

Grand exhibition

Expo to boost Sino-South Asian ties, promote trade and tourism

BUSINESS, PAGE 7



Scientists find molecular water in moon mineral

CHINA, PAGE 4



Charm of guzheng

Famous artiste enhances traditional instrument's appeal, global presence

LIFE, PAGE 16

CHINA DAILY

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DRIVING REFORM

Tech innovation seen as key to development

Party meeting emphasizes significance of fostering new quality productive forces

By FAN FEIFEI, OUYANG SHIJIA and LIU ZHIHUA

China's sharpening focus on deepening reform for fostering new quality productive forces will give strong impetus to the country's economic growth, drive industrial upgrading and offer enormous business opportunities for investors both at home and abroad, said economists, experts and company executives.

Highlighting that sci-tech innovation is a key element in the development of new quality productive forces, they called for more efforts to achieve breakthroughs in crucial technologies by investing more in fundamental research and strategic forward-looking sectors, and step up financial support for innovation-oriented technology enterprises.

Their comments came after the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China placed great emphasis on improving the institutions and mechanisms for fostering new quality productive forces in line with local conditions.

The resolution adopted by the key high-level meeting called for efforts to improve the systems for promoting full integration between the real economy and the digital economy.

Qu Yongyi, Party secretary of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences'

Institute of Industrial Economics, said that as a new round of technological revolution and industrial transformation is profoundly evolving, bolstering the development of new quality productive forces is of vital significance in promoting high-quality economic growth, advancing new industrialization and realizing Chinese modernization.

"For traditional industries, the injection of new production factors such as data, and the innovative allocation of original factors of production can effectively promote the deep transformation and upgrading of industries," he said.

The country's latest call to nurture new quality productive forces through a series of institutional reforms is conducive to accelerating the building of a modern industrial system and boosting its core competitiveness globally amid external uncertainties, Qu added.

He said the cultivation of strategic emerging industries and future-oriented industries plays a pivotal role in propelling the development of new quality productive forces. These industries mainly include new-generation information technology, artificial intelligence, new energy, new materials, high-end equipment, biomedicine and quantum technology.

See Tech, page 3

Why the third plenums are of significance globally

The highly anticipated and keenly-watched third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China has concluded in Beijing.

Since the third plenary session of the 11th Central Committee of the CPC in 1978, the third plenums have held special significance, not least for their policy setting agenda, especially on issues of economic modernization.

The iconic third plenary session of the 11th Central Committee of the CPC which was when the party decided to put economic modernization at the core of its work and put forward reform and opening-up to the outside world, the two policies that propelled China to the stratosphere of economic growth.

It was the fastest economic growth in history. It was not

growth for growth sake, but growth that delivered concrete improvement in the living conditions of more than 800 million people by lifting them out of extreme poverty.

The third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the CPC which began on July 15 and concluded July 18 has again underlined the significance of the third plenums as fundamentally practical problem solving, hope reinvigorating, confidence enabling and optimistically forward-looking.

See Plenary, page 3

After the landslides



People gather around an area on Monday where deadly landslides occurred between Sunday evening and Monday morning, in Gofa zone, southern Ethiopia. The landslides, triggered by heavy rains, have so far killed 229 people. The death toll is expected to rise. XINHUA

President: Further advance energy ties with Russia

By ZHAO JIA zhaojia@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping reaffirmed on Tuesday China's readiness to work with Russia in promoting mutually beneficial cooperation in the energy sector and safeguarding the stability and resilience of

industrial and supply chains.

In a congratulatory letter to the sixth China-Russia Energy Business Forum, Xi called on both sides to jointly contribute to a more robust, green and healthy development of the global energy industry.

China and Russia, celebrating the 75th anniversary of diplomatic

ties this year, have forged ahead with their comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era and seen bilateral energy cooperation becoming more mature and resilient, which delivered tangible benefits to the two peoples, Xi said.

On the same day, Russian Presi-

dent Vladimir Putin also sent a congratulatory letter to the forum.

Energy cooperation is an essential part of the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era. Russia surpassed Saudi Arabia to become China's largest crude oil supplier last year.



Foreign Minister Wang Yi (center) attends on Tuesday the closing ceremony of the reconciliation talks between 14 Palestinian factions in Beijing. He witnessed the signing of the Beijing Declaration on Ending Division and Strengthening Palestinian National Unity by the representatives of the factions, including the Hamas and Fatah who met in Beijing in a renewed bid for reconciliation. ZHAI JIANLIAN / XINHUA

Palestinian factions sign declaration on bolstering unity

By ZHOU JIN zhoujin@chinadaily.com.cn

Representatives of Palestinian factions signed on Tuesday in Beijing a declaration pledging to end division and strengthen unity, which officials and observers said marks a key step in promoting reconciliation within Palestine and creating conditions for ending the Gaza conflict.

Inside

Editorial, page 11

Hamas and Fatah.

It is the first gathering of the 14 Palestinian groups in Beijing, which China said provides hope for the Palestinian people in the abyss of misery. Representatives of Fatah and Hamas had held a dialogue in April in Beijing on promoting intra-Palestinian reconciliation.

The talks, which were organized and coordinated by China, also highlighted the country's role as a trustworthy peace broker, analysts said.

The declaration proposes hosting an international conference with broad participation and full authority. It also calls for achieving comprehensive national unity, which would include all Palestini-

an factions within the framework of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and establishing an independent State of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Tuesday at the talks' closing ceremony that the most important consensus reached in the talks was for the reconciliation and unity of the 14 factions, with the core outcome being that the Palestine Liberation Organization is the sole legitimate representative of all Palestinian people.

Wang said that a highlight of the talks was an agreement on post-Gaza conflict governance and the establishment of a provisional national reconciliation government. He added that the talks voiced a strong call for realizing the independent statehood of Palestine in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions.

Calls for internal reconciliation have been growing since the outbreak of the latest Palestinian-Israeli conflict in October, a prolonged conflict that has brought chaos and disaster to the Middle East.

Calling the Palestinian question the core issue of the Middle East, Wang said that China has no selfish interests in the issue and remains a staunch advocate of justice and fairness.

Wang called for a comprehensive,

lasting and sustainable cease-fire to ensure access to and implementation of humanitarian assistance, and emphasized upholding the principle of "Palestinians governing Palestine" in Gaza's postwar reconstruction.

He also stressed the importance of full membership for Palestine at the UN and the implementation of the two-state solution.

Mahmoud al-Aloul, deputy chief of Fatah, and Mousa Abu Marzook, who represented the Hamas delegation, both expressed appreciation to China for supporting and helping Palestine, as well as for the country's efforts to uphold justice for Palestine in the international community.

Liu Zhongmin, a professor of Middle East studies at Shanghai International Studies University, said that the talks and the ensuing declaration play a crucial role in forming a unified voice and stance within Palestine, which is an essential step toward the settlement of the Palestinian question and the realization of peace and stability in the Middle East.

The complexity of the Palestinian question has long been reflected not only in the conflict with Israel, but also in internal divisions, particularly the long-standing conflict between Hamas and Fatah, Liu said.

The internal division has hindered the implementation of the two-state solution and the progress of peace talks between Palestine and Israel, he said, adding that the latest reconciliation talks are conducive to creating conditions for the resumption of Palestine-Israel negotiations.

More talks and specific arrangements are required to consolidate consensus and resolve internal differences in Palestine, Liu said.

The fair and just stance of China in its Middle East policy, along with its traditional friendships with various parties, enabled Beijing to act as a mediator, he added.

Yu Guoqing, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of West-Asian and African Studies, said that promoting reconciliation among Palestinian factions is another significant endeavor by China to advance peace and stability in the Middle East, following Beijing's successful diplomatic mediation for the reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran last year.

Despite the ongoing conflict in Gaza, China managed to gather representatives from 14 Palestinian factions from different countries and regions to Beijing for talks, which shows the country's responsibility as a major country, he said.

CHINESE HOTEL CHAINS EXPAND OVERSEAS OPERATIONS

Rapid rise in outbound travelers creates strong regional demand, opportunities

By YANG FEIYUE yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn

Since the country's outbound tourism market started to show signs of a steady recovery last year, a number of domestic hotel chains have begun expanding their overseas operations to cash in on Chinese travelers' wanderlust.

They have already made strong inroads in Japan, South Korea and Southeast Asian countries, the first nations to embrace the increasing



arrivals of Chinese travelers.

Last September, iElectronic Sports Hotel announced it would construct its first overseas facility in Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur.

The new hotel, which aims to attract esports enthusiasts, has made a total investment of 20 million yuan (\$2.75 million) and will

offer more than 80 guest rooms.

Malaysia is a travel destination favored by Chinese travelers, making it an ideal first spot for iElectronic Sports Hotel to expand internationally, said Yuan Yang, founder of the Beijing-based company that was established in 2019 and focuses on providing accommodation for esports fans. It now has more than 150 hotel operations in over 100 cities in China.

See Travel, page 2

INSIDE
Springboard of confidence
Global Views, page 13
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PAGE TWO



Left: Chinese tourists relax at a resort in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia, on April 4. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY **Middle:** Chinese tourists visit the Erawan Museum in Samut Prakan, Thailand, on March 1. WANG TENG / XINHUA **Right:** A Chinese tourist takes a selfie at the observation deck of Sparrow Hills in Moscow on July 15. ALEXANDER NEMENOV / FOR CHINA DAILY

Travel: Chinese hotels open new frontiers

From page 1

But the Kuala Lumpur hotel is not only for Chinese and other international visitors. Through its tailored facilities, it is also hoping to attract Malaysian guests eager to stay and immerse themselves in an e-sport environment.

Malaysia has over 1 million game users, all of whom are loyal fans of Chinese e-sports games, according to a report by Peking University's Institute of Area Studies.

Germany-based data analysis company Statista predicted that the number of e-sports players in Malaysia will see rapid growth, and reach 9.5 million by 2027.

Baez Yang, a representative of the hotel project, said it is a one-of-a-kind development in Malaysia, and aligns with the Belt and Road Initiative.

"It not only fills a gap in Malaysia's e-sports industry but also injects new vitality into the local market. In the future, it could become a local chain brand, driving development in Malaysia's e-sports industry," Yang said.

Among its features, the Kuala Lumpur hotel will have a top-floor garden that enables guests to enjoy coffee and drinks while using the highest-spec e-sports equipment to play popular games like *Honor of Kings* and *Dota* for free.

Immersive experiences will also be offered through themed decor, designed spaces, smart-lighting control, and cinema systems, Yang said.

More hotels catering to e-sports enthusiasts are likely to be established in other Malaysian cities as well as Vietnam, Thailand and the Middle East, the company said.

Zeng Bowei, a senior official from the China Leisure Association, said the hotel is setting an example for other Chinese hotel operators to follow abroad.

"From a global perspective, when Chinese domestic hotels reach a certain level of development, going global becomes an inevitable trend," Zeng noted.

Emerging markets

Elong Hotel, a hotel management unit of Hong Kong-listed online travel company Tongcheng-Elong, plans to have a facility in Jakarta, Indonesia, up and running by the end of this year.

"The hotel will offer the same high-quality products and services as in China, ensuring that travelers can experience the same familiar living environment overseas," said Zhou Qunxia, brand manager of Elong Hotel, which has more than 4,000 operations across the country and 20 million guest members.

The hotel's offerings will include premium bedding, comprehensive guest amenities, and butler service, Zhou said.

"At the same time, the hotel will also consider local customs and preferences to provide localized services," she said.

Elong Hotel already has hotels in Tokyo and Osaka in Japan, as well as Cambodia.

Southeast Asia, Japan and South Korea are the first choices for Elong Hotel, when it comes to locations for expanding its operations, Zhou said.

"Compared with the saturated hotel markets in Europe and the United States, these emerging markets are in a booming development phase and are still largely untapped," Zhou explained.

"The rapid economic growth in these emerging markets and the increasing demand for outbound tourism from Chinese travelers since last year provide vast opportunities for the hotel industry," she added.

The governments of these countries have offered tax incentives and investment subsidies to attract for-



Hotel MONday in Japan is one of the international brands invested in by Shenzhen-based Delonix. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

eign investment and promote tourism development, creating a favorable environment for establishing and operating a hotel, Zhou said. With the introduction of favorable visa policies and the growing eagerness of Chinese people to travel, the outbound tourism market has seen a good recovery, she added.

The number of outbound tourists in 2023 exceeded 87 million, according to the annual report on China's outbound tourism development (2023-24) by the China Tourism Academy. The report predicts the number of outbound tourists will reach 130 million in 2024.

During the recent Dragon Boat Festival, searches for hotels overseas grew by 50 percent over the same period in 2019, an indication of the huge potential of outbound tourism, major travel agency Trip.com Group reported.

The large volume of Chinese travelers is poised to inject a major boost into the international tourism market and change the landscape of the international accommodation and travel industry, said Li Liang, CEO of the accommodation side of Tongcheng-Elong travel agency.

In the first three months of this year, overnight hotel room bookings increased by more than 150 percent year-on-year, the agency reported.

Li said young Chinese travelers are a big part of this increase, adding their destination choices, travel planning, and preferences differ from previous outbound travelers.

"They tend to make impromptu decisions ... so we need to listen to their needs when designing products and services," Li said.

While "first-tier" travelers still constitute the major portion of outbound travelers, Li said special attention is needed to cater to young people who will become a key growth area for the outbound tourism business.

Areas that need to be looked at include more convenient booking



Chinese tourists visit the Patuxai Park in the Lao capital Vientiane on May 1. KAI QIAO / XINHUA

procedures, more flexible hotel reservations and cancellations, and better cost efficiency.

Regional reach

The increasingly competitive domestic hotel market is a key driving force behind Chinese hotel companies expanding abroad.

Chain hotels accounted for 38.79 percent of China's hotel industry in 2023 and are expected to reach 45 percent in 2024, according to ABN Data, an Asian travel and accommodation research institute.

The popularity of Japan, South Korea and Southeast Asian countries as travel destinations and their governments' supportive policies for hotel industry development, make them attractive propositions for Chinese hotel operators looking to build their businesses.

These countries also have advantages through their well-developed tourism infrastructure and services, which cover transportation, catering and entertainment.

The hotel market in Southeast Asia is forecast to yield a profit of \$13.63 billion this year, and is expected to reach \$15.89 billion in

2028, according to Statista.

Over the years, Chinese hotel chains have gained experience in expanding their operations abroad.

In 2011, Jin Jiang Hotels signed a deal with a Philippine company, and has since directly managed or franchised hotels in the Philippines. The same year, the Guangdong-headquartered Dossen opened its budget hotels in Malaysia.

Many other Chinese hotel businesses have joined the wave of going abroad through brand acquisition, franchising and overseas investment. In December 2023, Zhejiang-based Landison Hotel Group opened its first operation in Nagano, Japan.

The Shanghai-based H World Group will open a new operation in Bangkok, Thailand, this year.

The CTG Hotel Holdings Corp, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Hong Kong-based China Tourism Group, has also made breakthroughs in the Southeast Asian market. It has engaged in brand franchise cooper-

ation with international hotel groups such as IHG Hotels and Resorts, Wyndham, and Hilton.

Currently, the Chinese hotel group has signed agreements to manage nine hotels in Thailand, with four hotels already opened and receiving positive market feedback.

Indonesian appeal

The Shenzhen-headquartered Delonix Group has been actively preparing its Model J hotel in Jakarta, Indonesia, for opening.

It will be the first project the Chinese hospitality management and lifestyle group is the sole operator of in the country, and is part of its efforts to increase its presence abroad.

"Our overseas operations are now mainly in Indonesia and Japan," said Wei Biao, who is in charge of Delonix's Indonesian market operations.

To date, it has holdings in more than 250 hotels, such as Swiss-Belhotel, Artotel, Model J and Hotel MONday in multiple cities abroad, including Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka.

Last year, Delonix reached a cooperation agreement with Indonesia's major hotel assets management platform Indies Hospitality Investments, which has given it control over more than 200 hotels across Indonesian business and tourism hot spots, Wei said.

Delonix is also planning to give its members full access to bookings at the Japanese hotel chain it has invested in, Hotel MONday, under its membership program.

"The investment in the Indonesian and Japanese markets holds significant strategic importance for Delonix's Asia-Pacific arrangements," Wei said.

First, it allows for early position-

ing in the potential high-growth markets of Southeast Asia and Japan, ensuring sustained growth and a leading edge in the Asia-Pacific region, he explained.

Second, investment abroad facilitates the transfer of Delonix's advantages in products, membership, and internet technology to overseas markets.

"This not only enhances the growth of our investment business, but also offers our nearly 35 million members a wider range of travel options abroad," Wei added.

Delonix's business development strategy features two main approaches.

On the one hand, it expands its commercial footprint through strategic cooperation with local hotel management groups, leveraging each other's resources and strengths, Wei said.

On the other, it creates its own hotel chain brands and then offers franchises, enabling rapid brand establishment and expansion of the hotel chain business.

The great market potential in Indonesia has been the driving force behind Delonix's expansion.

"Benefiting from accelerated urbanization, rising per capita income, and the growth of a large young labor force, Indonesia's hotel market presents significant investment opportunities," Wei said.

Compared with the domestic hotel market, Indonesia's hotel market is in the early stages of development, characterized by fragmentation, low franchise rates, low competition concentration, and inefficient management models, he said.

"It is also home to numerous internationally renowned tourist destinations, making the market highly promising for development," he said.

Competition expected

Japan gained Delonix's attention for its relaxed visa policy, currency depreciation and increased flights, which have seen a surge in inbound tourism to the country, said Li Zhong, who runs the Japanese market for Delonix.

Japan took in more than 3 million international travelers in April, up 4 percent over the pre-pandemic level in 2019, according to the Japan National Tourism Organization.

Hotel MONday operations have mainly received individual travelers from the Asia-Pacific region and Europe, most of whom are middle class, Li said.

"With strong demand, both the occupancy rate and the average room price of Hotel MONday properties have increased," he said.

Since Japan eased border control measures in October 2022, the average occupancy rate of Hotel MONday's facilities has exceeded 80 percent, higher than the national average in Japan, Li added.

While Chinese hotel operators are eager to grab a bigger slice of the outbound tourism pie, they need to brace themselves for challenges, experts said.

"They (challenges) do exist, as numerous internationally renowned hotel brands like Marriott, Hilton, and InterContinental have already established strong brand influence and customer loyalty worldwide and are continuously expanding," said Zhou, the brand manager of Elong Hotel.

"Additionally, the policy environment, economic and cultural conditions, and consumption habits of different countries and regions vary greatly. We need to quickly understand and adapt to these differences, including managing overseas employees and integrating upstream and downstream supply chain resources," she added.

Zhou believes Chinese hotel brands should continue strengthening their capabilities to improve their competitiveness in overseas markets.



Chinese tourists on a group tour aboard the ocean liner *Spectrum of the Seas* arrive at Incheon Port, South Korea, on May 7. YONHAP NEWS AGENCY

TOP NEWS

Peru port project set to boost trade ties with China

By JIMENA ESTEBAN
in Buenos Aires
For China Daily

The Chancay Port project in Peru, being built by China's COSCO Shipping, could boost trade between Asia and Latin America while cutting transportation time dramatically.

The \$3.5 billion mega project, dubbed a gateway to Asia from Latin America, will facilitate direct shipping between the two regions, said Carlos Aquino, an economist and director of the Center for Asian Studies at Peru's National University of San Marcos.

Chancay has the potential to become South America's main logistics hub because it could facilitate the shipment of products from remote mountainous and forest areas, Aquino said. With the opening of a direct shipping route, it will also make it more cost-effective to export products to China.

