

Towering passion

Craftsman dedicates life to building perfect replica of Sakyamuni Pagoda

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Kremlin issues warning over US missiles

WORLD, PAGE 7



Global reach

New-age ventures of Chinese firms elevate Belt and Road

BUSINESS, PAGE 8

CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 MONDAY, JULY 15, 2024

High on entertainment



Equestrian performers display their skills on Sunday during the opening ceremony of Naadam festival in Xilin Gol League in North China's Inner Mongolia autonomous region. Naadam, which means "entertainment and games", is a traditional festival celebrated by the Mongolian ethnic group. It features a variety of sports such as wrestling, archery and horse racing. WANG ZHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Security scrutinized after Trump shooting

By HENG WEILI in New York

A day after former US president Donald Trump narrowly survived an assassination attempt at a rally, there was much commentary as to whether the Secret Service had provided adequate security. The sniper, identified as Thomas Crooks, 20, fired rounds from a semi-automatic AR-15-style weapon as he was perched on a rooftop in Butler, Pennsylvania. Trump said one

bullet pierced his right ear. Another shot killed a spectator at the rally on Saturday. Cooks, a resident of Bethel Park, a Pittsburgh suburb, was killed by Secret Service snipers who were positioned on another rooftop, but not before he managed to fire several rounds. A local police officer climbed to the roof and encountered Crooks, who pointed his rifle at the officer, The Associated Press reported. The officer retreated down a ladder, and Crooks quickly took a shot toward Trump. That is when the Secret Service countersnipers shot him, said

officials who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity. The officials also said that bomb-making materials were found inside Crooks' vehicle and at his home. Questions arose as to how Crooks was able to go unnoticed by security as he scaled a building 150 yards (137 meters) away. A couple of eyewitnesses told reporters that they saw Crooks atop the building and yelled repeatedly for law enforcement to respond. The building where Crooks was is home to AGR International, a manufacturing plant just north of the Butler Farm Show grounds where

Trump's rally was held. "We're not looking at any skyscrapers here," said Robert E. McDonald, a lecturer at the University of New Haven who spent 20 years in the Secret Service," to The New York Times. "They should be able to see that." Former Secret Service director Julia Pierson told USA Today: "I think 1,000 yards is the sniper capability that we have a concern about for the president. So anything that's within that range, that is a professional, makeable shot," she said. See Shooting, page 7

Anxiety of the West over SCO rise misplaced

The 24th Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the Kazakh capital of Astana served as an important international forum for dialogue and cooperation. However, it has drawn a predictable negative response from the Western media, which is trying to project the summit as another bid by China and its allies to establish a counterweight to Western dominance. This portrayal, steeped in skepticism, reflects the deep-seated anxieties about a shifting world order away from the established Western-centric paradigm. For years, Western analyses and political discourse have centered on a singular question: Is the SCO a threat? However, the truth may be simpler than it appears. The short answer is: No. The SCO is not a challenge but rather a different kind of international organization. Understanding the SCO requires recognizing its unique approach and objectives, which differ from Western norms. Rather than a challenger, the SCO represents a distinct model of regional cooperation. In a rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape, appreciating these differences is crucial for fostering mutual understanding and coexistence. As a uniquely Eurasia-centric

WORLD WATCH By Imran Khalid

institution designed to address the region's specific needs, the SCO charter emphasizes goals such as strengthening mutual trust, friendship and good neighborliness between member states, while jointly ensuring regional peace, security and stability. Founded in 2001, the SCO serves as a crucial platform for dialogue and cooperation among its member states. Originally emerging from the Shanghai Five mechanism, which was established in 1996 by China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan, the SCO formally took shape on June 15, 2001, when these nations, along with Uzbekistan, convened in Shanghai to enhance political and economic cooperation. At its first summit in 2001, the organization adopted the Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism, making the fight against these threats a fundamental mission. This proactive stance predated the West's heightened concern over such issues, showcasing the SCO's foresight and regional commitment. The SCO's approach, emphasizing cooperation and mutual security within Eurasia, reflects its purpose-built nature, responding effectively to the evolving geopolitical landscape and standing as a testament to a different model of international relations, one that values cooperation over confrontation. See Mutual trust, page 4

TRACKS OF CHANGE LEAD TO PROSPERITY

BRI cross-border railway project helps Laos begin new phase of development, improving people's lives

By YANG HAN in Vientiane

As the Chinese saying goes, "Roads lead to riches." And this is what Somxay Laolion, a Laotian driver on the China-Laos Railway, has observed over the past two-and-a-half years. "As I drive between Vientiane and Boten (border town) every day, I can see more and more houses and factories being built along the route," said Somxay. "Every day, I can see the changes." Somxay said his family members are happy that he works for the railway because they believe the project is important to the

development of Laos, and will provide him with a better career path. As a flagship project under the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative, the 1,035-kilometer railway connects Kunming, the capital of Southwest China's Yunnan province, with the Laotian capital, Vientiane. It began operations in December 2021. Cross-border passenger service began in April 2023. See Rail, page 2

INSIDE Rekindling the Africa rising narrative Global Views, page 13

XI'S VISION | REFORM AND OPENING-UP

Third plenum to outline key reform steps

President's emphasis on people's well-being to guide, bolster nation's modernization drive

By XU WEI xuwe@chinadaily.com.cn

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China's policymakers are gathering in Beijing on Monday for an epoch-making meeting to advance the nation's reform and opening-up, amid high expectations that key steps will be introduced to further energize the world's second-largest economy and bolster its modernization drive.

The third plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee, scheduled from Monday to Thursday, will deliberate on a key policy document on deepening reform across the board and advancing Chinese modernization, the CPC's core leadership announced last month.

Ahead of the historic session, Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, presided over a host of meetings to set the tone for the key plenum and chart the direction for the nation's future reform.

He highlighted that "the furthering of reform must focus on refining and developing the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and advance modernization of the country's governance system and governance capacity."

"Our efforts in reform and development ultimately aim to enable the people to live better lives," Xi, who is also Chinese president, told a symposium attended by experts and entrepreneurs in May.

A readout of a key Party meeting presided over by Xi in February said: "Reform measures need to be sharply focused, targeting the most pressing problems. Reform efforts must be substantial and impactful."

Historically, third plenums have been pivotal in setting the direction for major economic and political reforms. The third plenum of the 11th CPC Central Committee in 1978 marked the beginning of China's reform and opening-up drive under Deng Xiaoping, setting the country on a path to economic transformation.

Wang Huiyao, president of the Center for China and Globalization, a Beijing-based think tank, said that President Xi has persisted in using the key strategy of reform and opening-up to address developmental challenges and respond to risks and challenges along the path of progress. See Reforms, page 4

"Since 1978, China has introduced major initiatives to advance reform and opening-up to higher levels almost every decade, unleashing significant dividends for its economic development," Wang said.

The policy dividends from this week's plenary session will enable Beijing to better navigate complexities in global landscapes, advance transformation, upgrading and high-quality growth of the economy, and enhance the people's sense of gain, he said.

China, after having lifted more than 800 million people out of poverty over the past four decades, is now facing a new strategic goal of ensuring common prosperity for all, he noted.

To meet such a policy goal, Wang said the Party should continue to carry out broader reforms to close the divide between urban and rural areas, including steps to reform the rural land system and allow farmers to transfer the right to use their homesteads, to boost urbanization and further energize growth.

Other analysts have underlined the session as pivotal in shaping China's policy directions in the next five years and beyond.

Bert Hofman, adjunct professor at the East Asian Institute of National University of Singapore, said this week's plenary session presents a key opportunity for developing a comprehensive reform agenda and anchoring the expectations of businesses and households on a common agenda.

"There is wide recognition among China's leadership that further reforms in the economic system are essential for achieving high-quality growth," Hofman said.

"Science and technology policy, for instance, will be critical for innovation to drive growth, but fiscal, financial and human resource policies are important as well. Fiscal policies are critical for more shared growth, but hukou (household registration), education and health policies are equally critical in building a society that offers equal chances for all," he said.

Gearing to go



Members of the Chinese women's volleyball team do warm-up exercises on Saturday at Zhangzhou, Fujian province, as they prepare for the upcoming 2024 Paris Olympics. WEI PEIQIAN / XINHUA See more, page 4

PAGE TWO



Left: Staff members perform a dance on the inaugural train service from Xishuangbanna, Yunnan province, to Luang Prabang, Laos, on April 13. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY. Passengers wait in line to buy tickets for the China-Laos Railway at the ticket hall in Vientiane station on June 25. JIANG JIAXUAN / CHINA DAILY. Chinese tourists from Guiyang, Guizhou province, are welcomed by the Lao National Art Troupe in the capital Vientiane, on May 9. The first Guizhou-Vientiane train carrying more than 200 Chinese passengers arrived at Vientiane station on May 9. DU DAPENG / XINHUA

Rail: Transforming nations, connecting cultures

From page 1

With a total length of 422.4 kilometers and a designed top speed of 160 kilometers per hour, the Lao section is an electrified single-track railway.

After gaining a degree in Chinese-language studies in China, Somxay saw a Laos-China Railway Co recruitment advertisement during the COVID-19 pandemic and decided to give it a try. The LCRC is a joint venture based in Vientiane and is responsible for the operation of the railway's Lao section.

With zero knowledge of railways, Somxay had to study from scratch to pass the recruitment test. Since then he has been learning from a Chinese colleague, or "shifu" as he calls him, the hands-on skills to drive a train.

Thanks to his hard work, when the railway began operations in December 2021, Somxay was selected to deliver the launch report from the Lao side via video to Chinese President Xi Jinping and Lao President Thongloun Sisoulith.

"I was really nervous at the time because I was afraid if I said something wrong it would affect the whole launch ceremony," said Somxay. "But the pressure was eased when the train arrived at Boten."

Milestone for country

Adopting Chinese technical standards, the China-Laos Railway is China's first international railway project primarily funded and built by Chinese companies and connected to China's railway network.

Since June 2020, the Laos-China Railway Co has recruited and trained Lao trainees in nine groups. More than 800 Lao employees, or over 90 percent of the trainees, have been assigned specific positions, and the proportion of Lao employees in the company is close to 60 percent, according to the LCRC.

The China-Laos Railway has opened "a new phase of development" for Laos to transform itself from a landlocked country to a land-linked one, said Saleumsak Sayamoungkhoun, director general of the Lao Ministry of Public Works and Transport's Permanent Secretary Office. "It is a milestone for Laos," said Saleumsak.

Noting the railway has maintained a positive trend of increasing volume and efficiency, as well as thriving passenger and freight businesses, Liu Hong, general manager of the LCRC, said the China-Laos Railway has become "a road of development, happiness, and friendship for the Lao and Chinese people."

In addition, Liu said the company has been working to build an international logistics golden corridor, ensure better travel for people and operational safety, promote in-depth and practical business development along the railway route, and help the people of China and Laos to connect with each other.

In 2023, the Laos section of the China-Laos Railway carried 4.089 million metric tons of cargo, a year-on-year increase of 83.1 percent, with a daily average of 11,204 tons. During the same period, the Laos section carried 2.594 million passengers, a year-on-year increase of 85.8 percent, and a daily average of 7,106 passengers.

As part of the pan-Asia railway network

"The China-Laos Railway has made a strong contribution to facilitating passengers and tourists."

Darany Phommavongsa,
Lao Deputy Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism

4.089 m
metric tons

Amount of cargo carried by the Laos section in 2023, an 83.1 percent year-on-year increase



Passengers board a train at Xishuangbanna railway station, Yunnan, on April 13, headed to Luang Prabang in Laos. WANG JINGYI / XINHUA

running from Kunming to Singapore, the China-Laos Railway connects Southeast Asia with China, Northeast Asia, Central Asia, and even Europe, transforming Laos into a land transportation hub in Southeast Asia.

"With the trial operation of the Laos-Thailand Railway between Bangkok and Vientiane on July 13 and 14, and the future connection of the China-Laos-Thailand Railway with the Malaysian Railway, economic and trade cooperation and people-to-people exchanges between ASEAN and China will be further promoted, driving the rapid economic development of regional countries," said Liu.

In the latest step toward improved regional logistics and rail connectivity, the ASEAN Express, a new international freight train service, was launched in June by Malaysia to connect with Thailand, Laos and China.

Near the Vientiane South Station in Laos, the Vientiane Saysetha Development Zone, which is being jointly built by Laos and China, had garnered investments of \$3 billion as of April, attracting 145 companies from nine countries including China, Thailand, and Japan. Among them, 72 companies are already operational.

In 2021, the LCRC moved its headquarters into the development zone.

With an area of 11.5 square kilometers, the development zone currently employs 7,000 people, and the number is expected to exceed 15,000 by the end of 2024. Total annual output will exceed \$2 billion after it has reached full operating capacity.

Tourism boost

With more Chinese tourists coming to Laos via the new railway route, the Lao government announced a 15-day visa-free policy for Chinese tourists from July during the Visit Laos Year 2024, to further encourage tourism and cultural ties between the two countries.

"The government of the Lao PDR (People's Democratic Republic) has identified the tourism sector as one of the important priorities in the country's socio-economic development and has used a large amount of the budget for the development of tourism," said Lao Deputy Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism Darany Phommavongsa.

Darany said the Visit Laos Year campaign aims to promote Lao tourism and attract more international tourists, which will contribute to job creation and foreign currency flows into the country.

"The China-Laos Railway has made a strong contribution to facilitating passengers and tourists," Darany told a group of 25 journalists and influencers from China and Southeast Asia on a media tour of the China-Laos Railway.

Organized by the Chinese Mission to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China Daily, the media group took a train to visit key places along the railway route, including Vientiane, Luang Prabang and Boten in Laos, as well as Mohan, Xishuangbanna, Pu'er and Kunming in China from June 23 to 30.

After the launch of the railway, more Chinese tourists are coming to Luang Prabang, helping the town, which was Laos' ancient capital and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, grab a big share of the Lao tourism market, said Bounthavone Phondala, an academic with the Luang Prabang National Museum.

Due to rising demand, Bounthavone said there has been a shortage of tour guides. The museum currently has one guide who can speak Mandarin.

Goud, who goes by one name, is from the Khmu ethnic minority group in Laos.

Working in a handicraft shop in Luang Prabang for the past year and a half, she said that it has been observed that more tourists, especially from China, are coming because of the railway.

"The railway is quite helpful especially in peak seasons like winter. There are a lot of people coming to visit Luang Prabang," said Goud. "I am very happy because our products are selling well."

Visitors impressed

Chen Yali, 29, a tourist from Hunan province in Central China, said she traveled by air to Xishuangbanna in Yunnan in order to take the China-Laos Railway for a three-day Lao trip.

"I teach English and history at a rural school and we talk a lot about the BRI, which makes me very interested in the railway project," said Chen. "The overall travel experience was very simple and the cross-border check was not as difficult as we had imagined."

After completing his trip in Laos, Umberto Disperati, a 30-year-old tourist from Italy, took the China-Laos Railway to start his first trip to China in Yunnan and Sichuan provinces.

"I was intending to travel from Laos to China and after looking on the internet I found out that (the railway) was the easiest way instead of taking flights," said Disperati. "It was easy to navigate the train station. It is huge and the train is quite clean and new."

Disperati said he hopes the train can open ticket bookings more in advance so he can better plan his trip.

For Laotian train driver Somxay, operating the China-Laos railway makes him feel proud.

Somxay said his shifu always tells him that every move they make will affect the safety of the passengers and the steady operation of the railway.

"When I was standing on the platform and saw the long train cars moving past the station quickly, I felt the responsibility and was really proud," said Somxay.

"I am driving the best, fastest and steady train in Laos," he said.

Somxay is now preparing for a test, which if he passes, will allow him to drive the train independently in the future.



The first freight train heading for the Laotian capital Vientiane departs from the Xi'an international port in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, in April 2022. LIU XIANG / XINHUA

TOP NEWS

SCIENCE

1,935.3 grams
Weight of lunar samples that have been brought back from the moon's far side to Earth by the Chang'e 6 mission

400 million km
Distance traversed by Tianwen 1, China's first independent Mars mission, in seven months before entering the Martian gravitational field

2 million light-years
Scale of the atomic cloud discovered by the FAST telescope, which is the largest cloud in the universe observed so far, about 20 times bigger than the Milky Way

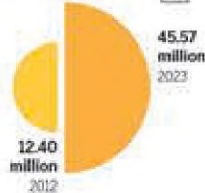


253,000
Patent applications submitted in China by countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative from 2013 to 2022

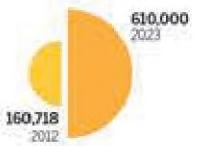
177,655	The Republic of Korea	70%
24,257	Italy	10%
15,327	Singapore	6%
10,616	Austria	4%
3,363	Luxembourg	1%
22,067	Others	9%

LAW AND ORDER

Cases concluded in courts nationwide



Officials punished by the discipline inspection and supervision agencies across the country



GROWTH OVER THE YEARS

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, the country has pursued a proactive strategy of reforms in various fields encompassing people's livelihoods, the economy, politics, ecology, law and culture. China Daily traces the nation's development through related data collected from diverse sectors.

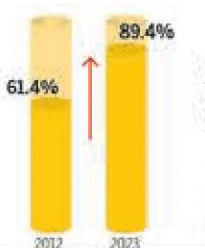
72
meetings

Of the Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reform and the Central Commission for Deepening Overall Reform were presided over by General Secretary Xi Jinping between January 2014 and June 2024



ENVIRONMENT

Monitoring stations that reported fairly good surface water quality



Average density of PM2.5 nationwide
Unit: micrograms per cubic meter
72 in 2013, 30 in 2023

Note: PM2.5 began to be monitored in 2013 in China.

AGRICULTURE

Total planting area of crops
Unit: million hectares
162.1 in 2012, 171.6 in 2023

Total power of agricultural machinery
Unit: billion kilowatts
1.03 in 2012, 1.14 in 2023

Belt and Road Shipping Trade Index



\$19.1 trillion

Total import and export volume between China and countries participating in the BRI from 2013 to 2022, with an average annual growth rate of 6.4 percent

Maritime Silk Road Trade Index



TOP NEWS

716-strong delegation unveiled for upcoming Paris Olympic Games

By SUN XIAOCHEN
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With the Paris Olympics just around the corner, the Chinese Olympic Committee has called on its 716-strong delegation to compete with pride and integrity at the sporting gala to promote the country's international image.

Counting on its prowess in six traditionally strong sports — table tennis, badminton, gymnastics, shooting, weightlifting and diving — the Chinese delegation, which announced a 405-athlete roster supported by 311 coaches and staff members on Saturday, is set for a fruitful campaign in Paris — not just for a medal-laden success, but to present friendship, sportsmanship and fair play to the world.

"We have to take the Olympic stage to demonstrate the superb competitive level and good spirit of Chinese athletes, as well as to present the thriving, prosperous and bright future of our country in the new era from the sports perspective," Gao Zhidan, president of the COC, said at the delegation launch on Saturday.

The massive global attention paid to the Paris Olympics, which will open on July 26 and run through Aug 11, has also made it an unparalleled platform for the country to "make more friends, expand international sports exchange and help build a community with a shared future", Gao added.

