

A day for pandas

San Diego Zoo visitors warmly greet Yun Chuan and Xin Bao

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Restored glory

Temple in Shanxi province gets a new lease of life

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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 FRIDAY, AUGUST 9, 2024

Gold rush at the Olympics



Luo Shifang reacts on Thursday during the women's 59kg weightlifting event at Paris 2024. Luo went on to win gold. YANG LEI / XINHUA



Members of Team China (above), gold winners of the artistic swimming event at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, pose on the podium with silver winning Team USA (left) and bronze winning Team Spain during Wednesday's award ceremony. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY See more, page 4



Gold medallist Xie Siyi celebrates after winning the men's 3m springboard diving title at the Paris Olympics on Thursday. MANAN VATSAYANA / AFP



Hou Zhihui shouts out during the women's 49kg weightlifting event at the Paris Olympics on Wednesday. Hou claimed gold, setting an Olympic record in the clean-and-jerk category. YANG LEI / XINHUA



Liu Hao (left) and Ji Bowen celebrate after winning the men's canoe double 500m gold medal at the Vaires-sur-Marne Nautical Stadium during the Paris Olympics on Thursday. OLIVIER MORIN / AFP

China seeks investigation into US doping cover-up

By CUI JIA
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China's anti-doping watchdog has called for an independent investigation into the United States Anti-Doping Agency's cover-up of drug rule violations after the international governing body for clean sports accused the USADA of serious breach of the global anti-doping code.

In a statement released on Wednesday, the World Anti-Doping Agency revealed that since 2011, there have been at least three cases where US athletes who had violated anti-doping rules were exonerated by the USADA and allowed to keep competing in exchange for acting as "undercover agents" and gathering information on other doping offenders.

WADA said it had never signed off on such an arrangement and wasn't aware of the USADA's practice until 2021. It instructed the USADA to immediately revoke the arrangement, WADA said.

In one of the cases, an elite-level athlete who competed in an Olympic qualifier and international events in the US admitted to taking steroids and erythropoietin enhancing drugs,

but was still allowed to continue competing until retirement.

The case was never published, the results never disqualified, the prize money never returned, and no suspension ever served, WADA said, adding that it is hypocritical on part of the USADA to accuse other anti-doping organizations of not following the rules.

On Thursday afternoon, the China Anti-Doping Agency released a statement saying the USADA's practice blatantly mocks the principle of fair play in sports, severely damages the rights and interests of clean athletes, and shows a serious lack of transparency in the USADA's anti-doping work.

Not prosecuting doping offenders in exchange for information is, in effect, a cover-up of anti-doping rule violations by the USADA, the Chinese agency said, calling for an independent probe and seeking full disclosure of relevant cases.

It was the third statement issued by China's anti-doping watchdog this week, urging the US to drop its double standards when dealing



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with cases involving its own athletes and those from other countries.

Earlier on Thursday, CHINADA called on the International Testing Agency to intensify its monitoring of US athletes, especially those competing in track and field events, and rebuild global trust, while citing the case of Olympic sprinting star Erriyon Knighton who tested positive for trenbolone, a banned performance enhancing steroid, during an out-of-competition test in March.

Knighton, 20, was unilaterally exonerated by the USADA and allowed to represent the US at the Paris Olympics. He became a finalist for the men's 200m race after topping the third semifinal heat on Wednesday with a time of 20.09 seconds.

In a statement released on Thursday morning, China's anti-doping watchdog said the case has been widely reported by the media at home and abroad, which prompted the USADA to issue a public statement claiming that trenbolone is a common contaminant in the US. Hundreds of positive tests for

trenbolone have taken place worldwide in recent years, but only US athletes have escaped sanctions based on the USADA's investigative findings and claims of meat contamination, the Chinese agency said.

However, while Knighton tested positive for trenbolone, the USADA decided that no ineligibility would be imposed on him, saying the positive result was caused by the consumption of contaminated meat, CHINADA said in a statement issued on Tuesday.

Knighton's case has once again put doping incidents in the US in the spotlight. Given the USADA's repeated disregard for procedures and standards, there is reason to suspect that the doping problem in US athletics is systemic, and therefore the positive cases need continuous investigation and monitoring, CHINADA said in Thursday's statement.

It strongly urged the ITA to intensify its testing of US track and field athletes and called on the Athletics Integrity Unit to strengthen its anti-doping supervision, in order to protect the legitimate rights and interests of athletes who compete fairly and rebuild the trust in athletes worldwide.

CHINESE-BORN ATHLETES FLY THE FLAG FOR ADOPTED COUNTRIES

Overwhelmed by talent at home, some competitors are getting second shot at Olympic dream

By SUN XIAOCHEN in Paris
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If it weren't for the different flags sewn on the athletes' uniforms, some early-round table tennis matches at the Paris Olympics could have been mistaken for a national championship in China.



The women's singles match between China's 23-year-old Sun Yingsha, the top seed and world No 1, and Luxembourg's Ni Xialian, 61,

left the crowd marveling at the huge gap between the two players.

Both athletes speak Mandarin and were born in China, and developed their table tennis skills under the Chinese training system, which has seen the country dominate the sport.

Despite a straight-sets loss to Sun in the round of 32 on July 31, Ni

etched her name in table tennis history. She is the first woman to have competed in table tennis at six Olympic Games and the oldest to win a match after she defeated Sibel Altinkaya of Turkey in the opening round on July 27.

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DRIVING REFORM

Policies push for improving full life-cycle services

Landmark meeting sets out measures for high-quality demographic development

By WANG XIAOYU
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China plans to redouble its efforts in improving the quality of human resources and boosting the provision of childcare and basic elderly care services to promote its high-quality demographic development, according to a key policy document and experts.

Declining birthrates and a rapidly aging society are defining features of China's demography, according to a resolution adopted last month by the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China.

Cai Fang, chief expert of the National High-end Think Tank, a division of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said that in 2022, China's total population began declining and the proportion of people age 65 and above exceeded 14 percent — a sign of entering a moderately aged society.

Last year, the nation's total population fell by 0.148 percent year-on-year and the proportion of seniors further rose to 15.4 percent.

"The document's call for instituting a system to provide full life-cycle population services and advance high-quality population development is aimed at adjusting to these emerging demographic features," he said.

A "full-cycle" system should encompass all aspects of livelihood, from marriage and childcare to employment, medical services and housing, and should take all age groups into consideration, Cai said in an article explaining the document.

Li Tongping, an economics and demography professor at China University of Geosciences in Wuhan, Hubei province, said that the rising education and health levels of Chinese people in recent decades have laid a solid foundation for further upgrading human resources quality.

Official data shows that the gross enrollment rate for China's nine-year compulsory education has reached 95.7 percent, and the enrollment rate for high schools has risen to 91.8 percent. The gross university enrollment rate has exceeded 60 percent.

"The average life expectancy in China has also increased to 78.2 years," he said. "These are all significant achievements in bolstering the quality and capabilities of the population, and stronger and continuous efforts are needed."

The policy document also calls for building a fertility-friendly society, which entails measures to advance systems related to maternity leave, maternity subsidies, and maternal and child healthcare, as well as to roll out tax-deduction policies for child-rearing and bolstering nursery care services.

Panzhihua, a city in Sichuan province that became the first in the country to offer cash for parents with a second or third child in 2021, announced last week that it will soon begin to give nursery care subsidies for babies age three or younger. The new measure is aimed at further reducing the child-rearing costs of families, said the local government.

Cai said that as regions across the nation are rolling out subsidies linked to newborns, it is now important to consolidate these different policies, increase the subsidies and expand their coverage.

He added that regulations should be established regarding maternity, paternity and parental leave, as well as breastfeeding breaks, to foster a work environment that is friendly for parents with childcare responsibilities.

China began allowing personal income tax deductions for taking care of children age three and under in early 2022 and doubled the deduction to 2,000 yuan (\$274) last year.

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Global megatrend of fast aging societies looms large



Several Asia-Pacific countries are aging. This transition is neither unique nor limited to the region — it is a global megatrend. However, what is different is the speed at which the aging process is progressing. While France and Sweden took 115 and 85 years, respectively, to go from being an aging society — 7 to 14 percent of the population aged 60 or older — to an aged society — 14 to 21 percent aged 60 or older — the same transition in China, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam is expected to take only 19 to 25 years.

Compared with other global megatrends that are shaping economies, such as digitalization or climate change, demographic shifts are relatively foreseeable and slower by nature. This provides some misleading comfort to policymakers. The impact these shifts have on economies is far from simple, and analysts struggle to understand and quantify them.

The economy is the people. Therefore, demographic shifts stand out as one of the most influential factors shaping any aspect of an economy. Changing demographics means altering the essence and purpose of all economic activities. As the purpose changes, so do the

needs. Changes in productivity, the share of the population in job markets, fiscal policy conduct and effectiveness, and how monetary policy affects economies — all these processes introduce high uncertainty into long-term economic and fiscal policy planning.

Why do analysts struggle with quantifying the economic impact of aging? The net change is a sum of multiple factors, often working in opposing directions. As people age, their productivity tends to fall. On the other hand, this trend is offset by technological progress, though to a largely unknown extent, making the net impact difficult to predict. Aging societies exhibit a shift in consumption from durables such as cars to essential services such as healthcare, thus affecting a country's composition of demand for goods and services and tax revenues. Aging also changes labor force participation.

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INSIDE Vocational education ignites African dream Global Views, page 13

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Newsstand prices: US \$1, Canada C\$1, UK £1, EU €1, Kenya 50 Kenya Shilling, Asia Pacific: Thailand 120, Philippines 120 php, Myanmar 2000 kyat, Japan 210 yen, Dubai 10 dirham, Pakistan 300 rupee

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Olympics: Older, wiser players ready for fun and Games



Left top: Zeng Zhiying of Chile in action during her preliminary round match against Lebanon's Mariana Sahakian at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. WANG DONGZHEN / XINHUA **Left above:** Singapore's Zeng Jian faces India's Sreeja Akula during a round of the women's singles tournament at the Games. PETROS GIANNAKOURIS / AP **Right:** Portugal's Fu Yu eyes the ball as she prepares to serve to Poland's Natalia Bajor during their match on July 30. WANG ZHAO / AFP

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An hour after that match, another showdown between two Chinese-born athletes sent the crowd at the South Paris Arena into a frenzy. Veteran Yuan Jinnan, representing the host nation France, outplayed Zhang Mo of Canada to advance to the round of 16.