Alejandro Indacochea, president of Indacochea Asociados, a law firm that specializes in oil and gas, said he expects the port to cut shipment time significantly.

Other countries in the region could also benefit from the port. Brazil, a large buyer of Chinese products and supplier of commodities to China, could benefit from the port as could nearby countries such as Ecuador, Colombia and Chile, Indacochea said. The port could support the development of the Peruvian coast, as well as agricultural and mining exports.

"If Brazil can send its cargo through the port of Chancay directly to China, it could save perhaps up to 15 days or a little more in transport time. So, I believe that this is another great benefit," Aquino told China Daily.

China's State-owned COSCO Shipping holds a 60 percent stake in the Chancay Port project, the first phase of which is expected to be completed later this year. COSCO invested \$1.3 bil-

lion in the first phase of the mega port, which is about 83 percent complete.

Indacochea pointed out that work remains to be done such as building a complementary infrastructure network, integrating the port with an industrial park and railway networks, and facilitating the routing of exports through it.

"This project is in the pipeline, but I don't think its geopolitical and economic scope and the magnitude it has for Latin America is fully understood," Indacochea said.

The relations between Peru and China are very significant, with China being Peru's largest trading partner today, he added.

Over 35 percent of Peru's export trade is directed to China, which consumes 80 percent of the nation's copper exports, Indacochea said.

When Chinese President Xi Jinping met with visiting Peruvian President Dina Ercilia Boluarte Zegarra in Beijing late last month, the two leaders said that they aim to boost trade and strengthen economic ties.

The two sides announced the completion of negotiations on upgrading their free trade agreement, six years after the negotiations were launched in 2018. The China-Peru FTA, which was signed in 2009, was the first such agreement that China signed with a Latin American country.

The meeting between the two leaders resulted in cooperation agreements covering various fields, including the digital economy and scientific and technological innovation. Indacochea noted that Chinese tech giant Huawei has signed a contract to train young Peruvians.

Aquino from Peru's National University of San Marcos said that Peru needs to invest more in infrastructure, including roads, ports and airports.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.



One for the album

Military attaches pose for a selfie on Monday aboard a training vessel of the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy in Dalian, in northeast China's Liaoning province. Military attaches from 35 countries visited the Dalian Naval Academy of the PLA Navy from Sunday to Monday. The visit was part of the arrangements for international military cooperation this year. During their visit, the military attaches also attended the opening ceremony of an international regatta and observed training sessions.

LI HAOTIAN / XINHUA

Nation's policy agenda offers global benefits

More opportunities to be created for world, overseas experts say

By XU WEIWEI and PRIME SARMIENTO in Hong Kong and CUI HAIPEI in Qingdao, Shandong

Experts expressed optimism on China's long-term social and economic policies outlined in the resolution on further deepening reform comprehensively, saying the modernization drive of the world's second-largest economy is of global significance.

The resolution was adopted at the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, which was held last week in Beijing. The communique from the plenum announced the adoption of the resolution.

Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan, president of the Pak-China Corridor of Knowledge and executive director of the Center for South Asia and International Studies, said, "The communique of the third plenum of the 20th CPC Central Committee shows a holistic and comprehensive policy agenda, covering all aspects of robust economic development, along with

further support for new quality productive forces, which is a good omen for (China's) economic stability, sustainability, diversification and modernization."

"The communique stands for further liberalization of the economy and policy guidance, which will ultimately foster more development and social productivity. It also guarantees social justice and equality by supporting people-centric policies. All of these convey the message of constructive policies, further opening-up and international cooperation," he said.

He pointed out that regional and global enterprises' keen interest in further investing in China shows that regional and global communities welcome the outcome of the third plenum.

"The long-term stability and vast growth potential of the world's second-largest economy disseminate the message of reliability, productivity and positivity. China's institutional opening-up and the development of new quality productive forces will definitely create more opportunities for the entire

world, benefiting not only the Global South, but also the Global North," he said.

Jasna Plevnik, president of the Geoeconomic Forum, a think tank in Croatia, said: "The communique is also about better understanding each other globally. It observes relations among countries in a profound way. That is why the communique attracted a lot of attention in Europe, and globally."

"China, as the world's second-largest economy, has the power to significantly affect the future course and stability of the world order. Though faced with an international situation full of chaos, noncooperation and underdevelopment trends, China's commitment to building an equal and orderly multipolar world emphasizes that it will not retreat from universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization and will enhance regional opening," said Plevnik.

She added that the third plenum has given people the hope that the world can be better.

Hussain bin Ibrahim Al Hammadi, ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to China, commended the resolution, saying the document highlights China's willingness to leverage its enormous market to bolster capacity for openness, expand collaborations with others, and refine mechanisms for high-quality cooperation within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative.

In China, reform and opening-up have unlocked the potential of its people, resulting in notable economic and social transformations, he said.

"China's modernization endeavors align with the UAE's agenda for 2030, both of which are focused on advancing sustainable development. I hold an optimistic outlook on China's economic future, expecting continued robust growth, which will pave the way for more cooperation that will benefit both our nations and the global economy," he said.

James Chin, professor of Asian Studies at the University of Tasmania in Australia, said that China's quest to promote new quality productive forces, apart from its drive for Chinese modernization, can also serve as a countermeasure to negative moves by some that aim to suppress China's growth.

Chen Weihua in Brussels and Wang Ran in Beijing contributed to this story.

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Container cranes and rail-mounted gantry cranes shipped from China arrive on June 27 at the Chancay Port in Peru. XINHUA

Plenary: Reaffirming approach that created economic miracle

From page 1

In the final communique of the meeting, the top leadership examined issues relating to comprehensively further deepening reforms with a view to advancing China's modernization.

Reflecting on the party's work since the 20th National Congress of the Party which was held in 2022, the plenary attendees agreed that firm strides have been made in building a modern socialist country in all respects. The resolution of further comprehensively deepening reform and opening up not only has implication for maintaining the momentum of China's economic growth for high quality development, but a boon to global

recovery for which there is common understanding that China is playing and would continue to play pivotal roles.

The third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the CPC outlined general principles of the country's foreseeable economic trajectory in which it promised to foster a high-standard socialist market economy for Chinese modernization.

The importance of the plenary's stance in respect to market reform cannot be lost to developing countries struggling through market related reforms and the imperative of contingency plan in case of a "market failure". Beyond the confidence in market-self driven mechanism, a night-watchman strong and credible State is necessary not only

to hold the rings for fair play but to ensure the system's continued health and resilience.

The plenum further outlined that it would "ensure that economic entities under all forms of ownership have equal access to factors of production in accordance with the law, compete in the market on an equal footing and are protected by the law as equals, thus enabling entities under different forms of ownership to complement each other and develop side by side", with further reaffirmation that China "will build a unified national market and refine the systems underpinning the market economy".

These key general principles, which would certainly be worked into specific policy outlines by the

government greatly illuminate the path of China's reform and opening up to the outside world, as eternal features and characteristics of contemporary China and which are both irreversible and a continuous work in progress. The implication is China would remain a solid partner to the world as far as openness, inclusiveness, shared responsibility and shared prosperity are the common themes toward which the majority of humanity gravitates.

The third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the CPC has again contributed to the manifesto of inclusive globalization that works for all, by reaffirming that China will be open as a bastion of free enterprise. The implications for policy choices in this respect is that

its success must reflect in the improvement in the quality of life for the people that "meet people's aspiration for a better life". Many emerging economies have had their growth trajectories vitiated by the growth of special and vested interests and ended up in the so-called middle-income trap, which China has avoided, with the Communist Party of China having neither interest of its own nor of any special interest group, but the broadest interest of the vast majority of the Chinese people.

The third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee reaffirmed that the modernization China pursues is the modernization of peaceful development and reiterated that in foreign relations, the country

would continue to be firm in its commitment to independent foreign policy of peace and dedication to promoting a human community with a shared future.

The plenum is not only a platform to outline principles that would guide the country's policy trajectories but also an important moment to reaffirm what the party is, what it stands for and what energizes and provides it with the enormous clarity that drives its vision and purpose. It has demonstrated the discipline, rigor, meticulousness, deliberate and methodical approach to governance from which the so-called "China's economic miracle" was created and is still being qualitatively developed.

The author is director of the Center for China Studies in Abuja, Nigeria. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Tech: Economist calls for 'firm engagement' in R&D

From page 1

He added that more efforts should be made to increase input in core technologies in key fields and solve bottleneck issues that hinder development in areas such as raw materials, critical components, core equipment and basic software, in order to enhance the resilience of industrial and supply chains and gain competitive advantages in the increasingly intense international competition.

Huang Hanquan, head of the Academy of Macroeconomic Research, which is affiliated with the National Development and Reform Commission, stressed the need to accelerate the forming of relations of production that are more compatible with new quality

productive forces, with greater focus on deepening reforms in fields such as technology and education to create a favorable environment that encourages innovation, and to attract more high-caliber talents.

Huang said that more efforts should be made to give full play to the role of enterprises in bolstering sci-tech innovation, expand international cooperation and exchanges in sci-tech, and support foreign enterprises in carrying out technological research and innovative practices in cooperation with Chinese research institutes and companies.

Denis Depoux, global managing director of market consultancy Roland Berger, said the country's emphasis on developing new quality productive forces is all about the

transformation of its economy, while foreign companies can play a bigger role in supporting China's transformation in fields such as automation and digitalization of industrial and supply chains.

The move will attract more investment by foreign companies to support Chinese companies' transformation and bring more new technologies to the world's second-largest economy, he added.

Li Daokui, director of Tsinghua University's Academic Center for Chinese Economic Practice and Thinking, told China Daily in an exclusive interview that new quality productive forces refer to a new development model mainly driven by new technologies, which also brings new production relations and

new institutional arrangements.

Li called for greater efforts to tackle the choking points that hinder the cultivation of new quality productive forces, saying that more measures are needed to innovate in the financial system to encourage investment in tech companies, encourage cooperation between tech firms and academia, and cultivate more talent with expertise in new quality productive forces.

Justin Yifu Lin, dean of Peking University's Institute of New Structural Economics, said that China needs to further deepen reforms in the financial system so that it can better meet financing demand from economic activities.

"We need to have firm engagement in research and development

to innovate new technology and new products. They require capital support," he said, adding that venture capital will be crucial in this regard, considering the high risk of failures in innovation in emerging sectors.

The economist also said that in fostering new quality productive forces, different regions in the country should focus on their comparative advantages, rather than all rushing to develop new technologies in frontier sectors.

Wang Yiming, vice-chairman of the China Center for International Economic Exchanges and former deputy director of the Development Research Center of the State Council, said that more efforts are needed to create a fairer and more dynamic market environment, innovate ways of allocating production factors and promote the efficient flow and optimized combination of production factors.

It is also important to improve the

basic market economic systems such as property rights protection, market access, fair competition and social credit, Wang said during a recent forum organized by Renmin University of China.

Zhou Hongyi, founder and chairman of Chinese internet enterprise 360 Security Group, said that fostering new quality productive forces is to drive a significant boost in productivity through technological innovation, achieve the transformation from old growth drivers to new ones with digital technologies, and promote the upgrading of traditional industries.

As the key meeting has sent a clear message of further deepening reform comprehensively, Zhou said the company will focus on digital security and AI and work to achieve breakthroughs in innovative technologies.

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CHINA

Artful kids



Children tour an art exhibition in Tianjin on Monday, the opening day of an international children's art festival. The event, which will continue until Friday, attracted over 400 Chinese children on Monday and more than 700 others from 20 countries, including Canada, Egypt, France and Germany. TONG YU / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Massive moth found in Guangxi

By ZHANG LI in Nanning
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The world's largest moth, *Attacus atlas*, was found recently in Hezhou, a city in South China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region.

It was stumbled upon by a team of entomologists from Guangxi Normal University during an insect diversity survey in the city's Guangxi Daguishan Crocodile Lizard National Nature Reserve.



Attacus atlas, the world's largest moth

Professor Deng Wei'an, from the university's College of Life Sciences, said the moth had a wingspan of 23 centimeters, and the species was identified by lepidopterist Professor Jia Fenghai.

Deng said there are more than 150,000 species of moths worldwide, with over 7,000 species recorded in China and over 1,000 species in Guangxi.

"Guangxi has many distinctive moth species," Deng said.

"Although not as large, they are also very good, such as the long-tailed silk moth, and so on. Specific data has not been compiled by anyone."

Attacus atlas, commonly known as the Atlas moth, can have a wingspan of 30 centimeters and a wing area of nearly 400 square centimeters, featuring prominent triangular transparent regions on both forewings and hindwings.

Unique serpent-like patterns adorn the tips of the forewings, which are believed to serve as a deterrent to predators.

The Atlas moth predominantly inhabits a number of Southeast Asian countries and regions in China such as Guangxi and the provinces of Guangdong and Fujian. However, wild populations in China are scarce, leading to the inclusion of the Atlas moth in the country's list of terrestrial wildlife protected by the State.

As environmental degradation persists in many regions, the wild population of the Atlas moth continues to dwindle.

The Guangxi Daguishan nature reserve was established in April 2005 and elevated to a national nature reserve in 2013.

Straw mulching helps to protect black soil

Conservation tillage, advanced machinery boost yields, increase farmers' incomes

By YAN DONGJIE
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Developing conservation tillage with improved farming techniques and agricultural machinery can increase grain production on the black soil in Northeast China, protect land resources and increase farmers' incomes, agricultural experts say.

On Monday — Black Soil Conservation Day in Jilin province — more than 300 agricultural experts from home and abroad, including major black soil areas in the world such as the United States and Russia, gathered in Changchun, the provincial capital, to discuss topics related to the conservation and utilization of black soil.

"Black soil is a precious agricultural resource," said Professor Jia Zhongjun from the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Northeast Institute of Geography and Agroecology. "With a large population and limited land, China is under pressure to feed its people. Therefore, great emphasis has been placed on the development and protection of black soil, accumulating rich farming techniques and experiences. We hope to exchange ideas with agricultural experts from around the world."

China is one of the world's four typical black soil regions, with approximately 50 million hectares of black soil mainly concentrated in Northeast China.

"Black soil feeds the world," said Tong Yuxing, an official from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

However, despite being a major grain-producing region in China, the organic matter content in the topsoil of the black soil region in Northeast

China has decreased by over 50 percent in the past 100 years.

The average thickness of the black soil layer has decreased from about 50 centimeters to around 30 cm, and it is still declining at an annual rate of 0.05 percent, according to research by the institute.

Strengthening agriculture, benefiting farmers and enriching rural areas were underlined in the Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Further Deepening Reform Comprehensively to Advance Chinese Modernization adopted at the third plenary session of the CPC's 20th Central Committee last week.

In July 2020, CAS launched a "Black Soil Granary" scientific campaign. Seven farmland demonstration areas were established in the provinces of Jilin, Heilongjiang and Liaoning and the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, including Lishu, Da'an, Longjiang and Dahewan.

Through collaboration among research institutions, government agencies and enterprises, conservation tillage has been developed based on modern farming techniques and has been applied to 18 million hectares of farmland, Jia said.

Straw mulching is the core of conservation tillage.

"Under different temperature and humidity conditions in different regions, we have explored three methods of handling straw — covering, mixing and burying — to accelerate decomposition and increase soil organic matter content," Jia said.

Taking the demonstration area in Lishu county, Siping, Jilin, as an example, after harvesting corn, the harvester scatters all the straw on the ground to cover the land, reducing environmental pollution caused

by traditional burning, as well as soil erosion and sand blowing. By the following spring, the straw naturally decomposes into organic fertilizer, Jia said.

"However, if the straw is scattered on the ground, it will affect the planting in the second year," he said.

"Therefore, we have independently developed a seeder that can gently open the surface without destroying the straw cover as much as possible and sow seeds next to the planting points from the previous year.

After a field trip to Lishu last week, Michael Thompson, a professor at Iowa State University in the US, said: "It could improve the management of crop residues on the surface and improve the incorporation of the residues in the soil. The machinery was really new to me and very interesting, so I'll take those ideas back with me to the US."

Thompson, who is also president of the Soil Science Society of America, said, "Increasing communication between scientists in the US and China, and other countries around the world, is really advantageous for us."

Steffen Kolb, an agricultural professor at Humboldt University of Berlin, said: "When we think of sustainability, we might minimize economic outputs. But I'm very impressed that in northeastern China, I saw people protect soil on a large scale but also figure out how to guarantee the produce."

Kolb said that China plays an important role in global food security due to its high agricultural productivity capacity, praising China's efforts in building a strong foundation of science and technology in agriculture.

"Through more communication and cooperation, we can share the technologies and ideas that we develop with regions facing food scarcity," he said.

Boy, 11, scales highest mountain in Europe

By CHEN MEILING in Beijing
and GUO JUN in Nanjing

A week after summiting Mount Elbrus in Russia, the highest mountain in Europe, Zhou Yichen, 11, still remembered every detail of the thrilling experience.

Strapping on crampons over high mountain boots and crushing ice and snow with each step, Yichen advanced toward the peak at 3 am on July 16.

"It was still very dark, with only a hint of red glow on the horizon. That's why we all had to wear head lamps, and the darkness also increased the difficulty of climbing," Yichen wrote in his diary.

The boy got to the top of the mountain with his father and three guides in five hours, something difficult even for an adult.

Looking at the snow-covered mountain peaks all around, with the sound of whistling cold winds in his ears, Yichen said he felt a strong sense of achievement that was hard to describe in words.

He wrote in his diary, "I felt exhausted but proud. I thought I would have failed, but I succeeded. I'm so excited."

About one-third of the way up the mountain, which has an altitude of about 5,642 meters, altitude sickness brought on stomach cramps and dizziness, causing Yichen's steps to slow. He began swaying, stumbled and collapsed on the ground. For two to three minutes, he couldn't get up.

The adults came over, asking if he could continue. Yichen thought for a moment and said: "The summit is right ahead. We're about two hours away from reaching it. I can persevere."

With his father's assistance, Yichen continued onward. The pain disappeared after climbing two-thirds of the way. In the final third of the journey, Yichen's condition improved. He was the first of the five to reach the summit.

After a brief rest, the group began their descent. On the way down, Yichen's performance once again impressed Zhou Shuangliu, his father, who said, "He recovered his speed and energy quickly, not losing to adult climbers at all."

Yichen, a primary school student from Zhenjiang, Jiangsu province, is influenced by his father, an outdoor enthusiast who climbed Mount Qomolangma, known as Mount Everest in the West, in May.



Zhou Yichen and his father on the summit of Mount Elbrus in Russia. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Together, they summited the 5,025-meter Siguniang Mountain in Sichuan province twice — when Yichen was 9 and 10 years old.

To prepare for their latest trip, Yichen ran for 5 kilometers twice a week and swam every week. On July 8, they flew to Moscow, and began adaptive training on July 12.

"Mountaineering can not only help the child exercise, but also learn the spirit of endurance and perseverance through embracing a love for nature. It will greatly aid in his future growth and development," Zhou Shuangliu said.

He added that children of Yichen's age often cling to electronic devices, stay in bed during holidays and lack enthusiasm for anything. "However, when he sets a goal and willingly gives up the temptation of screens to exercise and prepare, it is truly remarkable," he said.

In the week following the climb, Yichen, a rather shy boy, had become much more confident, he said.

"Previously, he would immediately think of playing games when holding a phone," he said. "A few days ago, I suggested to him that he could use the phone to learn English because he will need it for mountaineering abroad in the future. He actually started learning English on his phone."

Yichen said he has developed a strong interest in mountaineering from his Russian experience and has set a new goal of reaching the summit of the 6,178-meter Yuzhu Peak in Qinghai province next summer.