Featuring a blend of youth and experience, the Chinese delegation boasts confidence, vying with international powerhouses in 236 medal events for which it has qualified in 30 sports, out of a total number of 329 events in 32 sports on the Paris 2024 program.

It will mark the biggest representation of Team China in event number and variety at an overseas edition of the Games, even with 10 events that were on Tokyo 2020's program reduced in Paris to control the size and cost of the sporting extravaganza.

Led by 42 Olympic champions, Team China also expects to measure its future talent against the world's best, with 223 athletes mak-

"We have to take the Olympic stage to demonstrate the superb competitive level and good spirit of Chinese athletes, as well as to present the thriving, prosperous and bright future of our country in the new era from the sports perspective."

Gao Zhidan,
president of the Chinese Olympic Committee

ing their Olympic debut in the French capital.

The delegation, with an average age of 25, is made up of 136 male and 269 female athletes, with 37-year-old Olympic champion race walker Liu Hong being the oldest competitor, and 11-year-old skateboarder Zheng Haohao the youngest.

Leading China's charge among the "mighty six" sports are the country's all-conquering table tennis squad and its diving "dream team", which are both aiming to achieve a clean sweep of all gold medals up for grabs in their respective sports.

Liu Guoliang, president of the Chinese Table Tennis Association, said: "We cannot take for granted that these five gold medals (in table tennis events) belong to China. All five gold medals are in Paris, and they are reserved for the brave and the wise, for those who excel the most."

To improve competitiveness in some Western-dominated sports, such as swimming, track and field, fencing and cycling, the Chinese delegation has hired 42 foreign coaches, trainers and medical staff members from 17 countries and regions to help prepare for the Games.



Monsoon tragedy

Rescuers search for survivors on Saturday in the swollen Trishuli River near Simlatal, about 120 kilometers west of the capital Kathmandu, Nepal. Two passenger buses were swept off a highway and into the raging river by a landslide on early Friday. Three passengers swam to safety, but 63 others were still missing. The wreckage of the buses has not been found, while heavy monsoon rains are hampering rescue efforts.

RAJESH GHIMIRE / AFP

Beijing slams Washington act for interfering in Xizang affairs

China vows to take resolute steps to firmly defend sovereignty, security, development interests

By ZHAO JIA
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Beijing has strongly protested against Washington's passage and signing into law of the so-called Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act, warning that it severely undermines China's interests and must not be implemented.

The act gives recognition to the notion of "Greater Tibet", a concept made up by the group led by the Dalai Lama, and asks the United States government and the US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues to counter "disinformation about Tibet" from the Chinese government.

The act grossly interferes in China's internal affairs and violates the basic norms governing international relations, sending a severely wrong signal to "Tibet independence" forces, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson said in a statement issued on Saturday.

The spokesperson urged the US to take concrete actions to honor its

commitments of recognizing Xizang as part of China and not supporting "Tibet independence".

"If the US continues down the wrong path, China will take resolute measures to firmly defend its sovereignty, security and development interests," the spokesperson said.

The Foreign Affairs Committee of the National People's Congress condemned the act on Saturday for breaking international law.

Xizang affairs are China's internal affairs, which brook no interference from any external forces, the top legislature said in a statement. People of all ethnic groups in Xizang have achieved a full victory in poverty alleviation, resulting in greater social stability, economic and cultural prosperity, a better environment and happier lives, the statement said.

Any attempt to obstruct people in Xizang from pursuing a happier and better life will end in vain, and efforts to contain and suppress China by destabilizing Xizang are bound to fail, it added.

At a symposium on Saturday, members of the Committee on

Ethnic and Religious Affairs of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference slammed the act for being fraught with extremely erroneous views and provocative remarks.

Under the guise of ethnicity, religion and human rights, the act blatantly meddles in China's internal affairs, they said.

The committee members accused the US and the Dalai clique of brazenly denying China's sovereignty over Xizang, saying that such acts are typical examples of US-style bullying that greatly offend the Chinese people.

As the Chinese government implements the policy of freedom of religion, respects and protects religious traditions, and manages religious affairs in accordance with the law, they said the US is in no position to make unwarranted remarks.

The Standing Committee of the People's Congress of the Xizang Autonomous Region slammed the act for advocating a "Greater Tibet", saying it lays bare its true nature and sinister intention of containing

and suppressing China, and attempting to internationalize the so-called Tibet issue.

The so-called Tibetan government-in-exile is an out-and-out separatist political group and an illegal organization violating China's Constitution and laws, the regional legislature said in a statement.

The 14th Dalai Lama and the so-called Tibetan government-in-exile have no right at all to represent the people of Xizang, let alone decide the future of the autonomous region, it said, adding that manipulation by anti-China politicians in the US will in no way sabotage the stability in Xizang.

The Xizang Autonomous Regional Committee of the CPPCC said no matter how the US tries to confuse right and wrong, it cannot change the fact that Xizang has been an inalienable part of China since ancient times.

People of all ethnic groups in Xizang firmly support any measures taken by the Chinese central government and will fight against any separatist forces, the regional political advisory body said.

Reforms: Nation's major initiatives 'consequential'

From page 1

While the Party's central leadership is expected to repeat pledges to advance Chinese modernization and boost the development of new quality productive forces, Hofman said the session would be "a time for delivering on the details, on how these concepts translate into policy frameworks and specific policy measures".

Einar Tangen, a senior fellow with the Beijing-based Taihe Institute, said he is impressed by the host of reforms China has undertaken over the past decade, including the eradication of extreme poverty, the balan-

cing of urban and rural development, the emphasis on the development of basic science, and reducing the negative list for market access of foreign businesses.

"The need for efficiency and accountability has been the overriding goal of President Xi and the CPC," he said.

Going forward, Tangen highlighted the need for China to move up the global value chain and develop new quality productive forces, essentially higher-value innovative products and services for which Chinese companies own the intellectual property, enabling businesses to increase their margins and the

wages paid to their workers.

"As an economy that contributes to one-third of the global growth, any major initiative by the Chinese government is consequential," he added.

Zheng Yongnian, a professor of politics at Chinese University of Hong Kong (Shenzhen), said in an interview last month that Xi has provided the direction for advancing China's reform in sectors of high complexities, where the deepening of comprehensive reform must align closely with the theme of advancing Chinese modernization.

"Chinese modernization represents the highest standard of modernization today, encompassing

material modernization, institutional modernization and human modernization," he said.

Zheng highlighted the significance of China optimizing its visa policies for many countries and making it easier for foreigners to live and work in China, saying that such moves hold "strategic significance" in the nation's opening-up.

"China, in spite of the internal and external pressures it is facing, will not slow down its pace of reform and opening-up. This commitment is not only for the nation's own benefit, but also for global stability and prosperity."

Mo Jingxi contributed to this story.

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

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CHINA DAILY (ISSN 0748-6154) is published daily except weekends by China Daily USA, 1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036.

Periodical postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to CHINA DAILY USA, 1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036.

Vol. 38 - No.1375

Mutual trust: SCO resonates with countries wary of divisive mindset

From page 1

Rooted in the "Shanghai Spirit" of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for cultural diversity and the pursuit of common development, the SCO resonates with countries wary of the divisive mindset of "if you are not with us, you are against us". This inclusive approach has kept the SCO's doors open to new players beyond the Asia-Pacific region.

The SCO's guiding "Shanghai Spirit" offers a compelling alternative to the often dictatorial tendencies of global institutions. Its focus on cooperation for growth is not just rhetorical; it translates into real-world priorities like countering terrorism, separatism and extremism. Unlike other entities that

attempt to impose so-called democracy through force, the SCO respects the centuries-old political cultures and development paths of its members, demanding that these be respected by other geopolitical players.

Even its critics acknowledge the stabilizing influence the SCO exerts in the Asian region. The organization's commitment to a safe environment as the foundation for economic development underscores its holistic approach to regional security and prosperity.

The SCO's model of integration and cooperation continues to offer a beacon of stability in a tumultuous world. Central to this vast territory is the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative, fostering cooperation across numerous sectors.

In recent years, the SCO has significantly expanded its influence by incorporating major global players like India, Pakistan, Iran and Belarus. The rising international status of this extended SCO family is evidenced by the increasing number of applications from ... countries eager to join.

Ambitious projects such as the Polar Silk Road and joint Arctic explorations are being developed to enhance connectivity between Asia and Europe.

In recent years, the SCO has significantly expanded its influence by incorporating major global players like India, Pakistan, Iran and Belarus. The rising international status of this extended SCO family is evidenced by the increasing number of applications from Arab world and developing countries eager to join.

The SCO's strong internal cohesion and development momentum position it well to address global risks. The cooperative approach enhances the SCO's ability to resolve hot spot issues and contributes to global stability.

The member states are expected

to harness the momentum from the Astana summit to further enhance their collaborative efforts. This involves aligning their development strategies and strengthening policy coordination. By deepening mutually beneficial cooperation in key areas such as trade, transportation, energy, agriculture, science and technology, education and culture, the SCO can significantly boost its regional impact.

China, assuming the rotating presidency of the SCO for 2024-25, has expressed its commitment to working with all member states to uphold the "Shanghai Spirit". China is seeking to drive high-quality development within the SCO, fostering a closer community with a shared future. This approach is intended to bring tangible benefits

to the people of the region, contributing to lasting peace and shared prosperity on a global scale.

The upcoming presidency marks a pivotal moment for the SCO, as it looks to reinforce its role as a platform for regional cooperation and sustainable development. By strengthening policy alignment and fostering deeper ties, the SCO can ensure a more integrated and prosperous future for its member states and beyond. As it moves forward, the focus on building strong, sustainable partnerships can address common challenges and promote stability. The collective efforts of SCO member states can create a more integrated, prosperous and peaceful Eurasia.

The author is an international affairs commentator and freelancer based in Karachi, Pakistan. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CHINA

Chinese research team creates tiny, wireless brain sensor

BY WANG XIAOYU in Beijing and LIU KUN in Wuhan

Chinese researchers have developed a sesame seed-sized, biodegradable and wireless brain sensor that could potentially transform the way brain conditions are monitored in patients with head injuries or tumors.

The conventional method used to measure intracranial pressure, temperature and other brain health barometers is inserting a wired sensor into the brain. Implantation and removal of the device require surgery, and openings left in the skin during monitoring increase the risk of infection.

To address these problems, researchers at Huazhong University of Science and Technology in Wuhan, Hubei province, along with those from Tong Ji Hospital in the city and Nan-yang Technological University in Singapore, created a cube-shaped wireless sensor measuring 2 millimeters on each side.

The tiny tube can be injected under the skull through a needle and operated through an external ultrasound probe, eliminating the need for invasive operations and preventing infections.



The sesame seed-sized, biodegradable brain sensor. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Because the implant is based on a biodegradable material called hydrogel, it can eventually dissolve into harmless components.

Researchers tested the sensor in rats and pigs and found that it can perform as well as or even better than conventional wired sensors when measuring intracranial pressure and temperature. It remained stable for three to four weeks and degraded into harmless components after 18 weeks.

The results of their research were published by the international scientific journal *Nature* on June 5.

Zang Jianfeng, a professor at the university's School of Integrated Circuits who led the research, said the invention stems from years of research on the properties of hydrogel and flexible acoustic technology.

At the core of their innovation is making changes to the composition of degradable hydrogel so that it presents a periodically aligned air column structure. The material deforms in response to changes in its environment, which can be detected through an external ultrasound probe.

"We have so far carried out a large number of experiments, including animal tests, to examine its safety and biodegradability, and results are promising," he said.

Zang added that the team can make sensors of different sizes or shapes, based on demand.

"It could be a cube measuring 1 millimeter or several centimeters on each side, or a thin slice," he said.

He said the team's research is nearing clinical application, but more efforts are needed to deepen collaboration with doctors, test the sensor's effects in human bodies after rigorous ethical and technological review, and explore ways to use the technology on an industrial scale.

The size of the global market for traditional wired sensors, which mainly serve patients with brain tumors or trauma injuries, is about \$390 billion.

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Two kung fu practitioners compete in the 2024 Shaolin Games Finals at the Shaolin Temple in Dengfeng, Henan province, on Sunday. KAN LI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Kung fu contest helps foster cultural exchange

124 martial artists from 47 countries and regions compete in Shaolin finals

BY QI XIN in Dengfeng, Henan and ZHAO YIMENG in Beijing

The 2024 Shaolin Games Finals concluded Sunday, with those who placed in the top 10 earning the title of "Shaolin kung fu star" after a two-day competition at the historic Shaolin Temple in Henan province.

The finals culminated a year-long competitive process that saw over 20,000 Shaolin kung fu practitioners from 101 countries and regions vying for a spot in the event. From that pool, 2,400 contestants advanced to intercontinental events, with 124 ultimately emerging from 47 countries and regions to compete at the finals alongside 20 Chinese Shaolin kung fu masters in Dengfeng, Henan, according to the Shaolin Temple, which organized the event.

Two of the top 10 winners were from the Chinese mainland; one was from the Macao; two hailed from Australia; and there was one winner each from the Czech Republic, Austria, the United States, Peru and Zambia.

Korenc Karel, the 18-year-old Czech winner, said placing in the top 10 was a testament to her years of dedication to the martial art.

"I have been practicing kung fu for 12 years. I started when I was 6, and it's like I've been doing it almost my whole life," she said.

With a history spanning over 1,500 years, Shaolin kung fu is a world-renowned symbol of Chi-

20,000+ kung fu practitioners

from 101 countries and regions took part in the yearlong competitive process, and 124 made it to the finals.

nese culture and was listed as a national intangible cultural heritage in 2006.

Shi Yongxin, the venerable abbot of Shaolin Temple, emphasized the role of the finals in fostering cultural exchange.

"The competition brings together individuals from diverse countries and backgrounds, united by their shared passion for Shaolin kung fu and its spirit," Shi said.

Beyond demonstrating martial arts skills, the competition aimed to deepen understanding and appreciation of Shaolin culture, a philosophy rooted in health and well-being.

"Shaolin culture promotes a healthy lifestyle, equipping us to navigate life's challenges while maintaining physical and mental balance," Shi explained during the opening ceremony.

"International exchanges through Shaolin culture can foster understanding and friendship between cultures, ultimately promoting world peace and harmony."

The competition attracted international participants such as 32-year-old Italian contestant

Markus Hanisch, who performed Shaolin six-round boxing during the finals. Inspired by a Shaolin monk performance as a child, Hanisch became a kung fu teacher in Italy after winning a gold medal in a national competition.

"The Shaolin Games play a vital role in bridging cultures and fostering connections between countries," Hanisch said.

Wara Lucero, a competitor from Bolivia, highlighted the personal growth fostered by Shaolin kung fu training.

"My father always says the greatest warrior is the one who overcomes challenges, even in sickness, fatigue or pain," she said.

The 18-year-old also impressed audiences at the 9th World Kung Fu Championships in Emeishan, Sichuan province, last year.

Liu Genming, a teacher at the Shaolin Temple Culture Center in Texas, the United States, brought three students who all placed in the top 20 among the 124 contestants.

Born in Shangqiu, Henan, Liu grew up training at a kung fu school. Witnessing interest in the Shaolin variety in Texas while touring the US with Shaolin monks when he was 19, Liu decided to join the Shaolin Temple Culture Center and further promote the martial art.

"Through kung fu, the US people gain a deeper understanding of traditional Chinese culture in its various aspects," Liu said. "In turn, this helps spread Shaolin culture to a wider audience."

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Campaign to protect children online

BY LI MENGHAN in Beijing

China's top internet regulator has launched a two-month campaign to protect children online during the summer vacation, targeting e-commerce predators and inappropriate content.

The Cyberspace Administration of China aims to combat those encouraging child models to pose indecently for profit and diverting juveniles to third-party platforms under the guise of selling animated series and video games, which then provide them with pornographic and violent content.

The campaign also targets the sale of products such as stationary and scale models of popular animation characters that may be pornographic in nature, via e-commerce platforms.

The crackdown follows a controversy last year that occurred when China Central Television exposed e-commerce platforms selling nude scale model toys to children age 7 to 14. A subsequent

investigation led by authorities resulted in the closure of nine online companies.

The cyberspace administration emphasized the need to enhance control measures to prevent small companies from clandestinely marketing inappropriate products to children.

"Since the incident, I have made it a habit to carefully inspect the packaging of any stationary I buy online and have avoided purchasing blind boxes of stationary to shield my child from exposure to any adult content and violence," a woman surnamed Zhao, the mother of a 10-year-old girl, said in Nanjing, Jiangsu province. She said that children, who often lack discernment but can use the internet, are especially vulnerable and require more protection.

A report on juvenile internet usage by the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League of China and the China Internet Network Information Center showed that the number of juvenile internet users surpassed 193 million in

2022, with internet penetration among juveniles growing from 93.7 percent in 2018 to 97.2 percent in 2022.

The report also highlighted a trend of younger children using the internet, with over 95 percent of primary school children online, posing a potential hazard.

"Generally, the younger the age, the poorer the judgment and self-control abilities," said Zhu Wei, deputy head of the Communication Law Research Center at the China University of Political Science and Law.

Zhu said that some parents hand over their accounts to children for convenience, rendering juvenile modes for app downloads and content browsing ineffective. He emphasized the responsibility of parents in preventing minors from becoming addicted to or confused by the internet.

The campaign also includes measures to crack down on cyber-hunts and the counterfeiting of apps popular among minors through the use of similar logos and names.

Youths enjoy exchange at Chinese consulate

BY MINGMEI LI in New York mingmeili@chinadailyusa.com

Groups of children in colorful outfits gulped soft drinks from cups as they wandered and explored cultural booths at the Chinese Consulate General in New York over the weekend.

Nearly 300 children from six schools in New York City and Beijing gathered at the consulate on Saturday afternoon for the "Understanding Each Other, Building Closer Bonds, and Working Hand in Hand" special performance, promoting art exchange between American and Chinese youth.

The students sang and danced and participated in drama presentations, instrumental music and martial arts. They also sang popular songs bilingually in Chinese and English, including *Listen to Me, Thank You and Singing and Smiling*.

"This is the largest group we have hosted. I only regret that our space is too small; otherwise, I would have liked to invite all 650 children to visit," said Consul General Huang Ping.

Huang also introduced the "Young Envoys Scheme (YES)" program, which offers short-term exchange programs, international summer school programs, youth forums and fellowships. The program supports students from China and the US in furthering cross-cultural exchanges, not only in academics but also in music and art, helping children develop their interests.

The initiative started after President Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden agreed in November in San Francisco to promote further youth exchange. Students from both countries are already participating and traveling this summer.

Throughout the week, the Beijing Student Jinfan Art Troupe, with students from more than a dozen schools in the Haidian and Xicheng districts of Beijing, had a packed schedule in New York. They interacted with students at the United Nations International School, held a

special performance at Lincoln Center, and also engaged in a dialogue with Nobel Prize laureates at Columbia University. The visit marked the group's first trip to the United States since 2018.

The Beijing Student Jinfan Art Troupe has regularly toured the world and hopes to return to the US again during the winter vacation.

