As the third party in such issues, China emphasizes the importance of greater common good rather than shared interests, although the latter is equally important, because shared interests can be served by promoting greater common good.

Without setting specific preconditions for resolving regional disputes and conflicts, China has been calling on disputing parties to exercise restraint to settle their differences. As a fair mediator, China believes the principle of non-interference in other countries' internal affairs, which is part of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, is the best way to achieve win-win results.

Besides, China does not attach politi-

cal strings or impose its will on other countries; instead, it treats every country, big or small, developed or developing, equally and attaches equal importance to every country's interest while helping them boost their economic development so they can solve the problems on their own.

Second, many problems can be solved only through the efforts of a group of countries. While helping solve such problems, China treats both the symptoms and the root causes of the problems. It advocates for countries to adopt stopgap measures to solve the problems in the long run, but takes both temporary and final solutions into account when dealing with hotspot issues. The idea is to use temporary plans to reach a final solution.

Also, China attaches great importance to both security and development, and supports countries to boost their development. China is devoted to employing the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative to help build a community with a shared future for mankind.

Third, China has always advocated for the peaceful settlement of international disputes. Adhering to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, China does not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, promotes regional development, helps maintain regional peace, and encourages countries to seek common ground while shelving their differences.

China opposes the United States-led Western countries violating UN resolutions and imposing sanctions on other countries because such actions intensify contradictions and make the related parties antagonistic to each other. And unlike the US-led West, it upholds that the global order should remain centered on the UN.

Moreover, China advocates that traditional security challenges be also addressed through non-traditional security cooperation. Traditional and non-traditional security threats are intertwined in today's world, making cooperation in non-traditional security areas essential to safeguard a country's national security, and strengthen traditional security governance.

Yet there is no single way of dealing with traditional and non-traditional security concerns, so China promotes regional development and cooperation to address such concerns.

And fourth, the shortage of security mechanisms is a major reason behind the emergence of regional hotspot issues, making political communication among related parties even more important. To be sure, China's cooperation and cultural exchanges with other countries have created favorable conditions for establishing regional security mechanisms and resolving such hotspot regional issues.

The author is president of China Foreign Affairs University. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Deng Zhou

New quality productive forces energize emerging sectors

With the world experiencing a new technological revolution and undergoing an industrial transformation, China's industries face new challenges. The policy adjustments in developed countries and shifting of industries to and improvement of the development environment in some emerging economies pose serious challenges to China's industrial development. To make matters worse, the traditional development space is narrowing, and old development models are becoming unsustainable.

Therefore, it is imperative that China cultivate and develop new quality productive forces to seize the development opportunities and overcome the constraints in order to boost economic recovery and promote high-quality industrial development.

To foster new quality productive forces, China must leverage its industrial and market advantages to develop frontier and original technologies, and make revolutionary breakthroughs in the field of science and technology. Already a major global player in technology R&D, China was ranked 12th in the World Intellectual Property Organization's Global Innovation Index 2023 and has the largest number of top 100 science and technology clusters in the world.

After missing several occasions to seize the opportunities of technology revolutions in the past, China seems set to become a significant player in the new wave of technological and industrial changes. Self-reliance in science and technology is crucial for China to become a more important player in global technology development and establish itself as a key participant in new technology revolution and industrial transformation.

China has made remarkable strides in mobile communications, electric vehicles (EVs), renewable energy and high-speed railways, and is a leading player in AI, quantum communications, new materials and life sciences. However, it still lags behind the developed world in the fields of integrated circuits, industrial software and key machinery. Facing fierce competition in high-tech, China should harness the synergy of technology R&D and industrialization to achieve breakthroughs in disruptive technologies in a bid to develop new quality productive forces.

Developing new quality productive forces involves expanding strategic emerging industries, nurturing future industries and upgrading traditional ones. China's extensive and resilient industrial system has been resilient to economic upheavals. But its weaknesses in high-end segments and key core areas persist, increasing the possibility of encountering technological bottlenecks in the future.

So it should take measures to ensure its strategic emerging industries consolidate the existing advantages by turning its high-quality product into systemic advantages. For instance, China's EV industry, which accounts for 60 percent of the total global production, has built a comprehensive ecosystem, ranging from producing core components to providing after-sales services. Also, emerging industries in China must leverage their advantages to bridge the gap with that of the advanced economies, and collaborate with global partners to create a fairer global environment so they can supply their products to more markets.

For future industries with high risks and uncertainties, China needs to adopt a forward-looking approach, using its comprehensive industry chain and institutional advantages to pilot cutting-edge technologies and identify viable development models for industrialization and commercialization.

As for traditional industries, they need to transform themselves, and incorporate new technologies and business models to take advantage of the technology revolution and industrial changes. For that, the authorities have to improve market regulations to mitigate overcapacity, phase out outdated production models and optimize product structures. And energy-intensive industries must adopt green, low-carbon policies, reduce their carbon emissions and decrease their reliance on fossil fuels.

Developing new quality productive forces requires efficient use of resources and harnessing of the power of data. In this age of the internet, technology and talent are the most critical resources. Yet China's education, research and talent cultivation systems face various challenges, with imbalances in the supply and demand of talent across regions, industries and enterprises. Especially scarce are scientists, innovative entrepreneurs and multi-skilled technical personnel in strategic fields.

Besides, the reforms being carried out should be in line with the requirement for new skilled personnel and R&D must align with the current high-tech trends, so as to incentivize talent and create wealth. Additionally, data are becoming the most dynamic production factor. In digital products and services, data are directly consumed as a value carrier. More important, data empowerment in various industries generates substantial multiplier effects.