Three days earlier, Portugal's three-time Olympian Fu Yu delivered a major upset by defeating the 9th seed Jeon Ji-hee of South Korea in straight sets. Despite playing under different flags, fans in China rooted for the two "foreign" athletes, who were both born in Hebei province.

Excess of talent

Chinese-born players representing adopted countries is a trend that started in the 1980s. Back then, Chinese athletes began changing nationality to compete for other countries, driven by the prospect of brighter career opportunities, which wouldn't be available to them at home.

As a world power in sports like table tennis, badminton and diving, China is never short of talent thanks to its rigorous State-run development system.

With these sports producing more world-class talent than China needed, some of those "surplus athletes" opted to pursue their athletic careers elsewhere, after being approached by national Olympic committees of other countries eager to boost their talent pool.

In table tennis alone, as many as 13 players born on the Chinese mainland, where they developed their skills, are representing other NOCs in the men's and women's singles tournaments at the Paris Games.

The two oldest table tennis players at the Paris Olympics, Ni and her former teammate Zeng Zhiying, 58, were among the first generation of Chinese national team players who moved overseas to extend their sports careers by becoming naturalized citizens of other countries.

Chinese media have dubbed these sporting emigrants the "foreign legion". While they only have a slim chance of beating better players from their country of birth, they relish the opportunity to participate in international competitions.

"If I'd stayed in China, I probably would have never had the chance to compete at the Olympics because there is always too much talent coming from the pipeline of the Chinese system," Zeng Jian, 27, who represents Singapore in table tennis, told

China Daily after her round of 32 match in Paris.

The four-time Commonwealth Games medalist was born in China's Hunan province. She started table tennis training at the age of 6 at the Shichahai Sports School in Beijing. In 2013, she represented the Beijing team in the Chinese Table Tennis Super League, playing doubles with former world champion Guo Yan.

With the domestic competition too intense for her to advance any further, she joined the Singapore Table Tennis Association in late 2014.

Zeng said she has no regrets about the life-changing decision. "I feel grateful for the Singapore association offering me a chance where my skills and years of hard work could be appreciated," she said, adding the switch helped her play in the international arena, which wouldn't have happened if she had stayed in China.

With cultural and language similarities to China, since the late 2000s Singapore has emerged as an ideal destination for Chinese-born table tennis players seeking new opportunities.

Bolstered by former Chinese youth team members Feng Tianwei and Wang Yuegu, the Singapore women's team shocked the Chinese squad with a 3-1 win at the 2010 World Team Championships final. It is the biggest upset win of the "foreign legion" against their birth country.

To encourage the development of home-grown talent across the world, the International Table Tennis Federation tightened its rules on athlete naturalization in 2008. It banned athletes older than 21 who had switched nationalities, from representing his or her adopted country in international competitions.

The rules also impose a waiting period of at least three years before a naturalized athlete can represent his or her new national, or regional, association.

Teammates reunite

Major international events such as the Olympics have also become a stage for reunions of old friends and former teammates born in China.

In Paris, Luxembourg's Ni reconnected with her former teammate Zeng Zhiying, 58, almost four decades after they both

"Age is just a number. Our team really needs me, and everyone was working so hard. I saw staying around as a way to motivate them. If we make it (to Los Angeles 2028), great. If we can't, then we just enjoy the journey."

Ni Xialian, Luxembourg table tennis player



Luxembourg's Ni Xialian acknowledges the crowd at the end of her round of 32 match against Sun Yingsha of China on July 31 in Paris. ISABEL INFANTES / REUTERS

played for Team China in the 1980s. Zeng made her Olympic debut in Paris representing Chile.

Zeng was born in 1966, and her mom was a table tennis coach. She picked up a

paddle as soon as she could hold one, and joined the junior team at a military sports school in Beijing at the age of 11. Zeng started to compete at national-level events the next year.

Like all her peers, she aspired to make her country proud on the international stage, and harbored a longtime dream to compete at the Olympics. However, Zeng's attempt to qualify for the Los Angeles 1984 Olympics came up short due to the intense competition among her peers, including Ni, for spots on the national team.

Failing to make it to Los Angeles, Zeng retired and moved to Chile, and accepted an invitation to coach school children in the northern city of Arica. She said she "adored" her coaching job.

Zeng didn't pick up a table tennis paddle again until 2003 when she wanted to introduce her 13-year-old son to the sport to try and drag him away from video games and watching television.

However, the competitor now in her 50s realized she could still win at the national level in Chile, which rekindled her Olympic dream.

"I love this country," she said after losing in the preliminary round at the Paris Games on July 27. "I didn't reach my dream in China, and I have here. It's important not to give up."

Despite her early exit from the competition she had every reason to be proud of her efforts in Paris. Her husband and two sons cheered her on in the South Paris Arena and her 92-year-old father back in China was able to see his daughter's lifelong dream come true.

Ni, who was in China's squad at the 1983 Table Tennis World Championships, said they were both on the national team for a period of time.

"It's not easy for her to make a return to this level after not playing for such a long time," Ni said. "No matter what, she built her foundation in the Chinese national team, and that will always make a difference (in international competitions). I congratulate her for making it to Paris."

As to whether her Olympic journey is over, Ni said she is not planning to hang up her paddle any time soon. With support from the sport's governing body in Luxembourg and the grand duchy's government, she said she remains fresh and motivated, even at the age of 61.

"Age is just a number," said Ni, who was born in Shanghai and began her career

with the city's women's team in 1978.

She moved to Germany in 1989 for career prospects, and settled down in Luxembourg two years later. There she met her husband Tommy Danielsson, the then Luxembourg national team coach.

"Three years ago, Paris 2024 felt so far away, but I just thought let's keep trying," she said.

"Our team really needs me, and everyone was working so hard. I saw staying around as a way to motivate them. If we make it (to Los Angeles 2028), great. If we can't, then we just enjoy the journey."

Second thoughts

In addition to table tennis, Chinese names can also be found on several other countries' team lists for badminton and diving.

However, the transition to a different culture, coupled with the language barrier, can make it tough for some Chinese athletes to fit in to their adopted homes.

Zhang Beiwen, a badminton player representing the United States in Paris, said it's not always easy to navigate cultural differences, especially for those who moved overseas at an older age. "If you move to the US too late, I don't think it's worth it," said Zhang.

She started playing badminton in her hometown of Anshan, Liaoning province, and moved to Singapore along with her provincial team coach at the age of 13. Following a feud with her coach, she resettled in the US in 2013 and joined Team USA.

"(Latecomers) will have a hard time learning the language and getting used to the social environment," she said.

"It's not easy to compete at your best on the court when you have to deal with new challenges in life adapting to a new home."

Not all China-born athletes receive a warm welcome in their adopted countries, as sometimes their presence is seen as compromising the development of home-grown talent.

"There have always been some complaints from local fans," said Peter Hubner, a sports reporter covering table tennis in Paris for German media outlet Deutsche Presse-Agentur.

"They're afraid that the use of Chinese immigrants may affect the resources and funding allocated to developing native talent. It makes sense. But it will be easier for the second generation of Chinese players to be accepted."



Left: Canada's Adam Dong (front), born in China, and Nyl Yakura in action during their men's doubles badminton group stage match at the Paris Games on July 29. DITA ALANGKARA / AP **Middle:** Ni talks to China's Sun Yingsha while shaking hands with Qiu Yike, Sun's coach. ZHU ZHENG / XINHUA **Right:** Zhang Beiwen of the United States in action during a women's singles badminton group stage match in Paris on July 27. KIN CHEUNG / AP

TOP NEWS



Yun Chuan (left), a male panda, and Xin Bao (above), a female, are seen during their public debut at the San Diego Zoo on Thursday. SANDY HUFFAKER / AFP

What they say



Nova Cherry

“I’ve never seen pandas before, so it’s going to be cool to see pandas in real life,” said Nova Cherry, a Los Angeles resident and video influencer who has 6.5 million followers on TikTok. He said he has only seen pandas in movies and is a Kung Fu Panda guy.

Cherry added that he was really excited to see giant pandas in person and encouraged people to visit the San Diego Zoo and its beautiful environment and conservation area.



Jessica Chenoweth

“They are quintessential San Diego and to have them back here in San Diego, we couldn’t be more excited,” she said. “We’ve been missing them. I remember when we had our last baby panda — he was so cute and I loved him so much. We always watch them on the little videos.”

“They are too special ... that’s part of San Diego Zoo history. They are coming back here. It just feels like the family’s home.”



Jordan and Jada Metz

“Their ears. They look so soft,” Jordan Metz, 10, of San Diego told China Daily.

His younger sister, Jada, 7 also likes pandas a lot.

“They’re one of my favorites. How they are, how they feel. They’re just so, they look comfy,” she told China Daily. She felt really special because California Panda Day is also her birthday and “seeing the pandas first” made it a special birthday gift.

New pandas bring new chapter in ties

San Diego Zoo welcomes Yun Chuan and Xin Bao at Panda Ridge

By RENALI in San Diego
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Accompanied by the beautiful strains of Chinese classical music and cheers from the audience, the San Diego Zoo’s Panda Ridge officially opened on Thursday, a tribute to the remarkable achievements of China and the United States in giant panda and wildlife conservation.

Officials from both nations gathered at the ceremony, celebrating the moment by highlighting the symbolism of the exhibit as a bridge between the two countries.

When Chinese Ambassador to the US Xie Feng mentioned that two young panda fans from California had written letters proposing to give China grizzly bears in exchange for pandas, the guests at the ceremony laughed warmly.

Xie noted that last November, President Xi Jinping announced in San Francisco that China is ready to continue cooperation with the United States on panda conservation and “do our best to meet the wishes of the Californians so as to deepen the friendly ties between our two peoples.”

“Your dream has come true even without giving us grizzly bear,” Xie told the audience members, who held traditional Chinese paper fans symbolizing good luck.

Yun Chuan and Xin Bao arrived at the end of June. The first character in the name of Yun Chuan is a nod to his grandma Bai Yun, the previous superstar at the zoo, who gave birth to six cubs during her 23 years in San Diego. The first character in the name of Xin Bao means a treasure of prosperity and abundance.

Xie said the arrival of Yun Chuan and Xin Bao during the celebration of the 45th anniversary of US-China



Chinese Ambassador to the United States Xie Feng (center), California Governor Gavin Newsom (left) and President and CEO of San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance Paul Baribault at Panda Ridge ribbon ceremony at San Diego Zoo on Thursday. LIU GUANGUAN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

diplomatic ties has sent a clear and important message.