"This trip was filled with diverse activities, and we hope that American children can find time to visit China and explore, too. We would be delighted to host them in Beijing," Yao Wei, the executive director of the Beijing Shengtao Institute of Education Development and Innovation, told China Daily.

"No matter what form of art it is, art knows no borders, and there should be more exchanges between young people," he said. For example, the children not only performed traditional Peking Opera but also showcased gymnastics.

"Art helps people from both countries discover the beauty in each other. We welcome American schools to establish more connections with Chinese schools and invite them to visit Beijing," he added.

"Our students are currently learning dragon dancing in Sichuan. After just two or three days, I can see that they are already able to perform the dance beautifully," said Bo Yingkan, HuaXia Chinese school board chair.

"This is the first group from our school, and they have already arrived in China," he said. The school now has 22 locations on the US East Coast with more than 5,000 students.

"In the exchange between Chinese and American children, we have all learned a lot from each other. I see the enthusiastic smiles on the children's faces," he said. "As a promoter of cultural exchange between China and the United States, I believe it is very important. It allows children born in the US to understand Chinese culture because their roots and their parents have a deep cultural background in China."



The Jinfan Peking Opera Troupe from Affiliated Primary School of Peking University performs "The Drunken Concubine" at the Chinese Consulate General in New York on Saturday. MINGMEI LI / CHINA DAILY

Pioneering scientist Zhang Cunhao dies at 96

BY LI PEIXUAN in Beijing

Zhang Cunhao, a distinguished physicist and chemist who spearheaded advances in China's scientific landscape, died in Beijing on Friday at age 96, China Central Television reported, citing an announcement by the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Dalian Institute of Chemical Physics.

Zhang, a revered CAS academician, held esteemed positions throughout his career. He served as director of the National Natural Science Foundation of China and director of the institute in Dalian.

His dedication to research resulted in groundbreaking contributions across various scientific disciplines, including catalysis, rocket propellants, chemical lasers and molecular reaction dynamics, CCTV reported.

Zhang played a key role in developing a highly efficient molten iron catalyst for fuel synthesis and developed the multi-layer flame theory for solid propellants, which had significant impacts on China's scientific progress.

Zhang's achievements transcended national borders. He achieved international recognition for developing the world's first pulsed fluorine-iodine chemical laser ignited by discharge.

He also pioneered ion dip spec-

troscopy, a groundbreaking technique for studying ultra-short-lived excited molecules. He used the method to determine the lifetime of an ammonia molecule's predissociation excited state at 100 femtoseconds, a feat lauded by the global scientific community.

His life journey was a testament to his unwavering dedication to China's scientific advancement.

Born in Tianjin in 1928, he experienced the disruption of the Japanese invasion in 1937.

After studying in the United States and earning a master's degree in chemical engineering from the University of Michigan in 1950, he returned to China as tensions between the US and China escalated during the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea (1950-53).

Throughout his career, Zhang adapted his research focus to align with China's evolving strategic needs. He transitioned from water gas synthesis fuels to rocket propellants and later to chemical lasers, consistently excelling in each field.

As director of the National Natural Science Foundation of China, Zhang championed programs such as the National Science Fund for Distinguished Young Scholars. He actively fostered a research environment that empowered young scientists and facilitated their rapid development.

CHINA



The Sakayamuni Pagoda, also known as the Yingxian Wooden Pagoda, features centuries-old plaques written by renowned calligraphers and emperors. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

AI used to help preserve China's oldest wooden pagoda

67-meter tower has stood in Shanxi province for almost 1,000 years

By LUO WANGSHU and ZHU XINGXIN in Yingxian, Shanxi

Artificial intelligence is being used to safeguard the country's oldest and tallest wooden pagoda in North China's Shanxi province that has withstood natural disasters and human calamities for 968 years.

The technology is being used to enhance the understanding of the 67-meter-tall Sakayamuni Pagoda, visualize its states over time and prepare for restoration work.

AI is not only being used to aid in preserving the pagoda in Yingxian county's Fogong Temple, but also to enhance the visitor experience by revealing its significant architectural, historical and religious value.

Built in 1056 during the Liao Dynasty (916-1125), the pagoda, built entirely out of wood without the use of nails, has weathered earthquakes, wars and other challenges. Its intricate structure features innumerable mortises and tenons.

As tall as a 20-story building, and with a base diameter of about 30 meters, the pagoda is a remarkable architectural feat.

For its protection, visitors can only enter the first floor and are prohibited from climbing to higher levels. AI technology, however, will allow them to experience the whole pagoda through 3D animation.

When renowned architect Liang Sicheng visited the pagoda for the first time in 1933, he was impressed by the pagoda's intricate structure and ingenious design. He meticulously measured, surveyed and recorded the building, introducing its treasured relics to China and the world.

In Yingxian, the Sakayamuni Pagoda, also known as the Yingxian Wooden Pagoda, has been the most prominent landmark for generations, but over the years the pagoda has developed a slight lean.

Zhao Yushan, a 63-year-old carpenter in Yingxian, was so taken aback when he first saw the tower as a teenager that he has since dedicated most of his life to replicating it. He's made numerous scale versions of the pagoda using only the traditional methods of construction, and is currently working on an 8-meter-tall replica.

The pagoda is an octagonal structure comprising nine stories, with five visible from the outside and four concealed within. The Buddhist statues on each story and the paintings adorning the inner walls of the first floor are all creations from the Liao Dynasty.

"We local people believe the pagoda was built by Lu Ban (China's legendary master carpenter of the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC). The work is beyond manpower," said a Yingxian resident surnamed Li.

He said that as the pagoda's lean has increased over



A worker experiences "climbing" the Sakayamuni Pagoda with virtual reality gear in Yingxian, Shanxi province, in April. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

the past few years, the need for restoration has become more urgent.

High-tech preservation

In April, a virtual reality program that replicates the pagoda was released by Chinese technology company Lenovo Group and Tsinghua University's School of Architecture.

Wearing VR glasses, visitors can experience what it would be like to climb the pagoda and explore its interior.

The program has been donated to the county government to become a part of its digital museum.

In February last year, the school began conducting modeling work on the wooden structure inside the pagoda, creating a database of parameters through structural research.

Meanwhile, Lenovo Group is utilizing its AI-generated spatial computing technology, which combines AI, neural radiance fields technology and extended reality technology to construct a digital "twin" of the pagoda.

Besides benefiting tourists, the technologies provide strong technical support for re-creating the complete structure and details of the pagoda.

Mao Shijie, vice-president of Lenovo Group and head of Lenovo Research Shanghai, said the project has utilized cutting-edge AIGC technology, enabling the swift digital reconstruction of the pagoda within 10 hours.

"It was a task that would have taken months using traditional methods," he said.

By combining AI algorithms with data collected from drones and radar cameras, the project aims to recreate the pagoda's intricate details accurately, he said.

Professor Liu Chang from Tsinghua University emphasized the importance of fully understanding the pagoda from various perspectives in guiding effective restoration. He said unraveling the pagoda's historical transformations and predicting its future state are crucial steps in the preservation process.

Liu hopes to utilize the collected data to analyze and deduce the appearance of the pagoda during different periods.

"I can see how much the pagoda has been compressed and changed over time," he said.

By revealing the appearance of the pagoda at different stages of its history, Liu hopes to speculate on how the pagoda might have looked during certain periods, such as when well-known Chinese architect Liang Sicheng saw it in the 1930s, during the Song Dynasty (960-1279), Jin Dynasty (1115-1234) and Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368).

"It may even be possible to predict the future appearance of the pagoda by adjusting parameters and simulating how the wood may change after over 100 years," he said.

The first step in protecting or even restoring the pagoda is to know it deeply, he said.

The pagoda is tilting, which means it is "sick," he said, and to "cure" it, they have to first find a "hospital".

Addressing the challenges faced in protecting the pagoda, Liu highlighted the need for meticulous preparation, a comprehensive understanding of the pagoda's condition and the embrace of innovative technologies to drive conservation efforts forward.

Wang Xiaolong, deputy director of the Institute for the Protection and Research of Ancient Buildings and Colorful Sculptures in Shanxi province, hopes more information about the pagoda, such as the building's original design and material degradation, can be collected by utilizing technologies such as AI and big data.

"We experts are responsible for protecting and even restoring the pagoda, while other people can see this masterpiece and love it," Liu from Tsinghua University said.

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Craftsman dedicates life to towering passion

By LUO WANGSHU and ZHU XINGXIN

From the moment craftsman Zhao Yushan laid eyes on the towering Sakayamuni Pagoda when he was a boy, he knew it was special.

The 67-meter structure is almost 1,000 years old, made entirely of wood and not a single nail was used in its construction.

Built in Yingxian county in North China's Shanxi province in 1056 during the Liao Dynasty (916-1125), the tower is thought by locals to have been the work of legendary craftsman Lu Ban, though it has never been officially confirmed.

Zhao, 63, recalls how the tower has shaped his life for around 50 years.

"I was deeply fascinated by it. It was like being haunted. I couldn't shake it off — it consumed my thoughts and feelings," he said.

So much did his passion grow for the wonder that is the Sakayamuni Pagoda, also known as the Yingxian Wooden Pagoda, that for much of his life he has dedicated himself to creating replicas of the tower of various sizes using only the traditional construction methods that would have been used a 1,000 years ago.

Born in Sanmencheng village, not far from the pagoda, to a family of carpenters that stretches back five generations, Zhao's passion for wood-working and architectural marvels was ingrained from a young age.

Shortly after having seen the tower, Zhao set out on a project to build a replica of it — an endeavor that was discouraged by his father, thinking that there were better uses for his time.

However, the boy carried on, and despite having no formal training in engineering and architecture, started creating wooden models of the Sakayamuni Pagoda, with every iteration improving with each attempt.

"I pondered the structure day and night, eventually crafting rough mortises and tenons resembling those of the pagoda," Zhao said.

In a sad turn of events, his father, in a bid to shield his son from what he described as his "haunting dream", burned all of Zhao's creations.

Zhao was able to save one piece from destruction — a poignant reminder of his unwavering determination.

Trying his best to be a dutiful son, he set aside his aspirations to emulate the wooden pagoda and embraced the life of a typical villager, tending to the fields and apprenticing as a craftsman.

However, the embers of his dream still smoldered within, awaiting the right moment to reignite.

Tragedy struck in 1978 with the passing of his father. It was then that Zhao, amid his grief, resurrected his long-held ambition to construct the pagoda. Yet the path ahead remained fraught with challenges.

"At that time, the greatest hurdle was the absence of even a basic guide to the wooden pagoda, let alone design blueprints or structural diagrams," Zhao said.

Determined to unravel the mysteries of the tower, he visited it to study it deeply and immerse himself in its grandeur.

However, his subsequent attempts faltered, drained by the demands of time and finances.

Compelled to prioritize providing for his family, Zhao once again deferred his dream, laboring to sustain his loved ones. The pagoda, a beacon of his aspirations, stood as a distant goal, overshadowed by the exigencies of daily life.

When financial constraints threatened to dim his dream, Zhao adopted a cyclical rhythm — working diligently for years, saving every penny, then immersing himself in the study of the wooden pagoda.

His carpentry prowess served as a reliable anchor, ensuring a steady income to fuel his aspirations.

Years of sweat and setbacks culminated in a pivotal moment in 2015. An expert gave him a precious gift — a structural blueprint of the pagoda, infusing him with renewed vigor and clarity.

With newfound confidence, Zhao embarked on a transformative journey, birthing a small wooden pagoda that stood as a testament to his tenacity and skill.

"Inspiration struck me all of a sudden," Zhao said, reflecting on the pivotal moment that propelled him forward.

Buoyed by his initial success, he took a bold leap, establishing a workshop dedicated to realizing his grand vision — a larger wooden pagoda, meticulously crafted at a one-eighth scale of the original masterpiece, standing at roughly 8 meters tall.

Today, Zhao is still working in his workshop, finishing the second floor of the replica of Sakayamuni and starting work on the third floor. He has six more stories to go.

"I will dedicate my life to this endeavor. It is my dream — a dream I cannot relinquish," Zhao said.



Zhao Yushan explains carpentry skills used in the Sakayamuni Pagoda in Yingxian, Shanxi province, in April. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY



Left: The Sakayamuni Pagoda of the Fogong Temple in Yingxian, Shanxi province. Right: A well-preserved Buddha statue in the Sakayamuni Pagoda. PHOTOS BY ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

WORLD

NATO not contributing to Ukraine peace efforts

Analysts warn of dangerous escalation as bloc reinforces Kyiv against Moscow

By YIFAN XU in Washington
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Last week's NATO summit increased efforts to assist Ukraine in taking the fight to Russia, but "the escalation of the conflict needs to cease," and "the situation is incredibly dangerous," experts say.

"Twenty-five thousand more soldiers will be dead by now, and nothing will have changed for the better," said Sourabh Gupta, a senior fellow at the Institute for China-America Studies in Washington.

"Why not try to stop the fighting right now and try to have some sort of a cease-fire? But the West's actions are not moving in that direction at this point of time."

At a live dialogue on the summit on Thursday, Helga Zepp-LaRouche, founder of the Schiller Institute, a political and economic think tank in Germany, said: "If you look at it from the side of NATO, there is no option of diplomatic solution of going back to any kind of negotiations. There is only the policy of defeating Russia."

The three-day NATO summit was held in Washington from Tuesday to Thursday.

During a post-summit news conference in Washington, the alliance's Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said, "At this summit, we are turning a corner and putting in place the foundations for Ukraine to prevail."

Gupta said the West's approach is not helping matters because they should be pushing Ukraine to have some conversations with Russia to de-escalate the situation and reach a cease-fire now. "They are fueling the conflict by providing more arms," he said, mentioning that the European members of NATO and the US have been continuing with "their sanctions routinely."

NATO members have been taking different approaches to how Ukraine can use the military aid they provide — some, for now, only allow the weapons to be used inside Russia's border against targets that support Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, while some support Ukraine using them to strike targets deep inside Russia.

During the summit, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called for lifting all the limitations to "win" and "prevail."

Zepp-LaRouche said, "This idea that what is now being pushed prac-

tically by all of NATO, that all weapon systems can be used deep into the territory of Russia, is a prescription that sooner or later we will reach a point of no return."

According to her analysis, the accusation of NATO is that Russian President Vladimir Putin's intentions include reinstating the Soviet Union and acquiring Ukraine and "will not stop." Zepp-LaRouche described this accusation as "arrogance."

"I have not seen any fact, any proof that accusation is truthful, but the entire NATO behavior rests on that characterization of Putin's intentions supposedly."

"But that arrogance of the so-called collective West is the problem. Because it is that arrogance which prevents these people from seeing the world as it is."

Plan triggering response

In a joint statement with the German government on Wednesday, the White House said the "episodic deployments" of more advanced long-range missiles to Germany will begin in 2026.

Both sides said this plan demonstrates the US "commitment to NATO and its contribution to the defense of Europe," which triggered Russia's vow of a "military response." And in a common declaration on Wednesday, leaders of NATO countries said Ukraine is on an "irreversible path" to NATO membership.

Zepp-LaRouche compared these actions to the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, saying, "It is a legitimate security interest of Russia to make that point."

She also talked about the expansion of NATO, its policy of "expanding

to the east to encircle Russia more and more to now add to that, to encircle China," which is "very dangerous."

"What business do they have to try to expand to a global system all over the world trying to contain Russia and China?" She asked, also pointing out that countries of the Global South do not agree with that and insist on building their own system.

"It is very rational. It's very understandable. It's legitimate. Nobody has the right to impose their will on the majority of the world population, which is what these countries are, who together represent 85 percent of the human population," she said.

"The best way to resolve it is to go in the direction of sovereignty. The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence are a model, out of which all of international law came. The UN Charter is in cohesion with that."

The NATO declaration also called China a "decisive enabler" of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said China will never accept the "unfounded accusations" over a phone call with his Dutch counterpart Caspar Veldekamp.

Gupta said NATO's claim on China is "absurd but not surprising."

"They don't have any specific follow-up plans to punish China for its alleged behavior, whether it be so-called economic coercion or decisive enabler," he said. "This case-by-case characterization seems to me to be just one way to get headlines in the 24-hour news cycle."

He said it might come to a point, maybe this year or the next, when there will be "complete exhaustion" for all the main parties fighting the conflict, and their backers.

"But the West will realize that the front lines are not going to change and that we now need a political solution to at least stop the war," he said.



Protesters rally against NATO outside the alliance's summit in Washington on Thursday. NOAH BERGER / AP

DPRK calls declaration a threat to security

SEOUL — The Democratic People's Republic of Korea "most strongly denounces and rejects" the Washington Summit Declaration issued by NATO last week, state media reported on Saturday.

The declaration is proof that the United States and the bloc pose "the most serious threat to the global peace and security," the official Korean Central News Agency said, citing a statement released by the Foreign Ministry on Friday.

It is "an illegal document that violates the legitimate rights of independent sovereign states and a confrontational program that incites new Cold War and military confrontation on a global scale," the statement said.

The US moves to expand military blocs seriously threaten regional peace, extremely exacerbate the international security environment and spark a worldwide arms race, it said.

The DPRK warned that NATO's "globalization" strategy pursued by the US brings "the danger of a worldwide war."

The DPRK also lambasted Washington for "seriously infringing upon the sovereignty and security interests of other countries and constantly destroying the strategic stability of the world while wantonly violating the recognized principles of international law including respect for sovereignty, noninterference, equality and mutual benefit."

On the sidelines of the summit, the Republic of Korea and the US signed the "Guidelines for Nuclear Deterrence and Nuclear Operations on the Korean Peninsula."

The DPRK's Defense Ministry criticized those guidelines as "reckless provocation" making Pyongyang enhance its own nuclear deterrence capability. "It would be incomprehensible for anyone to imagine the price

that will be paid if this warning is ignored," the ministry said.

In a statement on Saturday, the DPRK said the country's military forces "will guarantee the national security in every way with its powerful nuclear war deterrent readiness."

The DPRK lashed out at the nuclear guidelines intended for "stepping up preparations for a nuclear war against the DPRK" by an integration of the nuclear forces of the US and the conventional forces of the ROK, saying it will "push the regional military tensions to extremes."

The nuclear threat posed by the enemy forces, along with the ensuing dangerous regional security environment, "urgently requires the DPRK to further improve its nuclear deterrent readiness and add important elements to the composition of the deterrent," it said.

XINHUA-AGENCIES

Heroic rescue



A student is rescued from the rubble of a collapsed two-story school in Jos, north-central Nigeria, on Friday. The collapse of the Saint Academy School in Plateau state killed 22 students, with dozens more in hospital for treatment, authorities said. AP

Shooting: Calls to reduce rhetoric

From page 1

"When you think about it, it's a football field and a half ... and that is a makeable shot by an individual. And obviously an inch would have made a difference in this case and Trump wouldn't be with us," Pierson said.

Asked at a news conference whether law enforcement did not know the shooter was on the roof until he began firing, Kevin Rojek, the agent in charge of the FBI's Pittsburgh field office, responded that "that is our assessment at this time."