As a populous and industrially diverse country, China's data resource potential is unparalleled. To cash in on this advantage, China needs to build robust data transmission and application infrastructure, and promote data trading, and establish data-protection frameworks to set global data usage standards and rules.

By fostering strategic emerging industries, laying the groundwork for future industries and upgrading traditional ones, China can build an advanced industrial system, thus consolidating the foundation for the development of new quality productive forces. This strategic push will not only enhance China's industrial capacity but also position it as a crucial player in the global economic landscape, contributing to the development of a more balanced and inclusive world economy.

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Wei Xinyu

Building agricultural resilience to extreme weathers

Despite being the world's second-largest economy, China is still a developing country and thus vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, with its agricultural sector being especially vulnerable to extreme weather events.

In recent years, the rate of rising temperatures has been faster in China than the global average, with climate conditions becoming more complex due to the rising frequency of extreme weather events such as unusually high precipitation rates, increasing typhoons, extreme heat and cold waves. In particular, there has been an increase in regional and periodic floods and droughts across the country, seriously affecting agricultural production. This has made it even more important to take measures to minimize the effects of extreme weather events on agriculture.

The central government attaches great importance to adaptation to climate change and has taken a series of measures to safeguard the agricultural sector.

The government issued the "National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2035" in 2022, specifying initiatives to optimize the utilization of agricultural resources, intensify the measures to boost the resilience of the agricultural ecosystems to climate change and establish a climate change-adapted food security system.

To mitigate the effects of climate

change on agriculture and better respond to natural disasters, China has established a preliminary natural disaster monitoring and early warning system to assess the impact of natural disasters, and formulate disaster prevention and relief plans. By strengthening the monitoring and early warning systems, as well as the mechanism to prevent and control pests and diseases, China aims to control the regional losses within 5 percent.

China realizes the importance of science and technology in adapting to climate change, especially in the field of agriculture. It also realizes the need to strengthen research and development in science and technology, particularly in projects aimed at collecting and studying germplasm adapted to extreme weather events; developing high-yield, drought-resistant and high-quality crop varieties; and devising new planting technology models. Not to mention that it has been promoting the cultivation of drought-resistant crops and use of water-saving technologies to mitigate the effects of extreme weather events.

In terms of international multilateral cooperation, China has implemented several international projects on smart agriculture in cooperation with international organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme and

the World Bank. These projects have established demonstration areas based on the climatic characteristics of different regions, including the main grain-producing areas in North-east and North China, and the alpine grasslands in Qinghai province. China has also popularized climate-smart agriculture technologies, such as precision spraying technology, and integrated prevention and control of pests and diseases in accordance with local conditions in the project areas.

Such practices have optimized local agricultural production, and made crops climate change-resilient, achieving a "three-win" effect of ensuring food security, adapting to climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate change has been affecting the development of China's agricultural sector. As the frequency of extreme weather events continues to increase, threatening China's food security, the ability of the agricultural sector to cope with climate change should be further strengthened.

First, the utilization of agricultural resources should be improved, by optimizing the spatial distribution of the agricultural sector according to local conditions, adjusting crop distribution and cropping systems according to climate change trends, and making food production more efficient.

Second, there is a need to strengthen the agricultural disaster mitigation

and response system. To that end, the authorities should assess the impact of climate change and extreme weather events on agriculture; improve the disaster monitoring, early warning and response mechanisms; issue disaster-response guidelines and plans in advance; and increase the crop storage capacity in disaster-prone areas.

Third, China should provide more scientific and technological support for the agricultural sector to adapt to climate change, promote innovation and industrialization in the seed industry, breed new high-yielding crop varieties, and strengthen the training of personnel involved in disaster prevention, climate mitigation and climate adaptation in the agricultural sector.

And fourth, food security should be better safeguarded amid the serious impacts of climate change on agriculture, while infrastructure in the agricultural sector should be strengthened and the quality of arable land improved. Further, it is absolutely essential to continuously develop all permanent basic cropland area into high-standard cropland, promote climate-smart agriculture practices and boost agricultural production capacity.

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GLOBAL VIEWS



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



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

BENYAMIN POGHOSYAN

Time for responsible statesmanship

China and the EU should work diligently together to find a way to peacefully coexist, setting an example for the world

The global order is transitioning from a unipolar structure, which emerged after the end of the Cold War, to a more complex and multipolar one. This transition is characterized by the relative decline of the Western powers, led by the United States, and the eventual growth of economic and political influence of other powers, such as China, Russia, India and Brazil. As with every transition in global security architecture, this phase of human history is full of contradictions, tensions and conflicts. The Ukraine crisis, perhaps, is the most vivid example of this tantalizing process, as Russia and the West are inching closer to a direct military clash with unpredictable consequences for all humanity.

However, the emergence of a multipolar world order should not mean the return of jungle rule in international politics, where everyone is at loggerheads with each other and "might is right" is the only principle. Great powers should work diligently to find ways to coexist, cooperate and manage contradictions. In this context, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence — mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual nonaggression, noninterference in each other's internal affairs, equality, and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence — initiated by China 70 years ago, still remain relevant.

Former Chinese premier Zhou Enlai proposed these ideas on Dec 31, 1953, when he met an Indian government delegation. In June 1954, premier Zhou visited India and Burma (now Myanmar). The Joint Statement of the Prime Ministers of China and India, issued on June 28, 1954, and the Joint Statement of the Prime Ministers of China and Burma, issued a day later, affirmed the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence as guiding principles in their bilateral relations. Later, the Five Principles were formal-

Accepting the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence may provide the EU with the moral high ground, which was the hallmark of the union in the past, and will strengthen the EU's role and influence. China and the EU now have a chance to set before the world an example of responsible great power statesmanship, and it will be a mistake to let this opportunity pass by and bring the world closer to a new crisis.

ly proposed as the norm for handling international relations. In 1955, the Asian-African Conference convened in Bandung, Indonesia, adopted 10 Principles for conducting international relations, including the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.