“China-US cooperation on panda conservation will not cease, our people-to-people exchanges and subnational cooperation will not stop, and once opened, the door of China-US friendship will not be shut again,” Xie said, adding that with the new round of cooperation, China and the US will work to improve the status of pandas and other rare wild animals, moving them from endangered to vulnerable, and ultimately to safe.

“China has sent the first pair of pandas to the US with the icebreaking trip by President Nixon inspiring in many Americans a strong interest in China. A panda a day keeps the

sorrow away,” Xie added.

California Governor Gavin Newsom echoed Xie’s sentiments, saying, “There’s nothing I enjoy more than watching the press report on pandas.”

He recalled a moment when an 8-year-old girl was interviewed on TV. When the reporter asked if she knew that pandas were coming back, “she lit up and got teary-eyed.” “This is a moment about exchange and understanding,” said Newsom, who earlier declared Thursday as “California Panda Day. ‘It’s about something much deeper and richer than just the two beautiful pandas we celebrate.’”

Newsom reflected on the challenges of recent years, noting how

people have been living in a world filled with stress, anxiety and division, often focusing on differences rather than unity.

“For me, the spirit and pride associated with today’s opening of Panda Ridge represent a deeper meaning — that we not only share brief moments in life, but we’ve also triumphed together,” he said.

San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria said Panda Ridge represents the latest chapter in the US-China story.

“Thirty years ago, the zoo, in partnership with our zookeeper friends in China, became a global leader in giant panda conservation,” he said. “I believe this is just the beginning of continued investments in the

relationship between our countries.”

Gloria shared that during his visit to China in June for the pandas’ farewell ceremony, he realized that the pandas “are truly diplomats”.

“I extend my appreciation to President Xi for his commitment to continuing this incredible conservation effort between our two countries,” he added.

California and San Diego share a special bond with giant pandas. The San Diego Zoo was the first American institution to collaborate with China on panda conservation efforts.

Paul Baribault, president and CEO of the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance (SDZWA), said giant pandas can unite people.

“Today, we are united by a common goal to save and protect our shared future,” Baribault said. “This reminds us that transformative change is possible when we come together for wildlife, conservation and people. We are more interconnected than ever before.”

Baribault, along with Shepard Fairey, a renowned California artist, unveiled a new artwork featuring the giant panda during the ceremony, followed by the official unveiling of Panda Ridge to the world by the guests.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the partnership between the China Wildlife Conservation Association (CWCA) and SDZWA.

Si Ping, deputy secretary-general of CWCA, emphasized that the health and safety of Yun Chuan and Xin Bao will remain the top priority, with a focus on disease prevention and treatment, epidemic control and the development of conservation technology.

“Our goal is to support the conservation of China’s wild giant panda population and contribute to the development of China’s National Park. We look forward to making new contributions to global biodiversity and strengthening the friendship between our two peoples,” said Si.

Policies: Affordable nursery, elderly care services urged

From page 1

“Future tax deduction policies should consider increasing the age threshold of babies and raising the deductible ratio,” Cai added.

The policy document also highlights that a range of nursery care services, such as home-based, community or workplace nursery care facilities, should be developed simultaneously while the emphasis should be placed on government-subsidized and affordable services.

Cai added that in 2023, the proportion of people age 65 and older in China stood at nearly 220 million. “Such a massive amount of elderly and senior workers is a strong force in terms of human resources and a group of consumers with significant demand,” he said.

Cai said that many people reaching 60 — the statutory retirement age for most workers in China — are still willing to continue working and are capable of doing so. Delaying retirement should be

based on a voluntary and flexible principle and conducted in an orderly and gradual manner as stated in the document, in order to tap into the potential of the workforce and help sustain China’s pension system, he said.

Li, the professor, added that as the document lays out a series of tasks for developing the gray economy and boosting public and private elderly care services, the focus should be on ensuring the provision of basic and affordable elderly care

services and guaranteeing their coverage in urban and rural areas.

He said that China has issued a basic elderly care catalog that pays special attention to elderly people with disabilities or financial difficulties, as well as those at a very advanced age. The list also encompasses fundamental services such as basic elderly care insurance and elderly care subsidies.

“Basic public services aimed at caring for the elderly should be prioritized,” he said.

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These materials are distributed by China Daily Distribution Corp. on behalf of China Daily Beijing, China.

Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.

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CHINA DAILY (ISSN 0748-6154) is published daily

except weekends by China Daily USA, 1500 Broadway,

Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036. Periodical postage

paid at New York, NY and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to CHINA DAILY

USA, 1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036.

Vol. 38 — No.1394

Aging: Govts can play proactive role in tackling demographic shifts

From page 1

The Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2024, prepared by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, discusses how demographic shifts are reshaping economies in the region, fiscal policy and the overall development agenda.

In simple terms, the share of working people in aged societies is lower than in young ones. Furthermore, the more developed a society is, the greater the temptation is to withdraw from the workforce, as

older people have the choice to quit early from the labor force and enjoy the comfort of retirement. In contrast, in developing societies, older people must work until very old age to avoid poverty.

Why is this a problem from the perspective of fiscal policymaking? First, policymakers would like to know how much goods and services are being and will be produced so that they can plan how to redistribute them through taxes and fiscal expenditures. In plain words, policymakers need to know how to cut and redistribute the “economic pie” or the GDP. It is not easy to predict

its size in the future. Second, some fiscal expenditures increase and some fall as societies age. Fiscal expenditures on pensions rise along with healthcare and other forms of social protection. In contrast, education expenditures fall given less demand for children’s education. Third, the exact scale and time of these shifts are not easy to determine.

However, governments do not have to remain passive observers of the demographic shifts, as they have multiple tools to soften the negative impact and boost positive processes. For example, premature

retirement results in excessive burden on the fiscal system. However, reskilling and upskilling of older people can help retain them in the workforce, increase economic output and reduce poverty among the elderly. At the same time, governments can implement society-wide policies that support healthy and active aging. With the help of modern technologies and experience from other aged countries such as Japan, much can be done to keep people active into old age. All such actions not only improve the quality of life and economic performance among older people, but also

directly alleviate the fiscal burden of pension systems as retirement is postponed.

Finally, all the challenges highlighted above and the policies needed to address them are closely linked. Therefore, policymakers should seek to address a few problems at a time looking for synergies. For example, greater investments in healthcare, education, social protection and environmental protection not only improve the quality of life but also allow people to stay employed for a longer period of time. A better environment improves people’s health, which

supports economic activity and decreases public spending needs for social protection and healthcare. In turn, saved social protection and healthcare expenditures can be used to support other development priorities.

This holistic approach must become the norm of government policy planning. Socioeconomic policies must embrace the idea of synergies between their goals, so that spending on one policy target also supports other goals.

The author is associate economic affairs officer at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



ARTISTIC SWIMMING

THE GOLDEN GENERATION

After a 36-year journey, China has finally set foot on the top step of an Olympic podium

By LI YINGXUE
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In 1983, by the outdoor swimming pool at Beijing's Taoranting Park, the seeds of a dream were planted, when a group of Chinese artistic swimmers gathered for the first time.

Nearly 15,000 days and nights of relentless effort from themselves and successive generations later, that dream has finally become a reality — China has been crowned Olympic champion.

On Wednesday night, in Saint-Denis in the northern suburbs of Paris, the Chinese artistic swimming team clinched a first-ever Olympic gold medal in the team event.

The team, consisting of Feng Yu, Chang Hao, Wang Ciyue, Zhang Yayi, Wang Liuyi, Wang Qianyi, Xiao Yanning, Cheng Wentao and Xiang Binxuan, delivered a stunning performance in the team acrobatic routine, earning 283.6934 points and taking their overall score to an insurmountable and history-making 996.1389.

"We have not only fulfilled our own dreams, but also carried the aspirations of generations before us. As a generation entrusted with a significant responsibility, we came to Paris thoroughly prepared, hoping that three years of hard work would yield a perfect result," said team captain Feng.

Before departing for Paris, Feng, who served as the female flag bearer for the Chinese delegation at the opening ceremony, vowed to "impress the judges and surprise the audience".

At the Olympic Aquatics Centre, that promise was fulfilled.

After their victory, the Chinese athletes celebrated by high-fiving every medalist. "Happiness needs to be shared. We wanted to share our joy with all the athletes, not just because it's our first gold medal, but because we are all winners,"

explained Wang Liuyi.

Wang Liuyi's twin sister, Wang Qianyi, was participating in her second Games. Sharing the Olympic stage with her sister made the moment even more special.

"Last time, I competed in the Olympics alone. This time, standing on the podium with my sister feels completely different. Even though it's a team event, having my sister by my side makes me even happier, especially because we won the gold medal," said Wang Qianyi.

The Paris Olympics saw new rules introduced for the artistic swimming team event, which now includes a technical routine, a free routine and an acrobatic routine, each of which is scored separately. The team with the highest combined score is crowned champion.

A major change in the rules is that any mistake, or a failure to complete the declared difficulty, will result in the score being downgraded to the base score.

"With the new rules, all countries start on an equal footing. During our preparation, we faced both successes and setbacks. Despite the high expectations for this gold medal, we managed to handle the pressure," said Wang Liuyi.

"The biggest challenge is not the external competition or the difficulty levels of other countries, but ourselves."

In February, the team delivered its best-ever performance at the World Championships in Doha, securing seven gold medals, one silver and a bronze — a massive confidence boost ahead of Paris.

And what boost it was! On Aug 5, China led the field with a score of 313.5538 in the technical routine.

The following evening, they maintained their dominance in the team free, with a routine that scored 398.8917, the highest of the competition. Their routine featured a tribute to the Paris Games with a formation resembling the iconic Eiffel Tower.



Route to glory

1983:

The Chinese Artistic Swimming National Team is officially established, marking the beginning of the sport's national development in China.

1986:

Team China participates in the World Aquatics Championships in Madrid, ranking 11th. It's the team's first appearance on the international stage.

1988:

Team China makes its Olympic debut at the Seoul Games, finishing 9th in the duet event, marking the team's first appearance at an Olympics.

2006:

Team China upsets Japan for the first time at the Doha Asian Games, marking a first major breakthrough on its way to becoming a world power in the sport.

2008:

China wins bronze in the

team competition at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, claiming the first Olympic medal in the team's history.

2010:

Twins Jiang Wenwen and Jiang Tingting make history by winning the nation's first artistic swimming gold medal at a major international event — the FINA Synchronized Swimming World Cup in China.