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Scientists find molecular water in moon mineral

By YAN DONGJIE
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A team of Chinese scientists has made a groundbreaking discovery: molecular water locked within a mineral in lunar soil samples collected by the Chang'e 5 mission.

Remote sensing data had indicated signs of water molecules on the lunar surface in recent years, particularly in the polar regions, known as the permanently shadowed region. However, molecular water has not been found in returned lunar samples.

"Due to the high temperatures and vacuum environment on the moon, the existence of liquid water is not possible, so it was previously unclear how water molecules could exist on the moon," said Jin Shifeng, a member of the research team and an associate researcher at the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Physics.

The research utilized lunar soil samples collected by the Chang'e 5 lunar probe in 2020.

China's first unmanned lunar sample return mission saw the Chang'e 5 probe collect basalt lunar soil samples from a high-latitude region of the moon, providing new opportunities for the study of lunar water.

Experts from the institute's Beijing National Laboratory for Condensed Matter Physics, Beijing University of Science and Technology, Tianjin University, CAS' Qinghai Salt Lake Institute and Zhengzhou University conducted the study. They determined that lunar water exists in a hydrated mineral known as ULM-1.

The research findings were published online in the academic journal *Nature Astronomy* on July 16.

According to the molecular formula, the mineral contains six crystalline water molecules, with the water molecules accounting for as much as 41 percent of the sample's mass.

About five years ago, a similar mineral was discovered in a volcano in Russia, providing new clues to the source of water on the moon.

"In other words, this mineral may have been formed by volcanic eruptions on the moon," Jin said.

"This indicates that lunar volcanic gases contain a significant amount of water. Thermodynamic calculations have revealed that the water content in lunar volcanoes is comparable to the driest volcanoes on Earth."

Jin said the crystalline water discovered in the lunar soil is relatively stable in the moon's vacuum environment.

The presence of water on the moon is crucial for lunar evolution studies and resource development. Around 1970, the absence of water on the moon became a basic assumption because no water-containing minerals were found in the Apollo lunar soil samples.

"This may be due to differences in sampling latitude," Jin said. "At the Chang'e 5 sampling site, the lunar surface temperature does not exceed 80 C."

"This also indicates that the distribution of molecular water on the lunar surface is uneven. However, because this crystal is relatively stable, it could potentially exist in vast regions of the moon."

Flying start

A university innovation center staff member retrieves university admission letters delivered by a drone in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, on Tuesday. Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics delivered 15 admission letters to freshmen 40 kilometers from the campus.

LIU LI / FOR CHINA DAILY



CHINA

Sick chick



Experts treat a sick Oriental white stork chick at Cangzhou City Wildlife Rescue Center in Cangzhou, Hebei province, on Tuesday. Cangzhou is an important habitat for birds migrating along the East Asian-Australasian flyway. It is the breeding season for birds, and staff members at the center have rescued 26 injured birds since June. Once they are rehabilitated, they will be released back into the wild.

FU XINCHUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Proposal would see records of minor offenses sealed

Social penalties linked to misdemeanors make offenders a destabilizing factor

By CAO YIN
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If someone serves a prison term for causing minor harm to others, the record will stay with the attacker for life, causing ongoing complications even though the offender has served their sentence.

But that is expected to change within five years as a resolution to seal minor criminal records for adults was adopted at the third plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee, which concluded in Beijing on Thursday.

The act of sealing minor criminal records has long been a hotly debated topic among legal professionals, especially with the number of violent crimes decreasing and misdemeanors increasing nationwide.

A recent report showed that the proportion of cases where suspects were accused of committing serious violent crimes, including intentional homicide, rape and arson, dropped to 3.6 percent in 2023 from 25.1 percent in 1999.

At the same time, the proportion of cases in which sentences were three years or less — which are generally handed down for misdemeanors — rose from 54.4 percent in 1999 to 82.3 percent last year, according to the Chinese Law Enforcement Report, which was issued by the China Behavior Law Association and Central South University in Hunan province this month.

Among the cases spawned by minor crimes, more than half

involved dangerous driving, theft, fraud and contributing to illegal activities online, the report said.

While calling for better solutions to handle the growing number of misdemeanors, it stressed that some “social penalties” attached to these crimes have become more costly for offenders and deserve more attention.

“A criminal record has been enough to deny someone a range of opportunities, including employment, education, public service exams and career advancement, and even affect his or her family members,” said Zhao Li, a Beijing lawyer. “One of my child’s classmates was unable to join the army because his uncle had committed a minor offense.”

For decades, many employers, including government agencies, military departments and State-owned enterprises, have been allowed to check whether job candidates have criminal records.

“Only when a certificate of no criminal conviction is obtained from the police can the candidate likely reach the next round in the hiring stage or be hired,” Zhao said.

People under age 18 can have their criminal records sealed, meaning that only police and judicial staff can access the records as needed for investigative purposes.

“However, the provision hasn’t been applied to adult offenders, even if their crimes do little harm to society,” Zhao added.

Yu Yang, who was sentenced to 10 months in prison in 2014 for orga-

nizing illegal blood sales, is an example. He has struggled to find employment since he was freed, as his crime remains on his record, according to Redstar News.

Yu found work as a security guard and courier, but he was fired from both jobs once his employers learned of his offense.

“I sought jobs in many provinces, including Shandong, Zhejiang and Guangdong, but wherever I went, a ‘no crime’ certificate was a must for employment,” he told the news outlet, adding that he got fired a dozen times a year for the mistake he had made 10 years ago.

Zhao, the lawyer, said: “Such social penalties for those who committed minor offenses, such as Yu, are too heavy. They serve prison terms, and then have to face difficulties in employment and education for themselves as well as their family members. The price they pay is too high.”

He pointed out that penalties caused by misdemeanors make them a destabilizing factor and suggested the country seal records of minor offenses for adults, just as it has done for juveniles, in a timely manner.

In addition, the record of punishments for administrative violations such as fines or short-term detention for disturbing public order should also be sealed, as those mistakes are less harmful to society than minor offenses, he added.

Luo Xiang, a professor at China University of Political Science and Law, shared similar advice on his social media platform, saying that records involving minor offenses such as reckless driving need to be sealed or even expunged if the convicted person doesn’t commit new

crimes within five years of their release.

“A major function of punishment is to educate and rehabilitate people, rather than to push criminals into a dead end,” he said. “If an offender is stigmatized and unable to find work after being released from prison, he or she will be likely to reoffend.”

Zhou Guangquan, a deputy to the National People’s Congress, China’s top legislature, said in March that to build a more harmonious social environment and achieve modernization in national governance, it is “necessary to consider the establishment of sealing minor offense records in legislation.”

In his opinion, China has always attached importance to recording offenses, but has not yet developed a more complete system for dealing with such records.

He suggested that a mechanism for sealing minor criminal records should be established through legislation as soon as possible.

“Only in this way can our laws show leniency for people who have made mistakes and ensure that those with minor crimes are punished in accordance with their offenses,” said Zhou, who is also president of Tsinghua University’s School of Law.

Zhao, the lawyer, emphasized that instead of blindly sealing minor records, they should be sealed based on specific circumstances.

“For those who commit minor offenses and do not commit new crimes within a certain period, their records should be permanently sealed or even expunged,” he said.

“If they reoffend, the records will be disclosed, and they may have difficulty in matters such as work promotion or school admission.”

China cracks down on cross-border gambling

By CAO YIN
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The Supreme People’s Court has directed courts across the country to continue imposing harsh penalties on people involved in cross-border gambling crimes, with a focus on organizers, ringleaders and repeat offenders. The directive aims to prevent financial risks and safeguard economic security.

The top court highlighted the growing issue of overseas casinos and online gambling groups targeting Chinese citizens, saying that such activities lead to significant outflows of domestic funds and give rise to various other offenses, including kidnapping, illegal detention, fraud, extortion and money laundering.

“These crimes seriously affect social stability and economic security and damage the country’s image,” the court said, emphasizing the need for severe punishment of those involved.

In one case, a group of 34 individuals with a clear division of labor was penalized for operating illegal casinos and businesses. The group recruited thousands of agents to attract players and facilitated the participation of over 60,000 people in overseas gambling, illegally acquiring more than 8.9 billion yuan (\$1.22 billion) through online platforms.

Between September 2018 and April 2020, the group’s ringleader, identified only by the surname Zhang, was discovered to have used bank accounts from multiple agent holding companies under his control to facilitate cross-border fund transfers.

The Wenzhou Intermediate People’s Court in Zhejiang province sentenced Zhang to seven years in prison for operating casinos and illegal business operations, along with a fine of 800,000 yuan. Other group members also received punishment

“These crimes seriously affect social stability and economic security and damage the country’s image.”

The Supreme People’s Court

and fines, and their illicit gains and equipment used for organizing the gambling were confiscated.

The top court praised the judgment, stating that Zhang deserved a severe penalty “as he was the principal criminal and his behavior seriously disturbed financial market order.”

In another case, a court in Zhejiang sentenced the leader of a mafia-style organization, surnamed Yu, to life imprisonment for 26 crimes, including operating casinos and illegal detention. Yu and 65 associates were involved in over 170 criminal activities from 1995 to 2018. Between 2012 and 2017, the gang organized the smuggling of over 100 people into Laos for gambling, generating illicit gains exceeding 50 million yuan.

The top court endorsed the intensified crackdown on gambling that is organized by mafia-style gangs, noting that they not only profit illegally by operating casinos and facilitating illegal emigration but also use violence, threats and other means to collect gambling debts.

The Supreme People’s Court has instructed courts nationwide to maintain robust efforts against gambling-related crimes and to be vigilant in identifying gambling activities during the handling of other cases, with the aim of curbing all criminal activities associated with gambling.



The ignition test of the new type of rocket engine designed to propel the third stage of the Long March 10 rocket is carried out at a newly built engine test facility in Beijing. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Rocket engine for lunar mission completes test

By ZHAO LEI
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Rocket scientists and engineers conducted a major test last week on the propulsion system to be used on a new type of carrier rocket, which will be the backbone of China’s future mission to land astronauts on the moon.

During the ignition test that took place at a newly built engine testing facility in Beijing’s Fengtai district, a new type of engine, which consumes liquid hydrogen and liquid oxygen, was ignited for more than 16 minutes in a mock high-altitude environment, according to the Academy of Aerospace Propulsion Technology in Xi’an, Shaanxi province. The academy is China’s major manufacturer of liquid-propellant rocket engines.

The new engine model has been designed to propel the third stage of the Long March 10 rocket, which is under research and development at the Beijing-based China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology. The engine will be used when the rocket reaches a high altitude.

Both academies are subsidiaries of State-owned industry giant Chi-

na Aerospace Science and Technology Corp.

An expert with knowledge of the test who spoke to China Daily on condition of anonymity, said both the new engine and the new testing facility were designed for the nation’s manned lunar expedition program.

“The new facility was built to test the performance of the new engine, which was developed to propel the third stage of the new Long March 10 rocket in a high-altitude environment,” he said.

The Long March 10 has been tasked with launching the country’s new-generation crewed spacecraft and the lunar landing module. The rocket is expected to be ready for its maiden flight around 2027.

The rocket for the moon mission will consist of a core booster and several side boosters and will be 92.5 meters tall, which is roughly the height of a 32-story residential building. The gigantic vehicle will have a liftoff weight of 2,189 metric tons and a thrust of 2,678 tons.

It will be capable of transporting spacecraft weighing at least 27 tons to an Earth-moon transfer trajectory, according to designers.

Sanxingdui ancient city showed signs of urban planning

By HUANG ZHILING
and PENG CHAO in Chengdu

New archaeological evidence unearthed at the Sanxingdui Ancient City site suggests that the city had consistent foundations throughout and clear urban planning more than 3,000 years ago.

The Sichuan Provincial Cultural Relics and Archaeology Research Institute said that although some sections of the walls have been damaged over time, archaeologists have reconstructed the basic layout of the city based on exploration of the existing city walls.

The Sanxingdui Ancient City site in Guanghan, Sichuan province, covers about 3.6 square kilometers and has a northwest-southeast layout, basically consistent with the high-grade building foundations and jade

workshop discovered since 2022.

Based on newly discovered water gates and city gates, the main axis of Sanxingdui city was the result of the ancient people adapting to the local geographical environment, and the natural mountains and riverbeds at that time, said Xu Danyang, deputy head of the institute’s Sanxingdui site.

According to the institute, the city’s northern and southern parts were divided by a river, with the northern section housing the palace and workshop areas, while the southern part contained the sacrificial area.

Water gates were situated on the eastern and western sides, and the city was surrounded by thick and sturdy walls with gates and roads, connecting it to the surrounding regions.

The layout was convenient for

both production and daily water intake, as well as for utilizing waterways to connect with the outside world, reflecting advanced urban construction ideas, Xu said.

Scholars believe Sanxingdui was established 2,800 to 4,800 years ago, and archaeological discoveries show it was a prosperous, highly developed cultural hub.

The site was discovered in 1929 when Yan Daocheng, a local villager, unearthed a pit full of jade and stone artifacts while repairing a sewage ditch at the side of his house.

Archaeologists have conducted excavations there since the 1930s. They had a major breakthrough in 1984 when the remains of large palaces and parts of the eastern, western and southern walls of an ancient city were found. In 1986, two large pits full of bronze arti-

facts, including masks and figurines, were dug up.

The discoveries confirmed the site comprised the ruins of a city that was the political, economic and cultural center of the ancient Shu Kingdom, an ancient civilization that existed in what is now Sichuan province.

The site was one of China’s most important archaeological discoveries in the 20th century.

Since 2020, six new pits next to the first two have been excavated, and artifacts found in them are now on display in the new Sanxingdui Museum, which opened in July last year.

The new museum has attracted over 5 million visitors from around the world.

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CHINA



A student from a US tour group enjoys dancing with Chinese students while visiting the Affiliated School of Beijing Normal University on April 18. LIU ZUNSHUAN / XINHUA

SUMMER CAMP STRENGTHENS TIES

US delegation one of several to visit China for exchange tour this year

By ZHANG YU in Shijiazhuang zhangyu1@chinadaily.com.cn

Many ponds in North China have been filled with fully bloomed lotus flowers in recent days. They are a visual feast not only for Chinese tourists, but also for many young people from the United States.

While admiring the flowers in Baoding city's Ancient Lotus Pond with his Chinese peers, David Einy Herrera took many pictures with his phone. "This flower is so beautiful! I've never seen such a flower before," said Herrera, a member of a US delegation that visited Baoding, Hebei province, this month for a 12-day summer camp with Chinese peers.

From July 10 to 21, the delegation of high school students and teachers from the West Contra Costa

Unified School District in California visited the ancient city, which is about 150 kilometers southwest of downtown Beijing. During their trip, the group also visited the Forbidden City and the Great Wall of China in neighboring Beijing.

After arriving in Baoding, the 38 students and seven teachers were greeted by their Chinese hosts from the Affiliated School of Hebei Baoding Normal.

Together, both groups visited several local tourist attractions, and the US visitors had the chance to learn and experience Chinese cultural activities, which helped the flower of friendship between Chinese and American young people begin to blossom.

"We have become friends and will keep in touch with each other via WeChat in the future because

we have common interests and hobbies," said Daniel Peterson, adding that he will definitely visit China again.

While visiting the attractions, members of the US group said they really enjoyed the activities. Encouraged by their Chinese peers, they tried their hand at writing with calligraphy brushes and played ping-pong. They were also given folding fans with different Chinese characters such as *fenghe*, or "wind lotus" and *longfei*, or "dragon flies".

"The characters for *longfei* are written in traditional Chinese characters," said Peterson, 18. "I think traditional characters are beautiful, but not as easy to write as simplified characters."

Elsewhere, a Peking Opera performance captivated the US teach-

ers and students, after which they were taught some of the movements from the performers. "I didn't do the moves very well, but it was really interesting," Herrera said.

Deeply impressed with Chinese culture, some said they would bring gifts back to their friends and family and that they would like to visit China again in the future.

The summer camp was created in response to a program announced by President Xi Jinping in November in San Francisco, where he invited 50,000 young people from the US to visit China over the next five years for exchanges and opportunities to study.

Since then, several US delegations have visited China, traveling to cities such as Shanghai and Xi'an, Shaanxi province.



A US student from the West Contra Costa Unified School District experiences writing Chinese calligraphy on a fan in Baoding on July 11. FENG QING / FOR CHINA DAILY



A US student learns how to play table tennis with a Chinese student in Baoding on July 15. MA JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY



High school students from Washington state play a game with Chinese students at the Shenzhen Nanshan Foreign Language School in Guangdong province, on March 25. A series of US delegations have visited China this year. MAO SIQIAN / XINHUA



A member of a US high school student delegation from Iowa visits the Hebei Museum in Shijiazhuang on June 9. CUI YUJIA / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



Two students (center) from the West Contra Costa Unified School District learn opera movements from Peking Opera performers in Baoding on July 11. MA JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

BUSINESS

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An exhibitor from Pakistan introduces handicrafts at the China-South Asia Expo, which opened in Kunming, Yunnan province, on Tuesday. YANG ZHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Expo to boost Sino-South Asian trade

By ZHU WENQIAN in Beijing and LI YINGQING in Kunming

The China-South Asia Expo, which opened in Southwest China's Kunming, Yunnan province on Tuesday, is forecast to further promote trade and economic development, as well as tourism and cultural communication between China and South Asian countries, according to a senior official.

China as well as South Asian and Southeast Asian countries have been a human community with a shared future, and the expo aims to promote economic globalization and common prosperity of all countries, Wang Ning, Party secretary of Yunnan province, said during the expo's opening ceremony.

"We hope to turn more exhibits into commodities. This year, the expo has increased the number of South Asian exhibition halls to two, including more than 800 booths showcasing various South Asian specialties such as Pakistani jewelry and Afghan carpets," Wang said.

The expo, the eighth edition since 2013 when the Belt and Road Initiative was proposed, runs through Sunday. This year, 82 countries, regions and international organizations are participating in the event, with over 2,000 exhibiting companies — of which nearly half are overseas enterprises — covering all countries in South Asia and Southeast Asia.

With 15 exhibition halls, the expo will showcase achievements of industries with significant potential for economic and trade cooperation between China and South Asian countries. The sectors include green energy, modern agriculture, healthcare and cultural tourism.

"Yunnan boasts geographical advantages with abundant resources such as mineral resources, green electricity and plateau agriculture. Yunnan also serves as an important node connecting China and South Asia and Southeast Asia, and it has enormous potential for industrial investment," Wang said.

In particular, a coffee industry hall has been established for the first time at the expo in which over 160 industry players are participating. In addition, a dedicated national exhibition area has been set up for Pakistan, the country of honor this year.

In the past 11 years, the expo has facilitated cumulative foreign trade transactions worth over \$100 billion and the signing of over 3,000 projects.

Last year, the trade value between China and South Asian countries reached nearly \$200 billion, doubling from the level seen in 2013, data from the Ministry of Commerce showed.

Himalayan Threads, a handmade products maker from Nepal that offers hand-embroidered scarves,

cashmere shawls and hand-woven bags, has set up three booths at the expo, and has brought more goods compared to last year, it said.

Pul Prasad Sharma, general manager of Himalayan Threads, said many Chinese consumers favor handmade products rather than machine-made ones, and the company has a large number of clients in Kunming.

"We participate in different kinds of big exhibitions in China, especially in Shanghai, Beijing, Shenzhen in Guangdong province, Lanzhou in Gansu province and Yinchuan in Ningxia Hui autonomous region. The business is good," Sharma said.