"It is surprising" that the gunman was able to open fire on the stage before the Secret Service killed him, Rojek added.

The FBI has taken the lead role in the investigation, the bureau said on X on Saturday. On Sunday, the FBI said the shooter likely acted alone.

A former Secret Service agent told Business Insider that countersnipers should have provided "360-degree coverage."

"I don't know how many they had, but they usually always look for 360-degree coverage," former agent Anthony Cangelosi said.

Bill Pickle, a former deputy assistant Secret Service director, told The Wall Street Journal that how the agency communicated with local law enforcement and used technology such as drones will be investigated.

"The reality is there's just no excuse for the Secret Service to be unable to provide sufficient resources to cover an open rooftop 100 yards away from the site," he said. "And there's no way he should've got those shots off."

A Secret Service spokesman said on X on Sunday that reports that a member of Trump's team had requested additional security was "untrue."

"There's an untrue assertion that a member of the former President's team requested additional security resources & that those were rebuffed. This is absolutely false. In fact, we added protective resources & technology & capabilities as part of the increased campaign travel tempo," spokesman Anthony Guglielmi wrote.

Authorities identified the rally attendee who was shot and killed as Corey Comperatore, 50, a former volunteer fire chief, of Sarver, Pennsylvania. Governor Josh Shapiro told reporters that Comperatore was fatally shot when he dived on top of his family to protect them from the

"I heard a whizzing sound, shots, and immediately felt the bullet ripping through the skin."

Former US president Donald Trump

hail of bullets.

Two other attendees were critically wounded.

Trump is due to receive his party's formal nomination at the Republican National Convention, which kicks off in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on Monday. He spent Saturday night at his golf club residence in Bedminster, New Jersey.

"I was going to delay my trip to Wisconsin, and The Republican National Convention, by two days, but have just decided that I cannot allow a 'shooter,' or potential assassin, to force change to scheduling, or anything else. Therefore, I will be leaving for Milwaukee, as scheduled," Trump wrote on his Truth Social site on Sunday. Trump arrived in Milwaukee around 7 pm EDT Sunday.

"I knew immediately that something was wrong in that I heard a whizzing sound, shots, and immediately felt the bullet ripping through the skin," he wrote of the shooting. "Much bleeding took place."

In a statement Sunday, former first lady Melania Trump said that when she saw her husband wounded, "I realized my life, and Barron's life, were on the brink of devastating change," referring to their son.

Cooks was a registered Republican, according to state voter records, and had made a \$15 donation to a Democratic political action committee at the age of 17 on Jan 20, 2021, the day President Joe Biden was sworn in.

In the third time that Biden addressed the shooting, the president said from the Oval Office on Sunday night that it was time to "lower the temperature" in American politics.

"All of us now face a time of testing as the election approaches," he said.

In brief remarks earlier Sunday, Biden called the shooting "contrary to everything we stand for as a nation, everything."

"We cannot, we must not, go down this road in America," he said. Biden, who is running against

Trump in a rematch of 2020, said the two men had a "short but good" conversation Saturday night.

He said Trump has been provided "every resource" for his security. The president added that he is directing a review of security at the rally and for the Republican convention.

Whether Saturday's shooting will eventually lower the political temperature in the US ahead of the Nov 5 presidential election remains to be seen.

Many Republicans quickly blamed the violence on Biden and his allies, arguing that sustained attacks on Trump as a threat to democracy have created a toxic environment. They pointed in particular to a comment Biden made to donors on July 8, saying "it's time to put Trump in the bullseye."

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, whose department oversees the Secret Service, said officials were engaged with the Biden and Trump campaigns and "taking every possible measure to ensure their safety and security."

House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer said in a statement on Saturday that he has "already contacted the Secret Service for a briefing and am also calling on Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle to appear for a hearing."

Saturday's shooting has increased calls for independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to receive Secret Service protection. Kennedy, whose father, Senator Robert F. Kennedy, was assassinated in 1968, and uncle, President John F. Kennedy, was assassinated in 1963, has said he has been paying for his own private security at a high cost.

Colorado Governor Jared Polis, a Democrat, wrote on X on Saturday that he encourages Biden to "immediately provide" Secret Service protection for Kennedy.

Representative Ritchie Torres, a New York Democrat, wrote on X on Sunday: "Congressman Mike Lawler (a New York Republican) and I are putting aside partisan differences to make a bipartisan push for enhanced Secret Service Protection for President Joe Biden, former President Donald Trump, and presidential candidate Robert F Kennedy Jr. We plan to introduce bipartisan legislation in the wake of the attempted assassination."

Agencies contributed to this story.

Kremlin warns Russia could target Europe if US deploys missiles

MOSCOW — The Kremlin warned on Saturday that the deployment of US missiles in Germany could make European capitals targets for Russian missiles in a repeat of Cold War-style confrontation.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov spoke of a "paradox" in which "Europe is a target for our missiles, our country is a target for US missiles in Europe."

"We have enough potential to deter these missiles, but the potential

victims are the capitals of these countries," he said, speaking to Russian state television channel Russia 1.

Peskov also hinted that such a confrontation could undermine Europe as a whole — in the same way the Cold War ended with the Soviet Union's collapse. "Europe is coming apart. Europe is not living its best moment. In a different configuration, a repeat of history is inevitable," he said.

The White House announced on Wednesday during a NATO summit

that it would periodically station long-range weapons including Tomahawk cruise missiles in Germany from 2026 as a deterrent.

"Exercising these advanced capabilities will demonstrate the United States' commitment to NATO and its contributions to European integrated deterrence," the White House said.

The Kremlin has already criticized the move, accusing Washington of taking a step toward a new Cold War and of directly partici-

pating in the conflict in Ukraine.

Russia's Defense Ministry said on Friday that Defense Minister Andrey Belousov held a telephone call with his US counterpart Lloyd Austin where they discussed lowering the risk of "possible escalation."

The call, the second in just more than two weeks between the defense chiefs, was initiated by Russia, Pentagon spokeswoman Sabrina Singh told a news briefing. Austin emphasized the importance of keeping open

lines of communication during the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Singh said.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz hailed the US decision despite criticism from members of his Social Democrats.

The decision marks a return of US cruise missiles to Germany after a 20-year absence.

Responding to the Kremlin's warning that the US missile deployment could put European capitals at risk, a US State Department spokes-

person said the US and NATO "do not seek a military conflict with Russia ... but any military action directed against a NATO Ally would trigger an overwhelming response."

The German army does not have long-range missiles that launch from the ground, only cruise missiles that can be fired by aircraft.

The 1980s deployment of US Pershing ballistic missiles in West Germany at the height of the Cold War prompted widespread demonstrations, with hundreds of thousands coming out in pacifist protest.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

BUSINESS

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Chinese firms' new-age ventures elevate BRI

Nation's corporates outgrow big-ticket infrastructure projects to redefine development globally

By ZHONG NAN
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At Chinese automaker Great Wall Motor's welding workshop in Rayong, Thailand, numerous robotic arms in operation indicate the level of high-tech in use even as Chinese technicians guide local employees through the welding process.

Following the successful rollout of its first electric vehicle at its plant in Thailand this January, the Baoding, Hebei province-based carmaker said that multiple batches of Thai workers have now mastered the production processes of its EV products. They have thus become valuable assets for the company, aiding its expansion efforts in other Southeast Asian markets.

Elsewhere, Beijing-based artificial intelligence services provider Terminus Group is charting a similar course to bring additional value to an overseas market. Amid the intensified efforts by many Middle Eastern countries to leverage the digital economy for sustainable growth, Terminus launched its international headquarters in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, in February.

It will not only facilitate Terminus' projects and business expansion initiatives in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman and other countries in the region, but also support the group's operations in Singapore, Australia and numerous countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative.

Both GWM and Terminus are epitomes of a larger trend — that of Chinese enterprises operating in the vast BRI landscape going beyond big-ticket infrastructure projects like dams, highways, railroads, airports and municipal engineering works.

As many parts of the world enter a new phase of development, Chinese companies, particularly those from high-end manufacturing and trade in services, are adjusting their strategies to better align with the evolving environment in BRI economies, said Wan Zhe, a researcher at the Belt and Road School of Beijing Normal University.

Facing challenges like escalating geopolitical tensions and rising protectionism in certain countries, Chinese enterprises are focusing on avoiding risks and generating revenue through higher-value business ventures that serve the changing landscape better, said Wan.

For instance, GWM plans to start operations at its new factories in Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia this year or the next.

Similarly, Chang'an Automobile Co, a Chongqing-based State-owned automaker, is building a factory in Rayong province, Thailand. The first phase of the project will involve an investment of over \$240 million and is scheduled to begin production in 2025.

The new energy vehicles produced will be not only marketed in Thailand but also exported to other neighboring ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries, as well as Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and South Africa, said Shen Xinghua, president of Chang'an Automobile's



A view of the NEV production line of BYD in Rayong, Thailand. SUN WEITONG / XINHUA



Employees work on a battery production line of BYD in Brazil. WANG TIANCONG / XINHUA

business for Southeast Asia.

Shen said that the initial annual production capacity of this plant is 100,000 units, which will be gradually expanded to 200,000 units in the next phase.

Chen Bin, deputy director of an expert committee at the Beijing-based China Machinery Industry Federation, said that South Africa, Hungary, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Vietnam and Malaysia have all formulated EV-related policies to encourage and support the development and growth of the industry.

Highlighting that electrification and intelligence complement each other, Chen said with growing popu-

lations in many countries, particularly in Africa and Southeast Asia, an increasing number of young consumers who prefer smart technologies are emerging, making these markets more proactive in embracing EVs.

His observation reflects a trend. China's NEVs are becoming popular in overseas markets thanks to their quality, driving range and multifunctionality.

Some 519,000 EVs and plug-in hybrids were exported from China between January and May, up 13.7 percent year-on-year, said the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

China's continuous efforts to enhance institutional opening-up and secure high-standard economic and free trade agreements, alongside the swift expansion of its tech-intensive green product industries, are anticipated to propel its companies to strategically invest in new plants, service centers and innovation facilities in markets involved in the BRI, said Yu Jianlong, vice-chairman of the Beijing-headquartered China Council for the Promotion of International Trade.

In addition to automakers such as SAIC Motor, Beijing Automotive Group, Guangzhou Automobile Group and BYD, Chinese battery and component manufacturers, including Contemporary Amperex Technology Co Ltd, Gotion High-tech Co Ltd and EVE Energy Co Ltd, have invested in BRI economies to supply products to their domestic partners and create jobs for local communities.

Recognizing this trend, Matthias Loebich, partner and leader for international business at BearingPoint, a European management and technology consultancy with more than 10,000 employees across 70 countries and regions, said that China's fast-growing EV sector will continue to lead the world's green transition and create enormous growth opportunities for upstream and downstream industries in the BRI landscape.

"This is evident in our doubling of Chinese automotive clients seeking consulting support over the past two years," said Loebich, noting that Chinese automakers are enhancing

their internal capabilities in management, digital transformation and overseas strategies, learning from advanced markets to elevate their global presence.

The company established a dedicated team to help Chinese automakers conduct sustainability-related activities in both home and global markets in 2023, in order to further enhance their growth strength.

Collectively, such moves have had a positive effect on official data. China's nonfinancial outbound direct investment came in at \$60.2 billion in the first five months, up 16.3 percent year-on-year, statistics from the Ministry of Commerce showed.

China's cooperation with countries and regions participating in the BRI continued to show growth momentum as ODI in these economies came in at \$12.81 billion, up nearly 13 percent year-on-year. The value of trade between China and BRI economies was worth 8.31 trillion yuan (\$1.14 trillion) during the January-May period, up 7.2 percent year-on-year, data from the General Administration of Customs showed.

Such a rise will likely be sustained given certain strategic Chinese corporate moves. For instance, in late June, Chinese train maker CRRC Corp, driven by its product upgrade and technology accumulation, unveiled seven new energy locomotives in Beijing, to offer the world new solutions for green, low-carbon development in rail transport. These will enrich CRRC Corp's overall product offerings. This marked a

“Showing strong competitiveness, Chinese companies excel in industries like new energy vehicles, lithium-ion batteries and photovoltaic products.”

Lyu Yue, professor at the Academy of China Open Economy Studies

notable step forward in green transition efforts in both domestic and global markets.

Lin Cunzeng, CRRC's vice-president, said the development of this series of new energy locomotives is a concrete step to promote the renewal and upgrade of outdated equipment in both home and foreign markets, and advance the green and low-carbon transformation of rail transit equipment.

"They will contribute to the high-quality growth of the BRI and enrich China's export content," said Lin.

These new locomotives, he said, will drive the demand for diverse new energy products like power batteries and hydrogen energy power packs. They will, therefore, stimulate the development of upstream industries like basic materials and core components, fostering new drivers of economic growth.

The current reshaping of the global supply chain has generated new avenues for Chinese companies to match their capabilities with shifting market needs, said Lyu Yue, a professor at the Academy of China Open Economy Studies, part of the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing.

"Showing strong competitiveness, Chinese companies excel in industries like new energy vehicles, lithium-ion batteries and photovoltaic products," said Lyu, adding this has resulted in increased acceptance and collaboration from many countries involved in the BRI.

Agreed Michael Dyke, CEO of the Riyadh-based New Murabba Development Co, a business unit of Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund. Dyke said that the tangible growth of the BRI and enhanced Sino-Saudi business relations will attract more Chinese companies to expand their market presence in Saudi Arabia.

New Murabba Development is responsible for building a modern town in Riyadh. Its development spans 19 square kilometers. The project will include 2 million square meters of floor space featuring retail areas, tourist attractions, 104,000 residential units, 9,000 hotel rooms and 80 entertainment venues. Its first phase is scheduled to be completed and operationalized in 2030.

China Harbour Engineering Co Ltd, a Beijing-headquartered subsidiary of State-owned China Communications Construction Co Ltd, will carry out the first phase of excavation work for this project.

Chinese warehouses abroad solve supply woes, offer many benefits

REPORTER'S LOG

By Zhong Nan

A surprisingly wide range of products — household appliances, auto parts, chemicals and passenger vehicles — get loaded into shipping containers at the Jiangsu (Suzhou) International Railway Logistics Center in Suzhou, East China's Jiangsu province, for export to Europe through the China-Europe freight train service.

The goods are destined for Budapest, Hungary. Many reach warehouses of Chinese companies there. After arrival, they will be distributed to other Central and Eastern European countries

This approach is a far cry from the one adopted by MNCs in China. Three or four decades ago, MNCs such as the German industrial conglomerate Bosch Group and the United States-based consumer goods giant Procter & Gamble initially set up offices in cities like Shanghai and Guangzhou to test the market before investing significant amounts to build factories in China. For Chinese exporters looking to grow their businesses abroad, however, such a cautious approach does not work well now.

Driven by big data solutions, the fast-growing trade volume generated by the Belt and Road Initiative, cross-border e-commerce and Chinese companies' industrial upgrades, many of them have invested directly in overseas warehouses. This strategy allows them to compete more effectively with both

domestic and foreign rivals.

For instance, Xuzhou Weijia Light Industry Co Ltd, a Xuzhou, Jiangsu province-based garment and suitcase manufacturer, has established an overseas warehouse in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, enabling the transshipment and distribution of products overseas.

This move fully leverages the role of overseas warehouses in smoothing the foreign trade supply chain, allowing more products made by other export-oriented companies in Xuzhou to continuously reach the Brazilian market as well as other neighboring markets in South America.

Overseas warehouses have also become a crucial solution to deal with the disruption of the global supply chain and fluctuations in international shipping costs during the peak season.

These facilities essential to the

cross-border logistics supply chain and serving as intermediary hubs for Chinese goods, help ensure logistics stability and bolster supply chain resilience.

By shipping goods in bulk to overseas warehouses, companies can benefit from lower shipping costs per unit. Moreover, local storage reduces the need for expedited shipping, which is often more expensive.

Therefore, investing in overseas warehouses allows companies to control inventory storage and management, enabling them to respond quickly to changing market demands and fluctuations in customer preferences. This flexibility can lead to better sales performance and market penetration.

There are three main types of overseas warehouses: third party-operated overseas warehouses, overseas warehouses managed by

e-commerce platforms and self-operated overseas warehouses run by companies themselves.

Large business groups often build their own overseas warehouses. This allows the company concerned to have complete control over inventory management and logistics processes, and it can quickly adjust inventory and shipping strategies based on market demand.

For small and medium-sized enterprises, third-party operated overseas warehouses and overseas warehouses managed by e-commerce platforms are more suitable and cost-effective.

Cross-border e-commerce is a new business model in foreign trade driven by technological innovation, actively utilizing new technologies, adapting to new trends, and cultivating new drivers of growth. It synergizes with new foreign trade

infrastructure like overseas warehouses, reducing intermediate links.

This approach helps optimize the structure and stabilize the scale of foreign trade, fosters new advantages in international economic cooperation, and has become a vital force in the development of China's foreign trade.

According to data from the Ministry of Commerce released in mid-June, the number of Chinese overseas warehouses exceeds 2,500, covering a total area of over 30 million square meters. Of these, more than 1,800 are specifically dedicated to serving the needs of cross-border e-commerce, with a combined area surpassing 22 million sq m.

In June, the Ministry of Commerce, along with other government branches, introduced targeted policy measures to advance the construction of overseas warehouses through a market-driven approach. These measures emphasize encouraging private sector participation to support businesses in the overseas warehouse sector

BUSINESS

Manufacturers up investments in services trade

Growth of the sector in China expected to maintain upward trajectory this year despite rising protectionism, uncertainties

By ZHONG NAN
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When Loctek Ergonomic Technology Corp, a Ningbo, Zhejiang province-based office products manufacturer, launched its first self-owned container vessel with a capacity of 1,800 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) last April, its goal was to reduce shipping costs and meet schedules on time.

Few could anticipate that this move would turn trade in services-related business into another major revenue driver for the company this year.

"Pushed by our clients' demand for shipping services and soaring goods orders generated by cross-border e-commerce transitions, space on our container ships has always been fully booked and we have put two new overseas warehouses into operation in the United States and Germany in early July," said Xiang Lehong, chairman of Loctek Ergonomic.

"Buying the container vessel has helped more Chinese exporters ship their products abroad," said Xiang, adding that the company today is also providing overseas warehousing services to more than 700 exporters across various industries.

Loctek Ergonomic's initiative is just an example to highlight how capable Chinese manufacturers transform their businesses to the next level and seek more growth points in trade in services.

In contrast to goods trade, trade in services refers to the sale and delivery of intangible services like transportation, tourism, telecommunications, warehousing, advertising, computing and accounting.

Despite facing rising trade protectionism and economic uncertainties, the growth of China's trade in services will maintain an upward trajectory this year, with huge potential in foreign trade, consumption, logistics and tourism, experts and foreign business executives said.

Attracted by China's growing foreign trade volume, US-based logistics provider FedEx launched two new flights to the United States from Qingdao, Shandong province, and Xiamen, Fujian province in June.