These five principles provide a solid basis for the development of relations between China and the European Union and can be jointly pushed by Beijing and Brussels as a new foundation of the emerging multipolar world order. The EU is a values-based organization, with less emphasis on geopolitics and more push for human rights, the rule of law, and mutual benefits as a cornerstone of international relations. These traits bring the EU close to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.

The Ukraine crisis, sanctions against Russia, and the protectionist policy of the United States, including the adoption of the Inflation Reduction Act and the CHIPS and Science Act, have put enormous stress on the EU economy, undermining the model of social welfare upon which the union is based. Meanwhile, the US is continuing to

push the EU into its orbit of China deterrence. However, the EU has the choice of becoming an independent pole in the emerging new world order while keeping its strategic partnership with the US or becoming a junior partner of the US and taking part in all US foreign policy endeavors.

Moreover, this is not an issue only about the EU and its future. Supposing the EU does get fully pulled into the US orbit, including its policy toward China, it will significantly increase the chances of a new Cold War emerging between the West and other rising powers, while some actors will try to balance and hedge. Meanwhile, if China and the EU agree on pursuing the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, the future multipolar world order will not become a jungle.

In this scenario, China and the EU may offer a valuable alternative, which will be attractive to many rising, middle and minor powers. Of course, the EU and China have their contradictions, which span from human rights to the rules of economic competition, but the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence are not about allying with like-minded ones. On the contrary, they are about managing contradictions and preventing their transformation into conflicts, which will have adverse implications for everyone.

Accepting the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence may provide the EU with the moral high ground, which was the hallmark of the union in the past, and will strengthen the EU's role and influence. China and the EU now have a chance to set before the world an example of responsible great power statesmanship, and it will be a mistake to let this opportunity pass by and bring the world closer to a new crisis.

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ZOU ZHIBO

For a better world

With countries getting dragged into confrontation, the world needs the five principles more than ever to maintain stability

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the proposal of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.

In June 1954, during former Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai's visits to India and Burma (now Myanmar), China issued joint statements with the two countries, respectively, announcing

the five principles as the guiding norms for bilateral relations and for their respective countries' relations with other states in Asia and around the world.

Once proposed, the five principles received widespread approval from many countries worldwide and gradually became fundamental norms for handling interstate relations.

Having emerged in a complex historical context, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence hold even greater value in today's world.

Aligned with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence were proposed to address the complex border disputes between China and India and between China and Burma, caused by Western colonialism. Later, they served as the guidelines for countries with different historical and cultural backgrounds, social systems and national conditions to handle their interrelations.

The five principles are a condensed version of the seven basic principles of the UN Charter. Able to be universally applied, they have become the fundamental norms for maintaining international peace and security and promoting friendly relations among nations.

The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence have made remarkable contributions to the developing countries' pursuit of independence and liberation after World War II, the maintenance of autonomy during the Cold War, the containment of hegemonic thoughts and power politics, and the promotion of fairness and justice in the international community. History has proven that the five principles transcend religions, ethnicities, systems and geographic boundaries as fundamental guidelines for international relations.

The five principles reflect sovereignty, autonomy, equality and the spirit of friendship. In an anarchic world, all international actors — states — seek to maximize their national interests. Due to the limited availability of land, resources and the natural environment, as well as the zero-sum nature of international power, it is inevitable that international actors compete,

conflict and clash with each other, which often ends up in wars.

The first priority of human society should be to find out how nations can coexist, avoid war and conflict, and create a peaceful and stable international environment. The fundamental premises and purposes for this are the principle of "mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty", and the principle of "mutual nonaggression".

Based on the basic rights of independence and autonomy, developing countries which have gained national independence urgently seek autonomy to handle their own domestic and foreign affairs. The principle of "mutual noninterference in each other's internal affairs" reflects this demand.

Since modern times, Western countries have abused their technological, economic, and military advantages to invade, colonize, intervene and control many developing countries, resulting in an unjust, unequal, and irrational international order. The aim of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence is to correct this with its emphasis on equality.

The five principles not only focus on preventing harm and maintaining the bottom line of international relations, but also emphasize on the building of harmonious relations among countries through "cooperation for mutual benefit".

In the context of international politics today, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence are not outdated but hold even greater value and significance.

When hegemonic states, for their selfish interests in maintaining hegemonic positions, provoke great power games and push for bloc confrontations, the world suffers from division, turmoil, and even conflicts. Peace and development are facing daunting challenges.

With countries around the world either getting dragged into confrontation or facing pressure to "choose sides", their sovereignty, independence, and friendly cooperation are under threat. Given this backdrop, the world needs the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence more than ever, as the international community strives to maintain world peace, stability, and development, to establish a fair and reasonable international order, and to create a better world.

China is the initiator, defender, and practitioner of the five principles. In today's turbulent world, China firmly supports the international system with the UN at its core, the international order based on international law, and the basic norms of international relations based on the purposes

and principles of the UN Charter. China resolutely upholds multilateralism.

At a time when the role and status of the UN are increasingly questioned and challenged, China's firm support for the UN is invaluable. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres once said that "China has been a strong buttress to the UN" and that "partnership with China is an important pillar of the UN and multilateralism".

China firmly opposes hegemony and power politics, unilateralism and protectionism, Cold War mentality and bloc confrontations, "small yards with high fences" and "decoupling", all of which pose a danger to world peace, stability and development.