2012:

Team China takes another step forward by winning silver in the team event and bronze in the duet event at the London Olympics.

2016:

Team China reaches the podium again, winning two silvers at the Rio Olympic Games.

2024:

In Doha, Team China achieves its best world championships record with seven golds, one silver, and one bronze.



After multiple world championships, China claimed its first-ever Olympic gold medal in artistic swimming at Paris 2024, after dominating the team acrobatic event on Wednesday. The United States took the silver with 914.3421, and Spain came third with 900.7319. REUTERS, AFP AND WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

On Aug 7, the team delivered a nearly flawless performance in its final routine, once again earning the highest score and setting a new benchmark in Chinese artistic swimming.

Zhang Xiaohuan, the team's head coach, explained that she integrated Chinese cultural elements into the routine choreography to emphasize the artistic sensibilities of the nation's heritage.

"For instance, one formation represents the Chinese character *shan* (mountain) found on ancient oracle bones, evoking the imagery of rising peaks. This also reflects our team's relentless pursuit of its dreams," she explained.

"Preparation was tough, but we kept ourselves in the fight and persevered. I think this was a great performance. We also drew inspiration from our competitors, as well."

Zhang Xiaohuan noted that the new rules required athletes to master challenging maneuvers that they had never attempted before, so there was not only considerable pressure, but a physical toll.

"They fought hard and never gave up. Training has been extremely demanding, with athletes suffering from broken bones, facial injuries, and other issues that required hospital visits," Zhang Xiaohuan said.

She also acknowledged the crucial technical assistance from China's diving team, which played a key role in the high scores of the artistic swimmers in Paris. "I am very pleased with our performance, and I'm sure the Chinese diving coaches are proud of the results, too."

Zhang Xiaohuan was the captain at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, when the team won bronze.

"That bronze medal was very meaningful to me. Many teammates retired afterward, but I stayed to pursue my dreams. Today's gold medal is the result of the joint effort of several generations of artistic swimmers. It is through that contin-

uous effort that we achieved this success," she concluded.

Decades of progress

When artistic swimming was added as an official Olympic sport in 1984, China had only just begun to develop the discipline. At the 1988 Seoul Olympics, China's solo swimmers were ranked outside the top 10, while the duet placed 9th.

Over the decades since, the Chinese artistic swimming team made gradual progress, with each advancement representing a major milestone.

At the 2004 Athens Olympics, the team achieved sixth place in the team event, a significant improvement from its seventh-place finish at the 1996 Games in Atlanta. It took eight years to achieve that single step up the ladder.

In 2006, the team enlisted world-class Japanese coach Masayo Imura, known as the "mother of synchro", who helped it overcome technical barriers and achieve significant progress. By the time the 2008 Beijing Olympics arrived, the team was ready to make a historic breakthrough, securing a first Olympic medal.

The team then dedicated 16 years to advancing up the steps of the Olympic podium. At the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, it earned silver medals in both the team and duet events, significantly closing the gap with the champion Russian team.

Now, in Paris, it has finally reached the highest position on the podium, not with a step, but with a leap, so great was the deficit in points with its nearest rival.

Yet the journey isn't over. The duet competition begins Friday, potentially featuring an unprecedented showdown between four sets of twin sisters from China, Austria, the Netherlands and Ukraine.

A compelling matchup, indeed, especially as the Chinese pair, Wang Liuyi and Wang Qianyi, have developed a taste for gold and are craving more.



PARIS 2024

FIELD HOCKEY

STICKING TO ITS TASK

China's hockey team marches on to *deja vu* gold-medal clash with No 1-ranked Netherlands

Team China captain Ou Zixia (right) fights for the ball with Belgium's Delphine-Daphne Marien during Wednesday's semi-final match. AP

By SUN XIAOCHEN in Paris
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Everything to win and nothing to lose.

The Chinese women's field hockey team is embracing its David-vs-Goliath final challenge against top-seed the Netherlands as a golden opportunity to restore pride and appeal to the once glorious program.

Underrated and overlooked, the Chinese squad has put its rejuvenation on full display in Paris after defying long odds to advance into its first Olympic final in 16 years, riding on momentum driven by having one of the sport's legends at its helm.

Coached by Australia's two-time Olympic champion Alyson Annan, Team China put up a gusty fight against European powerhouse Belgium — which stands three places above China in the International Field Hockey world rankings — in Wednesday's semifinal.

China started strong, with Zou Meirong scoring a second-quarter goal. However, the Belgians managed to tie the match at 1-1, thanks to a last-min-

ute equalizer from Emma Puvrez, sending a legion of Belgium fans into frenzy at the Yves-du-Manoir Stadium in the western suburbs of Paris.

That's how it stood at the end of regulation time.

After conceding two goals in the nerve-wrecking shootout, Team China kept its cool to score three in a row. Goalkeeper Ye Jiao then rose to the high-stakes occasion, denying the Belgians' next three attempts with heroic saves to secure China an Olympic final berth — its first at an overseas Games. The last time was at Beijing 2008, where the home team faced off against the mighty Dutch. It will be a case of *deja vu*, then, when the pair meet again in the French capital.

While the challenge will be monumental against the No 1-ranked Netherlands, the "Snow Lotus" have an edge this time around, with Annan — former mentor of the Dutch team — now in China's corner.

No matter what step it eventually occupies on the podium, Team China has already turned heads and earned respect for a victorious Olympic campaign in many ways, said Annan of her players.

"We have talked about this a lot since I started. We want to win a medal. We want to be on the podium in Paris. This is why we do this," Annan said of the confidence and belief she's instilled into the team since she took the helm in 2022.

"I hope the message is that dreams do come true, and you have to dream to be able to have that vision. And the girls saw it and went after it, and, now, they've got both feet on the silver and are one step from gold.

"(We have) everything to win and nothing to lose," said Annan, who led the Netherlands to the gold medal at Tokyo 2020.

Entering the Olympic knockout stage as a dark-horse contender, Team China proved its medal credentials by upsetting its coach's native national side, the Hockeyroos, in a solid 3-2 quarterfinal thriller — a bittersweet result for Annan.

"I have mixed feelings," she said following the victory on Monday. "I'd have preferred this to have been the final."

With all of China's other qualified ball-sport teams having already crashed out of the Paris Games, the women's hockey squad has served up a huge

morale boost for the whole delegation by at least clinching a silver medal.

After going up against its European rivals with the crowd rooting against it in almost every game, Chinese captain Ou Zixia expects the team's return to the top table to draw more support and exposure back home.

"Hopefully, what we did here will bring more attention to the sport in China, inspiring more girls to pick up a hockey stick and give it a try," Ou told the handful of Chinese journalists in the mixed zone after the semis.

"This means everything for the sport's profile and for everyone on the team. For us, we don't think it as the end of a tough journey. We take it as a new beginning for the sport to be better developed," said the defender, who's represented Team China in 172 international matches across three Olympic Games.

Speaking of the biggest difference that Annan's coaching crew, including her assistant Ric Charlesworth, has brought to the program, Zou, Wednesday's goalscorer, said it's all about self-confidence accumulated by practicing with, and drilling against, the Western powerhouses.

"I think it's kind of an advantage for us to be considered as an underdog, while at the same time we believe more in ourselves and that we are actually way better than people think," said the 23-year-old midfielder who's scored two goals in Paris.

Since Annan took over the Chinese program, the team has spent the past two years traveling extensively to train in Europe and Australia, and play quality opponents in the FIH Pro League. Gradually, it has become more balanced offensively and defensively.

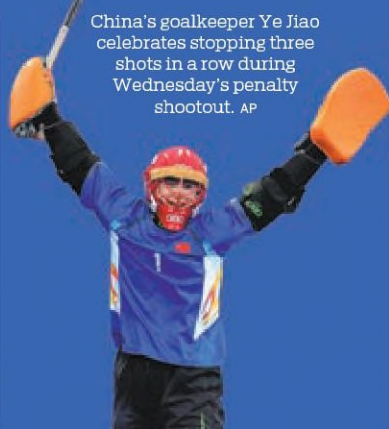
With the Aussie's coaching blended with the traditional discipline and zealous work ethic of Chinese athletes, Team China had climbed to No 6 in the world rankings prior to the Games, all the way from No 14 when Annan took over.

Now, it seems that the scalps of Australia and Belgium were nothing unexpected, at least for Team China's young aspirants.

"Mentally, we are stronger than ever, and, tactically, we've managed to keep pace with the strong European teams. We just need to hit them when they're off their guard," said Zou.



China's Yang Liu shoots from a penalty corner during the Paris 2024 Olympics women's field hockey semifinal against Belgium on Wednesday. AP



China's goalkeeper Ye Jiao celebrates stopping three shots in a row during Wednesday's penalty shootout. AP



China's players rush to congratulate goalkeeper Ye Jiao after she made three saves to ensure China's win in the Paris 2024 Olympics women's field hockey semifinal against Belgium on Wednesday. AP

Team China shining at Paris Games with 29 golds

By SUN XIAOCHEN in Paris
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Chinese veteran Xie Siyi delivered a masterful performance on Thursday, outshining his teammate Wang Zongyuan to retain his crown in the men's 3m springboard event at Paris 2024, while Olympic newcomer Luo Shifang clinched gold in the women's 59kg weightlifting category.

After Day 13, the United States top the medal tally with 30 golds, while China remain close contenders in second place with 29.

Previously, both Li Fabian, the defending Olympic champion in the men's 61kg division, and Hou Zhihui, who was gold medalist in the women's 49kg division at the Tokyo

Games, retained their titles.

Luo, 23, ranked No 1 in both the snatch event, with 107kg, and the clean and jerk, with 134kg, setting three Olympic records, in snatch, clean and jerk, and total weight. Maude Charron of Canada took silver and Kuo Hsing-chun of Chinese Taipei claimed bronze.

Meanwhile, propelled by strength and steered by willpower, Chinese paddlers Liu Hao and Ji Bowen won China's third straight Olympic title in the men's canoe double 500-meter.

Boasting strong pushes individually and exceptional synchronization of pace in the sprint, Liu and Ji started the final strong to take an early lead. They clinched the gold by paddling past the finish line first in one min, 39.48 sec, while Italy's Gabriele Casadei and Carlo Tacchini won silver and Spain's Joan Antoni Moreno and

“We started out fast, took an early lead, and from there we were just paddling as hard as we could to our own pace, and the result came as expected. To make it happen on a memorable day for all the Chinese Olympians, I am so excited and satisfied.”