Meanwhile, Shanghai-based MQ Coffee, a major domestic brand, is participating with its full product lineup at the expo this year. The company is showcasing local coffee beans produced in Lancang Lahu autonomous county under the city of Pu'er, Yunnan, with its unique anaerobic sun treatment process.

By participating in the expo, MQ Coffee said it hopes more people will understand and love coffee beans produced in Pu'er, Yunnan, known as China's coffee capital, and thus further promotes the development and prosperity of China's coffee industry.

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GDP growth on track to be around 5%

By OUYANG SHIJIA
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China's economy is on track to achieve its annual growth target of around 5 percent this year, as the country is set to launch a series of reform measures to boost economic growth in the remainder of the year, said a renowned economist.

"I'm quite optimistic about China's economic prospects this year," Li Daoxun, director of Tsinghua University's Academic Center for Chinese Economic Practice and Thinking, said in an exclusive interview with China Daily on Monday. "I believe the preset annual growth target of around 5 percent is achievable."

Li's remarks came after the recently concluded third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China adopted a resolution on further deepening reform in a comprehensive fashion to advance Chinese modernization.

As the country is set to roll out a slew of targeted measures to implement the reforms mapped out in the resolution, Li said he expects to see

gradual stabilization in prices and recovery in confidence among businesses, investors and consumers.

Although China's broader economy is still facing headwinds and challenges, he said deepening reforms comprehensively will help tackle the issues and inject new impetus into the economy.

"A package of measures is needed to defuse local government debt risks, boost consumer confidence and stabilize the real estate sector."

As the high local debt load has become a key issue dragging on China's economic growth, he suggested that the central government should issue more treasury bonds to replace local government debt, which will help boost domestic demand and create a favorable environment for further deepening reforms.

On the consumption front, he said it is advisable for the government to issue consumption coupons worth 1 trillion yuan (\$137 billion) during the weeklong National Day holiday in October this year, which will significantly boost consumer sentiment.

With the resolution adopted during the plenary session having shed light on market-oriented reforms and further efforts to tackle structural issues, Li said China is likely to roll out more targeted measures to deal with the challenges and dispel any possible doubts on the future prospects of the world's second-largest economy.

According to the resolution, the country will move faster to establish a housing system that supports both home rentals and purchases, and foster a new development model for the real estate sector.

Li said he believes the real estate sector will continue to serve as a "pillar industry" over the next 15 to 20 years, as around 350 million people — including those now living in rural areas and migrant workers living in cities — will likely buy residential properties in cities in the future.

"Despite the oversupply of housing due to excess construction in the short term in certain regions, the overall real estate market is expected to rebound and return to a growth path in a year-and-a-half to around two years," Li said.

Briefly

SAIC-GM JV posts strong NEV sales in H1

SAIC-GM-Wuling, a joint venture between SAIC Motor, General Motors and Liuzhou Wuling Motors, reported sales of 243,000 new energy vehicles in the first six months of this year, up 35.5 percent year-on-year and accounting for nearly 38 percent

of the JV's total auto sales.

Renminbi strengthens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, strengthened 1 pip to 7.1334 against the US dollar on Tuesday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's

spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day. The central parity rate of the yuan against the US dollar is based on a weighted average of prices offered by market makers before the opening of the interbank market each business day.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Policy thrust set to safeguard commerce

Targeted responses to evolving global scene, focus on digital, green fields key

By WANG KEJU
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China's resolve to intensify its efforts to harmonize foreign trade policies with fiscal, tax, financial and industrial policies will foster a robust institutional framework to cement the country's position as a trading powerhouse and better underpin economic growth, experts said after reviewing the highlights of a recent tone-setting meeting.

They, however, hastened to add that the global economic recovery is still grappling with instability, with uncertainties stemming from trade protectionism, geopolitical tensions and other factors. All these factors, they said, are casting a shadow over the world's second-largest economy's trading activities. They called for targeted responses to navigate the evolving dynamics.

The just-concluded third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China has pledged efforts to step up reforms to integrate domestic and foreign trade, and actively respond to the trends of digital and green trade.

According to the plenum's resolution released on Sunday, China will develop new regulatory approaches for Customs clearance, taxation and foreign exchange, and foster an institutional environment that is conducive to the development of new models and forms of trade.

Wei Jianguo, former vice-minister of commerce, said that China's ambition to strengthen its position

in foreign trade necessitates a unified approach that emphasizes synergy between trade policies in other key areas such as fiscal management, taxation, financial regulations and industrial development.

Going forward, by avoiding fragmented decision-making and adopting a collective strategy, China can leverage the combined strength of multiple policy instruments to optimize its trade potential, Wei said, adding that the country should further tap the immense opportunities presented by digital and green trade.

Digitalization in trade processes, including cross-border e-commerce, digital platforms and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, opens up new avenues for robust growth, said Cui Fan, a professor at the University of International Business and Economics.

China, as laid out in the resolution, will promote the development of integrated pilot zones for cross-border e-commerce; it will also support various types of entities in developing logistics facilities overseas in an orderly way.

The ongoing digital transformation of logistics, warehousing and payment processes has revolutionized the way foreign trade enterprises operate, enabling them to leverage big data analytics. This will help them to gain insights into market trends, consumer behavior and supply chain dynamics, and make informed business decisions, Cui said.

Meanwhile, the expansion of tech-intensive green product industries will help Chinese companies move up the global value chain and better compete with their global rivals, said Zhang Jianping, a researcher of the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

In response to a global need to address climate change and reduce carbon emissions, China exports green products like electric vehicles, lithium-ion batteries and photovoltaic products. This is effectively meeting growing international demand for clean energy and low-carbon technologies, Zhang said.

The ongoing global shift toward sustainability presents a fertile ground for Chinese companies, which have consistently delivered cost-effective and cutting-edge solutions over the last decade, he said.

In addition, China will adopt innovative measures to boost trade in services and fully apply the negative list for cross-border trade in services, according to the resolution.

Additionally, efforts will be made to promote comprehensive trials and demonstrations for expanding opening-up of the services sector and encourage specialized service organizations to enhance their capacity for providing international services.

To tap the immense potential of the services sector, China will further promote its liberalization and high-standard opening-up. Simultaneously, China is committed to enhancing its own service standards to meet international expectations, said Wei, the former vice-minister of commerce.



BUSINESS

Xiaomi gears up to lift SU7 EV deliveries

Success of its model seen intensifying competition in NEV market

By MA SI
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Xiaomi Corp plans to deliver at least 100,000 units of its SU7 electric vehicles this year, with a goal to sell 120,000 units in total, according to its chairman Lei Jun.

Analysts said this shows the company's confidence in its burgeoning car business, though they said it is still early days before Xiaomi achieves long-term success amid intense competition.

Lei said the fresh goal represents a significant increase from its initially set first-year sales target of 76,000 vehicles while determining its production capacity.

Xiaomi delivered over 25,000 EVs by the end of June and expects to reach the 100,000-unit target by November, according to Lei, who recalled that a decision by the US government to sanction Xiaomi in early 2021 was the catalyst for the company's decision to build its first electric car.

Since then, the company has devoted a large amount of resources to developing the SU7, which has received a warm welcome from Chinese consumers.

Roy Lu, a Shanghai-based automotive analyst, said Xiaomi's early success is expected to intensify competition in China's new energy vehicle market where established automakers, startups and tech companies are all vying to expand their presence.

“The production volume and sales of NEVs in China are expected to reach 13 million units in 2024, with a year-on-year growth rate of about 40 percent.”

Zhang Yongwei, vice-president and secretary-general of China EV 100

A price war is already on in the country's EV market, the world's largest.

Competition in the EV industry will heat up this year, with a more differentiated market landscape, said Zhang Yongwei, vice-president and secretary-general of China EV 100, a major auto industry think tank.

The next one or two years will be crucial, Zhang said, as companies that may not have the necessary competence will likely exit after a shakeout.

“The production volume and sales of NEVs in China are expected to reach 13 million units in 2024, with a year-on-year growth rate of about 40 percent,” Zhang said.

In the first six months of 2024, the production and sales volume of NEVs reached 4.93 million and 4.94 million units, respectively, marking an increase of 30.1 percent and 32 percent year-on-year, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

Amid the heightened competition, Xiaomi is also upping the

ante with a new “Ultra” Prototype version of the SU7 unveiled last week. The hyper-sports version of its four-door EV features strong motors, and Lei said the company hopes to develop the fastest four-door car in the world, gas or electric, in 10 years.

The move is part of Xiaomi's broader ambition to compete with Porsche and Tesla to become a major auto manufacturer globally in the future.

In the realm of smart driving, Xiaomi's team has exceeded 1,000 members by April, with plans to expand to 1,500 by the end of 2024 and further to 2,000 by 2025. Xiaomi's smart assisted driving was launched in 10 Chinese cities by the end of May and will be available nationwide by August, the company said.

The company also expressed optimism about support from core suppliers in scaling up production, ensuring that actual delivery times are ahead of the scheduled dates on its app.

Xiaomi plans to establish a robust sales and service network by the end of 2024, with 219 sales outlets across 46 cities and 143 service centers covering 86 cities.

Experts said it remains to be seen whether Xiaomi can really afford the capital and time needed for the cash-intensive smart car business, given that several Chinese companies that had entered the segment faced severe financial difficulties. Some of them have even gone bankrupt.

Xiaomi has pledged to invest \$10 billion in autos over a decade to crack the highly competitive NEV market in China. It has already invested significant resources in the development of several key technologies, such as autonomous driving and electrical machinery, over the past three years.

New school around corner

An aerial image shows the construction site of a junior high school in Shanghai. State builder China Railway 23rd Bureau Group Corp completed capping the project in Lin-gang Special Area last week. The project was planned by the local government to improve services for residents settling in the free trade area. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Michelin Guide expands biz in China

By LIU YUKUN
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The Michelin Guide, a global provider of restaurant and hotel information and ratings, will expand its culinary footprint in China by introducing two new provincial guides, driven by optimism about sustained growth in China's retail market, an executive said.

Gwendal Poullennec, international director of the Michelin Guide, said the Chinese dining market is growing steadily, constantly exhibiting new dynamics with consumers getting younger and younger, with better spending power, and showing signs of being more willing to open their wallets wider for quality dining experiences.

“Despite having established a presence in China for about eight years, the company's expansion is still in its early stages. There are constant new dynamics. More people are spending on lifestyle rather than just products. The market is moving up, and purchasing power is growing. Our readership is more than doubling annually. There are more food lovers than ever, and they are younger. Eating quality food is becoming increasingly important,” he said.

Rolled out by the French tire company Michelin, the Michelin Guide serves as a resource of information for international travelers and food enthusiasts.

Following its coverage of five major cities in China, the Michelin Guide will release its first provincial restaurant lists, starting with Fujian and Jiangsu provinces. Fujian's list will be unveiled by the end of 2024, and Jiangsu's results will be announced in early 2025.

Poullennec said this move aims to better connect with Chinese consumers while promoting China's rich and authentic culinary culture on the international stage.

“There is an increasing demand for quality dining experiences from both local residents and travelers, domestic and overseas. They are eager to discover not only good restaurants but also the rich culture and variety of Chinese cuisine,” Poullennec added.

A recent report by iiMedia Research indicates that China's catering industry market size has recovered to pre-COVID levels of 2019 and is expected to grow steadily in the short term. With ongoing consumption promotion policies across the country, demand in the catering market is continually being stimulated, and is projected to reach 5.7 trillion yuan (\$783.5 billion) by 2025.

Latest data from the National Bureau of Statistics show that in the first half, national catering revenue reached 2.6 trillion yuan, up 7.9 percent year-on-year, surpassing

the 3.7 percent year-on-year growth rate of total retail sales of consumer goods, showing strong growth momentum and development vitality.

The iiMedia report highlighted that in response to increasingly personalized and diverse dining demands and the rise of social media, restaurants are expanding their offerings from basic products to quality dining experiences, alongside a broader range of other services. Some providers have established their own multichannel network agencies for branding, extending services to influencer cultivation, group purchases and social media marketing, thus offering more comprehensive solutions to enhance market competitiveness.

Wu Ying, vice-president of the China Cuisine Association, said the catering industry is among the sectors to recover quickly and steadily after the pandemic, thus showcasing robust development trends and reflecting the resilience and vitality of China's overall economy.

Poullennec affirmed the company's long-term confidence and business plans for the Chinese market. “We established our presence eight years ago, and we want the market to last and continue to expand. It's a long-term project. Step by step, we are gradually increasing our coverage.”

People power



An employee (left) of State Grid Wenzhou Electric Power Co addresses a farmer's queries at a vineyard in Tashi, a village in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province. As power use peaks in the scorching summer, the company sent employees to agricultural areas to enhance awareness of safe electricity use, and assist in harvests. BAI LIJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Renewable energy use on the rise nationwide

By ZHENG XIN
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China's utilization of renewable energy has either reached or exceeded advanced international levels, reflecting its rapid progress in the field of sustainable energy, according to a recent report.

The adoption of renewable energy in the country has continued its momentum over the past few years, with a utilization rate of 97.6 percent — surpassing 95 percent for six consecutive years since 2018 — said Ye Xiaoning, senior engineer at the new energy department of the State Grid Energy Research Institute.

This is comparable to the levels seen in developed countries such as Germany, Ye said during the release of a report on China's new energy power generation by the institute in Beijing.

China's advancements in renewable energy highlight its determination to reshape its energy landscape, while achieving or exceeding international advanced standards reflects its improving credentials in the global renewable energy arena, he said.

The government has played a key role in this progress through supportive policies and substantial financial investments, Ye said.

According to the report, China's renewable energy generation reached 1,469.1 billion kilowatt-hours last year, a year-on-year increase of 23 percent, accounting for 15.8 percent of the total power generation, an increase of 2.1 percentage points compared to the previous year.

According to the report, the country has entered the high proportion renewable energy stage predicted by global institutions such as the International Energy Agency, with the

proportion of renewable energy generation in nine provinces exceeding 20 percent of electricity consumption, especially in the provincial-level regions of Qinghai, Gansu, and the Ningxia Hui autonomous region.

“China's renewable energy sector has now become the primary source of additional power generation, with newly installed capacity doubling year-on-year,” Ye said.

The report showed that the cumulative installed capacity of renewable energy nationwide has surpassed 1 billion kilowatts by the end of 2023, accounting for 34 percent of the total installed power generation capacity nationwide, a significant milestone highlighting the country's shift toward sustainable energy.

Among these, wind power installations have reached 440 million kW and solar power installations have reached 610 million kW, ranking first in the world for 14 and 9 consecutive years, respectively, accounting for about 43 percent and 42 percent of the global total, it said. The newly installed capacity of renewable energy rose to 290 million kW last year, 2.4 times that of 2022, accounting for 79 percent of the total new power generation capacity nationwide, and has become the main source of new power generation capacity.

“In 22 provincial-level regions including Hebei and Ningxia Hui autonomous region, the proportion of renewable energy installed capacity exceeds 30 percent, with Qinghai and Gansu having over 60 percent of their installed capacity from renewable energy,” said Ye.

The surge in renewable energy capacity also leads to significant investments in solar, wind, and hydropower projects across the

country, part of China's broader strategy to peak carbon emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060, he added.

Lu Zongxiang, an associate professor with Tsinghua University, said the country must ensure sufficient energy supply as it advances toward its carbon goals.

“Considering the fact that most new energy sources are intermittent and characterized by rapid and unpredictable variations, it is necessary to ensure sufficient power supply in times when the wind doesn't blow and the sun doesn't shine,” he said.

Lu said that investment in infrastructure construction, including energy storage facilities as well as grid upgrades and expansion, will be crucial in accelerating China's transition to green and low-carbon energy in the coming years.

According to a plan jointly issued earlier this month by the National Development and Reform Commission and the National Energy Administration, China will increase financing for emission reduction projects at coal-fired power plants.

Construction on some of the projects, which will include green ammonia and the burning of biomass, will start next year, with a goal of reducing emissions by 20 percent for each unit of power generated. China will also leverage carbon capture and storage to lower emissions.

The emission reductions from the upgrades should be 50 percent by 2027, compared with the 2023 levels, it said.

China's progress in this field is expected to positively influence global energy markets and foster further international collaboration in the fight against climate change, Ye said.

Pharmanovia to boost investment in nation

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai
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With plenty of opportunities, China is expected to grow faster than other markets for United Kingdom-based global pharmaceutical company Pharmanovia, said a senior executive in an exclusive interview in Shanghai on Friday.

Such continuous growth comes after China had already been the drugmaker's No 1 market globally since 2023, accounting for roughly 25 percent of the company's total sales, said James Burt, CEO of Pharmanovia, which was founded in 2013 and started business in China in 2018.

“It's quite unusual for a Western business to have its biggest market in China. However, we see plenty more potential in this country,” said Burt.

“So we're going to continue to invest in China over the next five years. We see upwards of more than \$40 million a year in the activities that we're doing in the China market. And over the next few years, it could easily be in the hundreds of millions,” he said.

There are some structural reasons that make China one of the most appealing markets in the world for pharmaceutical companies, said



James Burt

Burt. They include the innovative nature of healthcare here, unmet needs and the fact that value-added drugs are well-perceived here.

Also, China has one of the most advanced e-health platforms, which gives amazing opportunities to improve medical care, he said.

Ian McAleer, general manager of Pharmanovia China, also said that the company's investment is going to continue to focus on China. “I don't think that the contribution of China being the No 1 market for Pharmanovia is going to change in the foreseeable future,” he said.

Jin Chunlin, director of the Shanghai Municipal Health Development Research Center, said the aging process in China and the increasing demand for the treatment of major and rare diseases have also made the market more attractive for innovative drugs, which attracts domestic and foreign pharmaceutical firms alike.

“China's new drug approval and public medical insurance policies have been inclined to support truly innovative pharmaceutical companies in recent years. From 2017 to

2023, the number of innovative therapies going to the market has increased significantly, and the rate of innovative drugs included on the national medical reimbursement list is increasing,” he said.

Pharmanovia has marketed two products — both in the bone health segment — in China so far, and plans to roll out products from its other therapeutic areas, including endocrinology, neuropsychology, cardiovascular and oncology, for Chinese patients, said Burt.

“Within the next six to 12 months, there could be another two or three products that will be effectively helping support China. And by 2027, we could have a range of 10-plus products in China with bone health as a focus,” he said, adding that the company owns at least 25 core brands globally.

Official statistics showed that there are around 90 million people suffering from osteoporosis in China.

“But the patients are not diagnosed and treated enough. If osteoporosis is not treated properly, there can be a big cost to the nation as people have spinal fractures or hip fractures. The unmet medical need is there, and we feel we can do a lot to help,” said Burt.

BUSINESSFOCUS

CHINA UP-CLOSE

Chinese-made new drugs big hit overseas

Domestic pharma firms' enthusiasm for going global driving business abroad

By LI JIAYING
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With more Chinese-developed innovative drugs entering both US and European markets, China's pharmaceutical sector is showing escalating prowess in innovation and global market penetration, said industry experts.

"This (entering the European market) is a significant milestone. Fruquintinib is the first product approved in Europe completed by our research and development engine," said Su Weiguo, CEO and chief scientific officer of Shanghai-based biopharmaceutical company Hutchmed.

Su added that the drug is already improving treatment prospects in the United States and China, and the company is looking forward to extending its impact to European market.

Su's statement came after the company announced last month that its independently developed antitumor drug Fruquintinib received approval from the European Commission for use in the treatment of metastatic colorectal cancer.

Following the drug's US market debut in November, the milestone marks its second entry into a major global market within seven months.