As the largest trading partner of nearly two-thirds of the countries in the world, China adheres to an open and inclusive foreign policy, and pursues win-win cooperation.

China strives to safeguard the sovereignty, autonomy and development interests of all countries, especially those small and weak, daring to speak out for them. It defends international fairness and justice, and works for a more just and equitable international order. For instance, on the Palestine-Israel issue, China speaks out for the Palestinian people who suffer from injustice and are enduring a severe humanitarian disaster, and it advocates for the adoption of the two-state solution and the resolution on cease-fire.

Shouldering its responsibilities as a major country, China has proposed and implemented the Belt and Road Initiative. Underpinned by the vision to build a community with a shared future for mankind, the initiative aims to forge friendly ties and advance human progress and development. China's ideas, policies, and actions have added stability and certainty to a complex and volatile world, making China an important force for world peace, security, and stability, as well as a key contributor to growth and prosperity.

China is now on track to drive the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation through Chinese-style modernization. Its growth and success will bring benefits to the entire world, especially to the vast number of developing countries on their journey of modernization.

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WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

CULTURAL HERITAGE



Technology offers journey into ancient world

Exhibition brings creative way to connect to excavated relics, artifacts and people, **Deng Zhangyu** reports in Changsha.

Standing under a giant LED dome, visitors to Hunan Museum in Changsha, Central China's Hunan province, immerse themselves in a journey of the immortals dominated by mythical creatures imagined by people from about 2,100 years ago.

In the underground world, two colossal whales swim in dark waters while a towering giant hoists the entire earthly plane. Above, in the human realm, mourners gather for solemn burial rites, praying for the departed to transcend into celestial beings. Meanwhile, in heaven, mythical guardians stand vigilant, illuminating the path forward.

Welcome to the digital exhibition, *The Art of Life: Multimedia Exhibition of Mawangdui Han Culture*, where you can experience the vivid imaginations and artistic expressions regarding the universe and life of people from the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24). It's an innovative, digital endeavor by Hunan Museum to showcase its archaeological findings of the Mawangdui Han Tombs, where 3,000 pieces of treasured artifacts and a well-preserved female body dating back over 2 millennia were unearthed in 1972. Recognized as one of the most significant archaeological discoveries in China in the 20th century, it has attracted widespread attention both domestically and internationally.

"The digital exhibition tells ancient stories by employing the language of contemporary art," says Duan Xiaoming, director of Hunan Museum. "I'm a little nervous about whether visitors will like it or not. It's rare for a museum to present an archaeological exhibition in such a way."

The exhibition, opened on June 8 and running until next February, uses technologies such as naked-eye 3D and holographic projections to offer an immersive experience and a visual feast inspired by artifacts found in the tomb of the Marquis Dai's wife, Xin Zhui, whose un-mummified body was so well-preserved that medical experts were able to perform a full checkup, gynecological examination and autopsy. Many exquisite items, such as embroidered silk, lacquerware, musical instruments and wooden figures, were also unearthed from the tomb.

The digital exhibition features patterns and art designs inspired by Xin Zhui's tomb, but does not display any actual relics. In three years, the museum has created about 1,800 3D digital models of the artifacts and taken nearly 60,000 photos of the relics.

The exhibition consists of three sections. *Space and Time* features a digital layout of Xin Zhui's tomb, a central coffin chamber surrounded by four compartments and all the items buried in her tomb; *Ying and Yang* focuses on the imaginative patterns painted on the four nested lacquer coffins; and the *Life* section re-creates the painting depicted on a T-shaped silk banner laid on the surface of the innermost coffin.

"I think it's an exploration for a museum's future archaeological exhibitions. Transforming from viewing real relics to an immersive, theatrical and virtual experience, digital exhibitions can break the boundaries of time and space," Duan says. "It's easy for such exhibitions to tour across the world."



Center: A T-shaped silk banner from Xin Zhui's tomb at the Mawangdui Han Tombs in Hunan province is one of the inspirations for a digital exhibition at Hunan Museum.

WANG KAIHAO / CHINA DAILY

Clockwise from below left: Projected creative scenes displayed to visitors at the digital exhibition, *The Art of Life: Multimedia Exhibition of Mawangdui Han Culture*.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Left and right: Lacquerware items from the Mawangdui Han Tombs helped inspire the exhibition.

PHOTOS BY WANG KAIHAO / CHINA DAILY

The exhibition took three years to prepare and is co-organized with the Digital Library of China and US' Massachusetts-based Harvard FAS CAMlab, an art team established by Eugene Y. Wang, an art professor at Harvard University.

"Life is a question that humanity

has been pondering for thousands of years. The Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) people's concept of the cosmos and life, to some extent, are from the same perspective as those in the 21st century," says Wang, explaining why they chose "life" as the theme of the show.

The tomb of Xin Zhui offers a glimpse into the funerary practices and cosmological beliefs of the Han Dynasty. The elaborate burial goods and the design of the tombs reflect the importance of the afterlife and the desire for immortality.

Apart from the painting on the

T-shaped funeral banner mapping out an ascending journey to heaven, symbols, patterns and paintings on the four nested coffins also show vivid imagination regarding a safe passage to the afterlife. The painting on the third coffin used bright colors to depict the sun, mountains and auspicious animals, such as the dragon, tiger and deer. It illustrates the journey of a soul traveling through darkness into the eternal realm. The innermost coffin is adorned with feathers, symbolizing the hope that they would aid the deceased in ascending to immortality.

The exhibition used all these elements and turned them into a visual feast, "an artistic and abstract way to tell the stories of the Han Dynasty tombs," says Lyu Chenchen, associate director of Harvard FAS CAMlab.