Ji Bowen, gold medalist of men's canoe double 500-meter

Diego Dominguez took the bronze.

The Chinese duo's three-peat followed a 16-year wait, after the double 500m was excluded from the past three Games' sports programs, from 2012 to 2021, before its return in Paris.

China's legendary duo of Yang Wenjun and Meng Guanliang, both retired, claimed back-to-back gold medals in the double event at two previous Olympic regattas — Athens 2004 and Beijing 2008 — to become the first and only pair in the world to defend the title.

"With everything just falling into place, I feel we had a magical race today," said Ji, a 22-year-old native of Zhejiang province who made his Olympic debut in Paris.

"We started out fast, took an early lead, and from there we were just paddling as hard as we could to our own pace, and the result came

as expected.

"To make it happen on a memorable day for all the Chinese Olympians, I am so excited and satisfied," said Ji, who only started to partner with Liu, a two-time Olympian, at the end of 2021.

The golden race on Thursday capped the steady progress of Liu and Ji during the Paris Olympic cycle on a high note, following their bronze finish at the 2022 world championships and silver at the 2023 world championships.

Since China is the only Asian country to ever have won medals in the event, the nation's future as a dominant force is in good hands, said Liu. "In Tokyo I took two silver medals, so winning the gold medal means a lot to me, and it's very important for my country as well. It's compensation for what I've done up until now," said

Liu, a runner-up in single and double 1000m at Tokyo 2020.

Ji "is very young and motivated; he will be the future of China," said Liu, who pushed with Ji to reach an Olympic record time of 1:37.40 in their heats on Tuesday.

On Thursday at the Paris Aquatics Centre, China's invincible diving team also maintained its golden streak after men's divers Xie Siyi and Wang Zongyuan finished No 1 and No 2, respectively, in the 3m springboard final to grab the Chinese diving team's sixth gold and second silver in the pool.

After winning six out of six disciplines by the end of Thursday, the Chinese diving "dream team" stayed on course to achieve the clean sweep of all eight gold medals in diving at the Olympics for the first time in history.



From left: A man rides a hydrogen-powered scooter in Shanxi's Xiaoyi city. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY Photovoltaic cells are produced on the automated production line at Jinery. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY A technician tests the product quality of photovoltaic cells at Jinery's production plant in Jinzhong city. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Shanxi stands out for low-carbon growth

Media tour discovers province pulling out all the stops to meet nation's green targets

By YUAN SHENGGAO

In a recent media tour to witness the progress of low-carbon development in China's energy-rich regions — including Shanxi, Shaanxi, Henan and Shandong provinces, as well as the Inner Mongolia autonomous region — reporters found Shanxi a worthy example.

The province, which used to rely on coal mining and other heavy industries, began an industrial transformation program in 2019, aiming to upgrade its traditional coal mining and cultivate emerging industries for economic diversification and low-carbon development.

The media group, which included journalists from across the country, toured the Shanxi city of Jinzhong on July 22.

To contribute to Shanxi's low-carbon growth, Jinzhong has developed a complete methanol industry chain. Methanol is a clean, renewable energy resource featuring high combustion efficiency and low emissions.

Jinzhong, as well as the rest of Shanxi, is rich in coal and coking gas which can be used to make methanol. The city began to develop the methanol industry some 40 years ago.

It was Farizon New Energy Commercial Vehicle Group, the Jinzhong arm of renowned automaker Geely Auto, that pushed the industry into the fast lane of development.

At the production plant of methanol-fueled vehicles, an executive told reporters that Geely began research and development of methanol-fueled vehicles about two decades ago. It is now one of the leaders in the sector worldwide.

Geely's Jinzhong facility began the world's first mass production of methanol-powered heavy-duty trucks and methanol-electric hybrid passenger cars in June 2022.

Liu Hanru, chief scientist at Farizon New Energy Commercial Vehicle Group, said the mass-produced truck is its second generation of



Workers at Geely's Jinzhong plant inspect a methanol-electric hybrid car as it rolls through the final stages of the assembly line. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

heavy trucks powered by methanol.

"Compared with its previous version, which was a model for trial operation, the new truck features stronger performance and lower energy consumption," said Liu.

The executive added that the hybrid car belongs to the fourth generation of the company's methanol passenger vehicles.

Liu said the maturity in vehicle-making technologies and the availability of methanol are two decisive factors in the sector.

He said Geely began to develop technologies for methanol vehicles in 2005 and has since made breakthroughs in the production of engines and components.

"With our self-developed core technologies, Geely is the world's first volume producer of methanol-fueled vehicles and the first in China to get a license for methanol vehicle production," Liu said.

Geely established Shanxi New Energy Automobiles Corp — the predecessor of Farizon New Energy Commercial Vehicle Group — in the



A new energy car is assembled at Geely's Jinzhong facility. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

city of Jinzhong in 2011. Its facility began producing methanol and pure electric vehicles in 2017.

When talking about the availability of methanol, Liu said Jinzhong, as well as Shanxi, has unique advantages in developing such fuel.

He explained that carbon dioxide,

as a raw material for methanol production, can be captured from the emissions of Shanxi's coal-fired power plants, coking plants and other industrial facilities that consume coal.

Jinzhong is one of the cities piloting the development of methanol fuel and methanol vehicle produc-

tion. It now boasts a complete methanol industry chain, ranging from R&D, equipment manufacturing, methanol production and transportation to filling stations.

While Geely's Jinzhong facility is delving into the methanol energy industry, Jinneng Clean Energy Technology, or Jinery, demonstrated to the media group another aspect of new energy technology development: the R&D and production of the advanced TOPCon photovoltaic cells.

Jinery recently announced that its TOPCon high-efficiency heterojunction solar cells were produced with a photoelectric conversion efficiency of more than 25.5 percent, one of the highest rates for the industry worldwide.

Jinery began R&D on heterojunction cells in 2016 and realized mass production of the products in 2017. It started to develop the more advanced TOPCon cell technology in 2019.

As the first domestic mass production facility of heterojunction cells, Jinery has now sold products to

more than 50 countries and regions across the world.

"The energy industry is at the forefront for realizing the nation's peak carbon and carbon neutrality goals," said Liao Jicheng, deputy general manager of Jinery. "We will continue to develop more products with higher quality and efficiency to support China's low-carbon development."

For an energy company, efficiency always means better economic and environmental benefits, the media group learned at a power plant in Jinzhong.

Inside Ruiguang Thermal Power, journalists were led to the central control room, where large displays showed figures relating to the output and efficiency of its two power generation sets.

The two generation sets, each with a capacity of 300,000 kilowatts, can generate 3.3 billion kilowatt-hours of power annually, supplying electricity to the whole province.

The company is creating benefits other than power generation through its recycling practices, according to Dong Xin, deputy general manager of Ruiguang.

"We have realized 100 percent utilization of solid waste," Dong said. "The coal ash and cinder are used to produce construction materials like cement and gypsum."

Heat residue from coal-fired power generation is also collected and supplied to cities like Jinzhong and Taiyuan, according to Dong.

"Despite the growing use of new energy resources, coal-fired power generation still occupies a dominant position in today's electricity industry," Dong said. "Upgrading the facilities with intelligent technologies and improving efficiency through recycling are a practical and cost-effective method of carbon reduction."

One of the solutions to improve efficiency is the use of smart boilers, Dong said. He explained that the use of digital technologies can adjust the volume of coal combustion according to practical requirements, thus economizing the use of fuel and reducing emissions.

Feng Siqian contributed to this story.

By YUAN SHENGGAO

China has set its goals for low-carbon development: to reach peak carbon before 2030 and carbon neutrality before 2060.

The North China province of Shanxi, with coal mining as its traditional pillar industry, is implementing its own measures to meet these goals through a large-scale industrial transformation initiative that is upgrading its coal industry and fostering new, green industries that can drive low-carbon development.

An active player in Shanxi's industrial transformation, the city of Yangquan, located in the east of the province, is using cutting-edge technologies to upgrade traditional industries and foster emerging sectors as new growth drivers.

Like the rest of Shanxi, coal mining had been the dominant industry in Yangquan for decades. But now the city has been given a new lease on life thanks to efforts to upgrade coal-mining facilities and boost economic diversification through developing new industries.

An affiliate to the local coal-mining giant of Huayang Group, Huayang No 2 Mine is an old coal-mining facility with a history of more than 70 years. It is seeing a rejuvenation thanks to digital empowerment and smart mining construction.

Huayang No 2 began smart mining construction in December 2021. Since then, it has developed nine intelligent operational subsystems for areas including infrastructure

Energy transformation spurs new development

management, geological safety guarantee and coal cutting. The subsystems have been integrated through a comprehensive operational platform, substantially improving the coal mine's operations, safety and efficiency, according to executives.

The coal mining company now boasts nine intelligent mining shafts and 19 smart coal-cutting sites, featuring such technologies as 5G connection, remote monitoring and automation.

"The automation rate of our mining shafts and coal-cutting sites reached 90 percent," said Wu Ruiming, an executive of the company. "This has led to greater safety, as it is commonly recognized in the coal-mining industry that 'less manpower means better safety'."

Wu also noted that the daily work period of in-shaft workers has been reduced by about five hours, also leading to better safety and efficiency.

"In the next stage, we will use such technologies as artificial intelligence and robotics to further increase safety and efficiency," Wu said.

While Huayang No 2 is devoting much energy to the intelligent upgrade of traditional coal-mining operations, other companies in Yangquan have delved into various emerging sectors.

One such company is Huana Xinneng, which is also a branch compa-



Large screens display data at the operational center of Huayang No 2 Coal Mine. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ny of Huayang Group and a developer of new types of batteries. Unlike the popular lithium-ion battery, what gives it an edge are sodium-ion batteries.

Nowadays, lithium-ion batteries have been applied to portable electronics and electric vehicles due to high energy density, long work life and environmental benefits. But limited lithium resources and high costs have impeded the application of lithium-ion batteries in large-scale energy storage systems.

Because of sodium's high abundance, low cost and suitable redox potential, some companies in China

are developing applicable sodium-ion batteries as a substitute of lithium-ion ones, according to a report released by the University of Science and Technology of China. Huana Xinneng is one of such companies.

"Lithium-ion batteries are now increasingly popular in many application scenarios," said Luo Zhenhua, an executive of Huana Xinneng. "But there are still limits to the batteries. For instance, the mileage of lithium-ion battery vehicles can be drastically reduced in low temperatures and the batteries cannot be used in scenarios with strict requirements in safety."