The company also plans to establish international gateway facilities at each location to enhance operational and clearance efficiency, in keeping with the increased business



Visitors check out imported products at a trade expo in Langfang, Hebei province, in June. WANG MIN / XINHUA

and trade demands of local customers.

"The launch of these two new cargo flights is a proactive move to meet the growing demand of China's foreign trade and deepen cooperation with the local market," said Koh Poh-Yian, vice-president for operations at FedEx China.

China's trade in services totaled 3.02 trillion yuan (\$415.66 billion) in the first five months of this year, up 16 percent year-on-year, data from the Ministry of Commerce showed.

In the meantime, the country's imports and exports of travel services totaled 820 billion yuan, a jump

of 48.4 percent on a yearly basis.

Upbeat about the Chinese market, EHL Hospitality Business School, a Swiss hospitality management university, started the seventh "HEMBA" program — an executive master of business administration in hospitality — with China Europe International Business School in Shanghai in June.

Achim Schmitt, dean of the Lausanne, Switzerland-based school, said the university will provide more tailor-made courses for Chinese students in the coming years.

Schmitt said that the hotel business in China has changed signifi-

cantly in recent years. For example, luxury hotels are losing points with travelers in favor of specialized boutique hotels and fancy breakfasts. A number of hotels in Yunnan province and the Xizang autonomous region with beautiful landscapes have been the go-to options for a number of travelers.

Developing services related to immersive experiences is an effective way to attract more foreign tourists, as it allows them to explore these destinations from the comfort of their own homes, he added.

"People are eager to learn about the culture and scenic beauty of new

areas. Local experiences are highly valued, including a taste of regional cuisine and cultural performances," said Schmitt.

The huge market demand and growth opportunities in China, particularly in sectors like export-related manufacturing, travel, smart city development and e-commerce, are driving an increasing number of multinational companies to boost their investments in trade in services business within the country, said Nie Pingxiang, a researcher specializing in trade in services at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic

Cooperation in Beijing.

To seek more growth points, China rolled out in April national and pilot free trade zone versions of negative lists for international trade in services, further liberalizing its service sector and creating a more open and fair business environment.

Nie said that lowering entry barriers for foreign investors in the services sector stimulates competition among domestic service providers. The competition drives businesses to enhance their services, boost efficiency and improve overall competitiveness.

Countering EU misconceptions about Chinese electric vehicles imperative

GENEVA — The EU's decision to impose provisional tariffs on electric vehicles imported from China starting July 4 has triggered strong dissatisfaction from both Chinese and European automakers, prompting the two sides to start consultations on the EU's anti-subsidy investigation of Chinese EVs in late June.

As the talks are underway, it is crucial for the EU to review the facts on the following issues to avoid politicizing economic and trade matters.

Has Europe suffered losses from automotive cooperation with China? Never.

Collaboration between the Chinese and European automotive industries began 40 years ago when Volkswagen established a joint venture in China, followed by other manufacturers like PSA Peugeot Citroen, BMW and Daimler.

Over the four decades, European car manufacturers have produced and sold a significant number of vehicles in China. Volkswagen had delivered approximately 40 million vehicles in the Chinese market by the end of 2022. BMW Brilliance Automotive, a China-Germany joint venture, rolled its 6 millionth vehicle off the production line in May. For both Volkswagen and BMW, sales in China account for over 30 percent of their global total.

While bringing advanced technologies, management experience, and production techniques to China, European automakers have also reaped substantial profits in the competitive Chinese market.

Even in the field of new energy vehicles, China and Europe are not engaged in a zero-sum game. Com-



The exhibition area of BYD during the Ecar Show 2024 in Lisbon, Portugal, in May. WEN XINNIAN / XINHUA

panies like Volkswagen and BMW have established research centers in China or collaborated directly with Chinese firms to drive technological innovation. This has helped European automakers better understand and adapt to the Chinese market, positioning them advantageously in electric and intelligent vehicles.

In recent years, Chinese EVs have progressed significantly, which surprised many in Europe. Yet their market share in Europe remains low. Still, some politicians are trying to exploit the situation for political purposes.

In fact, over the past 40 years, European carmakers have undoubtedly benefited from cooperation with China, as evidenced by their opposition to the EU's anti-subsidy investigation of China-made EVs. Major car companies such as Volkswagen, BMW and Mercedes-Benz have voiced their objections to these

protectionist measures, regarding them as neither reasonable nor justified.

The German Association of the Automotive Industry said recently that the planned tariffs against China-made EVs would be counterproductive for Europe's climate goals and harmful to its industry and consumers. Western car manufacturers in China would also be affected, in some cases even worse than Chinese companies, it noted.

"Competitiveness is fostered through competition," the association said.

Is Chinese "overcapacity" or EU undercapacity the problem? Probably the latter.

As observed by the Swiss newspaper Neue Zürcher Zeitung, if a country only produced for its domestic market, there would be no international trade. The automotive industry inherently operates on global

production and global sales. In 2023, around 80 percent of cars produced in Germany and 50 percent of those made in Japan were exported, while only about 12.7 percent of China's EVs were sold to the international market. Accusations of China's "overcapacity" are therefore groundless.

According to research by the International Energy Agency, to achieve carbon neutrality, annual global sales of EVs need to reach about 45 million by 2030, more than three times the figure in 2023 and far exceeding current global production capacity.

Take the EU as an example. Its transportation sector accounts for nearly a quarter of total greenhouse gas emissions. To meet the net-zero emission target by 2050, the EU needs at least 30 million zero-emission vehicles on the road by 2030. From a supply and demand perspective, the electric vehicle sector is not experiencing overcapacity but rather facing a capacity shortage.

In essence, the EU's allegations of China's "overcapacity" in EVs and concerns about "supply chain security" are just excuses to prevent China from participating in normal international trade and undermine the development of China's EVs.

The so-called "dumping" of Chinese EVs in Europe is also exaggerated. Most EVs exported from China to Europe are Western brands made in China.

According to data from the European Federation for Transport and Environment, in 2023, 19.5 percent of EVs sold in Europe were produced in China, and only 7.9 percent of those were Chinese brands. US

carmaker Tesla's Shanghai factory exported around 340,000 vehicles in 2023, nearly half of which were sold to Europe. Thus, Chinese EV brands hold a relatively small market share in Europe, far from being the main players.

Is a boom in Chinese EVs the result of subsidies?

No. China's success in the EV sector stems from technological innovation, a robust supply chain and a competitive market, rather than from subsidies.

A report by the US-based Center for Strategic and International Studies has noted the importance of recognizing the tremendous advancements made by Chinese EV manufacturers and battery producers. Recent years have seen substantial improvements in the energy density, range, and reliability of Chinese EV batteries, as well as better designs, infotainment systems, and autonomy capabilities.

The EU's claim that China's affordable EVs are heavily subsidized and therefore disrupt the market is baseless. In reality, it is the EU's protectionist measures that are causing market disruption.

Subsidy policies originated in Europe and the United States and are widely practiced globally. China does not implement any subsidies that are prohibited under WTO rules.

In contrast, Europe and the United States have significantly intensified their subsidies for EVs in recent years, with a range of exclusive and discriminatory practices. This has created barriers for Chinese EVs and is in clear violation of WTO regulations.

Is the EU's investigation reasonable?

No. Industry insiders believe that the EU's investigation seeks to prevent Chinese EV companies from investing and expanding in Europe and to diminish the competitiveness of emerging Chinese industries, so as to protect local traditional industries. Timed before the just-concluded EU elections, this protectionist move is geopolitically motivated.

The EU has always portrayed itself as a staunch defender of free trade, and it claims that its investigation is meant to determine whether China is excessively subsidizing its EV industry and will set tariffs based on the findings. However, in fact, the investigation was initiated without requests from member states or the auto industry.

Moreover, the investigation process was characterized by noncompliant sampling standards and a lack of transparency, seriously breaching WTO rules.

For example, the EU excluded high-sales producers from member states during the sampling process, demonstrating a clear discriminatory approach aimed at Chinese EV firms.

Visionary voices from Europe's political, business, and academic circles have urged that, instead of keeping Chinese EVs out, the EU should collaborate with China to leverage technological and supply chain advantages to enhance Europe's industrial landscape, meet emission reduction commitments, cater to consumers and achieve mutual benefits. Putting up barriers is nothing but a shortsighted move.

XINHUA

BUSINESSINSIGHT

Fiscal, tax system reforms key to development

EAGLE EYE

By Yuan Haixia,
Wang Yuanhui
and Liang Yunxi

The Central Economic Work Conference held in December proposed to arrange a new round of fiscal and tax system reform measures. The proposed fiscal and tax system reforms should be in line with the current stage of China's economic and social development.

In 1994, the tax-sharing system was initiated, marking the beginning of a redistribution of tax revenues between the central and local governments. Since then, the central government has continuously refined the framework of the tax-sharing system, including the division of revenues, the delineation of governance and fiscal responsibilities, and the establishment of related supportive mechanisms.

However, there remain some areas of obscurity and irrationality that has resulted in dampened efficiency of resource allocation and financial strain on local government budgets.

The upcoming fiscal and tax system reform needs to better define the roles of the central government and local governments, improve the delineation of governance and fiscal responsibilities between them, and carry out corresponding reforms in the establishment of related supportive institutional frameworks.

The central government's budget is mainly allocated to areas such as national defense and strategic reserves of grain and oil, whereas local governments are responsible for the bulk of expenditures in most other sectors. Local governments account for about 60-80 percent of spending on some critical fields with broad national significance and effects, such as social security and education. During the COVID-19 pandemic, local governments shouldered large amounts of macro-governance and public services, further exacerbating their fiscal burdens and leading to wide revenue-spending gaps.

In some areas, the division of governance and fiscal responsibilities between central and local governments is too vague, characterized by ambiguous boundaries and a lack of unified legal provisions, making it hard for them to be implemented.

Therefore, first, the relationship between government and the market should be further clarified, the boundaries of governance and fiscal responsibilities should be clearly explained, and the role of market mechanisms should be fully leveraged to alleviate the pressure of government spending.

In sectors with a strong public well-being nature, the government should continue to bear the primary responsibility. In quasi-public sectors with higher degrees of marketization and diminishing public well-being attributes, emphasis should be placed on the guiding role of government investment, thereby encouraging deep participation from private capital.

In areas that can be fully addressed by market mechanisms, the government should streamline administration, ease regulations and provide support to market forces, thus reducing pressure on the government while better unleashing the

market's role in resource allocation.

Second, we should ensure some spending responsibilities are transferred to the central government, promoting the standardization and legalization of the allocation of governance responsibilities.

For instance, we must continue to refine and implement the existing division of governance and expenditure responsibilities between central and local governments, adjusting and streamlining the specific arrangements for this division to improve practicality.

Some specific governance and spending responsibilities should be transferred to the central government in an appropriate manner, such as those related to the national flow of production factors and market integration, as well as some cross-regional issues.

Legally, we need to define the principles of governance responsibility division in laws and regulations to ensure the stability, effectiveness and sustainability of fiscal authority allocation.

Third, we also need to refine the transfer payment system to maximize its policy effect.

In recent years, the scale of transfer payments has been on the rise, and such increased transfers have been instrumental in mitigating local fiscal pressures. However, an excessive reliance on fiscal transfers can potentially dampen the enthusiasm of local governments and lead to moral hazard issues.

In the short term, it is advisable to further increase transfer payments to alleviate financial pressure on local governments.

And over the medium to long term, it is crucial to improve the system by using scientific assessment and calculation methods to make fund allocations more rational and efficient.

It is also imperative to further deepen reform of the fiscal and tax system at sub-provincial levels to bolster the financial sustainability of local governments.

It is important to ensure that the division of governance and spending responsibilities below provincial levels is formalized and legalized. A dynamic adjustment mechanism should be established from a top-level design perspective to enhance the system's binding efficacy, thereby ensuring the effectiveness and stability of the division.

We also need to improve revenue distribution effectiveness among governments below the provincial level, appropriately transfer tax collection power to lower-level governments, standardize tax revenue sharing and enforce the principle of statutory taxation.

Moreover, there should be a measured transfer of financial resources to sub-provincial governments, including exploring the viability of increasing the tax-sharing proportions for cities and counties. Nevertheless, for provinces that have serious developmental disparities, a certain concentration of financial resources at the

provincial level is necessary for the provinces to balance lower-level interregional development.

We also need to scientifically improve the transfer payment system below the provincial level to increase support for underdeveloped areas and grassroots governments.

Last but not the least, we need to further deepen reform of local taxation systems and establish a robust long-term mechanism for local taxes.

China's local tax revenues depend heavily on shared taxes like value-added taxes and income taxes. Meanwhile, taxes that are locally exclusive often feature scattered tax sources, small revenue scale, and challenges in collection and administration.

From the perspective of financial security and tax collection efficiency, it is advisable at this stage to continue with a local tax system primarily based on shared taxes. However, it is recommended to appropriately increase local governments' share of these taxes to ensure local fiscal stability and sustainability.

Over the long term, it is essential to focus on establishing a stable and long-lasting mechanism to ensure local tax revenue viability. Local governments may adjust measures to be in harmony with local conditions and gradually develop a local tax system primarily based on locally exclusive taxes.

We should also investigate the viability of modestly delegating some fiscal authority to local governments, therefore bolstering their financial resources and motivating

them to better carry out their respective responsibilities.

It is also crucial to maintain the overall stability of the financial balance between central and local governments when deepening taxation reforms.

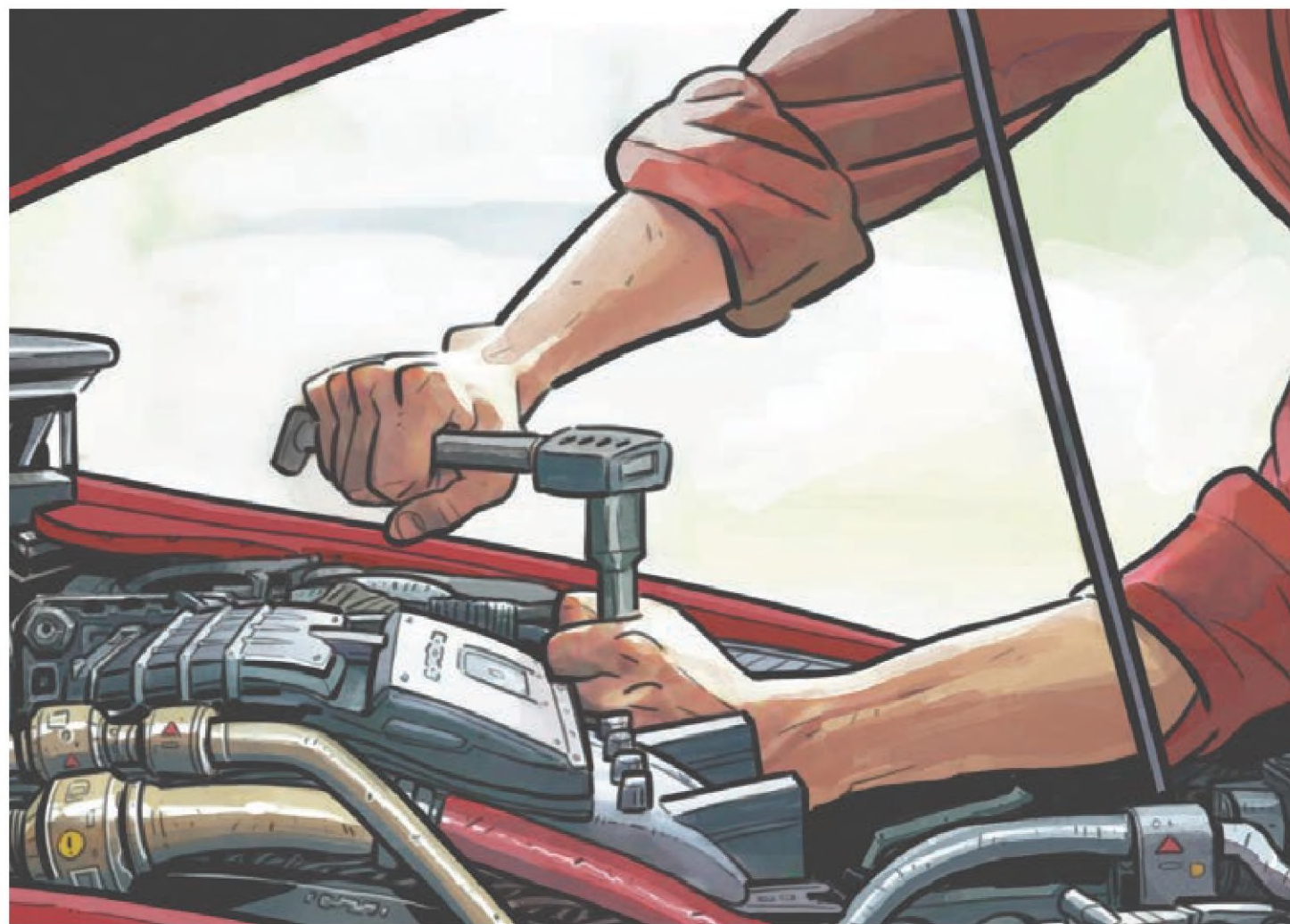
Currently, there is a heightened need for the central government to enhance its coordinating role and for local governments to improve the efficiency of their public services. The fundamental stability of the financial structure between the central and local governments is imperative for sustaining fiscal capabilities and macroeconomic regulatory functions.

Reform of the fiscal and tax system should also keep pace with the evolving dynamics and needs in the Chinese economy and society at large.

As the shift to new growth drivers from traditional ones intensifies, emerging industries — led by the digital economy — are poised to become a significant driving force of China's economic growth. Consequently, the new round of fiscal and tax system reform ought to resonate with these new dynamics and growth momentum.

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CAI MENG / CHINA DAILY

Outright ban on securities refinancing not best solution

MAIN STREET

By Xue Yi

The China Securities Regulatory Commission has announced a halt to securities refinancing starting Thursday, in the latest move to maintain stock market stability. Existing contracts can be extended, but they must be settled no later than Sept 30, the CSRC said on Wednesday.

The persistent market volatility in the A-share market, despite continuous positive indicators, can be attributed to several key factors.

First, the current favorable news mostly pertains to long-term institutional improvements, with limited immediate impact on the market. Policies such as enhancing the quality of listed companies, promoting dividend increases, and managing the market value of central enterprises are expected to take three to five years to show substantial effects. These measures, while positive, do not offer immediate support to current market trends.

Meanwhile, the ongoing global macroeconomic slump, coupled with changes in Chinese government policies, has contributed

to market fluctuations. The macroeconomic environment is one of the primary factors influencing stock market trends. Recent Chinese economic data and policy support have indeed brought positive signals to the market. However, global economic uncertainties and international trade relations also contribute to market volatility.

Moreover, market sentiment and investor behavior shifts can also lead to market turbulence. Positive news may initially drive the market upward, but subsequent profit-taking behaviors can trigger volatility.

One of the main roles of the securities refinancing mechanism, which enables major shareholders of listed companies to lend shares they own to investors, is to increase market liquidity, facilitating easier buying and selling of securities. This should theoretically aid in price discovery and market stability. However, there are potential issues in practice.