"It is a distillation of the Western Han Dynasty's cosmology and view of life. We aim to enable audiences to look beyond the surface and engage more deeply with the conceptual world of early Chinese civilization, to glimpse the spiritual world of the people of that era and their artistic imaginations," Lyu says.

The Han Dynasty was an era of grand tomb construction. Nobles began building their tombs while they were still alive, making it one of the most significant undertakings of their lifetimes. Even though people knew living forever was just a fantasy, their strong belief in eternal life and an everlasting soul kept them determined, as they saw "death" as just another form of "life" and believed life continued in a different way.

Since the excavation of the Mawangdui Han Tombs in the early 1970s, the rich relics found within have been exhibited both in and out of China, attracting large numbers of visitors. With the opening of the digital exhibition, Duan says that it is more convenient for the museum to hold exhibitions outside China without the complicated transportation of the actual relics. A global tour is currently being planned.

He adds that it will also help them to attract more young visitors. "We used the traditional way to exhibit our relics for years. It's time for us to change and employ the way adored by the younger generation," Duan says.

Jia Yan, an art professor at Peking University in Beijing, came to the show on its opening day with her 14-year-old daughter. They went to the third floor of the museum first, where the relics of the tombs are displayed. However, her daughter found it a little bit difficult to engage, failing to feel the connection with the artifacts that her mother hoped for.

When the daughter entered the digital exhibition on the first floor, she immediately responded and told Jia that everything in the digital show related to the artifacts she viewed on the third floor. When Jia asked her daughter whether she would like to go back to take another look at the real relics, the teenager quickly said, "Yes."

"The show provides us with another way to present relic-related exhibitions. The three sections of the digital exhibition are like a typical three-act drama. It brings people from a state of shock back to one of tranquility or delight," Jia says.

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Noblewoman from the past gives researchers new insight

By **DENG ZHANGYU** in Changsha

What did a noblewoman dating back more than 2,100 years look like? This enigmatic question was answered in dramatic fashion when Hunan Museum in Changsha, Hunan province, unveiled a 3D digital image of the human female remains recently, the longest-preserved "wet" human body ever found in China.

Xin Zhui, also called Lady Dai, was unearthed from a tomb at the Mawangdui site in 1972 in Changsha. The other two tombs discovered next to hers belonged to her husband Li Cang, the Marquis of Dai, and their son. More than 3,000 artifacts were also uncovered, making it one of the most significant archaeological discoveries of the 20th century in China.

When the noblewoman was discovered, her body was found to be intact and in a remarkable state of preservation.

Her skin remained moist, her subcutaneous soft tissue had retained its elasticity and some joints were still movable. Even her eyelashes were in place and the lines on her fingers and toes were discernible, leading to the estimation that she was about 50 years old when she

died, says Duan Xiaoming, director of Hunan Museum.

Xin Zhui's face was swollen, deformed and decayed at the time of excavation, making it impossible to know her appearance when she was alive. The 3D digital version of Xin Zhui was based primarily on X-ray scans of her skull.

The museum released a full-body version of Xin Zhui in a seated position at 35 years old and a head image of her at 50 years old.

The digital project started last October. To protect Xin Zhui's body, experts did not directly handle it. Instead, they relied on close, multi-angled observations and measurements of the cadaver, practical experience, database sample comparisons, pathological examinations at the time of excavation and research on early Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) makeup to infer her appearance, demeanor and other physical characteristics.

Additionally, they paid special attention to the image of the hunched Xin Zhui depicted in a T-shaped silk painting, which corresponded with lumbar disease symptoms found during the pathological examination of the body. The expert team completed the preliminary facial reconstruction



Left: Facial reconstruction expert Yuan Zhongbiao (front) instructs a colleague working on the digital versions of Xin Zhui, wife of the Marquis of Dai, whose remains were unearthed from a tomb at the Mawangdui site in Changsha, Hunan province. Right: A 3D image of Xin Zhui at the age of 35.

PHOTOS BY XINHUA

in January of this year. Details of her hairstyle, headwear and clothing are yet to be refined.

Yuan Zhongbiao, a facial reconstruction expert involved in the digital version of Xin Zhui, says in terms of facial appearance, Xin Zhui was relatively ordinary and not the "noble

beauty" expected by the public.

"Due to the diversity of facial features, there are similar types but no exact matches. We restored her appearance as accurately as possible," Yuan says.

After the release of Xin Zhui's digital image, some netizens raised

doubts about the depiction, suggesting that the facial features of the marquise, particularly the nose, bear a striking resemblance to Yuan. They suspect that Yuan may have used his own face as a reference in the reconstruction of Xin Zhui's appearance.

In early June, Hunan Museum stated that the digital representation of Xin Zhui has no connection to the face of Yuan, the reconstruction expert.

It was not the first time the museum has attempted to restore Xin Zhui's appearance. In 2002, it invited a professor of forensic medicine to reconstruct the facial images at four different ages — 7, 18, 30 and 50 years old. The next year, it unveiled a statue of Xin Zhui based on the painted images.

Explaining why the museum tried repeatedly to reconstruct the noblewoman's appearance, Zhang Xingguo, an assistant researcher at the Hunan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, says that chasing the truth about history is a key part of how humans move forward. "To get closer to what really happened, we need to use scientific methods," Zhang says.

In June, the digital rendition of Xin Zhui was showcased on large screens at a metro station in Changsha. Plans are underway for an interactive artificial intelligence-driven version of the marquise. Xin Zhui is anticipated to serve as a cultural relics interpreter and engage in real-time conversations with visitors.

LIFESHANGHAI

Berlin orchestra sets a masterful tone

Philharmoniker puts on 11 concerts along with educational projects to boost love for music, Zhang Kun reports.