He added that such shortcomings can be overcome by sodium-ion batteries. Compared with lithium-ion batteries, sodium-ion batteries feature better safety performance, better adaptability to temperature change and a longer life cycle.

"In a temperature as low as -20 C, the capacity of some sodium-ion batteries can be kept at 80 to 90 percent," Luo said.

Huana Xinneng began to develop sodium-ion batteries in 2021. It realized volume production of cylindrical cells and battery packs in 2023 and began mass production of square cells in April this year.

According to Luo, square cells are the upgraded version from cylindrical cells, featuring a larger capacity in energy storage.

Jin Shenglong, board chairman of Huana Xinneng, said the company will continue to boost the growth of the sodium-ion battery industry, contributing to Shanxi's and China's low-carbon development.

Jinyang New Energy Power, based in Yangquan's Yuxian county, is another example of Shanxi's industrial transformation in diverting its operations from coal-fired generation to the solar power business.

The company has a coal-fired power plant near a coal mine. After decades of development, the mine had seen its reserves depleted in recent years. Land subsidence was

the direct outcome of this.

To make better use of the coal mine's land, Jinyang developed a large solar farm on the surface of the mine after refilling it.

With a total investment of 727.97 million yuan (\$101.74 million), the solar farm can generate 128 million kWh of electricity annually. Compared with the former coal-fired facility, this translates into a reduction of 127,600 metric tons of carbon dioxide emission every year, according to Lu Haijun, head of the company.

"We have seen great environmental benefits from this new (solar power) business," Lu said. "We are developing the solar farm while repairing the local environment and restoring the ecosystem."

More importantly, Lu said the new facility has brought new jobs to workers who were on the verge of unemployment because of the depleted mine reserves. With the expansion of the solar farm, rural residents in the vicinity were also offered jobs.

"As a solar power enterprise, we are benefiting the fast-developing photovoltaic technologies," Lu said. "In the years to come, along with our business expansion, we will promote our operational experience to the rest of the county and even the province, bringing more benefits to the people and the environment."

Feng Siqian contributed to this story.

GLOBAL LENS



Tourists pose with the Olympic rings in front of the Louvre Museum in Paris on July 30.



Police on horseback patrol near the Arc de Triomphe in Paris during the 2024 Olympics on Aug 1.



People gather at a bar in Paris and watch the Olympic Games on July 27.



SPORTING CHIC

China Daily photojournalist shares his 2024 Olympic Games moments

Women's 20km race walking athletes take part in the Paris 2024 Olympics on Aug 1. PHOTOS BY WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

By WEI XIAOHAO in Paris
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My trip to Paris marked my third time covering the Olympics, following my assignment at the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics. Photographing in a foreign country brought new challenges.

For this assignment, I brought four camera bodies and five lenses: a 600 millimeter prime for distant shots, a 400 mm prime for close-ups, an 85 mm prime for portraits, a versatile 70-200 mm zoom and a wide-angle 15-35 mm lens. These choices ensured I could capture a wide range of events and perspectives.

The opening ceremony of this Olympics was unlike any before, setting on the Seine River — a departure from traditional stadium settings. The cultural and artistic ambiance of Paris shone brightly, presenting a visual feast that posed a unique challenge to photograph in its entirety.

Upon arriving in Paris, navigating the city presented significant hurdles, from the complexities of the metro system to the language barrier. Despite these challenges, local volunteers and residents, though limited in English, offered invaluable assistance, helping us acclimate to the city's rhythm.

Throughout the event, Paris showcased its iconic landmarks ingeniously. The beach volleyball venue under the Eiffel Tower with its enchanting light show, the fencing events at the Grand Palais and archery competitions at the Esplanade des Invalides — all provided stunning backdrops that blended sport with the city's rich history.

One of the most memorable additions to the award ceremonies was the athletes' selfies on the podium. A standout moment was the mixed doubles table tennis ceremony, where athletes from China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea came together for a heartwarming photo, embodying the spirit of unity and sportsmanship.

Overall, covering the Paris Olympics was a uniquely enriching experience. Beyond capturing thrilling moments in sports, I witnessed Paris thriving with the Olympic spirit, as tourists from around the world flocked to the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre Museum and the Arc de Triomphe.

The blend of athletic excellence and Parisian charm made this assignment unforgettable, leaving me with a deep appreciation for both the city and the Olympic ideals it embodied.

Duan Jichu contributed to this story.



Zheng Qinwen makes history by winning the first Olympic women's singles gold medal for China's tennis team on Aug 3.



Chen Yiwen (right) and Chang Yani deliver their gold medal performance at the women's synchronized 3m springboard event of the Paris Olympic Games on July 27.



Tourists gather near the Olympic cauldron at the Tuileries Gardens in Paris on July 30.



A visitor poses for a photo during the Paris 2024 Olympics on July 25.

WORLD

Editor's note: There are no signs of letup in violence in Gaza as the conflict enters the 11th month. China Daily looks at the international community's efforts in finding a solution as well as humanitarian crisis on the strip.

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong
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With both the death toll and humanitarian situation rapidly worsening in Gaza, the international community has made continued efforts to end the conflict, with the UN Security Council adopting at least four resolutions, namely Resolution 2712, 2720, 2728 and 2735.

The resolutions call for an immediate cease-fire, the immediate and unconditional release of all Israeli hostages held by Hamas, the need to expand the flow of humanitarian goods into the Gaza Strip, and reinforce the protection of civilians in the conflict zone.

However, until now, there have been no signs of a letup in the conflict despite the diplomatic efforts, not even after the Paris Summer Olympics torch was lighted on July 26.

The desperate appeals from the families of Israeli hostages, urging Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government to bring their loved ones home, have fallen on deaf ears.

An advisory from the International Court of Justice, published on July 19, declared that Israel's laws and measures violate the international prohibition on racial segregation and apartheid.

The court also demanded that Israel end its occupation of Palestinian territories, dismantle its settlements in the West Bank, provide full reparations to Palestinian victims and facilitate the return of displaced people.

But all these consolidated efforts, legal advice and international opinion continue to be ignored.

A series of international condemnations and resolutions largely aimed at preventing Israel's military strikes on the Gaza Strip have done little to improve the conditions of aid worker Neel Farsakh and her colleagues, as well as the 2 million Palestinians struggling for survival in their homeland.

Despite the existence of international humanitarian laws, "our teams have been strategically and repeatedly targeted", which has resulted in the killing of 19 Palestine Red Crescent Society members up to this moment, Farsakh, a spokesperson for the group, told China Daily.

Farsakh noted that while several United Nations resolutions have been passed to restrain Israel since the conflict in Gaza began, these have had no direct impact on their work — in terms of ensuring the aid workers' safety.

She said the group's objective is to ensure "the protection of our staff, the humanitarian, medical personnel and medical facilities" so they can continue to provide lifesaving work.

On Aug 3, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies confirmed the death of one of their own — Tamer Jalal Muhammad Saqr — who died after he was shot during an Israeli raid on the Balata refugee camp east of Nablus in the West Bank on July 27. He was helping the wounded civilians after a blast killed two people and injured more than 20 others.

On Aug 8, the US-based food aid charity World Central Kitchen said on its X account that Nadi Sallout, an integral member of the warehouse team from the early days in Rafah and a humanitarian at his very core, was killed near Deir al-Balah, Gaza.

On April 1, seven of its staff, which included citizens from the US, Australia, Britain and Poland, were killed after the Israeli military attacked their three-vehicle convoy despite being clearly marked with logos of the organization.

The schools in Gaza are not safe either. On Aug 4, at least 25 Palestinians were killed when an Israeli airstrike hit the al-Nasr and Hassan Salama schools in Gaza City, Xinhua News Agency reported. Many of the victims were children and women. Israeli Army spokesperson Avichay Adraee said the attack was aimed at militants operating inside Palestinian schools.

Prolonged crisis

Farsakh said they continued to see repeated attacks on civilians and schools, even UN-sponsored ones, and that the citing of some militants could not justify Israeli strikes on medical facilities, refugee camps and other UN-affiliated schools over the past months.

The prolonged conflict, now in its 11th month, has been catastrophic for young Palestinians, with more than 14,000 children reportedly killed, according to UNICEF.

In a July 22 report, UNICEF estimated that on average, one Palestinian



Victims of Israeli bombardments are rushed into a hospital in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, on Wednesday. BASHAR TALEB / AFP

International mediation bid underway as Gaza seethes

Conflict enters 11th month amid deepening humanitarian situation

an child was killed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, every two days since October, or a nearly three-and-a-half-fold increase from the previous nine months.

A total of 143 Palestinian children have been killed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, since October, a spike of nearly 250 percent compared with the preceding nine months, during which 41 Palestinian children were killed.

Two Israeli children had been killed in the West Bank in conflict-related violence during the same period.

The Palestinian death toll in the ongoing Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip has risen to 39,699, according to the Palestine health authorities on Thursday.

On the Israeli side, about 1,200 people were killed in the Hamas surprise attack on Israel on Oct 7.

But The Lancet, a well-respected medical journal based in the United Kingdom, said in July that the actual figure could reach more than 186,000 people, which is almost 8 percent of Gaza's prewar population of 2.3 million.

The toll is higher because the official figure does not include the thousands of Palestinians buried under the rubble and the indirect deaths due to the destruction of health facilities, food distribution centers and other public infrastructure, plus the prevalent famine, and shortage of water and shelter, The Lancet study said.

The recent relocation orders have also reduced the size of Israel's unilaterally designated "humanitarian zones" in Gaza from 20 percent to 14.5 percent, the Norwegian Refugee Council, or NRC, said in its latest report on the Gaza situation on Aug 6, based on an estimate by its Health, Safety and Security team.

The relocation orders, it noted, affected the eastern areas of Khan Younis on July 22, the southern areas of Khan Younis on July 27, and most of al-Bureij and the eastern areas of Nuseirat on July 28.

The UN estimates that 86 percent of Gaza is subject to Israeli-issued orders. Following that estimate, Israeli authorities issued new relocation orders in southern Khan Younis on Aug 5, further shrinking the "humanitarian zones", the NRC noted.

"Humanitarian partners on the ground estimate that over 200,000 people were displaced from Khan Younis and Deir al-Balah between 22-28 July following Israel's latest relocation orders," it said.