To start with, it leaves room for short-term volatility and short-selling. After positive news, the market typically experiences an upswing. However, as stock prices rise, some investors might use the securities refinancing mechanism to short-sell, anticipating a short-term market correction. This behavior can exacerbate short-term volatility, leading to market fluctuations.

Second, it will amplify the influence of large funds. The securities refinancing mechanism allows large funds and institutional investors

to operate more flexibly. They might engage in hedging, buying stocks to benefit from an uptrend while short-selling to mitigate risks. Such complex operations could introduce certain volatility effects into the market.

Despite issues with the securities refinancing mechanism, an outright ban is not the best solution.

First, the securities refinancing mechanism plays a positive role in increasing market liquidity and providing risk-hedging tools. Second, completely banning the securities refinancing mechanism could reduce market liquidity, affecting price discovery and market efficiency.

More importantly, banning the securities refinancing mechanism will not fundamentally resolve issues like market manipulation and unfair competition, which require improved regulatory frameworks and market mechanisms.

To mitigate the negative impact of the securities refinancing mechanism on market trends, further regulation is necessary.

First of all, more efforts are needed to enhance information disclosure. Real-time disclosure of trading data is essential. This includes requiring securities firms and fund management companies to disclose the frequency and scale of their securities refinancing transactions, including the quantity, price, and counterparties for each transaction.

Regular disclosure of the holding of large

funds and institutional investors that conduct securities refinancing transactions routinely, particularly large and concentrated holdings, should occur monthly or quarterly. Clear disclosure of the purposes of borrowed securities, especially for large-scale short-selling operations, is crucial.

Additionally, compliance audits should be strengthened by introducing third-party independent audit institutions to ensure the authenticity and completeness of disclosures. Noncompliant institutions should face strict penalties, including fines and business suspensions.

Meanwhile, there is a need to limit short-selling ratios. Set dynamic short-selling ratio caps, adjusting based on market volatility. For example, during high volatility, limit short-selling ratios for individual stocks to within 10 percent of their free-float shares, and relax this to 15-20 percent during stable periods.

Moreover, efforts are needed to implement stricter caps for strategically important industries or stocks to prevent malicious short-selling from threatening national economic security.

Additionally, there is a call for introducing a tiered management system based on the scale, historical performance, and risk management capabilities of institutions, allowing larger, well-performing institutions higher short-selling caps while imposing stricter limits on smaller and new entrants.

Regular evaluations should adjust caps dynamically based on performance and market conditions.

Finally, more measures are needed to actively regulate arbitrage behavior, such as establishing a real-time monitoring system to track large funds and institutional investors that conduct securities refinancing transactions routinely. Under the system, such behavior would trigger early warning mechanisms for unusual activities like frequent large-scale borrowing and repayment.

Use big data and artificial intelligence to analyze trading behavior deeply, identifying potential arbitrage. Introduce trading restrictions, such as requiring borrowed securities to be held for a minimum period (such as 10 trading days) before closing positions, to prevent rapid arbitrage operations.

Temporarily increase securities refinancing borrowing rates in specific market conditions (for instance, when a share price fluctuation exceeds a limit) to reduce arbitrage incentives. Enhance regulatory cooperation between securities regulators and other financial oversight bodies to jointly tackle cross-market and cross-product arbitrage, sharing information and experiences with international counterparts to address cross-border arbitrage.

The writer is a professor of finance at the University of International Business and Economics.

The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

COMMENT

Editorials

Key meeting will give fresh impetus to China's reform and opening-up

The third plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee, convened this week in Beijing, is viewed as one of the most important meetings of the central leadership this year as it is expected to study key issues concerning further comprehensively deepening reform and advancing Chinese modernization.

According to the main agenda of the session, the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee will report its work to the CPC Central Committee.

The CPC Central Committee will also analyze the current economic situation and economic work and deliberate on a document detailing policies and measures intended to continuously advance the high-quality development of the country in the face of the increasingly complex internal and external development environments.

These policies and measures are all necessary to help the nation cope with major risks and challenges, and win the strategic initiative in the increasingly fierce international competition. China's reform drive must continue as the current and future periods are critical for building a strong country and realizing national rejuvenation on all fronts through a Chinese path to modernization.

As the country's fast socioeconomic development over the past more than 40 years indicates, reform and opening-up have become effective instruments for the cause of the Party and the people to make great strides in keeping up with the times.

The plenum is problem-focused and results-oriented, as it sets the stage to pool the wisdom of the Party for intensive, open and constructive discussions on workable solutions to help the country overcome some major hindrances in its pursuit of sustainable growth while upholding its long-term strategic autonomy.

The problems that have appeared in the process of development should and can only be resolved through deepened reform and higher-level opening-up. The plenum has sufficient lessons and experience to draw from the country's development since 2012 when it started implementing a more open, inclusive and flexible development philosophy to crack some of the knotty issues related to the balancing of social efficiency and fairness, long-term and immediate interests and the quality and speed of development.

This is not the moment for the country to rest on its laurels, but there is no reason for it to be intimidated by the challenges it faces, as it has faced and overcome challenges before, and the challenges always harbor opportunities and new possibilities.

A few years back, reducing emissions and pursuing green development seemed to be a daunting task for the nation that relied heavily on fossil energy to fuel its growth. Now China has not only controlled its emissions increase but it has also proved that it can strike a balance between energy consumption and growth. In doing so, it has developed one of the most robust new energy industries and green economies in the world.

China's development has never been plain sailing. Yet the headwinds that have been encountered have always inspired the Party and the nation to double down on efforts to explore the country's future development path.

The plenum will prove again that the Party's leadership and the socialist path with Chinese characteristics, featuring stability, unity and institutional strengths, are central to the endeavors to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation in the foreseeable future.

Thus it is expected that the plenum will prove to be another critical milestone invigorating the Party to keep the country's development on the right track.

Act of desperation in last-chance saloon

A spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry has stressed that if the United States does not take practical actions to abide by its commitments to recognize "Tibet" as a part of China and not support "Tibet independence", Beijing will be left with no recourse but to take resolute and strong measures to firmly defend China's sovereignty, security and development interests.

The Chinese side's urging that the US not go its own sweet way came after the US introduced the "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act", or "Resolve Tibet Act". An amended edition of the "Tibetan Policy Act of 2002", it was approved by the US House of Representatives on Friday local time and then signed into law by US President Joe Biden. While the modifications might seem anything but sensational, put in perspective with other recent China-related developments in Washington, the legislation gives further impetus to a trend of unfathomably damaging potential.

The Act is a last-minute attempt to exploit the Dalai Lama clique, but it includes not only clauses that violate both US obligations under bilateral agreements and international laws and conventions, but also the seeds of greater troubles going forward.

Anything could happen on Capitol Hill going forward, and with anxiety over perceived challenges from China inexorably growing in Washington, the Act is of concern as it provides a handy tool for those seeking to compromise Chinese territorial and sovereign integrity. Upon signing, Biden said the Act "does not change" the US policy that recognizes the Xizang autonomous region and other Tibetan areas of China as part of the People's Republic of China. Yet from its official title on, the legislation shows an explicit intention to do the opposite. The so-called "Tibet-China dispute" is a US Congress invention rather than a real-world issue. The "Tibet" of the US narrative, whether it refers to the present-day Xizang autonomous region or the autonomous region along with other Tibetan inhabited areas in China, is a part of China. This is an internationally accepted reality, which the US president also acknowledged in his statement.

There is no dispute between the central government and local governments in the Xizang autonomous region and other Tibetan areas. The so-called Tibetan government-in-exile based in Dharamshala, India, has no international recognition as a representative of the real Xizang. Even those behind the US Act know it has no validity for that role. Simply put, there is no jurisprudential basis for Dharamshala to speak or act in the name of "Tibet". The legislation's central claim that "the conflict between Tibet and the People's Republic of China is unresolved" is therefore nothing but a falsehood fabricated by Washington to serve the aim of destabilizing China.

The legislation's drafters worked hard, enlisting multiple Cold War-era US legislations that misrepresent Xizang, to muddy the water on its status as part of China. The Act seeks to portray the autonomous region as "an occupied country under the established principles of international law", in open disregard of the fact that the region has been and remains in international law a part of China, which no country in the world identifies as a "country". Contrary to this truth, the drafters present the lie that "the legal status of Tibet remains to be determined in accordance with international law".

There are well-documented records that suffice to discredit that proposition, showing that Tibet officially came under Chinese jurisdiction during the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), which was more than 700 years ago. That might be hard for the lawmakers in Washington to grasp as that is long before the US was founded as a country. And, as everyone knows, for those in Washington anything that occurred before the Big Bang of the US' existence is some kind of primitive myth.

Yet, provocative as it is, disruptive as it may be, the US legislation will hardly inflict the kind of damage on China that its backers hope for, simply because it is inherently so blatantly weaponized as a means to attack China that no one can mistake it otherwise.

Cao Yi



Opinion Line

Assassination attempt reflects country's gun violence

The shooting incident targeting former US president Donald Trump on Saturday once again highlights the rampant and unresolved issue of gun violence in the United States. That it happened at a political rally where one would expect tight security measures, underscores the severity of the gun violence problem in that country.

Objectively, the incident is likely to provoke anger within the conservative wing of the Republican Party. President Joe Biden's response that he is grateful Trump is safe, is relatively standard in the face of an unexpected event involving an opponent. If Biden were to continue with campaign activities as usual, it could potentially increase the risk of retaliation from the conservative camp, leading to further unexpected incidents. Hence, a temporary suspension of campaigning is a prudent decision.

Subjectively, continuing campaign activities would involve criticizing and attacking Trump as an opponent, which may not be appropriate at this moment. It could also provide ammunition for those seeking to incite extreme actions against Trump, making it a less manageable situation. Thus, a pause is advisable.

This suspension, in fact, will also benefit Biden personally. Since the first televised debate, Biden has faced criticism for his poor performance, with calls from within his party to withdraw from the race. He has also made several gaffes in public. Taking a break at this juncture can shift the focus, possibly easing tensions or reducing some pressure on him, ultimately working in his favor in the election.

The attack on Trump is a significant and noteworthy event that is bound to

have some impact on the election trajectory.

However, its impact may not necessarily be decisive, other than reinforcing existing trends. For instance, this incident will undoubtedly strengthen support for Trump among Republican voters. Similarly, this incident is likely to accelerate the return of conservative voters to the fold, with more people clearly expressing support for Trump, potentially stabilizing his slight lead over Biden in the polls, which would have been within the margin of error even without this incident. Therefore, this incident is seen as reinforcing current trends but may not necessarily have a critical impact on the overall outcome. With less than four months remaining until the election, the outcome remains uncertain.

— DIAO DAMING, RENMIN UNIVERSITY OF CHINA

Incident further dents confidence in US leadership

Former US President Donald Trump was reported to be "fine" on Saturday night (local time) following what is reportedly an apparent assassination attempt that resulted in a wound to his ear.

The extreme event reflects the politically polarized society in the United States, where dissatisfaction with the elderly candidates in the coming election is rampant among voters. Both candidates represent starkly different policy directions, exacerbating the divide. Issues such as immigration and LGBTQ rights evoke strong emotions and divergent values, leading some individuals to extreme measures.

The acrimonious struggle between the two parties has created a tumultuous

environment. Against this backdrop, it is foreseeable that this incident will spark a new storm as election day approaches. The incident significantly boosts Trump's chances of winning, as it shifts the narrative from his legal troubles and moral shortcomings, making him a national hero targeted for assassination. This is reminiscent of the Chen Shui-bian shooting incident in Taiwan during the island's leadership election campaign in 2004, where a single bullet transformed public perception. Trump's previous controversies are overshadowed, and he is now seen as a potential martyr, with increased public sympathy.

The fallout from this event will increase the pressure on US President

Joe Biden, who now faces reduced space to criticize Trump and increasing calls from within his party to withdraw from the race. Prominent figures such as former House speaker Nancy Pelosi have already hinted at his possible withdrawal. The attack has amplified these pressures, making it harder for Biden to campaign effectively.

Internationally, this incident projects an image of instability within the US, diminishing the US' standing on the global stage. A sign of the significant internal strife, the incident will lead to a further decline in international confidence in US leadership.

— CHEN QI, CENTER FOR US-CHINA RELATIONS AT TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY

What They Say

Manila hyping up arbitration again to no avail

Editor's note: On Friday, Manila marked the eighth anniversary of the so-called South China Sea arbitration, with supportive statements from the United States and other countries. Below is an excerpt of a statement on that issued by the Chinese embassy in the Philippines:

The South China Sea arbitration case is essentially a political farce cloaked in legal garb. The Philippines violated the consensus with China to resolve their disputes through bilateral negotiations, contravened the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, and abused the dispute resolution mechanism of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The arbitral tribunal overstepped its authority and delivered an unlawful and invalid judgment. China neither accepts nor recognizes the so-called ruling and rejects any claims or actions based on it. This stance is supported and understood by over 100 countries, with many international legal experts and scholars criticizing and questioning the arbitration ruling.

Despite this, the Philippines holds the illegal ruling of

the South China Sea arbitration case as its guiding principle, even at the cost of sacrificing Sino-Philippine relations, and has in fact fallen into the trap set by the United States and Western countries, becoming a tool for some countries to build an anti-China and China-containing group. The Philippines regards the ruling and UNCLOS as the two cornerstones of its policies and actions in the South China Sea, but the ruling itself is a serious deviation from the Convention, exposing the contradiction in the Philippines' position. The Philippines' stubborn adherence to its wrong position and its insistence on the result of the ruling will only push it further down the wrong path.

The illegal ruling of the South China Sea arbitration does not constitute international law at all, but instead undermines the international rule of law. The advisory opinions issued by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea

focus on addressing climate change and marine environmental protection issues, and do not involve territorial and maritime disputes, nor do they involve the validity of the ruling in the South China Sea arbitration case. Any attempt to confuse the public with sensationalist hype will be futile, as it cannot cover up the illegal and invalid nature of the ruling, nor can it change China's firm determination to defend its territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests.

China is willing to continue to work with the Association of Southeast Asian nations, including the Philippines, to manage maritime differences, deepen maritime cooperation, comprehensively and effectively implement the DOC, actively promote consultations on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea, and jointly maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea.

The US is the real instigator of the South China Sea arbitration case.

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COMMENT



China and the World Roundtable | The Third Plenary Session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee

Editor's note: The third plenary session of 20th CPC Central Committee will analyze the current economic situation and economic work, and deliberate policies for advancing the high-quality development. Deepening reform is a requirement for upholding and improving the socialist system with Chinese characteristics and modernizing China's governance capacity. Four experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

Harley Seyedin and James Eric Black

Innovative workforce crucial for future reform

China's economic growth over the past more than four decades has been truly incredible. Since China launched reform and opening-up in 1978, its GDP growth has averaged above 9 percent a year, and it has lifted more than 800 million people out of poverty. It has also significantly improved healthcare, education and other services.

China's opening-up and rapid economic development began with Shenzhen. While millions of workers and huge amounts of resources were brought in to Shenzhen and other coastal regions, energy was sourced from other regions or imported to fuel economic growth. And the goods manufactured in the coastal regions were shipped through Hong Kong port and airport.

Guangdong province, where Shenzhen is located, had and still has insufficient energy resources, and it meets most of its energy requirements through supplies from other parts of China or imports. Economic growth has benefited Chinese society in many ways. For example, in 1989, Guangdong had a total of 16 kilometers of expressways. In 2023, it had more than 11,000 km of expressways. In 1992, Guangdong had no subways. By 2023, Guangzhou city alone had 16 subway lines covering 653 km, while Shenzhen had 16 subway lines totaling 431 km. In 1990 Guangdong's GDP was a mere 155.9 billion yuan (\$21.44 billion). In 2023, its GDP exceeded 13 trillion yuan, making it the 12th largest economy in the world.

Today, most of the global supply chains are connected to China in some way or the other. However, as the cost of energy-intensive and labor-intensive production has risen significantly in China, companies are relocating to lower-cost manufacturing locations.

This may appear to be a problem, but it's not. The Chinese mainland is simply on a path other countries and regions have tread to achieve higher value production. The Chinese mainland, on its part, is creating more high-wage, high-value jobs, as it knows that harnessing the potential of existing workers is key to maintaining economic productivity.

After the end of World War II, Japan gradually became the workshop of the world by being one of few countries that could provide unskilled labor and cheap land for manufacturers both from home and abroad. Those people who grew up in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and are familiar with the friction between the United States and Japan in later years

know that most simple things during those years were labeled "Made in Japan".

By the mid-1970s, many of those items started being labeled "Made in South Korea", followed by "Made in Taiwan" and "Made in Hong Kong".

And by the mid-1990s, the labels had mostly changed to "Made in China".

These developments demonstrate a natural transition which, over the years, took place in Japan, the Republic of Korea, Taiwan and the Hong Kong Special Admin-



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James Eric Black is the Schumann Endowed professor and chair of Mercer University's Department of Journalism and Media Studies.

strative Region, and is now taking place on the mainland.

Each of these economies began their development by manufacturing low-technology, low labor-cost and energy-intensive products for export. However, given the increase in their literacy rate and skilled labor force, and high-tech development, it made perfect business sense for them to shift their low-end production to other economies that welcomed it.

Such a transition, however, is a bitter-sweet medicine, always associated with difficult and sometimes painful policy

decisions. Nonetheless, to transform itself into the next secure, consumer-based economy, China needs to make hard decisions.

China's working-age population peaked at 1 billion in 2014, dipping in the last few years. China's working-age population has been declining by an estimated 7.9 million a year since 2020 and will drop to about 58.6 percent of the total population by 2030. And by 2100, China is projected to have a workforce of less than 400 million.

This problem is not unique to China. Dozens of countries in Asia, Europe, the Americas, the Middle East, Africa and Oceania, including Germany, Italy, Ireland, Poland, Canada, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Norway, Luxembourg, Portugal, Ghana, India, Mexico and New Zealand are, to varying degrees, issuing passports based on ancestry, with some of them granting dual citizenship based on genetic linkage. This is especially important to countries such as Mexico which, in particular, have been attracting large investments in the manufacturing sector.

Challenging times call for innovative solutions. China has become the world's largest economy (according to GDP purchasing power parity). It is also the world's biggest manufacturer and trader in goods, and has the largest foreign exchange reserves. As a result, it has become a major commercial partner of the US. China is the US' largest merchandise trading partner, biggest source of imports, and third-largest export market. It is also the largest foreign holder of US Treasury securities.

Despite a record number of graduates entering the job market this year, China still faces a shortage of skilled personnel, especially in the manufacturing sector. According to a survey published in 2022 by China International Intellectual Corporation, 83 percent of manufacturers face difficulties in recruiting skilled workers. A manufacturing talent development guide issued by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and other departments said China may face a shortage of about 30 million skilled workers in 10 critical manufacturing sectors by 2025.

Increasing investment in the country's workforce and taking bold and innovative steps to attract and retain talent is key to unlocking a stronger and more stable economy. And China is mostly doing what needs to be done to realize that goal.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

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Zhou Yuehui

Socialist market economy vital for modernization

China has been deepening economic reform and taking measures to improve the socialist market economic system since the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 2013.