The Berliner Philharmoniker begins its 10-day residence in Shanghai this week from Monday to next Tuesday. The prestigious orchestra from Germany will join hands with Chinese pianist Yuja Wang to present 11 concerts, including four symphonic performances, and a series of educational projects around the city.

This is the first time the 142-year-old German symphony will hold a residency program in China. More than 6,000 tickets for four symphony concerts sold out within five minutes in April, when ticket sales kicked off, according to the China Shanghai International Arts Festival, host of the program. The festival also revealed that more than 40 percent of the ticket buyers were not from Shanghai, but 21 other provinces and cities across China and abroad.

This is the fourth time the Berliner Philharmoniker will perform in Shanghai and its sixth visit to China. Andrea Zietzschmann, general manager of the Berliner Philharmoniker Foundation, is impressed with China's excitement for the orchestra and the growing public enthusiasm for classical music, especially among young audiences. She says that a series of outstanding musicians have come from China, such as Yuja Wang and Lang Lang, and the orchestra received its first Chinese musician in the 2019/20 season. Thirty-year-old Mei Diyang is the first viola principal of the company from China.

"We really want to create an impact in China," Zietzschmann tells China Daily on Monday.

In contrast to the usual tour schedule when the company would stay no more than 2 days in a city, the residency allows it to present "a whole showcase of the Berliner Philharmoniker and what we do at home". She says: "We are not only bringing four symphonic concerts and a wide repertoire with our music director Kirill Petrenko, but we will also perform seven chamber concerts and a lot of educational activities."

"The whole idea and aim is to get to know the people of Shanghai better, to create friendship, to have a good exchange, and to give an idea of what the orchestra is like in different aspects."

These concerts and public events will take members of the German orchestra to "theaters, school campuses, cultural landmarks and other



Above: The Berliner Philharmoniker presented its first concert, featuring pianist Yuja Wang, at the Shanghai Grand Theatre on Wednesday. Right bottom: Its percussionist Raphael Haeger talks with a Chinese opera actor in Shanghai on Tuesday. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Andrea Zietzschmann (right), general manager of Berliner Philharmoniker Foundation, gives free tickets to two visually impaired children on Monday.

popular locations in Shanghai," says Li Ming, president of the center for the arts festival. "From the most dedicated music lovers to ordinary folks, from professional instrumentalists to young music students, everyone in the city will have the opportunity to encounter the musicians during their stay."

On the first concert on Wednesday, the Berliner Philharmoniker performed under the baton of Petrenko, chief conductor and artistic director of the company since the 2019/20 season, at the Shanghai

Grand Theatre, the same repertoire as its end-of-season concert at Waldbühne in Berlin on June 22, a grand outdoor event attended by more than 22,000 spectators.

Chinese pianist Yuja Wang has collaborated with the Berliner Philharmoniker often and played Sergei Prokofiev's *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 1 in D major* at the concert. On Saturday Wang will join the company again to play Beethoven's *Piano Concerto No. 4 in G major*.

The unique sound of the Berliner

Philharmoniker has been built over many decades and many generations of artists in cooperation with the music directors, according to Noah Bendix-Balgley, the first concertmaster of the company.

In the Berlin Philharmoniker, there's a great tradition of individual creativity and thinking about the orchestra as a sort of chamber music, he tells China Daily. "There's so much personality and individual brilliance among the members and we try to bring that together."

At concerts, instead of performing exactly what is prepared, musicians are ready to reach beyond that and take risks, he says, "and that's something that I enjoy about the orchestra."

"Counting myself, musicians with the Berliner Philharmoniker come from 32 countries and regions," Mei, the first principal viola player and the first Chinese musician of the Berliner Philharmoniker, tells China Daily. "Through my two music seasons with the company, I have gained more understanding that music is an art without borders ... we have all come together to serve the music ... I am not so naive as to believe that my joining will bring any immediate change to the sound of our company. There are more than 100 of us and we must work as one. I need to know when to show my individuality and lead my section but mostly I need to learn when

to support and let others shine."

Aside from the four symphony and seven chamber ensemble concerts, the company will hold master classes, play in a range of nonconventional venues and engage with the community. On Friday, Mei and several colleagues are set to go to suburban Shanghai's Lingai area and play a chamber concert at Dishui Lake Theater.

Educational programs have always been a priority for the Berliner Philharmoniker since Simon Rattle took up the position of music director (2002-18), according to Zietzschmann. "We want to have a big outreach and help as many people as possible get acquainted with classical music," she says. "In Berlin, we have a program for babies a couple of months old to elderly people. Since we are doing a resident program in Shanghai, we have the time to do more than play symphony concerts."

Not everybody can come to those concerts, Bendix-Balgley says. "So we must engage with the community and music lovers around the city, in different settings than the concert hall."

"It's meaningful to have a musical exchange with people here, which is meaningful to build the relationship and have some sort of impact on the next generation of musicians and music lovers," he says.

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From top: Two posters for the concerts in Shanghai. Jelka Weber from the orchestra plays the Chinese bamboo flute.

Something in the air as festival attracts global talent

By ZHANG KUN

Shanghai will host some big-name artists from all over the world at an upcoming music festival, with the premiere of new compositions and arrangements.

Music in the Summer Air, or MISA, is a festival held by the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, which will take place from Monday to July 15.

The 24 live concerts and an extensive collection of other music events around Shanghai will feature artists and ensembles including the New York Philharmonic, cellists Wang Jian and Qin Liwei, violinist Ning Feng, pianist Zhang Haochen, harpichordist Fabio Bonizzoni and the Makoto Ozone Jazz Quartet.