In November, the Chinese-made new drug was approved by the US Food and Drug Administration, with the first prescription issued within 48 hours of approval, Hutchmed said. According to data from the company's overseas commercialization partner Takeda, Fruquintinib's sales in the US market exceeded \$50 million in the first quarter.

The innovative drug is also in the process of being approved for sale in other global markets, such as Japan, with a focus on enlarging its global footprint and reaching out to more patients worldwide, said Hutchmed in a recent statement.

In a related development, Hangzhou, Zhejiang-based Yifan Pharmaceutical announced in March that its innovative product, Ryzneuta, also received approval for sale in the European market.

Previously approved by the US FDA in November for treating chemotherapy-induced neutropenia, the approval marks this year's first innovative drug approval for a Chinese pharmaceutical company in a foreign market.

Last year was widely recognized as a significant watershed for Chi-

nese innovative drugs that aim to go global, with the number of "license-out" deals surpassing "license-in" ones for the first time.

According to data from online pharmaceutical platform Pharmcube, there were about 70 out-licensing deals in China in 2023, up 32 percent from 2022, with a total transaction value of over \$46.5 billion, up 69 percent from the previous year.

Out-licensing in the pharmaceutical industry is a practice where a company grants another foreign organization the rights to use its product, technology or intellectual property. It allows the licensor to enter new markets through the licensee's established presence. In-licensing, on the other hand, allows the licensee to expand its product portfolio and access innovative technologies without having to develop the product or technology in-house.

In the first half of this year, the enthusiasm for "going global" among domestic innovative pharmaceutical companies has remained high. According to a report by Chinese media Yicai, as of June 30, there were approximately 30 out-licensing deals by innovative Chinese drugmakers, with a transaction value of over \$10 billion, significantly more than a year earlier.

"The surge in overseas expansion of domestic innovative drugs highlights the enhanced innovation capabilities of China's biopharmaceutical sector and reflects international regulatory bodies' recognition of China's drug innovation," said Yu Meng, deputy director of the information department at the China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Medicines and Health Products.

Yu said commercialization serves as the major reason for Chinese pharmaceutical companies to target foreign markets, as lucrative pricing of innovative drugs abroad presents a vast profit potential and prompts some globally competitive companies to explore overseas markets for higher returns.

In fact, due to the significant market size of innovative drugs, the US and European markets have become prime targets for such drugmakers. The US accounted for over half of global innovative drug sales in 2021, with Europe at 16 percent, while China stood at merely 3 percent, far below that of developed countries, according to a report by consultancy Market Monitor.



Above: Employees examine drug samples at a laboratory in Shenyang, Liaoning province, in May. YANG QING / XINHUA
Below: Technicians run drug experiments at a pharmaceutical company's lab in Haikou, Hainan province, in May. SU BIKUN / FOR CHINA DAILY



“I see there are a lot of companies in China that have big potential to develop global-level new drugs.”

Chris Shim, general manager for Asia R&D and quality at US pharmaceutical software company Veeva Systems

In order to strengthen policy support for the growth of the innovative drug sector, on July 5, the State Council, China's Cabinet, issued a guideline that supports improved price management, medical insurance payments, commercial insurance coverage, allocation and usage, as well as investment and financing in the sector.

Specifically, efforts will also include improving scientific and technological resource allocation, strengthening fundamental research in new drug development and solidifying the R&D foundation for China's innovative drugs, according to the guideline.

"I see there are a lot of companies in China that have big potential to develop global-level new drugs. For

example, the number of drugs the country is running for clinical trials is massively bigger than other countries in Asia," said Chris Shim, general manager for Asia R&D and quality at US cloud-based pharmaceutical software company Veeva Systems.

With its enormous domestic market size, sufficient talent supply and large number of biotech and biopharma players, China's pharmaceutical industry is endowed with great potential to witness an increasing number of global-level innovative drugmakers, Shim said.

He added that in order to better adapt to local market conditions during their global outreach, Chinese companies are setting up concise strategies based on different

market compliance issues and business performances, with a focus on the usage of cutting-edge technologies such as cloud platforms and artificial intelligence.

"Take cooperation ecosystem, for example. If Chinese companies want to manage different partners and patient dynamics abroad, they'll have to manage all the data and solutions across different countries, where lie cultural and regulatory differences and other kinds of complexities," he said, adding that digitalization can facilitate cross-regional communication and operation process to a large extent.

Shim's view is echoed by Yang Bin, clinical operations vice-president at Hutchmed. "The digitalization of overseas data collection, analysis and management ensures the timeliness of our data processing and analysis. For example, clinical data might contain some anomalies, but through a comprehensive digital management system, we can promptly detect and address these issues, ensuring the overall quality of the experiments.

"It can be said that the success of approvals in the US and Europe markets can't be separated from the application of a fully digitalized system."

In addition, Shim mentioned the role of AI in facilitating the going-global process.

"AI is helping people improve their productivity by eliminating routine jobs. For example, the documentation process of clinical trials can involve a lot of human work of writing, uploading, scanning and analyzing, but now all of them can be done by AI by simply taking a picture and AI will take care of the rest. AI is going to be the key differentiator for industry players," he said.

Cutting-edge tech boosting diagnostic accuracy

By LI JIAYING

Artificial intelligence is expected to boost today's medical sector by enhancing diagnostic accuracy and facilitating clinical decision-making, if combined well with irreplaceable human expertise that underpins effective healthcare, experts said.

In a study published this month in international science journal *The Lancet Digital Health*, Japanese scientists said they have developed an AI model that can determine lung functionality from chest radiographs with high accuracy.

The method, using static information from chest X-rays, demonstrates the potential to accurately estimate lung functionality — an assessment typically requiring physically demanding tests for patients, said Daiju Ueda, one of the scientists in the study, in an earlier report by Science Daily.

The results showed a Pearson's correlation coefficient of more than 0.90, indicating that the

method is sufficiently promising for practical use.

"AI holds especially significant potential in medical technology departments such as imaging, pathology and ultrasound," said Yuan Jinglin, vice-president of Beijing Daxing District People's Hospital, during the China Digital Health Conference 2024 held in Beijing this month.

Yuan said that in radiology in the neurology field, for instance, AI can rapidly identify the extent of cerebral infarction and salvageable tissue in acute stroke patients, a task that would be challenging for physicians to perform without AI's objective data and precise evidence.

"AI-assisted decision-making can substantially reduce medical errors and provide more informed choices during patient care," said Lu Zhaohui, deputy director of the international exchange office at the Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine.

AI's application is particularly valuable in the deep mining of clinical

data and aiding the formulation of clinical plans, such as providing surgical and chemotherapy solutions, Lu said, adding that AI can also help enhance hospital operational efficiency by facilitating data-driven management and enabling real-time comprehensive monitoring of medical processes.

Lu also highlighted the transformative impact of AI on infection control. "Incorporating AI for real-time surveillance and predictive monitoring, rather than retrospective checks, significantly boosts the precision of hospital operations," he said.

According to data from market consultancy International Data Corp, the global AI application market is projected to reach \$127 billion by 2025, with the medical sector accounting for one-fifth of the total market value.

However, AI's limitations in clinical applications can not be overlooked. Accurate diagnosis still relies heavily on the clinical expertise of physicians rather than solely

on AI data, especially in certain areas such as chronic occlusive vascular issues, Yuan said. "AI should serve as an auxiliary tool rather than a decisionmaker."

Hou Xiaobing, president of Beijing First Hospital of Integrated Chinese and Western Medicine, noted that traditional Chinese medicine has a lot to do with face-to-face consulting, and the four specific forms of intake to determine diagnosis — looking, listening, asking and feeling the pulse — cannot be accomplished by current AI technologies.

"TCM encompasses a wide array of schools and perspectives. For the same illness, different schools and experts may propose varying treatment plans. This diversity necessitates addressing the issue of standardization when developing AI for TCM," Hou said.

Additionally, TCM's external treatments, such as acupuncture and massage, depend on the practitioner's hands-on skills, and thus cannot be easily replaced by automated AI equipment either, he said.



Visitors check out digitalized X-ray equipment during a medical supply expo in Shanghai in April. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Hou added that establishing standardized treatment protocols and processes, through guidelines or consensus, is crucial for training AI models. Only with improved accuracy can AI assist more grassroots-level doctors in providing the precise expertise of seasoned TCM practitioners and help more patients in rural and distant areas.

"High-quality medical resources need to be extended to grassroots and rural areas. In situations where there is a shortage of medical personnel, AI technology can substitute for healthcare workers at the grassroots level, enabling these communities to access better and more advanced medical resources, thereby benefiting locals," he said.

WORLD

Secret Service chief out after Trump shooting

By MAYZHOU in Houston
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US Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle resigned on Tuesday after outrage expressed by both political parties over her agency's failure to prevent an assassination attempt against former president Donald Trump at a campaign rally 10 days ago in Pennsylvania.

Cheatle, 53, announced her resignation through an internal email. She said that "in light of recent events, it is with a heavy heart that I have made the difficult decision to step down as your director". Cheatle said that she didn't want the calls for her resignation "to be a distraction from the great work" the agency is doing.

Cheatle served on the team of President Joe Biden that secured Vice-President Dick Cheney on Sept. 11, 2001. Cheatle later worked on Joe Biden's detail during his vice-presidency and was assigned to his wife, Jill Biden.

President Biden issued a statement Tuesday after her resignation: "As a leader, it takes honor, courage and incredible integrity to take full responsibility for an organization tasked with one of the most challenging jobs in public service."

Within minutes after news of Cheatle's resignation broke, Trump posted a statement on his social media network saying: "The Biden/Harris Administration did not properly protect me, and I was forced to take a bullet for Democracy. IT WAS MY GREAT HONOR TO DO SO!"

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas appointed Secret Service Deputy Director Ronald Rowe as the agency's acting director. Rowe is a 24-year veteran of the service. In an interview last week, Rowe defended Cheatle's leadership and said she shouldn't resign.

The security measure during Trump's July 13 rally was seriously flawed by not monitoring a nearby warehouse, where the gunman, Thomas Crooks, 20, positioned himself for the shooting.

The day before her resignation, Cheatle testified at a congressional hearing where she offered no clear answers to the failure to protect Trump.

She acknowledged that the shooter was identified as suspicious — having had a range finder and backpack — more than an hour before he opened fire. She also acknowledged that Secret Service agents had received multiple notifications of a person acting suspiciously "somewhere between two and five times" prior to the shooting.

However, the potential threat seemed to not have been conveyed to the Trump's security team.

"If the detail had been passed information that there was a threat, the detail would never have brought the former president out on the stage," Cheatle said in the hearing.

Crooks fired at least six rounds from an AR-15-style rifle from the roof of the American Glass Research building, roughly 400 feet from where Trump spoke. The shots killed one spectator, critically injured two others and grazed Trump's left ear.

A Secret Service sniper team shot back, killing Crooks, whose motive remains unknown.

House Speaker Mike Johnson and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries on Tuesday agreed to form a bipartisan task force to lead the congressional investigation into the assassination attempt.

"The security failures that allowed an assassination attempt on Donald Trump's life are shocking," Johnson and Jeffries said in a joint statement. "The task force will be empowered with subpoena authority and will move quickly to find the facts, ensure accountability, and make certain such failures never happen again."

Take the bull by the horns



People dressed as bulls attend the signing ceremony of a law that bans bullfighting at Santamaria Cultural Square, Bogota, Colombia, on Monday. Colombian President Gustavo Petro signed the bill in front of hundreds of animal rights activists at the capital's bullring, ending a practice that had been constitutionally recognized as part of the country's culture. IVAN VALENCIA / AP

Ethiopian landslide kills at least 229

ADDIS ABABA — Local residents were desperately searching for survivors on Tuesday after a landslide in southern Ethiopia killed at least 229 people, the deadliest such disaster recorded in the country.

"We have so far recovered 229 bodies from two villages ... We believe the number will increase," Markos Melese, head of the National Disaster Response agency in Gofa Zone, told Reuters by phone.

The disaster occurred at about 10 am on Monday following heavy rains in Gofa, an isolated mountainous area of the South Ethiopia regional state.

The government-owned Ethiopia Broadcasting Corporation quoted

local administrator Dagemawi Ayele as saying that most of the victims were buried after they went to help the inhabitants of a house hit by an initial landslide.

"Those who rushed for lifesaving work have perished in the disaster, including the locality's administrator, teachers, health professionals and agricultural professionals," EBC quoted Dagemawi as saying.

Young children and pregnant women were among victims of the landslide, Dagemawi said.

Images posted on social media by the Gofa authority showed residents carrying bodies of the dead on makeshift stretchers, some wrapped in plastic sheeting, and

people clawing through the mud with shovels or their bare hands.

The South Ethiopia regional state has been battered by short seasonal rains between April and early May that have caused flooding and mass displacement, the United Nations humanitarian response agency OCHA said.

African Union Commission chief Moussa Faki Mahamat said "our hearts and prayers" are with the families of the victims. "We stand in strong solidarity with the people and Government of Ethiopia as rescue efforts continue to find the missing and assist the displaced," he said.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

HK action film star Nicholas Tse also has a knack for storytelling

By MINGMEILI in New York
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Beyond his exploits as an actor, singer, songwriter, entrepreneur and TV chef, Nicholas Tse is a storyteller.

"I've always had a lot of input in my previous action films, like choreography, the camera angles or the editing, so basically for me, I'm still doing the same thing," Tse told China Daily in New York. "For me, the most important part is the storytelling."

Tse, who made his debut as an action choreographer to international audiences in New York, was honored with this year's Screen International Star Asia Award at the New York Asian Film Festival (July 12-28).

The festival also featured the North American premiere of his latest film, *Customs Frontline*, an action-packed movie that follows Hong Kong customs officers as they uncover illegal weapons on a cargo ship, leading them on a thrilling international adventure.

"I'm not trying to do the action because it looks cool, that's called do the action for the action. I'm doing the action for the storytelling. So, I think, you know, that blends in very significantly to not lose the vision in terms of — 'Oh, I'm gonna throw that kick because it looks cool! You can't really do that because you should only do a movement if it really portrays the emotions of that character at the moment!'"

Tse said that body language is crucial in acting, as it helps audiences better understand the plot conveyed through Mandarin or Cantonese dialogue.

"Body language actually transcends more, and it breaks all barriers," Tse said. "It's also the true identity of action movies."

Hong Kong action movies are popular overseas. They have gained a large audience base since the days of Bruce Lee in the 1970s, due to their unique style.

Tse, 43, believes that one of the strengths of the films is the choreography, and insists on performing his own stunts, despite physical strain.

"I've done my own stunts ever since I was 19," Tse recalled. "All the



Hong Kong actor Nicholas Tse (left) talks to the media on July 17 in New York, where he was honored with this year's Screen International Star Asia Award at the New York Asian Film Festival. MINLU ZHANG / CHINA DAILY

explosions are real, all the gunfights, all the hits are real, and all the falls are real. When the actors themselves are pushing themselves to the edge and feeling, feeling the pressure, feeling the danger, that's really how to make the audience be on edge as well."

Tse said he also believes it is his responsibility to take care of other actors in different scenes, such as the stunts in traditional Hong Kong action movies.

Tse, who has studied martial arts for the screen with Jackie Chan and is a practitioner of wing chun, a form of kung fu, said that kung fu attracts international audiences, and that's what Hong Kong action movies should take advantage of.

"It's very important that we keep the advantage, especially Hong Kong action movies; we've really reached so much of the Western world," he said, having witnessed his Western classmates' passion for kung fu during his years at boarding school in Vancouver.

"That [kung fu] gives us the advantage. If we lose the tradition now and give in to AI or CG (computer generation), we won't practice this art anymore. I think it's a very, very big loss for action movies."

With the popularity of new emerging entertainment, Hong Kong action

movies aren't so popular as they were in the past. As of now, Tse doesn't plan to introduce *Customs Frontline* to Hollywood. While he is open to more collaborations, he really wants to get more young people involved in Hong Kong's filmmaking industry.

The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in New York hosted a welcome reception for Tse before the premiere of his new film on July 17.

The director of the office, Maisie Ho, and Film Festival Director Samuel Jamier delivered speeches at the premiere, congratulating Tse on the award and praising his contributions to Hong Kong cinema.

In March, Alibaba Digital Media and Entertainment Group released the "Hong Kong Arts Revitalization Plan", in which it said it will invest no less than HK\$5 billion in the next five years in four major fields of Hong Kong's entertainment industry: TV series, movies, performances and training young talent to further promote the region's industry with China and the world.

"Nothing will stay popular forever," Tse said. "But if we don't spend time to rejuvenate or reintroduce action movies, or how we do action movies to the younger audience, no one's going to participate. No one's going to train that way. No one's going to do it."

Harris rips Trump as she kicks off run

V-P holds first campaign rally in swing state of Wisconsin as White House bid shapes up

By HENG WEILI in New York
hengweili@chinadailyusa.com

US Vice-President Kamala Harris, having now secured backing from Congress' top Democrats, held her first presidential-style campaign rally in Wisconsin on Tuesday, where she sharply criticized the Republican nominee Donald Trump.

Harris continued to bolster her political support Tuesday after announcing that she also had secured pledges from enough party delegates to secure the Democratic nomination for president.

Harris, 59, had moved quickly to shore up her likely nomination after President Joe Biden, 81, on Sunday announced that he would not seek reelection. Biden endorsed Harris that day, and the vice-president's campaign picked up steam.

Most Democratic lawmakers have lined up behind her candidacy, including the party's leaders in the Senate and House, Chuck Schumer and Hakeem Jeffries, who endorsed Harris on Tuesday at a joint press conference. Former House speaker Nancy Pelosi endorsed Harris on Monday.

Democrats were looking to unify the party following a tumultuous month of infighting over whether Biden should remain the nominee.

An Associated Press unofficial survey found that Harris has the support of 3,095 delegates from various states — 1,976 are needed for the nomination. Delegates still may vote for the candidate they prefer when the party picks its new nominee next month at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

"This campaign is not just about us versus Donald Trump. This is about who we fight for," she said before an enthusiastic audience Tuesday at a high school in West Allis, a Milwaukee suburb.

Wisconsin, along with Michigan and Ohio are crucial US Rust Belt battleground states in the November election.

"The path to the White House goes through Wisconsin. And to win in Wisconsin, we are counting on you, right here in Milwaukee," Harris said in the 17-minute speech. "Do we want to live in a country of freedom, compassion and rule of law, or a country of chaos, fear and hate?" she said. "We believe in the sacred freedom to vote. We believe that every person in our nation should have the freedom to live safe from the terror of gun violence ... and we trust women to make decisions about their own bodies."

Of her time as a prosecutor in California, Harris said she "took on perpetrators of all kinds: predators who abused women; fraudsters who ripped off consumers; cheaters who broke the rules for their own gain. So hear me when I say, I know Donald Trump's type," in an apparent reference to some of the former president's legal issues.

Harris has previously served as the San Francisco district attorney, the



US Vice-President Kamala Harris before boarding Air Force Two as she departs on campaign trip to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on Tuesday. KEVIN MOHATT / POOL VIA AP

California attorney general and a US senator from the state.

She has faced some controversy for her stance on marijuana. During Harris' tenure as district attorney in San Francisco from 2004 to 2011, more than 1,900 people were convicted for marijuana offenses, Forbes reported.

She opposed a California ballot initiative in 2010 that would legalize cannabis, although she did favor its medical use. In 2015, she favored the lifting of a federal ban on medical marijuana.

In a call with reporters on Tuesday, Trump criticized Harris' record on immigration since she was tasked by Biden with looking into the root causes of the migration surge.