Since the launch of reform and opening-up, China's productive forces, production relations, and economic base and superstructure have undergone profound changes. More important, the principal contradiction has changed from the "ever-growing material and cultural needs of the people versus backward social production" to that "between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people's ever-growing needs for a better life".

This is therefore the right time to expedite the process of Chinese modernization and intensify efforts to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, while deepening reform and promoting a new round of technological revolution and industrial transformation.

China has been meeting the basic needs of over 1.4 billion people, ensuring they lead decent lives, and has succeeded in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

But the needs of the people to lead a better life have increased with the passage of time. They seek not only more material and cultural goods and services, but also rule of law, fairness and justice, and better security and healthier environment.

At the same time, China's overall productive forces have significantly improved, with the country leading the world in many areas of production and research. Yet the "unbalanced and inadequate development" remains the main constraining factor in meeting the people's increasing needs for a better life. As such, China needs to deepen reform and adopt a new development policy to address the principal contradictions and promote Chinese modernization.

In fact, the 2023 Central Economic Work Conference stressed that Chinese modernization must be implemented as the foremost policy, with the Party leadership deepening economic reform and taking steps to establish a high-level socialist market economy. As a matter of fact, since the Third Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee in 1978, the Party has been pursuing economic development as its central task, and implementing economic reform as its main measure to implement all-round reform.

The socialist market economy is a key driving force for high-quality development and Chinese modernization. It provides an institutional guarantee for Chinese modernization, which seeks high-quality development, common prosperity and harmony between material and spiritual civilization while shunning polarization and capital-centered development, which characterizes Western-style modernization.

To address the drawbacks of Western-style modernization and promote Chinese modernization, the country needs to adhere to socialist market economy, which combines the socialist and market economic systems, in order to give full play to the socialist system and utilize the resource allocation mechanism of the market economic system.

To realize Chinese modernization, the country has to establish a high-level socialist market economy and take advantage of socialist means of production. And to promote high-quality development, the country needs to establish a high-level socialist market economy and ensure economic development serves people's needs.

The establishment of a high-level socialist market economy can improve labor productivity and expand total social output, laying the foundation for realizing common prosperity. Also, income disparities can be narrowed through reasonable primary distribution, redistribution and tertiary distribution in a high-level socialist market economy.

More important, new quality productive forces require the reform of the existing economic system and adjustment of production relations. So China should adopt a problem-solving approach and attach greater importance to solving problems that concern people most.

Accordingly, the government should further develop the public sector and encourage, support and guide the development of the non-public sector, while removing barriers hindering the development of new quality productive forces and taking measures to augment people's incomes, improve governance and boost social development.

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Sui Jigang

Sci-tech revolution to drive growth

The relations of production must meet the requirements for developing new quality productive forces. To develop new quality productive forces, it is imperative that reform across the board be deepened so as to create a new type of relations of production that is compatible with the development of new quality productive forces.

The development of new quality productive forces also requires innovations in the field of science and technology. A sci-tech innovation system is a series of institutions and systems established to promote innovations. It not only includes different innovation subjects, but also an array of systems and policies that affect the country's innovation capabilities, in areas such as science and technology, market, patent and education. Hence, the sci-tech innovation system belongs to production relations.

But since the environment of sci-tech innovation and economic development, the old sci-tech innovation system can no longer meet the requirements for developing new quality productive forces in the new era. It is therefore necessary to establish a new sci-tech innovation system to facilitate the development of new quality productive forces.

The innovation-driven development paradigm put forward at the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012 has helped China implement sci-tech system reform to comprehensively promote innovation-driven development.

The functional structure of innovation subjects has been optimized. China has formed a new diversified structure comprising enterprises, universities, research institutes and sci-tech interne-

diary agencies. While enterprises have become the subject of R&D investment and sci-tech innovation, universities are the subject of talent training and basic research.

Besides, China's innovation policy system is becoming increasingly sound, with the formation of a policy system that covers fields such as innovation-driven macro-management system, resource allocation mechanism, industry-university research coordination system, talent training system, research management mechanism, and incentive and evaluation system. Besides, policies concerning fiscal, taxation, finance, talent, foreign cooperation and industrial development have been further improved, and some laws have been issued or amended to form a basic legal framework for promoting sci-tech innovation.

Innovation-driven development has helped the country make remarkable achievements, providing a strong guarantee for economic growth, improving people's livelihoods, and giving rise to global innovation-driven enterprises.

Despite these achievements, however, China's innovation promotion system still faces challenges. The lack of strategic technology power results in weak innovation capability. In the past, many universities and research institutes blindly pursued economic benefits, ignoring national strategic targets by mainly focusing on fund-seeking and publishing papers. That in turn resulted in a lack of strategic scientific power and the inability to form an organized model for collaborative research in many key areas.

Also, the role of enterprises in sci-tech innovation needs to be strengthened. Although Chinese enterprises have become innovation subjects, many of



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them lack the basic absorptive and innovative capabilities. For example, a large number of national-level industrial enterprises either do not conduct research or have R&D departments despite the fact that innovation means experimental development. The serious lack of basic research has undermined original innovation capability.

Besides, the coordination between innovation subjects should be deepened. For example, universities conduct research for scientific discoveries and talent training instead of applying the results of research to industry, while enterprises' research focuses on product development rather than finding basic sci-tech theories. Hence, the lack of a common knowledge base has affected the industry-university-research coordination.

There is also a need to create a favorable environment for promoting innovation by, for example, straightening out the relationship between the government and market, and addressing problems such as a lack of market incentives, inefficient resource allocation and insufficient vitality in the micro economy. On the other hand, many policies aimed at reforming the sci-tech system are repetitive and poorly coordinated, hindering overall efficiency.

A new round of sci-tech revolution and industrial transformation is boom-

ing across the globe, requiring sound basic research to promote original innovation. Yet China is unable to lead the revolution because it is still "catching up" with global leaders.

More important, since China's sci-tech development under-contributes to economic growth, innovation needs to be the primary driving force of economic development. So China should establish a new sci-tech innovation system to address those problems.

First, the authorities should establish an institutional framework to support innovation subjects and break the barriers of new systems and policies.

Second, innovation subjects need to strengthen cooperation, while enterprises can lead the joint innovation-promoting mechanism also comprising universities and sci-tech institutes to optimize the systematic layout of the industrial chain. A mechanism should be established to also encourage the flow of talents and resource allocation.

Third, efforts should be made to create a healthy environment to ensure the market plays the leading role in research, prices setting and resource allocation. And universities, sci-tech institutes and enterprises should be encouraged to cooperate with their foreign counterparts to build a global innovation network.

And fourth, a national sci-tech decision-making mechanism should be established to solicit opinions from related departments, councils, think tanks and all sections of society. And new innovative governance models should be established.

The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

GLOBAL VIEWS

GERT GROBLER

Spirit of Dar es Salaam reigns

The Consensus is a powerful response rejecting unilateralism and hegemonic practices in the world

The Africa-China Dar es Salaam Consensus, which in essence represents the collective voice of the Global South, among others, calls on the international community to deepen development cooperation based on the principles of mutual respect, solidarity, win-win cooperation, openness, and common prosperity. It also focuses on the promotion of peaceful resolution of conflicts, and the need for respect of historical, cultural traditions and the national conditions of different nations.



In fact, through the Dar es Salaam Consensus, Africa and China have, in essence, agreed to firmly oppose the vestiges of colonialism and hegemony in all forms, and to support each other in safeguarding core interests and upholding the legitimate demands of developing countries. Furthermore, they have agreed to advocate dialogue as a means to bridge differences and cooperate in resolving international and regional issues, thereby safeguarding world peace and stability. This constructive approach augurs well not only for Africa and China but also for the entire Global South and further afield.

The essence of Africa-China cooperation is mutual benefit and common development, which underlies the Africa-China Dar es Salaam Consensus. Africa-China cooperation has never been and will never be a mere talk shop. With Africa's population expected to double by 2050, the continent's growing and young consumer market will, among others, be the main driver of global demand for consumer, education, health, technological and infrastructural products and services.

Despite many headwinds, trade between Africa and China jumped to a record level of \$282 billion in 2023, growing 11.1 percent from a year earlier, as a result of Beijing's growing push to boost imports from Africa. In supporting Africa by advancing integrated cooperation, China has also agreed to actively participate in the development of the African Continental Free Trade Area and to provide continued



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

support to the secretariat of the AfCFTA toward the full implementation of this important initiative. The World Bank recently described the AfCFTA as a "game changer" which would create a single, continent-wide market that unites 54 countries with a combined population of 1.3 billion and GDP of \$3.4 trillion. Given the accelerated progress with the establishment of the AfCFTA, Chinese companies will find new opportunities as they explore and invest more in the African market and add fresh dynamism to the growing high-quality cooperation between Africa and China. China's active participation in the devel-

opment of the AfCFTA will boost global trade and create economic opportunities for the Global South.

While bringing tangible benefits to the African and Chinese peoples, Africa-China cooperation has also created more favorable conditions for international cooperation. The growing concrete cooperation between Africa and China in achieving their respective development goals is having an increasingly beneficial impact on building a fair and reasonable international order, maintaining a peaceful and secure global environment as well as building an open

and inclusive world economy. There is thus a strong convergence of interests between the two sides to collaborate on issues of common interest, whether at the bilateral, regional or multilateral level, which is the focus of the Africa-China Dar es Salaam Consensus.

This must be seen against the background of today's world that is facing multiple and complex challenges, as a result of which Africa and China are striving to strengthen unity and cooperation with other Global South countries, with a view to jointly tackling challenges and pushing for a more equal, just and rational international order. In this context, the implementation of the Global Security Initiative is increasingly relevant to global security and will continue to contribute to achieving peace and security worldwide. The GSI has, in fact, improved international and regional security dialogue and platforms.

The Africa-China partnership is a mutually beneficial endeavor with huge potential for future growth and there is no doubt that it will continue to evolve into a model of success for expanding Global South cooperation. When China-Africa cooperation thrives, Global South cooperation will also flourish. The Consensus implies that building on the solid foundation of a shared global political vision and accelerated economic cooperation toward an Africa and China community of shared future, it also creates a strategic opportunity to cement a new stepped-up form of Global South collaboration which provides hope and inspiration to the developing world.

As a developing country, China is naturally an emerging political and economic force in the Global South. China has consistently stood in solidarity with fellow developing countries, through thick and thin, and continues to safeguard the shared interests of developing countries.

The far-reaching achievements of China's social and economic transformation have inspired many countries in Africa to learn and borrow best practices from China. It is also a fact that most Global South countries are highly receptive to China's

experience of development, which serves as a model for many developing countries.

Africa and China therefore look forward, as stated in the Consensus, to working with the international community to deepen the solidarity, cooperation and the alignment between international initiatives. In this regard it is vital to promote the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063, enhance high-quality Belt and Road Initiative cooperation, implement the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative, in order to open a new chapter in global development and modernization toward the achievement of common prosperity.

A further development of major significance in the Global South is the expanding BRICS partnership of emerging economies and developing countries. BRICS continues to give concrete and practical content to the core principle on which it was founded, namely one of shaping an international order that is fairer, just, inclusive, equitable and representative. BRICS is fast evolving into a champion of the needs and concerns of the peoples of Africa and the Global South.

Africa therefore strongly values the commendable approach adopted by the Africa-China Dar es Salaam Consensus, which undoubtedly strongly resonates with a large part of the international community, and demonstrates the legitimate demand of Africa and China to defend their sovereignty, security and development interests. The Consensus represents a powerful response in rejecting unilateralism and hegemonic practices, and in addressing global peace and the plight of the poor and marginalized in the world.

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DENNIS MUNENE

Rekindling the Africa rising narrative

The Dar es Salaam Consensus is one of the blueprints advancing China-Africa cooperation, making it one of the greatest mutual cooperations in the 21st century

The global community today is facing both traditional and nontraditional security threats that endanger its socioeconomic stability and development. Against this backdrop, scholars and policy experts from about 50 countries in Africa and China jointly released the Dar es Salaam Consensus at the 13th Meeting of the China-Africa Think Tanks Forum in Tanzania's port city of Dar es Salaam in March. The Consensus provides a policy dialogue platform for deepening global development cooperation.



Today, both China and Africa have entered a new development stage as indicated by the Consensus. This development paradigm is creating more opportunities for Africa's development. For instance, China has developed more than 100,000 kilometers of roads, 10,000 km of railway, 1,000 bridges, approximately 100 ports, and several energy facilities in Africa. These infrastructure expansions continue to usher in a new era of connectivity and accessibility across the continent, making Africa a fulcrum and frontier of development. Indeed, the Dar es Salaam Consensus has rekindled the Africa rising narrative.

Further, the Dar es Salaam Consensus will strengthen Africa's economic integration, providing more room for growth in China-Africa cooperation. The two civilizations are focused on boosting quality development and further aligning the goals of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, the Belt and Road Initiative, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative with those of the African Union Agenda 2063, the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the development strategies of individual Afri-

can countries such as Kenya's Vision 2030. This will strengthen high-quality sustainable development pledges, ensuring that no country or society is left behind. This exemplifies the true meaning of building a community with a shared future for mankind.

In retrospect, the immense success of China's path to modernization inspired the Dar es Salaam Consensus that emboldened Africa's search for its own independent path to modernization. For Africa, modernizing its infrastructure, boosting economic growth, development and foreign investment and eradicating poverty catalyze its quest for an African renaissance story.

The Dar es Salaam Consensus also breaks the myth that modernization equals Westernization. For China, the path to modernization for both civilizations is anchored on the principles of mutual respect, solidarity, win-win cooperation, openness and common prosperity. As a breath of fresh air, the Dar es Salaam Consensus is advocating for reform of the international financial system to bridge the development gap, and ensure countries in the Global South have the same opportunities as those in the Global North.

Knowing that the promotion of dialogue and consensus in a multipolar world is fundamental to ensuring the countries in the Global South experience true modernization, delegates present made several consensus. First is the adoption of more practical and effective measures to promote knowledge sharing. Second, give priority to development and explore independent, people-centered paths of mutual respect and mutual learning. Third, promote the building of an equal and orderly multipolar world to facilitate common development. Fourth, advance a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization to share the dividends of development. Fifth, promote reform of the international finan-

cial system to bridge the development gap. Sixth, ensure that China and Africa align with international initiatives and national plans to strengthen high-quality sustainable development bonds. Seventh, activate domestic development through effective markets and proactive governments. Last, the Dar es Salaam Consensus calls on the global community to consider both traditional and nontraditional security threats to create a secure development environment. Additionally, the Consensus has shown

that both Chinese modernization and the African renaissance are still works in progress. None place their achievements as being superior to the other. The act of humility between China and Africa is deeply rooted in ancient times and hardened in the furnace of mutual struggles against imperialism and their shared aspirations for freedom and development.

Thus, as Africa continues to search for an independent path to modernity, recovery, development and renewal, rooted in the African cultures and philosophy, the Dar es

Salaam Consensus will serve as one of the blueprints advancing China-Africa cooperation, making the destiny of the two ancient civilizations inextricably interlinked, and one of the greatest stories of cooperation in the 21st century.

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SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

LIFE



All the world's a stage

Traveling troupes of entertainers give audiences in remote grassland areas shows to remember, Deng Zhangyu reports.

Actresses from the Ulan Muqir troupe of Sonid Right Banner in Xiliin Gol League, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, perform for herdsmen in a yurt in November. Nomadic families living in remote areas have limited access to cultural events. WANG KAIYAN / XINHUA

As Guo Liru and her troupe approached a village in a remote area in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region last month, the crackle of firecrackers erupted in the air. This was a signal to the villagers that a troupe had arrived, and a call to gather and watch their performance.

Two decades ago, when Guo journeyed to remote grassland pastures, the signal was delivered in even more picturesque fashion. Residents would ride out a day in advance of their arrival, galloping from yurt to yurt to spread word to each nomadic family: "Come tomorrow, the performance is not to be missed".

Regardless of the method of notification, a crowd of enthusiastic spectators still awaits Guo and her troupe, and the 59-year-old singer's passion for her audience remains unchanged.

She is a performer with one of the Ulan Muqir troupes of the Inner Mongolia autonomous region. Meaning "red bud" in Mongolian, the Ulan Muqir troupes originated in this vast grassland. They travel from one encampment to another, performing for herdsmen who live in remote regions.

"No matter how far the distance, we make our way to the same pastures to perform each year. Our audiences are like family to us," Guo says.

After each performance, elderly women often kiss her on the head and invite her to return the following year. With the grassland as its stage and the vast sky as its backdrop, the troupe's repertoire includes singing, dancing and performing small skits, all inspired by the daily lives of local people.

The performers travel to pastoral areas in a bus or truck loaded with their equipment. Their longest journey, to the remote Alshaa League in the far western reaches of Inner Mongolia, took an entire month.

In the 1990s, performances didn't start until after 9 pm, as herdsmen first needed to milk their cows. Songs echoed through the night, continuing until the stroke of midnight. Passionate herdsmen danced alongside them and some even stepped forward to join in the singing.

"They wouldn't come right out and ask for another song, but you could see it in their faces — they wanted more. The excitement would keep going until 1 in the morning," Guo says, recalling moments that touched her.

"We were once invited to stay in a yurt and cooked together with the family. It felt like a celebration, and they offered us their best food," she says.

The genuine emotions that come from



A Ulan Muqir troupe performs for viewers on Xilamuren Grassland in Baotou, Inner Mongolia. There are 75 such troupes in the autonomous region, and they stage thousands of performances each year.



From left: Guo Liru, 59, sings in the costume of the Daur ethnic group. Bao Rui, 30, is a dancer from the regional-level Ulan Muqir troupe. Guo has been performing in another Ulan Muqir troupe since she was 19. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

connecting with the audience on such a personal level have fueled her performances with her Ulan Muqir troupe for decades.

The first Ulan Muqir troupe was formed in the Sonid Right Banner in Xiliin Gol League in 1957, with the mission of entertaining herdsmen in remote areas, the troupe has performed at local communities, nursing houses, villages and primary schools in recent years. Being mobile allows the troupe to tailor its performances to meet the demands of different groups.

Guo giving thousands of performances around the region each year, according to local government data.

Xing Lili, director of the regional-level Ulan Muqir troupe of Inner Mongolia, says that the troupe gives around 100 performances every year. Apart from entertaining herdsmen in remote areas, the troupe has performed at local communities, nursing houses, villages and primary schools in recent years. Being mobile allows the troupe to tailor its performances to meet the demands of different groups.

Typically, each troupe is small, consisting of about a dozen versatile members, all skilled in various forms of entertainment. In recent years, these troupes have extended their reach, performing for bed-ridden seniors in nursing homes, staging shows in communities about fraud awareness, and visiting border outposts to boost the morale of young soldiers.

"As long as the audiences need us, we will continue our service," Xing says.

Bao Rui joined Xing's troupe after graduating from college in 2016. She enjoyed the feeling of being needed by the audience,

and the genuine connection that comes from direct interaction with people.