A vintage program card in the archives of the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra shows that Mario Paci, then director of the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra, conducted the orchestra and played a concert at Hongkew Park, now known as Lu Xun Park, on a summer evening in 1926.

The program card is the earliest documentation of summer outdoor concerts in Shanghai, says Zhou Ping, director of the orchestra.

"If we count from that concert, the tradition of summer outdoor



Left: Jaap van Zweden will conduct the New York Philharmonic in two concerts at the MISA festival. Right: Makoto Ozone, born in Kobe, Japan, will perform with his jazz quartet at the Urban Music Lawn on July 12. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



concerts has carried on for almost a century in Shanghai."

The Shanghai Symphony Orchestra is celebrating its 145th birthday this year and its 15th installment of the MISA festival.

"The orchestra has come a long way, following the development of urban civilization in Shanghai. Step-by-step, we have helped to bring people and music closer, which has become an indispensable part of everyday life in the city," Zhou says.

MISA, jointly hosted by the

orchestra and the Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, is a cross-genre music festival centered on classical music committed to integrating it into the urban lifestyle and cultural scenes.

This year, in addition to performances in the concert hall and chamber hall at the Jaguar Shanghai Symphony Hall, the MISA program also includes seven free open-air events, five cultural talks and 13 "Across the City" activities, which will see musicians performing at landmarks around the city.

The opening gala concert will take place on the main stage of the Jaguar Shanghai Symphony Hall on Monday under the batons of four conductors — Yu Long, music director of the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, Yang Yang, Huang Yi and Sun Yifan — performing with some of the most celebrated Chinese soloists in the global music scene.

The New York Philharmonic, in its long-term strategic partnership with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra and the MISA festival, will be returning to Shanghai with

the full orchestra for the first time since 2019.

Music director Jaap van Zweden will conduct the orchestra in two concerts at the MISA festival. The first show on Tuesday will feature baritone Thomas Hampson, who will sing selections from Mahler's song cycle *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*.

Also, a new composition titled *Lumina* by Nina Shekhar will make its China premiere at the concert. The young female composer has been praised as "tart and compelling" by The New York Times and a

"rare composer who opens our ears a little wider each time" by the Chicago Tribune.

Some instruments that are less heard in symphony concerts, such as the harmonica, accordion and saxophone, will take center stage at MISA this year.

"I've waited for 10 years for this phone call inviting me to perform again in Shanghai," Gianluca Littera, a renowned Italian harmonica performer, says about his excitement for the concert with conductor Zhang Lu and string players of the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra on July 5. Together they will present a free concert at the Shanghai Urban Music Lawn Gordon Jacob's *Five Pieces for Harmonica and Strings*, as well as some of the most popular film music by Ennio Morricone.

On July 15, the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra will conclude this year's MISA with a concert celebrating the centennial commemoration of martial arts novelist Louis Cha.

Yu Long will join hands with violinist Wang Jing and Chinese *shudi* (bamboo flute) player Feng Tianshi to present *Wu Xia* (Martial Art Heroes), a new composition celebrating Cha's life and art, by Liang Haoqi, alongside violin concerto *Hero* by Oscar-winning composer Tan Dun.

LIFE

Zhan Chunpei (center) is captain of the *Haixun 01*, a 5,000-ton patrol vessel belonging to the Shanghai Maritime Safety Administration. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The wisdom of Confucius still has me transfixed

It is a memory that will forever be etched in my mind. To the accompaniment of pulsating music amid a sea of color and movement, the global audience looked on in awe as China greeted the world at the 2008 Olympics opening ceremony in Beijing with the welcoming and touching Confucian proverb, "Friends have come from afar, how happy we are!"

I sat at home in the United Kingdom marveling at this spectacle, transfixed by this blend of flawless choreography and cutting-edge technology that was clearly

steeped in ancient Chinese history and tradition.

Nick Ive
Second Thoughts

Yet, like so many foreigners, I was ashamedly rather ignorant of just how revered the philosopher Confucius was in China, and how his teachings have, and still continue to play such an important

role in Chinese history, culture and society. His teachings stand the test of time and remain the cornerstone of a proud, respectful, sincere and innovative nation.

I could never have imagined that nearly 16 years later, thanks to China Daily and the hospitality and kindness of the Cyberspace Administration of Shandong, I would be part of a group of international media invited to visit Qufu, the hometown of Confucius (551-479 BC).

Located in Jining in Shandong province, Qufu is naturally proud of its heritage and expertly keeps the spirit of Confucius alive thanks to an array of historical and modern sites, including the Confucius Museum. Here we learned about the man, his life and teachings, as well as about Chinese civilization through a fascinating variety of exhibits and musical instruments.

One thing is evident though, having tried my hand at the *zhong* (bells), the *qing* (a stone chime) and the *guqin* (Chinese zither), sadly I don't think I will be invited to join the talented group of artists who wowed us with traditional music upon our arrival at the museum.

And to emphasize my lack of musical ability, I am just relieved the public did not have to witness my feeble attempts at performing the *yiwu*, a dance used in sacrificial rites in ancient China ahead of the incredible memorial ceremony at the Confucius Temple.

The legacy of Confucius in this part of Shandong is woven into the fabric of people's lives. We delved into the rich cultural history by learning ancient practices that are kept alive through skills such as calligraphy, as demonstrated by Kong Xiangsheng, a renowned calligrapher and descendant of Confucius.

The Kong Family Mansion, where the descendants of Confucius lived and where historical artifacts are preserved, was the setting to learn to make shadow puppets and Kong-fu pastry, and do some stone-rubbing, while the Lu Brocade Museum gave us the chance to try embroidery, weaving and make knot buttons and thread-bound books, as well as learn costume etiquette during our whistle-stop tour.