"Kamala Harris was appointed border czar, as you know, in March 2021, and since that time, millions and millions of illegal aliens have invaded our country, and countless Americans have been killed by migrant crime because of her willful demolition of American borders and laws," Trump said on the call.

A July 22 YouGov poll showed Trump had a 15 percent lead on Harris on the issue of immigration.

Recent polls on voter preference overall are mixed.

Harris led Trump 44 percent to 42 percent among registered voters in a national Reuters/Ipsos poll, conducted on Monday and Tuesday.

A recent YouGov poll showed Trump ahead 44 percent to 39 percent, among registered voters. A Yahoo News poll had each candidate with 46 percent, in a contest that has five candidates.

Trump said Tuesday that he would like to debate Harris "more than once" but did not commit to appearing at the next scheduled debate in September on ABC.

Trump told reporters that he was "not thrilled at ABC" and may want another network, such as Fox, to air the debate. He said he'd only agreed to debate Biden twice — during the June 27 debate that led to the president bowing out of the race, and then in September.

But Trump said he still wants to debate Harris.

"I think debating's important for a presidential race," he said. "You sort of have an obligation to debate."

Agencies contributed to this story.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Reform of the taxation system will support higher quality development and social fairness

Reform of the fiscal and taxation systems is one of the major tasks outlined in the resolution for further deepening reform that was comprehensively adopted at the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, held from July 15 to 18.

The changes to be made to the current taxation system will have an impact on the revenue of the central government and that of local governments, and also on the well-being of ordinary residents. It is little wonder that it has caught the attention of people from all walks of life.

The basic framework of taxation has remained unchanged for 30 years since the system of sharing taxes between the central and local governments was established in 1994. With that system, the revenue of the central coffers was secured and so was that of local governments.

Since then, changes have continuously been made to the taxation regime in the past three decades to allow taxation to play its role in reasonably adjusting the distribution of wealth. For example, the income tax for domestic and foreign-funded enterprises was unified in 2008, and later on business tax was changed into value-added tax, which has reduced the tax burden on both enterprises and consumers.

The income tax reform of 2019 increased the share those with higher incomes have to pay, and reasonably cut levies on those breadwinners who have more peo-

ple to provide for. As a result, the income tax has become more fair. Taxes on environmental protection and biological conservation have greatly promoted the improvement of the environment and ecology.

With new objectives set for the building of a great country in all respects and the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation in the new era, it was inevitable that the taxation system would be further improved to make the system more conducive to high-quality development and the building of a unified market and to further boost social fairness.

The directive outlines the establishment of a clear and balanced fiscal relationship between central and local governments. Key initiatives include increasing local fiscal autonomy, expanding local tax bases, shifting the collection of consumption taxes to later stages and progressively allocating them to local governments, and reasonably expanding the scope of local government bonds. And there is an emphasis on strengthening central government responsibilities and increasing central fiscal spending.

Such measures represent a systematic and forward-looking approach to fiscal policy, providing a solid institutional foundation for improving macroeconomic governance and enhancing the role of fiscal policy in driving economic development. As these reforms take shape, they promise to contribute significantly to the nation's modernization efforts and the establishment of a more resilient and equitable economic system.

China acting responsibly in hosting reconciliation talks

As Israel's military operations in Gaza, most recently the town of Rafah, intensify global humanitarian concerns over civilian casualties, the issue of Palestinian statehood is back in the spotlight.

With more and more countries supporting the "two-state" solution to the historical conflict between Israel and Palestine, the internal divide among the Palestinians has emerged as an outstanding obstacle on the road to Palestinian statehood. The Palestinians' seeming inability to manage internal divisions and control the frictions has been a regular pretext for Western and Israeli opposition to immediate statehood for the Palestinians.

By hosting a fresh round of inter-factional talks among Palestine's major political actors, Beijing is taking a proactive step to push for Palestinian national reconciliation, and ultimately Palestinian statehood. The talks also represent a new attempt by Palestine to introduce order at home.

As Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning stated, the Chinese side has persistently shown solid support for the factions in Palestine to achieve reconciliation and unity through consultation and to build an independent state as soon as possible. The latest Beijing talks are a part of those efforts.

The second round of reconciliation negotiations going on in Beijing reportedly feature 14 Palestinian political factions, including the Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fatah) and the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas). While the meeting is an endorsement of Chinese enthusiasm for the Palestinians' pursuit of statehood, a more

important driver behind it is the Palestinian recognition that reconciliation is necessary for a stable state. A Fatah official was quoted by a Turkish news agency as saying his organization would "participate in the meeting in Beijing with an open mind, and seriously consider ending division". It also quoted a member of the Hamas Political Bureau as saying they would accept Beijing's invitation, because they "yearn to accomplish national unity". Representatives of the two factions held their first consultation in Beijing in April, which was widely viewed as a promising start for the journey toward reconciliation among the various Palestinian factions.

What Beijing has contributed to that process has not been limited to moral support. According to the Foreign Ministry, Beijing's position has been fully reflected in the advisory opinions issued by the International Court of Justice calling for Israel to immediately end its illegal occupation of Palestinian land.

If, as some international observers have reported, China could offer a framework for the talks to be productive, that would certainly be a greater contribution.

Since Palestinian divisions suit the agendas of Israel and the United States, Tel Aviv and Washington have been trying to distort Beijing's good intentions and undermine and obstruct its efforts to promote Palestinian reconciliation. Doing so leaves them at odds with the conscience of the world. China stands firmly on the side of peace and justice and it will continue to do what it can to promote the settlement of the Palestinian issue.

Trump's words cause of consternation for Lai

Given the direct bearing it will have on the United States' support for the "pro-independence" cause he espouses for the island, the leader of the secessionist-minded Taiwan authorities Lai Ching-te must be one of the keenest followers of the US presidential election situation.

Lai's hard-line "pro-independence" speech at a meeting of the Democratic Progressive Party on Sunday, shortly after US President Joe Biden announced he was ending his reelection bid, must be taken with a pinch of salt.

Lai's true motive was to take advantage of the DPP gathering to raise the morale of his crestfallen colleagues amid the pessimism gripping the party at the prospect of Republican candidate Donald Trump occupying the White House for a second time.

Unlike Biden's stress on a "united front" against Beijing, based on the US' global alliance network, Trump has held to his hallmark "America first" principle during his ongoing election campaign as well. Which means, if Trump wins the election in November, the Lai authorities will face a big change in US policy.

In an interview with the media published five days before Lai's we-are-not-alone bravura on the weekend, Trump said that on taking office again, he would demand Taiwan pay for US protection, and accused the island of taking the chip industry and jobs away from the US. He also dodged the question of whether

he would defend the island should Beijing have to resort to national reunification by force.

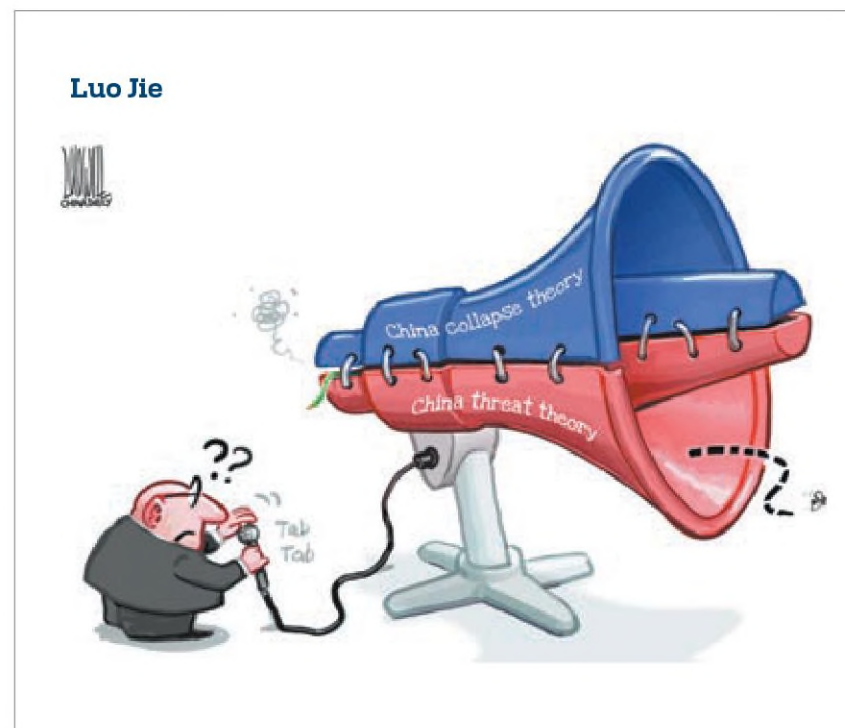
After the Biden administration's frequent playing of the "supporting Taiwan independence card", Trump's words have taken the wind out of the DPP's sails.

Biden had said he would send troops to defend the island. The "pro-independence" forces in Taiwan have always taken the US' protection for granted, bragging the "rock-solid" and "iron-clad" ties with the US as their largest strategic and political assets.

However, Trump has made his point crystal-clear by saying "Taiwan should pay us for defense ... You know, we're no different than an insurance company." That Cho Jung-tai, head of the island's "executive yuan", responded by saying that Taiwan is "willing to take on more responsibility" and would defend itself only serves to expose the Lai authorities' anxiety at the prospect of more conditional US support.

By continuing to stress "values" in his speech, a catchword of the Biden administration in its clique building, Lai showed the DPP is caught in a dilemma, trying to butter its US bread on both sides.

Yet the studied silence his authorities have maintained over Trump's remark in the same interview that "I mean, how stupid are we? They took all of our chip business. They're immensely wealthy", clearly indicates the Taiwan leader's concern that only paying for US protection may not be enough to satisfy its backer.



Opinion Line

Flexible model needed for raising the retirement age

The top authorities have said in a recent resolution issued after a top-level meeting that China will gradually raise the statutory retirement age in a prudent and orderly manner.

As one of the important measures to deal with China's aging society, delaying the retirement age has been an issue of top concern since 2013 when it was first raised. Given that it is closely related to pensions, and also involves the fairness of different groups, the country needs to deal with the issue in a prudent manner. That the top authorities have confirmed the gradual postponement of the statutory retirement age based on a voluntary and flexible approach is regarded as a new top-level consensus reached on this issue.

As pointed out by experts, the "voluntary" principle here shows respect for the individual's work-

ing ability. It means individuals can decide for themselves whether to delay retirement on the basis of their physical, family and working conditions and abilities.

China's statutory retirement age is 60 years for male workers, 55 for female officials and 50 for female laborers, with the average retirement age of people participating in employees' pension insurance being less than 55 years, the youngest in the world. This leaves room for a delayed retirement age in China. However, affected by personal choices, work status, physical conditions and other factors, it is indeed difficult to adopt a "one-size-fits-all" model for retirement age. In this sense, delaying retirement by adhering to the principle of "voluntariness and flexibility" will help ease the anxiety of and resistance from relevant parties, reduce the social shock that may

arise, and achieve a smooth transition from the current to a later retirement age.

Based on the steady growth and improvement of average life expectancy and national health level, as well as the change of demographic structure and technological advances where machines can replace manual labor, the conditions for delaying the retirement age have ripened in China. While guaranteeing the principle of "voluntariness", it is also necessary to establish a supporting incentive mechanism.

Delaying retirement age is not just about pensions, but also a significant issue related to people's livelihoods. While advancing it, the authorities should address the most immediate and realistic issues of people's greatest concern and constantly meet their yearning for a better life.

— BEIJING NEWS

Gun culture continues to kill, but nobody cares

The shoot-out at a party in West Philadelphia on Sunday, in which three people were killed and six others injured, once again shows the danger from firearms in the United States.

Unlike random shootings, the shoot-out in West Philadelphia was triggered by an argument at the party, which then turned violent with people involved pulling out firearms.

The root problem, of course, is the failure of gun control in the US. Because of lax registra-

tion, the total number of guns in the US remains a mystery, but according to ammo.com, an online ammunition seller, which based its numbers on National Instant Criminal Background Check System data, there are 393 million civilian-owned firearms in the US, which is even higher than its population.

In such a society, it is all too easy for a dispute or quarrel to turn into a shoot-out. No one knows how many quarrels could

end up in bloody shoot-outs with so many people in the country carrying firearms.

The number of people killed from gun violence in the US in 2024 so far, according to the Gun Violence Archive website, has reached 9,497, plus 18,233 injuries, as of Monday.

It is time to curb the rampant gun culture in the US, but who knows when those in the US Congress can arrive at such a consensus and take action.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

No first use initiative significant peace move

On Monday, China submitted a working paper on its "No first use of Nuclear Weapons Initiative" to the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons that opened in Geneva on Monday and runs to Aug 2.

China encourages the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council to negotiate and conclude a treaty, agreeing to no first use of nuclear weapons, or to issue a political statement in this regard. This treaty will be conducive to international peace and security and set a positive example for other states, thus helping to create a favorable international environment for further progress in arms control and disarmament.

In the draft elements it pre-

sented as a basis for deliberation, China called on the other four parties to realize that nuclear war would have devastating consequences for all humanity and thus must never be fought, and they should be mindful of the primary responsibilities of the permanent members of the UNSC for the maintenance of world peace and security. It urged them to fully honor their commitment to work for the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of all types of weapons of mass destruction.

They should all undertake not to be the first to use nuclear weapons at any time and under any circumstances, and they should undertake to support the early conclusion of a treaty on not using or threatening to use nuclear weapons against nonnuclear weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones.

China has also proposed that the parties should have the right to withdraw from such a treaty if extraordinary events justify doing so.

China is ready to engage in in-depth discussions on this issue within the five-state framework, and hopes the other parties will demonstrate their willingness to do so.

China adheres to a no first use policy, based on its understanding that there will be no ultimate victor in a nuclear war, which would only bring huge disasters to humanity.

In the current international strategic security situation, China's initiative is a practical step to enhance strategic mutual trust, avoid a dangerous nuclear arms race, effectively reduce strategic risks, and promote global balance and stability.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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COMMENT

Justin Yifu Lin

'Patient capital' boosts new quality productivity

The resolution on further deepening reform, adopted on July 18 at the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, proposed that "we will encourage and regulate the development of angel investment, venture capital, and private equity investment, better leverage the role of government investment funds, and work to promote the development of patient capital." The term "patient capital" has drawn widespread attention.

Patient capital refers to a form of capital that focuses on long-term investments, as opposed to short-term speculative capital. This type of capital seeks long-term returns and usually involves investments in start-ups, infrastructure projects, or projects that take a longer time to yield benefits.

Following the global financial crisis in 2008, the global economy continued to slump. To address the situation, Yan Wang of the World Bank and I published an article in the first issue of the *Journal of Developmental Finance* in 2017, titled "New Structural Economics: Using Patient Capital as a Comparative Advantage".

From the perspective of new structural economics, we pointed out that long-term patient capital investments can clear the economic growth bottlenecks in infrastructure, increase investment demand in the short term to address economic downturns, and enhance the potential and quality of economic growth in the long run. Such investments are beneficial for stabilizing the economy and increasing employment in the short term, and are conducive to high-quality development in the long run.

The idea of using patient capital investments to clear the infrastructure bottlenecks as a response to economic downturns caused by crisis shocks was summarized from China's approach and experience in dealing with the Asian financial crisis in 1997-98. At that time, affected by the Asian financial crisis, China's exports, investments, economic growth and

employment sharply declined.

The government set a goal of "maintaining 8 percent" growth, issued construction bonds, and stabilized growth with large-scale construction of highways. China's economic growth quickly recovered to over 8 percent, and it achieved an average annual growth rate of 11 percent from 2002 to 2008. As the infrastructure bottlenecks were cleared, the increase in the retail price of goods remained at a low inflation level of 1.8 percent during the same period.

Infrastructure projects are characterized by large scale, long cycles, capital intensity and high sunk costs, requiring a long time to complete and generate returns. Just as labor varies due to different levels of human capital, capital, too, is heterogeneous.

In 2017, we proposed the distinction between "patient capital" and "impatient capital". Lenders of patient capital are not interested in short-term arbitrage but are willing to see the borrower achieve higher development in the future, thereby obtaining favorable

returns in the long run. Owners of patient capital, similar to equity investors, are willing to withstand risks and invest in the real economy, innovative projects, infrastructure and unlisted companies or projects for a long term.

The "patient" period refers to 10 years or even longer. Providers of patient capital include (foreign and domestic) direct investors, entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, national pension funds, sovereign wealth funds (such as the Silk Road Fund), multilateral development banks (such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank), some country-specific development banks, green funds, private equity infrastructure funds and long-term government bond purchasers.

In times of global economic crises, China is adept at mobilizing its comparative advantage in patient capital to clear infrastructure bottlenecks and

achieve a win-win situation. China has also provided a large number of overseas loans through the Export-Import Bank of China and the China Development Bank to support the infrastructure construction of countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative and countries in Africa and Latin America.

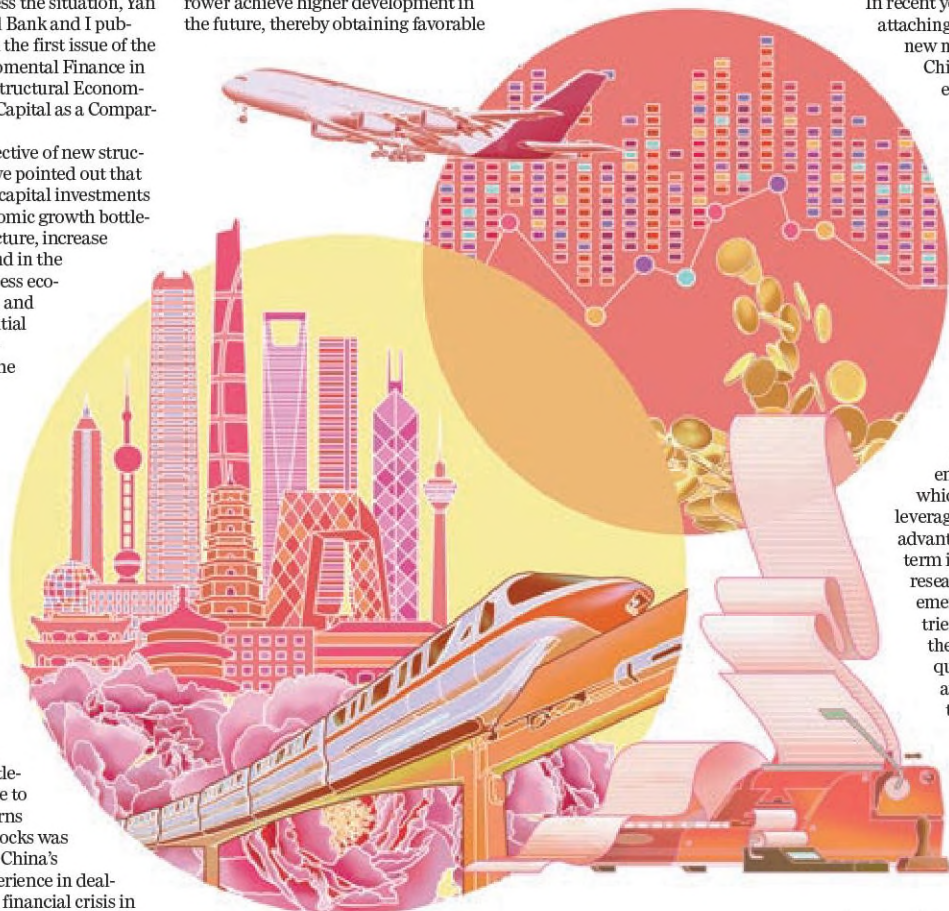
These projects help the recipient countries build infrastructure to clear bottlenecks, develop industrial parks, protect the environment, develop resources, promote economic growth, increase exports, and create jobs. The emergence of new multilateral or regional development banks and funds after 2015, such as the AIIB, New Development Bank and the Silk Road Fund, as well as other unlisted infrastructure or sovereign wealth funds, is very encouraging, as it injects positive energy and momentum into the development of the global economy.