Unlike large crowds for which actors perform on grand stages, her audience sometimes consists of just a handful of people. "Even if there's only one person, we must see the performance through to the end," she says.

The 30-year-old can dance, host shows and play instruments. She once danced for an elderly bed-bound woman in a nursing home. After watching her performance, the elderly woman held her hand and kept thanking her with tears in her eyes.

The troupe members frequently travel to perform in distant villages. On their way to a performance once, their bus passed a herdsman whose truck had overturned, scattering his horses. They stopped to help, with some rounding up the horses. Having grown up in pastoral areas, these ethnic Mongolian actors are adept at setting up tents and herding horses.

When they perform in villages, they often find that many of the residents are elderly, as the younger generations have left for work in cities. People ask the actors to help them fix their mobile phones and appliances, and sometimes they even assist in setting up tents.

"All these experiences are interesting, although sometimes the conditions are hard. I feel closely connected to the lives of my audiences, and their stories inspire us to put on good performances," Bao says.

Many ethnic groups, including Mongolians, Ewenki, Daur and Oroqen, make their home in this vast grassland expanse. The troupe weaves the distinctive stories and traditions of each group into its performances, a creative endeavor that has earned it numerous awards over the years.

Guo is a member of the Daur ethnic group. Over the years, she has learned several languages through her performances.

"Speaking in the local language helps close the distance with them quickly. It also enriches my own artistry," Guo says.

She grew up in a yurt in the pastoral areas of eastern Inner Mongolia. From childhood, she watched performances by Ulan Muqir troupes, which planted the seed in her heart to one day join them.

"I was touched by their desire to perform for people in need. It's important that this spirit is kept alive and passed down through generations of people living on the grasslands," she says.

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Library run by retiree brings Chinese culture to Barcelona

BARCELONA — The Chinese Library of Barcelona, located in Hospitalet de Llobregat, seeks to introduce the residents of the city to Chinese culture as part of a unique initiative in northeastern Spain.

It was set up by Ma Xuefeng, who has lived in the city for the last six years, and who spent her retirement savings setting up the library, which offers a free lending service. It took her two years to build the library's collection, importing books direct-

ly from China, and it is the first Chinese-language library in Barcelona.

"After I moved to Spain, I noticed that there are few Chinese books here," Ma says. She expresses her hope that the library would provide an opportunity for Chinese children and local residents alike to explore and appreciate Chinese culture.

Ma's inspiration to start the library stemmed from her admiration for the classic Spanish novel *Don Quixote*. During the

COVID-19 pandemic, she compiled a Chinese translation in 64 notebooks over 443 days, which are now displayed in the library.

Carlos Gonzalez, a Barcelona resident, expresses his fascination with Chinese culture. He says that there is limited exposure to Chinese culture locally, which is why he'd like to visit China and experience its culture and lifestyle firsthand.

Leveraging his language skills in Chinese, Spanish and Catalan, 10-year-old Yixuan Wu

volunteers at the library while enjoying access to his favorite books. "I became a volunteer here when they opened the library because I like Chinese books and we don't have many in Spain. I come here to read books in Chinese," he says.

Ma is optimistic about the library's future, saying that with everyone's help, it will continue to improve. She made a point of highlighting the fact that the collection also includes Spanish literature translated into

Chinese, which will allow Chinese readers to learn about Spain, and foster cultural exchange between China and Spain.

There are approximately 4,000 residents of Chinese descent in Hospitalet de Llobregat, part of the 54,000-strong Chinese community in the Barcelona area. Ma hopes her library will serve as a gateway for them to connect to their cultural roots.

XINHUA

LIFE

A fresh way to handle dance

Sino-Swiss production discovers new creativity in physical limitations, pushing the boundaries of art, **Cheng Yuezhu** reports.



Chinese dancer Liu Yan performs in the production *Handling Hands*, which premiered at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing on July 6.

As dancers, Liu Yan and Alessandro Schiattarella come from different backgrounds — Liu, born and raised in China, specializes in traditional Chinese dance, while Schiattarella, who comes from Switzerland, is trained in ballet.

Yet in a new dance theater production, *Handling Hands*, staged at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing on July 6 and 7, they joined hands, a motif key to both their personal and creative journeys.

Schiattarella received ballet training when he was young, but since the age of 15, he has been affected by Hirayama disease, a neurological disorder that gradually weakens the muscles in the hands.

The disorder hinders the performance of certain hand gestures required in ballet. For some time, he tried to conceal the deterioration by taping his hands up, and continued to perform onstage.

"I was good enough to stay, but my hands could not keep up with my other talents. I had this clash between what my body could do and what it could not do in ballet. This slowly made me realize that these challenges can be very heavy in the long term. From then on, I tried to detach for a moment from the canons of beauty in ballet," he says.

Schiattarella began to face the weakness in his hands through dance productions, notably *Altrove+*, a solo dance he performed earlier this year in Beijing, which integrates choreographic elements centered on his hands.

The seed for the Sino-Swiss production *Handling Hands* germinated in May 2023, when Ge Huichao, founder of Beijing Body On&On Cultural Exchange Center, took a trip to Europe.

In 2019, Ge established the annual Luminous Festival, which centers on inclusive arts and organizes lectures, forum discussions, stage productions and screenings to promote inclusiveness and equality.

Upon learning about Schiattarella, Ge immediately thought of Liu. Inspired by the similar changes to their lives, she envisioned a dance project that would connect them.

An acclaimed classical Chinese dancer, Liu was chosen as lead dancer for a performance during the 2008 Summer Olympics opening ceremony in Beijing, but an accident during a rehearsal resulted in spinal injuries.

Hand dancing became Liu's new form of expression, and after finishing a doctoral degree, she became a professor at the Beijing Dance Academy. Her research includes the hand movements in classical Chinese dance, as well as their relationship to Buddhist mudras (symbolic hand gestures).

"Over the past 16 years, as I have started to reexamine dance, I feel that my perception has broadened. I still find traditional Chinese dance extremely beautiful, but there are other elements in dance that are more encompassing, powerful, and possess a different quality," Liu says.

"Another insight is that a new dimension of my life has opened up. While I used to focus solely on performing, I have now also begun to create, teach and research."

When the two dancers first met, they jotted their interests down on paper in an attempt to find common directions to



Clockwise from above: The production is a collaboration by Liu Yan and Swiss artist Alessandro Schiattarella. Ge Huichao, founder of the annual inclusive arts-centered Luminous Festival, speaks at a news conference in Beijing on July 4. Schiattarella and Liu address the conference. PHOTOS BY LI XIAOCAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

explore as part of a collaborative production.

"The topic of hands was there from almost the first moment, because Liu Yan wrote two books about hands, and I created work about hands that was also presented here in China. This was our first point of connection, and was very strong," Schiattarella says.

"I remember a line from one of Liu's books, where she said that hands were her new means of expression. It is the same for me. We come from different cultures, but we're so connected by something I found really striking. I felt that we had to go further into this."

In choreography devised and performed by both dancers, they tell their own stories and communicate with each other via intricate hand gestures and movements that blend both Chinese and Western classical and contemporary dance elements, amplified and highlighted by lighting.

For Schiattarella, the production draws from autobiographical dance pieces in which he explores the movements his hands are able to perform, but also adds cultural elements, such as those of his birthplace Naples, in Italy.

"There is a tradition of using hands in specific ways in daily life in Naples. Neapolitans speak a lot with their hands, to the point that there are books describing all the gestures. Then we also dug into the arts, the iconic images of hands in paintings and sculptures, to enrich the choreography," he says.

For the production, Liu choreographed a section specifically using hand movements from traditional Chinese dance. She says that while the basic hand gestures in ballet are the same for men and women, some of the dozens of hand gestures in traditional Chinese dance are specific to certain genders.

Initially concerned about whether the different genres would work together in the same production, Liu says that when she heard the music, she spontaneously began to interpret it through dance.

"For me, this section flows naturally with the other passages, which represent an interesting contrast of cultural differences," she says.

The music is composed by Li Bo and Zhang Yong, the two founders of Silent Choir, an ensemble of children and teenagers with hearing impairments. For the production, they used a *pipa* (a four-

stringed lute) to imitate the sound of Neapolitan music.

As the production's producer and dramaturge, Ge says that the creation and rehearsal process involved constant brainstorming of imagery related to hands, resulting in a harmonious blend of the contemporary, the classical and the folk.

"I hope that the audience will feel the production's sense of fun, uniqueness and inclusiveness. I feel that it is a bold collaboration and exploration based on the connection between the two artists," Ge says.

The production is sponsored by Pro Helvetia, the Swiss Arts Council, with the aim of promoting Sino-Swiss cultural exchange and supporting inclusive arts.

"From my experience of promoting inclusive arts, I know how challenging it is to work in this field, and we deeply appreciate the talent, possibility and creativity of artists with disabilities," Ge says.

"We look forward to fostering inclusive arts exchanges between China and Switzerland, beginning with *Handling Hands*, a fine starting point for future collaboration."

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A Tajik family's bond with China

DUSHANBE — In her studio in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 76-year-old Musharrafa Sharipova gently unwraps a well-preserved painting, which vividly depicts legendary ancient Chinese heroine Mu Guiying.

A renowned figure in the legends of the generals of the Yang family during the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127), Mu is a famous cultural symbol in China, and an embodiment of courage, resolution, loyalty, and insightfulness.

Sharipova received the painting as a gift from her father in 1960 when she finished fourth grade. Then an official of the Communist Party of Tajikistan, her father had received the painting as part of an art collection donated by a visiting Chinese delegation in the 1950s.

"The painting is almost like a flag, suggesting that my destiny is closely connected with China," says Sharipova, former deputy chairman of the Tajik Society for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries.

She and her family have maintained close bonds with China for four generations, from her father to her grandson.

Sharipova notes that the gifts from the delegation were a testament to her father's interactions with China, and planted the seed in her heart to carry on his work promoting friendship with China.

"The special affection our family has for China and our closeness to Chinese history and culture were established by my father. From a young age, I was influenced by him, and my bond with China took root in childhood," she says.

In 2003, she served as the chief editor of Friendship magazine, the quarterly publication of the Tajik Society for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries.

The magazine has extensively covered China and has published several special issues on the country.

Between the 1990s and 2018, Sharipova visited China eight times and was able to see the country's rapid development.

"Every visit revealed new developments. The scale of construction and the architecture were astounding," she says. "Everywhere in China is developing in a visible manner."

She also regularly participates in activities held at Dushanbe's Confucius Institute, sharing her experiences in China with students, and encouraging them to learn Chinese culture.

Years of personal and professional interactions have also helped Sharipova develop close Chinese friends. "For me, the word 'China' holds immense significance," she says.

Every generation of the family has maintained a strong connection with China. Sharipova's son frequently interacts with Chinese companies as part of his logistics job. Her grandson, Sul-ton Sultonov, engages in cultural exchange with Chinese colleagues in advertising. Her great-niece, Niso Nozirova, a university student majoring in Chinese, is passionate about Chinese culture and music.

"China has always been a close topic, inspiring a profound interest in our family. Preserving these precious memories and continuing the good deeds of our family are essential," Sultonov says.

Sharipova's 14-year-old grandson, Amid Sharipov, is a tech enthusiast fascinated with artificial intelligence and new technology. Inspired by Chinese innovation, he dreams of studying at a Chinese university.

"China's progress amazes me, and many experts predict a new era of technology led by China," he says.

Sharipova intends to enroll her grandson in the Confucius Institute at the Tajik National University to learn Chinese in September.

"My grandmother's cooperation with China and numerous visits have solidified my desire to pursue a career in China. Realizing this dream would bring immense joy to my family and honor my great-grandfather's legacy," says the 14-year-old.

XINHUA

CULTURE

Cheerleading, Chinese style

Cheerleaders break new ground by combining traditional and ethnic elements to their routines, **Hou Chenchen** and **Li Yingqing** report.

When Shen Yajun received an invitation from Pu'er University cheerleading coach Li Dong in 2018 to join the school team, he promptly declined. As a dedicated practitioner of Chinese kung fu, Shen felt his interests lay elsewhere, rooted in the traditions of his culture.

But Li persisted and continued to encourage Shen to try out cheerleading. The university student eventually agreed, setting out on a journey to become a pioneer in the field.

The coach saw similar potential in Shen's fellow student Gong Ningjunnan, who is skilled in martial arts and gymnastics. Gong, now 28 would soon also become one of the first leading practitioners of "Chinese-style cheerleading".

Cheerleading, an activity primarily associated with American football and basketball, had been unfamiliar territory for the two students.

"I'd never even heard of cheerleading before coach Li's invitation," said Shen, 27. "The idea of participating in a pompom competition with flower balls and wearing skirts, that was completely foreign to me."

Li Dong started his career as a sports teacher in the university in Southwest China's Yunnan province in 2017. He subsequently worked to establish a cheerleading team that included boys, breaking away from the stereotype cheerleading squad comprising girls in colorful skirts.

Shen and Gong began to gain recognition for their moves in 2021, when their team secured a third-place finish at the cheerleading world championships. Their performance integrated elements of Chinese martial arts, striking what many people saw as a perfect balance between power and grace. It also marked the first time for such a Chinese team to win a medal at the tournament.

In April, a winning fusion of Chinese culture and cheerleading, incorporating the enchanting melodies of traditional musical instruments, also struck a chord among global audiences. A Yunnan cheerleading team performed at the 2024 ICU World Cheerleading Championships held at Disney World in Orlando, Florida, where competitors from more than 66 countries and regions showcased their moves.

"Paintings, musical compositions and ancient texts — each of these can be integrated into our cheerleading routines," Li said. "We gather these cultural elements and blend them with sports. Our aim is to incorporate Chinese traditional culture, aesthetics, and the dances of our ethnic groups into our performances."

Li said that in the process of dance design, there are three key aspects to integrate dance with traditional culture; through costume design, musical expression, and the choreography of movements.

In a Chinese cheerleading performance *Journey to the West*, named after the classic novel, students wore costumes adorned with black and golden elements resembling the golden cudgel wielded by monkey king Sun Wukong, one of the story's main characters.

Team members also positioned themselves to mimic the mountains of Chinese landscape, while another performer portrayed Sun jumping among them.

"We incorporate characteristics of the heroic Monkey King, such as riding on clouds and mists and his ability to perform 72 transformations, into the design of our dance routine. This allows us to integrate cultural elements into cheerleading," Li said.

"Our goal is to integrate our ethnic culture into cheerleading," he said.

Building bridges

Li said that while cheerleading is commonly viewed as an American activity symbolizing school spirit, leadership and youthfulness, it also shares similarities with China's traditional ethnic dances.

"American cheerleading combines power and aesthetics, while China places greater emphasis on cultural connotations," he said. "In both American cheerleading and Yunnan's ethnic dances, we see reflections of our peoples' vibrant cultural expressions."

"Cheerleading arose from a context of support and enthusiasm, much like the origins of many ethnic dances rooted in festivals and communal celebrations," Li said.

"These occasions often witness people from diverse ethnic backgrounds coming together to sing and dance, fostering joy and excitement. It underscores a shared essence embedded in our everyday lives, which is to positively live our collective selves."

Yunnan, the birthplace of the cheerleading team, stands out as one of China's most culturally diverse provinces, with ethnic minorities constituting about 34 percent of its population. Among China's 56 recognized ethnic groups, nearly half are found

Cheerleading arose from a context of support and enthusiasm, much like the origins of many ethnic dances rooted in festivals and communal celebrations."

Li Dong, Pu'er University cheerleading coach



The cheerleading team of Pu'er University in Southwest China's Yunnan province waits backstage, ready for the parade of the opening ceremony at Disney World in Orlando, Florida on April 25. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



The Pu'er University cheerleading team performs at the 2024 ICU World Cheerleading Championships held at Disney World in Orlando in the US state of Florida on April 25.



The Pu'er University cheerleading team with US cheerleading counterparts at Disney World in Orlando, Florida on April 25.

within Yunnan alone.

In his role as the team's coach, Li has endeavored to include members from various ethnic groups, thereby infusing their cheerleading performances with a rich tapestry of ethnic elements. More than 60 percent of the team is made up of members from ethnic minorities.

Their cheerleading routines showcase a vibrant array of ethnic dances, providing a window into multifaceted Southwest China, Li said. These performances include traditional dances such as the Va ethnic group's hair-swinging dance and Dai ethnic group's drum dance, which have deep roots in folk festivals and ceremonies.

"These dances authentically reflect the distinct daily lives, work scenes and spiritual beliefs of local communities, he said.

For most performers of the Pu'er University team, the championship in April was their first visit to the United States. Throughout their journey, the cheerleaders encountered numerous heartwarming moments.

"We received traditional hats from the Mexican team members and in return, we shared our Chinese knots and panda badges with athletes from other countries," Li said.

"We felt encouraged and supported by athletes from various nations," he said. "This sense of camaraderie is a defining feature of cheerleading team culture and it brought a wonderful warmth to our experience."

Inclusive activity

Cheerleaders take pride in a team sport in which bonds naturally form between teammates. Su Xianliang, 25, a team member of Yi ethnic group who took part in the championship, used to be an introvert but the spirit of cheerleading has changed his life, the coach said.

"He seldom talked previously and did not have too much confidence," Li said. "But through the cheerleading training he has gained a clear goal, and become thoughtful and proactive in many aspects, which is truly impressive."

In April, Su stood on the international stage with confidence and had the honor of being a member of his team to carry the national flag during a ceremony at the event.

"Cheerleading has given me significant spiritual strength," Su said. "It has fortified my will to face difficulties and solidified my belief in pursuing my dreams."

"The key word of our cheerleading is unity," Li said.

"Cheerleading transcends the stereotypical notion of elegant dance; it embodies both strength and aesthetic appeal. Unlike traditional art dances, cheerleading is accessible to all without high barriers to entry," he said.

"As a cheerleading team, we welcome students of different gender, height, weight and background to join us and train with us."

"To bring together a group of unrelated individuals into a team, I think this is the most fascinating aspect of cheerleading. Through training and the technical coordination that comes from being together, we transform into a harmonious dance unit," said Lu Yanxia, a female student who has nurtured a passion for dance since childhood.

In the US, the earliest cheerleading squads were predominantly male before becoming a sport dominated by females.

"I want to try to change it because sports should not be divided by gender. Therefore, I want to see if males can perform stunts with the same finesse and excel in cheerleading. I hope to break these gender stereotypes," Li said.

Lu Yanxia, Shen Yajun, and Gong Ningjunnan, three of Li Dong's students from Pu'er University, have all chosen to teach at primary and secondary schools after graduating. As graduates of the cheerleading team, they have helped spread the practice beyond Pu'er University, making it increasingly popular throughout the area and beyond.

Since its inception in 2016, the Pu'er cheerleading team has clinched eight international competition titles and 20 national championships. In 2018, it was designated as a national cheerleading experimental school.

Each athlete must possess a positive attitude, discipline, hard work and dedication in order for the team to mesh well, Li said.

"I hope cheerleading can instill these values to athletes so that they can carry them into the real world."

Hu Xinyue and Kuang Hanqing contributed to this story.

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