Our last port of call was Rongcheng, a picturesque fishing village situated in Weihai on the easternmost tip of Shandong, which is enjoying a boom in tourism.

Thanks to its mix of golden beaches, delicious seafood and cultural heritage of seaweed-roofed buildings, such as the Yuying Elementary School and the Sanggou Bay Marine Ranch in Linjialiu village, a delightful homestay, this captivating region makes for a wonderful visit.

Having only moved to China about three months ago, I've not had much of chance to experience life outside Beijing, but Confucius once said, "Wherever you go, go with all your heart", and that is exactly what I plan to do whenever I get the chance to see more of this wonderful historic, friendly, majestic and vibrant country.

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The sister who 'makes waves'

China's first female captain of a public oceangoing ship talks rescue missions and life on the high seas, **Zheng Zheng** reports in Shanghai.

At just 33, Zhan Chunpei has already achieved several significant milestones in her maritime career. She is the captain of the *Haixun 01*, a 5,000-ton patrol vessel belonging to the Shanghai Maritime Safety Administration, and manages a 35-person crew, making her the first female captain of a public oceangoing ship in China, and she has participated in 20 major search and rescue missions, including the search for the missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370.

"I call myself a real 'sister who makes waves'," she tells China Daily in an exclusive interview, referring to the popular reality show *Sisters Who Make Waves*, in which female celebrities, mostly over the age of 30, are challenged to stage performances that defy Chinese showbiz stereotypes about age.

Zhan began her maritime career at the Shanghai Maritime Safety Administration after graduating from the Shanghai Maritime University in 2013. Despite having a variety of opportunities open to her, she chose to dedicate herself to life at sea.

When she heard that the *Haixun 01*, one of the country's largest and most advanced maritime patrol and rescue vessels at the time, was being commissioned, Zhan set her sights on it.

"I requested a shipboard position several times until a chance finally opened up," she says.

Her opportunity came in 2014 when the *Haixun 01* was dispatched as command ship for the Chinese fleet taking part in the search for Flight MH370 in the southern reaches of the Indian Ocean. The ship was in urgent need of rescue personnel and Zhan volunteered, becoming a trainee third officer. The experience gave her a passion for maritime rescue operations.

"I would say the starting point of my maritime rescue career was quite high," she says. "As the on-site command ship for the Chinese fleet, we demonstrated China's technical prowess, and our commitment to international search and rescue efforts."

Zhan's involvement in multiple search and rescue missions changed her perception of maritime rescue operations. Before they can enjoy the knowledge that they have helped save people, often at the very last moment, rescuers have to deal with the pressure of searching the vast, featureless ocean for signs of life.

"Still, every additional effort we make gives those in distress another chance of survival," she says.



Top: Zhan in a work meeting. Above: She is the first female captain of a public oceangoing ship in China and has taken part in around 20 major search and rescue missions.

This belief was borne in late 2015 when a fishing vessel capsized in the Yangtze River's estuary area, leading to nine people going missing. As third officer, Zhan assisted the captain with on-site coordination.

"Our first scan of the vessel detected no signs of life. As we were about to depart, our boatswain took the risk of jumping onto the overturned hull for a final check, and he was able to hear a survivor," Zhan says. "The captain immediately requested assistance from the maritime rescue center, and after efforts by all parties involved, we successfully rescued a fisherman, who had been trapped for 36 hours."

In January 2018, she faced one of her most challenging missions when the *Sanchi*, a tanker carrying 110,000 metric tons of highly flammable condensate oil, collided with

another vessel in the East China Sea and caught fire. By then a second officer, Zhan was urgently recalled from leave.

"As the on-site command vessel, we had to get close to the stricken ship for an inspection," Zhan says. "We had multiple tasks — rescuing people in distress, controlling the fire, and monitoring oil spills. It was a significant challenge and required us to balance our own safety with coordinating 32 surface and air rescue units, both domestic and international."

A clear mind was needed. "Emotions can cloud your judgment, so I've learned to remain dispassionate when lives are at stake," she explains. "You can reflect on the tragedy later; but in that moment, it's essential to be calm and collected."

The operation took 117 days to complete.

onboard, nor are all women unsuited. What matters is their passion for the work and how well it aligns with their abilities."

Zhan also believes that increased female participation has demystified a role once seen as purely male, and that diversity of perspective is a strength.

"Having both genders creates different perspectives and voices when it comes to approaching issues. It fosters a more diverse environment conducive to overall development," she says.

Zhan adds that technological advancements and automation have reduced the physical demands of many maritime jobs, making them more accessible to women. "Today, it's more about endurance and mental acuity. With a healthy lifestyle and regular exercise, most tasks are manageable for women."

She also advocates for measures to attract more women to the maritime sector, suggesting more tailored career plans and support systems. "For instance, we could ensure that the necessary feminine hygiene products are available onboard, especially on long-distance voyages."

Beyond her maritime duties, Zhan has been involved in academic research to improve psychological support for survivors of maritime accidents. Having witnessed the mental harm resulting from such terrifying experiences, she is determined to complement rescues with mental health assistance.

Through partnerships with major hospitals, Zhan and her colleagues are seeking to develop comprehensive emergency plans that improve efficiency while addressing the psychological needs of survivors.

"Rescuing a person is only half the battle," she says. "Neglecting their psychological wounds does them a disservice. My dream is for this human element to become an integral part of our rescue protocol."

Looking ahead, Zhan is aiming higher.

"I hope to contribute more to the maritime sector and be a voice for women in different roles within the field," she says.

For those considering a maritime career, Zhan has a piece of advice. "If you have a passion for this kind of work or a dream to enter the field, take the plunge. The difficulties you imagine are often far greater than those you encounter in reality."

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