"Honestly, many families have been forced to flee six, seven or even 10 times. They are seeking shelter, searching for safety assuming they will be safe. But it turns out not because of dozens, or several attacks



A Palestinian resident exercises at a damaged gym, which was recently reopened in Khan Younis, on Wednesday. BASHAR TALEB / AFP

Global efforts in securing peace

Through the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and the International Court of Justice, the international community has attempted to secure peace following the Israel-Palestine conflict after Hamas attacks in Israel on Oct 7 last year.

• Resolution 2712 (Nov 15, 2023)

Resolution 2712 called for urgent and extended humanitarian pauses and corridors through Gaza to facilitate the provision of essential goods and services. The resolution also demanded the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, especially children, and urged the parties to refrain from depriving civilians of lifesaving services and humanitarian assistance.

• Resolution 2720 (Dec 22, 2023)

Resolution 2720 called for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to appoint a senior humanitarian and reconstruction coordinator for Gaza and demanded that all parties "allow, facilitate and enable" the delivery of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

• Resolution 2728 (March 25)

Resolution 2728 demanded an immediate cease-fire in Gaza for the Muslim holy month of Ramadan (March 10-April 9). It reiterated the urgent need to expand humanitarian assistance and lift all barriers to its pro-

vision. The UNSC further emphasized "the urgent need to expand the flow of humanitarian assistance to and reinforce the protection of civilians in Gaza".

• Resolution 2735 (June 10)

Resolution 2735 called for Hamas to accept a three-phase cease-fire proposal and urged both parties to implement it immediately. The United States sponsored and drafted the resolution based on US President Joe Biden's May 31 statement, in which he proposed a similar three-phase plan to reach a cease-fire in Gaza and to coordinate the release of the remaining Israeli hostages.

• ICJ advisory opinion to Israel (July 19)

The ICJ declared that Israel's occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is unlawful, along with the associated settlement regime, annexation, and use of natural resources. The ICJ added that Israel's legislation and measures violate the international prohibition on racial segregation and apartheid. The ICJ mandated Israel to end its occupation, dismantle its settlements, provide full reparations to Palestinian victims, and facilitate the return of displaced people.

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SOURCES: UN & ICJ WEBSITES

at all of the schools," Farsakh told China Daily.

Even civilian tents have been targeted, she said. "There are no safe places for civilians in Gaza."

"Because of the displacement of 2 million people, there is a new need to provide relief assistance for 2 million people. We need to get tents to accommodate these families, we need to get mattresses, blankets and whatever relief items, even hygiene kits. Unfortunately, because of the restrictions, not enough is getting into Gaza," Farsakh said.

Hassan Morajea, NRC's regional access adviser, said in the Palestinian city of Deir al-Balah that humanitarian aid in Gaza is trickling through "nowhere near enough to meet the dire needs of the population here".

Morajea added they are faced with "multiple layers of bureaucracy when attempting to bring basic aid items", pointing at Israeli restrictions and that "a breakdown of law and order" continues to hinder aid access.

Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, speaking at a conference in Yad Binyamin, a community set-

tlement in central Israel, hosted by the right-wing Israel Hayom media outlet, said that blocking humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip is "justified and moral" even if it causes 2 million civilians to die of hunger, but said the international community will not allow that to happen, the Times of Israel reported on Aug 5.

"These statements and many others, which are issued by the extremist ministers of the Israeli government and other Israeli officials, are very clear evidence that they have an intent to commit genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza. And it is strange that the International Criminal Court still has no legal reaction to these statements," Abdalfatah Asqool, an international law lecturer at the University of Palestine, told China Daily.

The European Union strongly condemns recent declarations of Smotrich, said a statement of the European External Action Service. The EU continues urging Israel to implement the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and binding orders of the International Court of Justice, it said.

In May, ICC chief prosecutor Karim Khan had sought arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant for alleged war crimes, including the late Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, and two others. However, US congressmen, among others, have threatened Khan with sanctions for trying to have the Israeli leaders arrested.

On Aug 7, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement saying it submitted its declaration of intervention in South Africa's genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, following its announcement in May. Turkey joined other countries such as Colombia, Nicaragua, Spain, Libya, Palestine and Mexico in the case.

"I think there is a belief now among many decision-makers within this government that only by force can they achieve their own political objectives," Ayman Talal Yousef, a professor of international relations at the Arab American University in Jenin in the West Bank, told China Daily.

"This will certainly delay any political deal, political diplomatic track that can be reached with Hamas and other resistance groups in Gaza. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has no option but to simply tell the world that Palestinians have been slaughtered in Gaza," he added.

Israel and Hamas had been in talks to reach a cease-fire deal through their Qatari, Egyptian and United States mediators for months. But with the recent assassination of Hamas political leader Haniyeh in

Teheran, Iran, on July 31, the fate of the negotiations remains unclear.

"Political assassinations and continued targeting of civilians in Gaza, while talks continue leads us to ask, how can mediation succeed when one party assassinates the negotiator on the other side? Peace needs serious partners and a global stance against the disregard for human life," Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani posted on his X account on the day of Haniyeh's assassination.

Abbas blamed Israel for killing Haniyeh "to prolong its war on Gaza", also calling it a cowardly act and a dangerous development in Israeli politics, Al Jazeera reported on Aug 6. Iran accused Israel of launching the airstrike on the residence of Haniyeh with US support. Israeli officials have not commented on the assassination while US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the US "was not aware of or involved in" the killing.

Asqool said though the ICC warrant on Haniyeh "will die by the death of the relevant person", Haniyeh's assassination "contains two violations of international law".

"The first, killing a political personnel, which means committing a crime of political assassination, and the second is violating the Iranian sovereignty, and according to international law, Iran has the right to self-defense and their sovereignty," said Asqool.

Veteran Palestinian leader Hanan Ashrawi said: "Gangster-style assassinations and extrajudicial executions are a matter of policy in Israel."

The former member of the Palestine Liberation Organization Executive Committee expressed despair over what she called "US complicity in Israeli crimes". These are attacks not just on the capitals of sovereign states but also on significant leaders to ensure total provocation and destabilization.

Arie Afriansyah, associate professor at the Faculty of Law at Universitas Indonesia, noted that despite numerous attempts, international law enforcement against Israel has proved "ineffective" because of US support for Israel.

"Supported primarily by the United States, Israel frequently dismisses international legal standards that conflict with its national interests. From a legal perspective, Israel should be held accountable for significant and widespread violations of international law and face corresponding international responsibilities," Afriansyah told China Daily. "However, this accountability is unlikely to be realized as long as the US continues to support Israel."

Major destruction

Nonetheless, "given the incontrovertible evidence of destruction and violence against Palestinians and their properties, it will be challenging for Israel to obscure or mitigate its substantial breaches of international law through limited humanitarian efforts in Gaza," he added.

Asqool from the University of Palestine said there should be consequences and sanctions for violating international laws and resolutions.

He cited sanctions or the banning of arms sales, which has not been adopted so far because "the US does not want this to happen".

"Because they are involved in this genocide against civilians in Gaza, which indicates that we live in a world ruled by the powers not laws," said Asqool.

He added that US appeals to Israel not to kill civilians and allow humanitarian aid "are not serious", and are only "lies" in a bid to "wash their hands of the Palestinians' blood". US government leaders "have been calling for it since Oct 7 last year and nothing has been applied on the ground, but more killing and blood", said Asqool.

Instead of pressuring Israel to meet the promised proposals for the US-proposed three-phase cease-fire, the US not only invited Netanyahu for a visit to Washington, but gave him more than 50 standing ovations in his hourlong speech to the US Congress.

"One of the great shames of American politics in recent times to see this display of pitiful obeisance of the US to the mass murderer standing at the podium and in the context of tens of thousands of innocent women and children being slaughtered to the moment that Netanyahu talked and then he gave a litany of complete lies and after that has gone on with the continued murder and provocations of a wider war in the Middle East," said US economist and geopolitical commentator Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University.

Mike Gu contributed to this story.



From left: The Sichuan-Xizang Highway winds its way through the Xizang city of Chamdo. TANG DEHONG / FOR CHINA DAILY The Lhasa-Nagchu high-grade highway, which is a part of the upgraded Qinghai-Xizang Highway, is near completion. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Xizang highways reflect nation's spirit

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Construction and maintenance of roads vital to region's trade and development

At the southern side of Beijing's Tian'anmen Square, visitors can easily find a "zero-kilometer" sign. This marks the starting point of China's extensive highway network that reaches various destinations.

One such destination is in Lhasa, the capital city of the Xizang autonomous region. The destination is marked by a sign that is more conspicuous than the one in Beijing.

The sign is a 20-meter-tall stone stele with inscriptions reading "Sichuan-Xizang and Qinghai-Xizang Highways Monument". It was dedicated to the memory of the workers — mostly soldiers — who devoted their lives to the construction of the two historic roads into Xizang.

In December 1954, the two highways were put into service, ending Tibet's reliance on men, horses and camels to transport goods.

The opening of the highways has played a crucial role in the development of Xizang.

Before the operation of the two roads, trade and travel between Xizang and the rest of the country were made possible through the ancient Tea-Horse Road and Tang-Tibet Road that links Sichuan and Qinghai provinces respectively.

For hundreds of years, cargoes were carried by camels and horses on the two roads and a single trip usually took several months. The low efficiency of transport severely hindered the development of Xizang.

The historic change happened in the early 1950s, with the construction of the Sichuan-Xizang and Qinghai-Xizang highways.

The Sichuan-Xizang Highway is a high-elevation road starting from Chengdu, Sichuan province, in the east and ending at Lhasa, in the west. The highway has two routes — the south line with a length of 2,115 kilometers and the north line which spans 2,414 km.

Construction of the highway started in April 1950, when the road builders cleared mountains and crossed waters, and it was finally opened for traffic on Dec 25, 1954.

Starting from Xining, capital of Qinghai province, the Qinghai-Xizang Highway stretches 1,947 km into Xizang with an average elevation of above 4,000 meters. Winding along the Kunlun Mountains, Tangula Mountains, Tuotuo River and vast grasslands, it began construction on May 11, 1954, and was also opened to traffic on Dec 25, 1954.

Due to the harsh natural environment along the roads, the two projects were called by many "a miracle of road construction in the world". More than 3,000 people died during their construction.

After the construction was completed, the maintenance of the two roads was also called another miraculous achievement of the world because of the extremely challenging natural environment.