In recent years, China has been attaching great importance to new multilateralism, sharing Chinese wisdom, experience and solutions with the world, which have benefited the global economy. In the accelerated evolution of a century of unprecedented changes, cooperation provides win-win solutions for sustainable development and world peace.

The recent meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee advocated for "strengthening patient capital", which is also beneficial in leveraging China's cultural advantages in valuing long-term investments, increasing research and development in emerging and future industries, providing funds for the development of new quality productive forces, and for green and sustainable development projects, contributing to China's high-quality development.

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JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Liu Xinjun

Intelligent manufacturing driver for technological progress

The resolution on further deepening reform adopted on July 18 at the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China stressed the importance of expansion of advanced manufacturing clusters, saying the manufacturing sector should be made more higher-end, smarter, and more eco-friendly.

In fact, China is emerging as a global player in intelligent manufacturing because of its economic resilience, innovation capabilities, abundant talent pool, comprehensive industry and supply chains, vast market and concentrated efforts to improve the quality of its products.

First, China's huge and growing market demand drives the country's technological progress while continuously injecting new impetus into the economy. China's huge market not only offers unending scopes to apply research results to industry, in order to improve productivity and product quality, it also accelerates the development of new technologies. China's strong domestic consumption capacity and leading role in the global supply chains prompt Chinese enterprises to independently develop their technologies, improve production efficiency and quality, and reduce costs, optimizing and upgrading China's economic structure.

Second, manufacturing, which covers almost all industrial sectors, remains a key driver of China's economic growth and a major stabilizing factor. And the country's comprehensive manufacturing capability provides the base for technological innovation and industrial upgrading, endowing China with unique integra-

tion capabilities and the ability to timely respond to challenging times.

China can quickly access any type of supply chain for its products, including those for high-end products and traditional manufacturing products, demonstrating the efficiency with which the country can realize industrial transformation. Such advantages have helped China to play an important role in the global manufacturing system.

Third, the abundant number of talents in China has helped promote innovation and sharpen its competitive edge in the industrial sector. A large number of high-quality talents in the engineering and technological sectors, nurtured by the country's education system, that enter the job market every year provide the impetus for intelligent manufacturing. China has increased investment in vocational and higher education, focusing on cultivating professional talents for intelligent manufacturing. These talents provide the momentum for China's innovation-driven development.

And fourth, concentrated efforts should be made to achieve technological breakthroughs and high-quality development. In fact, China has made major breakthroughs in fields such as aviation, aerospace, high-speed trains, maritime and nuclear power, advancing manufacturing technology.

China's intelligent manufacturing is progressing well, driven by innovations and high-quality development. This progress has not only helped increase the country's production capacity and reduce production costs and product prices but also promoted the development of related industries as new growth drivers.

Thanks to well-organized scientific research, China's intelligent manufacturing has achieved major breakthroughs in aeronautics. For example, China independently developed the *Tianzhou* series of cargo spacecraft. It has also increased the cargo capacity of the spacecraft, and helped upgrade and optimize the cabin structure.

The manufacturing team at China Academy of Space Technology, in collaboration with Tsinghua University, addressed the core manufacturing technology issues with the support of a program devised by intelligent robots. Plus, the innovation of mobile-hybrid machining robots has helped China to more efficiently manufacture high-quality large components. The independent development of *Tianzhou* manufacturing technology and equipment raised China's global status in high-end manufacturing and competitiveness.

By developing and applying a heavy dye-forging press, China has broken the Western economies' technological blockades in its pursuit of independent R&D in manufacturing, and aeronautical equipment and components such as aircraft landing gear. Local production of high-precision, high-tonnage dye-forging equipment boosted China's competitiveness in high-end manufacturing, significantly advancing core technologies and bolstering intelligent manufacturing, reducing dependence on foreign technologies and promoting independent development.

Thanks to policy support and intensified research, China's intelligent manufacturing is set to reach newer heights. The narrowing gap between China and the West in intelligent

manufacturing such as machines used to manufacture machines means China has huge potential to achieve technological breakthroughs and industrial upgrading. Yet China's intelligent manufacturing needs to shift paths, aiming to make leapfrog achievements through innovation. This is in line with the proposal for the development of new quality productive forces.

In the field of computer numerical control systems and high-end equipment, China has accumulated rich experience and developed high-tech through learning. For example, through technical cooperation with countries such as Germany and Japan, China learned about advanced manufacturing technologies and realized that merely following foreign technologies cannot help China realize healthy, sustained development.

The development of the *Tianzhou* spacecraft and heavy single-cylinder dye-forging press show China's potential in path-shifting development. The *Tianzhou* spacecraft reflects China's independent innovation capability in high-end manufacturing. The heavy single-cylinder dye-forging press indicated that China can achieve breakthroughs in key technologies.

Also, some cases provide valuable experience, which could propel economic development. Innovation in intelligent manufacturing will continue to promote China's technological progress and industrial upgrading.

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Kimihiro Fukuyama

RCEP fostering development in Southeast Asia

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations stands at the center of a dynamic economic tapestry in Asia and Oceania. Flanked by the industrial powerhouses of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, ASEAN has been playing a pivotal role in fostering regional economic integration. The three countries and ASEAN, with the help of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement, are facilitating the economic development of Southeast Asia through trade, investment, technological innovation, and supply chain integration.

ASEAN's journey, starting with five countries — Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand — toward regional integration began in 1967 with a focus on promoting peace and stability. Recognizing the interconnectedness of economic prosperity and regional security, the ASEAN member states embarked on initiatives such as the ASEAN Free Trade Area in 1992. The AFTA was formed to eliminate tariffs on most goods traded among the ASEAN member states, facilitating the movement of products and boosting intra-regional trade by about 222 times by 2016 compared with 1967 levels.

ASEAN now has 10 members, and the AFTA has not only spurred economic growth among them but also created an attractive market for external investors, particularly from the Northeast Asian economic giants.

The economic growth of Japan, ROK and China has been a significant driver of the region's long-term growth and integration. The three countries' robust appetite for raw materials and their position as manufacturing powerhouses have fueled trade with ASEAN. China is ASEAN's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade exceeding \$722 billion, and Japan is the third exceeding \$268 billion after United States' \$420 billion, ROK is the fourth with around \$223 billion in 2022. The United States, incidentally, is ASEAN's second-largest trade partner with a two-way trade volume of \$420 billion.

But ASEAN's economic journey has not been smooth. Indonesia, Malaysia, the ROK and Thailand experienced a serious economic downturn due to the 1997 Asian financial crisis. At that time, Japan played an extremely important role in helping revitalize ASEAN's economy as a whole by pumping in as much as \$30 billion into the ASEAN and ROK economies under the "New Miyazawa Initiative" framework. China, too, played a key role in revitalizing the ASEAN economy by keeping the yuan's exchange rate flat. And Japan and the ROK, with their technological prowess, also played crucial roles in stabilizing the region's economy.

Japanese FDI in ASEAN member states has played a vital role in developing infrastructure, and promoting technological advancements in fields such as electronics and automotive manufacturing. Now ASEAN-made cars are exported to the Middle East, Africa and even Japan. The ROK, too, has invested heavily in the region, particularly in Vietnam, contributing to its emergence as a manufacturing hub. To be sure, these investments have fostered knowledge transfer and upgrading of ASEAN workforce's skills, thereby enhancing the region's competitiveness in the global market. China, too, has invested heavily in ASEAN.

The establishment of the RCEP has further bolstered regional economic integration. This mega trade agreement among all the 10 ASEAN member states and China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand has created a free trade zone encompassing nearly a third of the global population (2.3 billion) and a cumulative GDP of \$26 trillion. And the RCEP has eliminated tariffs on more than 90 percent of goods traded among the 15 signatory economies, thereby helping expand trade and attracting investments.

Besides, the RCEP promotes the harmonization of regulations and standards, simplifying cross-border trade and creating a more predictable business environment. This economic integration has significant implications for the development of Southeast Asian countries, as increased trade flows lead to economies of scale, allowing ASEAN producers to benefit from relatively low production costs and compete more effectively in the global market.

Also, FDI by China, Japan and the ROK provides much-needed capital for infrastructure development, industrialization and job creation in the region, with a 2021 study by the Asian Development Bank estimating that the RCEP could increase signatory countries' incremental income by up to \$514 billion by 2030.

But challenges remain. The gap in development level of ASEAN member states has created disparities in benefits, as less-developed countries struggle to compete with established players such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. In addition, a surge in imports from more advanced economies could threaten the domestic industries of some ASEAN member states. As such, effective policy response is needed to bridge these gaps and ensure inclusive growth.

In conclusion, ASEAN, China, Japan, and the ROK are playing a critical role in shaping the economic landscape of Asia and Oceania. Through trade, investment, technology transfer and supply chain integration, these economies are fostering a dynamic regional economy. The RCEP, with its focus on trade facilitation and harmonization of regulations, is a milestone in the region's economic journey. Moving forward, ensuring equitable distribution of benefits and narrowing the capacity and development gaps among the region's economies remain crucial for maximizing the positive impact of regional economic integration on the development of Asia and Oceania.

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Through trade, investment, technology transfer and supply chain integration, these economies are fostering a dynamic regional economy.

GLOBAL VIEWS

JOSEF GREGORY MAHONEY

Springboard of confidence

Improved governance will ensure 'hard bones' of reform are cracked on time

The overarching theme of the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China was comprehensively deepening reforms. The key signal from the meeting is that the Party is now ready to get down to cracking the hard bones and plumbing the deep waters of structural



reforms that have been addressed to date through piecemeal efforts. These "hard bones" include structural reforms related to the property market, local debt, and the challenges facing small and medium-sized financial institutions, which have been rightly recognized as problems that must be faced to support national security and stability needs. Another key area requiring structural reform noted in the communique is finding the right mix of policies so that State-owned enterprises and private enterprises can complement each other with their relative strengths without competing with each other for finance, talent and profits.

While the communique offers broad insights and directions that touch on nearly every facet of China's political economy and national well-being, there are five that deserve close attention. First, the dialectical relationship of reform with opening-up has now been inverted in some respects. When reform and opening-up began decades ago, China promoted openness through reform. That is first reforming and improving itself and then welcoming foreign investment and trade. Today, however, China is promoting reform through openness, testing itself in the global economy, facing the growing headwinds, identifying strengths and weaknesses, addressing them, and moving forward.

Second, the communique emphasizes lifting restrictions on the market while still ensuring effective regulation. For some, this will seem like a contradiction; but openly acknowledging and managing this contradiction is the key to understanding China's socialist market economy. Consequently, the market will play the key role, but as China has learned from its own experiences

and that of others, it's also vitally necessary to employ effective macro controls to ensure the overall well-being of society, especially in times of crises.

Third, there has long been a debate regarding the fate of SOEs, and for the time being, that debate has been answered. On the one hand, it's well-understood that some SOEs suffer from inefficiencies. On the other hand, during times of adversity, SOEs are a vital source of micro and macro-economic stability. Furthermore, public ownership remains a cornerstone of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

The communique states two "unwavering principles": First, unwaveringly consolidating and developing the public sector; and second, unwaveringly encouraging, supporting and guiding the development of the private sector. These two different sectors will be encouraged to complement each other, to use their respective strengths to compensate for their respective weaknesses.

Fourth, some economists have stressed that consolidating the post-pandemic economic recovery and moving forward requires demand-side policies, and some have fretted over a lack of these being mentioned in the communique. It's true that the document focuses on supply-side solutions, but there are two points to keep in mind. First, supply-side solutions in China should not be equated with the typical supply-side policies one finds in the West, which tend to focus on tax breaks for wealthy people and corporations with the theory that this will trickle down and improve the overall economy. The second point is that in China's case, where SOEs play such a large role and where government policies will aim to make significant reforms of both SOEs and other structural issues, supply-side reforms are more about getting the economic fundamentals right, so that real and sustainable economic growth can follow, thereby creating more jobs, higher-paying jobs, and therefore increasing consumer confidence and disposable incomes, as well as putting downward pressure on high rates of savings which tend to restrict domestic-led economic growth. In short, one doesn't want to throw good money after bad or simply encourage more sav-



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

ings, nor does one want to encourage unaffordable entitlements or a government bailout mentality, both of which would stymie responsible economic decision-making and lead to mountains of government debt, as has happened in countries such as the United States. That said, the communique makes it clear that the government should ensure economic growth targets are met this year, and one implication here is that might eventually require some demand-side stimulus, which is neither promised nor forbidden.

Fifth, the communique notes a new date, 2029, which corresponds with the 80th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, which is the deadline for when the reform tasks identified in the communique are expected to be completed. This is in fact an ambitious date, one that will now require annual progress reports from the government. This date is critical because it sets the foundation for the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) and keeps China on track to achieve the goals slated for 2035, which in turn are the necessary stepping stones for realizing the second century goal of 2049, on the 100th anniversary

of the nation's founding.

A final two points in conclusion, another two "keys" for understanding the communique. One has already been mentioned in part, namely, if you want to understand Chinese development and strategic planning, then you must understand the unique way that Chinese Marxists understand dialectical and historical materialism. We consistently see Chinese policymakers working through differences in order to mitigate their harmful effects or to encourage important synergies. This is the key to understanding the development and reform of China's socialist market economy, to how it develops and expands free trade zones, how it formulates policies such as "one country, two systems", and how it approaches international affairs, to name only a few examples, and it is a key for understanding the reform agenda expressed in this communique as well.

The other is the "spirit" of confidence. Despite the challenges, there is absolute confidence in China's political leadership, in the CPC and in President Xi Jinping. There's absolute confidence in Chinese culture and

Chinese Marxism. There's absolute confidence in China's modernization path. There's absolute confidence that reforms can improve governance and address various challenges and effectively exploit and develop new opportunities. There's absolute confidence that China can help foster an ecological civilization at home and abroad. There's absolute confidence that China can help build a shared future for humanity by playing a leading role in building an equitable multilateral system, one that emphasizes common ground while reserving differences, to make possible peace, security and development.

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YU MIAOJIE

The myth of 'China's overcapacity'

Imposition of anti-dumping tariffs on Chinese green goods will not boost corresponding US industries

Some US economists and politicians have claimed that China has an overcapacity problem, and that the United States must adopt anti-dumping policies because China is dumping its excess capacity into the US. As a result, the Joe Biden administration has recently announced new tariff rates on \$18 billion worth of Chinese imports — a 100 percent tariff on Chinese electric vehicle imports, a 50 percent tariff on Chinese solar cells, and a 25 percent tariff on certain Chinese steel and aluminum imports.



This overcapacity allegation is unfounded. It is critical that the erroneous thinking of "industrial subsidies lead to overcapacity and overcapacity leads to dumping" should be corrected.

Whether or not there is overcapacity in China depends on how overcapacity is measured. If overcapacity is defined as the difference between potential and actual production, there is overcapacity in China to some extent. However, there is a fundamental difference between the overcapacity referred to by China and the dumping due to overcapacity claimed by the US.

Overcapacity is a common problem in global economic development. According to our calculations, China's capacity utilization rate is within the so-called reasonable range, on par with that of the European Union, the US, Brazil and other economies.

The root cause of the current overcapacity in China is the lack of effective demand in the global market. To address this problem, the government is working to build a unified national market to effectively alleviate the pressure caused by a lack of effective demand in the world.

Take China's "new three" exports — electric vehicles, lithium batteries and solar cells as an example. Even if China does not export the "new three" products, the US will not be able to export them to seize the market. The reason is not that the US does not have subsidies, but that the US does not have a whole industry chain to support their production. In other words, China's

"new three" products are not winning in the market because of subsidies.

When judging whether subsidies have an impact on exports, the criterion should be whether China's industrial subsidies comply with World Trade Organization rules. Currently, China's industrial subsidies are mainly subsidies for R&D, which are aimed at incentivizing technological innovation and do not belong to the WTO's prohibited (red light) subsidy category. Furthermore, the beneficiaries of the subsidies cover enterprises with different ownership structures including State-owned enterprises, private

enterprises, and foreign-funded enterprises. China has strong export power, with a total foreign trade volume of around 41 trillion yuan (\$5.6 trillion) and the largest export volume in the world. China's strong capabilities in exports are first and foremost because of the comparative advantage of Chinese goods, which are cheaper than others and highly competitive. Second, China has made good use of a large and ever-expanding international market. Comparative advantage can explain the difference between the Global South and the Global North. Exporting labor-intensive

products is because of China's lower labor costs. But comparative advantage is not the whole story.

The strength of Chinese exports stems from stepped-up economies of scale. That is to say, when exporters make the market bigger and lower the fixed costs of companies, they can sell more and earn more. So it's not because of Chinese subsidies. In other words, even industries that are not subsidized at all in China can export a lot to other countries, which is a strong rebuttal to the "overcapacity" allegation. The US' so-called overcapacity allega-

tions and the anti-dumping measures taken by the US have insufficient evidence and unjustified intensity.

First, there is insufficient evidence. Chinese automobiles have not caused substantial harm to the US' domestic automobile industry. Chinese exports of new energy vehicles to the US accounted for a meager 1 percent of total US auto sales, a proportion that is certainly not sufficient to cause substantial harm to the US domestic auto industry. In fact, the challenges facing the US auto industry stem mainly from the hollowing out of US industry and the incomplete value chain, which constrain the development of its auto industry, rather than simply because of competition with cars imported from China.

Second, the intensity of anti-dumping measures is unreasonable. The average tax rate of the US is around 37 percent. Defining China as a non-market economy and charging anti-dumping duties of up to 100 percent on new energy automobiles imported from China is obviously highly unreasonable.

China should deal with anti-dumping measures taken by the US by vigorously developing a unified domestic market.

Cultivating new quality productive forces and eliminating backward ones is obviously one direction. Another direction is to actively cultivate a large domestic market. Among the three main drivers of economic growth, investment is certainly the most objective and practical way to boost the economy in the short run. Given the current global environment, exports are not the main driver of economic growth. Using domestic consumption to drive economic growth is certainly desirable, but consumption is insufficient at present. Fostering consumption takes time. Without income growth, it's impossible to boost consumption. Therefore, the most effective way to boost growth in the short run is to stimulate investment.

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JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

LIFE

All about Gen Z



Tale of power and redemption

In *The Princess Royal*, a Chinese princess is given a second chance at life to rewrite her destiny, captivating audiences with its blend of power struggles, romance, and Eastern aesthetics.

By WANG XINGWEI
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"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

This famous line from William Shakespeare's play *Henry IV* is often used to describe the burdens and difficulties of leadership. The same is true of a Chinese princess.

Following the story of a princess and her consort in a fictional dynasty, where a miracle gives them a second chance at life, the Chinese costume drama *The Princess Royal* has dominated social media discussions since its debut on the Chinese streaming platform Youku in June.

Hashtags related to the drama have garnered more than 2 billion views on Sina Weibo, a social media platform that tracks popularity levels in China. The drama has also extended its reach to international markets and is currently available on overseas platforms, including Netflix and Viki, resonating with viewers across over 190 countries and regions.

"This is undoubtedly a must-watch drama. Can't get enough of it," commented a netizen overseas.

So, how has *The Princess Royal* captured the hearts of today's global audience?

The drama is an adaptation of a popular web novel by Moshubai (pseudonym), which has already been translated and published in Thailand, Vietnam, and other countries. The twisting storyline revolves around Li Rong, a princess of a royal family who wants to fight for power and change her destiny.

Like many princesses in real history, Li is forced into an arranged marriage with her consort, Pei Wenxuan, for political reasons. After living with resentment caused by misunderstandings for two decades, they were both killed in a palace intrigue involving a power struggle for the throne.

However, death is not the end of their lives but the start of a new journey.

A miracle occurs, rewinding the clock to the time when Li and Pei first met, but with the memories of their past lives. Armed with the knowledge of her future, Li is determined to rewrite her destiny and get to the bottom of a series of royal conspiracies.

According to Moshubai, when depicting this fictional dynasty, she drew on various social phenomena from the Wei, Jin, and Southern and Northern Dynasties (220-589) as well as the Tang Dynasty (618-907), including the ancient Chinese imperial examination system and the conflict between noble houses and commoners in the court.

Yet, in this series, it is not a male-dominated game. "In this fantasy world that emphasizes descent rather than gender, the political arena is open to a blue-blooded

woman with talent," said Moshubai.

For instance, in the final episode released yesterday, Li finally wins in the palace mutiny and governs the country as Regent Princess Royal, achieving her political aspiration to create a fairer, more merit-based society.

Apart from the unstable power dynamics in the palace court, another highlight in the drama that has resonated with audiences is the depiction of exquisite emotions within the context of Eastern aesthetics.

In the eyes of Yuan Yumei, chief executive producer of the drama, the essence of the story is something we've all fantasized about: if you could wake up one day as your younger self from 20 years ago, how would you relive your life?

Yuan explained that the Chinese name of the drama, *Du Hua Nian*, comes from a verse by Tang Dynasty poet Li Shangyin (813-858): "Why should the sad zither have fifty strings? Each string, each strain evokes but vanished springs."

"The poet reflected on his youth in this verse, and I hope everyone can live every day to the fullest with their beloved ones," Yuan said.

This poetic quality, which permeates almost every aspect of the drama, also enhances the mood among the characters.

"I was really impressed by the scene where Li and Pei gazed at each other in a bustling night market fair," said Moshubai, noting that the numerous historical replicas used as props emphasize the varied stages of antique beauty, allowing the scene to capture the charm of ancient China and the essence of youthful romance.

However, the portrayal of every subtle nuance of emotion has increased the demand on actors.

"It is a bit challenging to portray an 18-year-old girl with a 38-year-old soul," said actress Zhao Jinmai, who plays Li in the drama.

In Zhao's view, the princess is mentally trapped in the past in her second life, hoping to correct many mistakes from her youth. As she revisits these regretful moments, she continues to uncover new insights.

"Many people would say that if they had a second chance in life, they might choose differently. But after filming *The Princess Royal*, I believe Princess Li Rong has already made the best decisions for herself in both of her lives," said Zhao, adding that making the best choices in the present is what truly matters.

Although the emotional entanglements between Li and Pei span two lifetimes, love is not the entirety of Li's existence.

Unlike the stereotypical image of a princess, Li is intelligent and self-reliant, able to stand on her own. She consistently gains the upper hand in power struggles and ultimately

propels her career to new heights.

"I really like one of Li's lines: 'I don't like to leave my fate in the hands of others; I want to control my destiny,'" said Zhao, adding that Li hopes to use her power to protect more innocents.

According to Moshubai, Li is a typical Confucian leader, who is dedicated to benefiting all people.

"For Li, being a princess means not great dignity but great responsibility," she said.

Yuan believes that the Confucian values portrayed in the drama could provide an ethical foundation for universal principles. She also noted the drama's potential to reach audiences far beyond Asia.

"The drama is rooted in Eastern culture, but its story is global," she said.



Zhao Jinmai stars as Princess Li Rong in the Chinese costume drama *The Princess Royal*. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

LIFE

Explore China's sacred peak

International students from around the world visit Mount Tai, uncovering its historical significance, spiritual symbolism, and cultural impact while connecting with China's rich heritage.



Clockwise from top left: Olivia Sabine Schubert (left) from Germany and Joyce Kagan (right) from the US explore China's traditional rubbing techniques. Mikhail Milko from Russia poses in front of an inscription at Mount Tai. Abalfazl Delkhasteh (front) from Iran practices handling shadow puppets. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



By MENG WENJIE
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Among China's Five Great Mountains — Mount Tai in Shandong, Mount Hua in Shaanxi, Mount Song in Henan, Mount Heng in Shanxi, and Mount Heng in Hunan — Mount Tai is widely recognized as the most prominent of these renowned elevations.

The reasons for this reputation have long fascinated Mikhail Milko, a 23-year-old student from Russia studying at Peking University.

Driven by curiosity, Milko traveled to Tai'an in Shandong, the location of Mount Tai, where he joined 10 other young people from around the world for a three-day visit to the city from July 16 to 18.

During a conversation with a guide on Mount Tai, Milko finally unveiled the mountain's significance.

As the highest point in the eastern plains of the Yellow River basin — a region historically important to generations of Chinese people — Mount Tai has served as a refuge during natural disasters such as floods. Also, in ancient Chinese beliefs, climbing Mount Tai symbolized a spiritual connection to ancestors and celestial beings.

Particularly remarkable is the tradition of Chinese emperors performing sacrificial ceremonies on the mountain, a practice dating back to China's first emperor Qin Shi Huang (259-210 BC), which has enriched it with cultural value associated with blessings and aspirations.

Abalfazl Delkhasteh, a 29-year-old Iranian student at Tsinghua University, recalled seeing an image of Mount Tai on page 26 of a Chinese passport. This personal experience made his impression of the mountain more vivid. "The breathtaking views and the unique integration of Chinese culture have left a lasting impact on me," he said.

Tang Sinan, a 22-year-old Chinese student at Jinan University in Shandong, noticed something interesting during his interactions with young people from other countries. He found that while many foreign tourists recognized Chinese calligraphy as an art form, they had only a general knowledge of it and couldn't fully appreciate its charm.

However, on Mount Tai, they saw inscriptions left by emperors and lit-

erati from different eras on the rocks, each exhibiting a unique style.

"These calligraphic pieces, aged by time, allowed us to witness the elegance of Chinese calligraphy directly," Tang said.

For Olivia Sabine Schubert, a 22-year-old German student at Sun Yat-sen University in Shanghai, the natural beauty of Mount Tai reminded her of her homeland in southern Germany, where mountains also hold a special significance in local literature and poetry, often symbolizing vitality, strength, and endurance.

The trip allowed her to see that this deep admiration for the wonders of nature, particularly peaks, is not unique to Germany but is a sentiment shared globally.

"In living nature, nothing happens that is not in connection with a whole," quoting the words of the famous German author Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), Schubert expressed her surprise at

discovering cultural connections between China and Germany.

"These experiences not only enrich our lives but also foster a sense of interconnected humanity, and at the same time nurture mutual respect," she said.

Maria Regina De Jesus Dominga Uriarte Huang, a 22-year-old US student at Sun Yat-sen University in South China's Guangdong province, was inspired by the Chinese visitors she met at Mount Tai. Among them were an elderly man who had climbed the mountain multiple times and was now accompanied by his grandchildren, and a group of students preparing for exams, who came with their best wishes.

"This made me feel the spirit of Mount Tai and the transmission of its culture," she said.

The legacy of Mount Tai extends beyond the mountain itself and impacts generations in Tai'an city, as seen in the preservation of Taishan shadow puppetry.

As a national intangible cultural heritage of China, Taishan shadow

puppetry boasts a history of over 600 years. It distinguishes itself from other shadow puppetry schools through its unique feature of a single performer managing the puppets while also delivering musical accompaniment, singing, and narrating the tales.

Fan Zheng'an, a seasoned master artist in his 80s, stands as the guardian of this time-honored art, having devoted decades to its preservation and promotion.

When Fan's show began, all the young guests were immediately captivated. "While our foreign friends might not grasp the dialogue, the visual and auditory aesthetics enabled this art to transcend language boundaries and resonate with them," Tang said.

"I think it's magical," said Uriarte Huang, admiring how Master Fan managed the entire show by himself, acting as a complete band. "He controlled the music with his feet, sang the storyline, and maneuvered the complex characters with both hands."

Before this trip, Delkhasteh had a basic understanding of shadow

puppetry from the cultural programs he attended during his Chinese studies in Iran. However, Fan's show completely surpassed his expectations.

"When I tried to handle the puppets backstage myself, I realized the incredible skill and years of practice required to master this art," he said. "I learned that only a handful of people are capable of performing this art, with two of them being Master Fan's son and grandson."

Ting Hui Ng, a 21-year-old Malaysian student at Fudan University in Shanghai, noted that Malaysia also embraces a similar art form known as Wayang Kulit. Unlike the solo performance of Taishan shadow puppetry, Malaysian shadow puppetry involves several performers. However, they both recount mythical tales from ancient times within their respective cultures.

"I'm from a country closer to China, so I might have missed certain cultural aspects, but participating in such activities with people from diverse backgrounds allows me to look at China in a new light, which is great for painting a full picture of the country," said Ng.

YOUTHFUL INSIGHTS

The attempted assassination of former US president Donald Trump on July 14, along with the killing of bystander Corey Comperatore, has once again brought the discussion of gun violence in the US to the forefront.

Gun violence is an unavoidable reality in American society. As an American living overseas, I often find myself explaining the seemingly inexcusable behavior of my home country.

To outsiders, the solution seems simple: ban all, or at least the most dangerous, guns. However, it is difficult for them to see the existential crisis that comes with gun control for many Americans.



Susan St. Denis

The issue is not as black and white as some would like to paint it.

The Second Amendment to the US Constitution reads, "A well-regulated Militia,

being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

This amendment was born from the inherent distrust that citizens in the then Thirteen Colonies had toward the centralized military power of the British militia. The experience of being a colony birthed a still ongoing struggle regarding just how much power the federal government should possess.

This is where one can find the origins of the conservative view on gun control. However, it's not just conservative pro-gun Americans who oppose gun control policies; many on the left also resist such measures due to concerns about state violence against minorities.

Slavery wasn't abolished in the US until 1865. For Black people and other minority groups, the right to bear arms provides an avenue through which they can protect themselves from institutions with a history rooted in racism and white supremacy.

These are the public perspectives that contribute to the partisan stalemate in America over gun violence issues. But one cannot discuss gun violence in America without also addressing the capitalist interests of the industry surrounding it.

While gun violence kills over 40,000 people each year, the gun industry in America enjoys around \$9 billion in profits annually. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, gun sales hit record levels.

In 2022, the House Committee on Oversight investigated major gun manufacturers who, in the past decade, have made over \$1 billion selling military-style assault weapons. At a hearing the committee held on July 27, 2022, the leaders of these corporations denied responsibility, despite acknowledging using underhanded marketing tactics, such as presenting guns as a way to prove "masculinity."

For gun makers, as is true for most, if not all, capitalist industries, profits will always come before people. There are powerful gun lobby groups, such as the

famously anti-gun control National Rifle Association (NRA) and the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF), that have invested millions of dollars into American politics to protect the interests of these manufacturers and prevent the passage of significant gun control policies.

My intention in presenting these perspectives is to show those outside of the US just how challenging the fight to end gun violence truly is.

For us Americans, it questions the very institutions upon which our country was built. It is a fight about identity, racism, and capitalism, and such a fight is rarely resolved quickly.

To be fair, steps have been taken, such as the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act signed into law on June 25, 2022, strengthening background checks for firearm

purchasers under 21. However, much more needs to be done. In a country where guns outnumber people (120.5 guns for every 100 residents), this task is daunting.

Gun violence in America will not be solved through one law; it requires systemic change and strengthened community ties. Americans need to reassess their history and who they are to come together and solve the problem of gun violence.

Written by Susan St. Denis, a 26-year-old American living in China, studying her second master's in Chinese Politics and Foreign Policy at Tsinghua University. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication from the University of North Florida and a master's in Chinese Studies from Florida International University.

LIFE



Elevating the guzheng's legacy

Ji Wei, a renowned *guzheng* artist, enhances the traditional Chinese instrument's appeal and global presence through cultural outreach.

By LI XINRAN
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On July 21, Ji Wei, a *guzheng* artist and the deputy director of the Department of Traditional Chinese Music at the Central Conservatory of Music, led a performance with a group of young musicians in a *guzheng* ensemble concert at the National Library Arts Center in Beijing.

Ji's journey with the *guzheng*, a Chinese zither, began at the age of five. As she immersed herself in the instrument, she came to appreciate its cultural richness and diverse charm over the years.

"The sound of the *guzheng* can convey both melancholic and cheerful emotions: its lower range exudes solemn and dignified music, its middle range displays great tenderness, and its high notes can be incredibly majestic," Ji explained.

For decades, Ji has been an ambassador for the *guzheng* on the international stage, performing at prestigious venues such as the Lincoln Center in the US, the Golden Hall of Vienna in Austria, the Sydney Opera House in Australia, and the Royal Albert Hall in the UK.

"When I first started performing overseas, many Western audiences would ask me if I was playing the koto, a Japanese plucked string instrument," Ji

recalled. "It was then that I realized I had a huge responsibility to help more people learn about the *guzheng*, this remarkable traditional Chinese instrument."

Whenever Ji performs, she often shares a brief history of the *guzheng*. For instance, it was originally known simply as the *zheng* when it first appeared during the Warring States Period (475-221 BC), and the prefix "gu" was added later to mean "ancient" in Chinese.

She also emphasizes that music can sometimes speak louder than words.

"Every performance is like a direct conversation between the performer and the audience," she said. "When I performed overseas, the audience responded enthusiastically and showed great respect for our culture, which fostered further cultural exchange and collaboration."

For several years, Ji participated in a special workshop hosted by the Royal Conservatoire The Hague in the Netherlands. Each year, musicians from around the world would gather in the Netherlands for two months, learning about each other's music and instruments and ultimately creating new music together.

"It was an open and friendly environment for exchange, and all the participants were professionals in the music industry. For the public, however, it takes



Top: Ji Wei (front center) performs at the National Library Arts Center on July 21. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

longer to learn about and understand our music and culture," said Ji.

Ji acknowledged that promoting the *guzheng* both domestic-

ly and internationally requires more than her individual efforts. However, she observed that over the past 30 years, the number of people learning the *guzheng* —

both professionally and recreationally — has increased significantly.

"I believe the *guzheng* is the most popular traditional Chinese instrument, with millions of people learning it," she said.

Ji explained that one key reason for this popularity is the *guzheng*'s beginner-friendly nature.

"Instruments like the *erhu* and violin require a bow and it takes a long time to produce a decent sound. With the *guzheng*, you get the right pitch and a pleasing sound right away as you pluck the strings. This makes it easier for beginners to stick with it," she said.

Ji also mentioned that the *guzheng*'s therapeutic effects might contribute to its growing appeal in today's world.

"With many people struggling with anxiety and possibly depression, music therapy has become more popular," Ji said. "Traditional music, like that of the *guzheng*, can have a calming effect on the mind."

Cultural confidence also plays a crucial role in this change, according to Ji.

"More people in China are embracing traditional Chinese culture because it resonates with our aesthetic values," Ji said. "The *guzheng* is a powerful symbol of our heritage and culture; it can be seen frequently at national events and international performances."

Recently, a growing number of Generation Z individuals have been promoting traditional Chinese music by playing instruments like the *guzheng* and *pipa*, either on the streets of foreign countries or on social media platforms. They often wear traditional Chinese *hanfu* while performing pop music pieces, both Chinese and Western.

Ji is delighted to see young people using traditional music to express themselves and blending the dynamic sound of the *guzheng* with pop culture.

"After all, it's unrealistic for Gen Zers to instantly fall in love with music from a thousand years ago," she said. "This kind of creative promotion offers a fresh approach to popularizing traditional instruments and bridges the gap between history and youth."

However, Ji noted that this is just the beginning. "As more people become familiar with the *guzheng* and develop an interest, it's important for them to also understand the cultural heritage behind it in order to truly appreciate and preserve it."



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Overseas Report

Calligraphy connects China and Zimbabwe

At the "I Am Mbare" community school near the slums of Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe, over 30 children sat in neat rows in the small schoolyard. Their eyes were wide with curiosity as I unrolled my calligraphy work, displaying the Chinese characters "sheng sheng bu xi" — which literally translates to "live, live, never stop" — as my encouragement for the kids to grow and thrive.

I read the words aloud and explained their meaning. I was impressed as the children excitedly tried to imitate me, showing their interest in my calligraphy and the Chinese language. The small yard was filled with their enthusiasm.

This happened during a field trip I took from July 1 to 9 as part of the Tsinghua University Global Competency Overseas Practicum Course. The course sent four teams to various countries as part of a summer program in 2024, and I was selected as a member of the team visiting Zimbabwe.

This small-scale, in-depth, hands-on course aims to cultivate students with a global vision and a Chinese stance, facilitating future people-to-

people connections.

During my time in Zimbabwe, I was pleasantly surprised to discover that my calligraphy talents played a significant role in cultural exchanges.

One of the highlights was the First Harare Forum for Africa-Rural Development Cooperation and China-Zimbabwe Civilizational Dialogue Academic Week, held on July 8.

At the beginning of the forum, we engaged in a series of activities with local artists. While my fellow team members sang *Welcome to Beijing*, I created four calligraphy pieces, one of which read "Sino-Zimbabwean friendship lasts forever". I presented these pieces on stage at the end of the song, receiving an enthusiastic response.

In addition to my performance at the forum, I dedicated time each evening in my hotel room to create calligraphy tailored for the people we were to visit the next day.

For example, I wrote "sheng sheng bu xi" again for artists from the Mbare Art Space and a popular local musical group called Fusion 5 Mangwiro. This time, however, I

changed the first "sheng", meaning life, to a different character also pronounced "sheng", meaning voice, creating a homophonic effect.

My efforts were well-received, as the Zimbabweans' initial surprise at my calligraphy turned into delight, recognition, and gratitude after I explained the meanings to them. This gave me a profound sense of accomplishment and firsthand experience in cultural exchanges.

As Napoleon Nyanhi, director of the National Arts Council Zimbabwe, stated in his keynote speech at the forum: "When it comes to mutual respect, it's important that we put the arts first because the arts can help us develop affinity."

He believes that storytelling through artworks fosters curiosity about each other's cultures, which boosts understanding and cooperation between nations.

I empathized with his words, as I will never forget when the principal of Tafara 5 Primary School received my calligraphy work and asked about the brushes I use and where he could learn the art form. I introduced him to the Confucius Insti-

tute, and he, in turn, introduced me to the Zimbabwean education system. Conversations like these, sparked by calligraphy, made me realize the infinite possibilities that curiosity can open up for people.

My fellow team member Jiang Yifan, an undergraduate majoring in philosophy, politics, and economics, shared his reflections after the forum.

"It is only when we set foot in a foreign land that we realize the significance of our own culture. To truly promote it, we need a realistic means of expression, be it art, literature, or craft," he said. "After appreciating the calligraphy today, I feel I should explore my roots to better understand who I am and where I am going."

This experience in Zimbabwe has made me realize the power of art to bridge differences. These valuable connections will stay with me, inspiring me to continue sharing Chinese culture while remaining open to others. As I return to Tsinghua, I carry with me not just cherished memories but also a renewed sense of purpose and a deeper



Dou Yuchen (center) presents her calligraphy to Fusion 5 Mangwiro members at the China-Zimbabwe Exchange Center in Harare, Zimbabwe, on July 9. ZHAO YUCHEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

understanding of the importance of mutual respect and curiosity in fostering global friendships.

Written by Dou Yuchen, 20, a sophomore majoring in philosophy at Rivin College, Tsinghua University.