According to Ma Guodong, a civil engineering expert at the Ministry of Transport, what made the miraculous achievements possible are the "Two Roads Spirits" that feature great courage, long-term dedication and the unity of people of various ethnicities, during the construction and maintenance of the roads.

"The Two Roads Spirits have thrived for decades, and will continue to be cherished by the people in Xizang and other regions along the roads, as a source of inspiration to drive further progress," Ma said.

The spirits have also been inscribed on the Sichuan-Xizang and Qinghai-Xizang Highways Monument. While giving a brief retrospective of the history of the roads' construction, the inscriptions state that the great spirits of road builders and workers should be remembered forever.

Civil engineering miracle

When the 18th Army of the People's Liberation Army was ready to enter Xizang for a peaceful liberation of the region in early 1950, they were required by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China to build a modern highway for the better socioeconomic development of Xizang.

Construction of the Sichuan-Xizang Highway began in April 1950. At an oath-taking rally held in March, Zhang Guohua, commander of the army, called on the soldiers to renew their courage to tackle all the challenges for a new mission that was even tougher than the battles they had faced.



Clockwise from left: Workers cleave mountains to build the Sichuan-Xizang Highway. A ceremony is held in Lhasa on Dec 25, 1954 to celebrate the operation of the Sichuan-Xizang and Qinghai-Xizang highways. The two roads have become the major channels for cargo transportation to and from Xizang from the very beginning of their operation. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



The construction of the highway needed to cross dozens of snow-covered mountains and torrential rivers. This route planning was crucial for the project.

Survey and route planning were carried out section by section, just slightly ahead of the construction process due to a tight schedule. Yu Jiong, a senior civil engineer from Sichuan, was tasked with heading a team for route survey and planning.

Their mission spanned one year and three months, traveling more than 4,000 km through the high mountains and across deep rivers. They proposed seven routes for comparison and offered suggestions for the decision-makers to choose the best one.

With high elevation and harsh geographical conditions, the building of the Sichuan-Xizang Highway was an unprecedented challenge to highway construction.

Wang Changwei is the daughter of Wang Qimei, then deputy political commissar of the army. She recalled what her father told her about the difficulties in roadbuilding.

"When construction took place in high-altitude areas in the winter, extreme coldness was the biggest challenge that the soldiers had to overcome," she cited from what her father told her. "Sometimes their hands would be stuck to the steel chisels when they were drilling blast holes on the cliffs."

Landslides, collapse of mountain slopes, falling rocks and high-altitude sickness happened frequently, which could easily take the lives of the soldiers and workers. Each kilometer of the highway was built at the cost of the life of one builder.

Strategic vision

Construction of the Qinghai-Xizang Highway began on May 11, 1954. When talking about this project, Mu Shengzhong is the most frequently mentioned name.

In early 1950, Mu was appointed as the political commissar of the Independent

Division of the 18th Army, which was ordered by the CPC Central Committee to enter Xizang via Qinghai. This was a route roughly in line with the ancient Tang-Tibet Road, along which, famed early Tang Dynasty (618-907) Princess Wencheng traveled to Xizang for a historic marriage with Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo.

The Independent Division began its journey from Lanzhou, capital city of Northwest China's Gansu province, on July 11, 1950 and arrived in Lhasa in December that year.

In the following two years, Mu headed the mission of transporting supplies to Xizang several times. Every time he traveled, he would pay attention to and record the topographic features and weather conditions of the routes and produce a research report later.

The trips spurred Mu to propose the building of another highway to link Qinghai and Xizang, which was not in the central authorities' plan originally.

Mu was not a civil engineer by profession. But he had a strong willingness to learn, to research, to think and to act. And he had a strategic vision to guide his actions.

On another mission to Beijing in May 1953 to receive supplies, he chose to travel through the Tea-Horse route, where the construction of the Sichuan-Xizang Highway was going on. The trip was aimed at comparing this southern route and the Qinghai-Xizang route that he had studied for a long time.

Mu found that the Sichuan-Xizang Highway would have its limits even after its operation — natural conditions like snow, fog, flooding and landslides would be frequent challenges that could not be easily overcome by human efforts. In comparison, a Qinghai-Xizang highway could be easier to build and maintain because of the flat terrain and dry weather, despite the higher altitude.

During that time in Beijing, he put forward a formal proposal for building the Qinghai-Xizang Highway — with research reports

attached — to the central authorities. To his delight, the proposal was quickly approved.

On May 11, 1954, Mu headed thousands of construction workers and engineers to begin the highway's construction from Qinghai's Golmud.

Thanks to the scientific planning and the workers' morale of "fearing neither hardship nor death", the road's construction proceeded at an astonishing efficiency. It was opened to traffic on Dec 25, 1954.

During the process of construction, Mu was more like a soldier charging on the frontlines instead of an officer commanding in the rear. He took part in heavy manual work alongside the ordinary workers.

The general was fully aware of the danger of laboring in high-altitude areas, which could easily take one's life. "If I die in building the road, just bury me on the site," he said. "If I die afterward, just throw my ashes along the road."

He fulfilled his promise. After he died in 1994, his ashes were thrown along the road.

Long-term devotion

With the two highways in place, their maintenance posed a great challenge. However, the challenge has been tackled over the years because of the long-term devotion of road maintenance workers.

Both on the Qinghai-Xizang or Sichuan-Xizang lines, to keep the traffic open and smooth in adverse natural conditions like blizzards, floods, landslides and the thawing of frozen soil is not an easy job for road maintenance workers. But they succeeded as a result of painstaking efforts.

On the Qinghai-Xizang Highway, the famed Road Maintenance Station 109 is called the "No 1 road maintenance station under the heaven" because it is located at the Tangula Pass with an altitude of more than 5,200 meters — the highest point of the road.

At the border of Xizang and Qinghai, this is

an important facility ensuring the safe operations of the highway, seeing an annual traffic volume of more than 1.3 million vehicles, according to the latest statistics of the Qinghai-Xizang Highway Management Bureau.

For the maintenance workers there, it can be a tough life. In addition to the extremely high altitude and isolation from the rest of the world, blizzards that are frequent on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau from October to April, are a major threat to the lives of workers and the operation of the road. Despite the difficulties, workers there have seen keeping the highway running smoothly as a lifelong mission.

Bacha, 76, was the former chief of the station. He worked there for decades since being employed there in 1962.

Bacha said his career was inspired by the previous generation of road maintenance workers, who showed him the precious values of benevolence, unity, sense of responsibility and long-term devotion.

He said that his first acquaintance with the workers was some day in 1961. That period saw a severe natural disaster throughout the country and an inadequate food supply was a challenge facing many people.

Bacha once lingered around this station in his neighborhood, in the hope of finding something to eat.

He said the chief of the station at that time, who was surnamed Zhang, gave him a piece of steamed bun, which was the last portion of his daily food supply. In the following days, other workers there did the same for him.

In his gratitude, Bacha visited the station frequently, trying to help with cooking and washing. He was also employed by the station when he reached working age in 1962. Since then, he worked there for more than 30 years.

Among the many critical moments in the history of the highway's maintenance, Bacha said the most unforgettable one was a big blizzard in October 1985, which had covered nine counties in Xizang's Nagchu prefecture.

When disaster victims were badly in need of supplies for relief, the rescue fleets were stranded at the snow-blocked Tangula Pass.

"Under the temperature of -40 C, we worked day and night, shoveling the snow off the road, and finally cleared the way for vehicles," Bacha said.

The heavy workload in extreme weather and high altitude caused many health problems for workers, with frostbite as the slightest and severe pneumonia as the most severe.

However, Bacha and his colleagues felt relieved when there was no single casualty case reported in disaster-hit regions.

Progress going on

Inspired by the Two Roads Spirits created by the road builders and maintenance workers, the people of Xizang have been devoting more energy to driving the development of the local transport industry and have made more achievements.

The two highways have developed into the key economic arteries of Xizang, shouldering more than 90 percent of the freight transportation volume entering and exiting the region, Dawa Ngodrub, deputy head of Xizang's transportation department, said at a recent news conference.

Based on the success of the two highways, the transport network in Xizang has increased steadily.

The Xinjiang-Xizang Highway and the Yunnan-Xizang Highway became operational in 1957 and 1976 respectively, forming an outbound highway network reaching all of Xizang's neighboring regions within the territory of China. Inside Xizang, a highway linking Metog county in Nyingchi city was opened to traffic in 2013, breaking the blockage to China's last county without road access.

The total distance of roads opened in Xizang has reached 123,300 km. As of the end of 2023, 93,000 km of the roads were in rural areas. Townships and administrative villages are now 100 percent accessible.

The Qinghai-Xizang Railway became operational in 2006. The operation of the Lhasa-Nyingchi Railway began in 2020.

Travel to, from and inside Xizang is now more convenient with the development of comprehensive transport networks of highways, railways and civil aviation.



The Qinghai-Xizang Highway passes one of the highest grasslands in the world. MO FENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

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Shenzhen to issue new offshore bonds in HK

By OSWALD CHAN in Hong Kong
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The Shenzhen municipal government in Guangdong province will issue offshore renminbi-denominated bonds in Hong Kong for the fourth time since 2021, further bolstering Hong Kong-Shenzhen financial collaboration by encouraging more mainland governments and corporate issuers to tap Hong Kong's fund-raising platform for channelling capital to promote regional development.

The bond issuance amount will be up to 7 billion yuan (\$980 million), with maturities of two years, three years, five years and 10 years, with the bulk being social responsibility bonds, low-carbon city-themed green bonds and sustainable development bonds.

Among them, the 10-year tranche is the first time a mainland municipal government will issue outside of the Chinese mainland. It is also the first time that Shenzhen will issue green bonds themed around promoting a low-carbon city.

"The bond issuance move enriches the product types of offshore yuan-denominated financial products and the vitality of the yuan-denominated bond market in Hong Kong, bolstering yuan internationalization and upholding the central government's vision of maintaining Hong Kong as an international financial center," Hong Kong Deputy Financial Secretary Michael Wong Wai-lun said during the bond issuance roadshow.

The roadshow on Wednesday invited representatives of 33 investment institutions from countries such as Canada, South Korea and the United Kingdom.

"While Shenzhen's bond issuances in Hong Kong are an important achievement of the city's reform pilots, it is also a milestone for Shenzhen and

Hong Kong to strengthen financial cooperation and promote the interconnection of capital markets in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, making new and greater contributions to building a world-class city cluster," added Li Lirong, deputy director of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the Shenzhen municipal government.

The municipal government had issued a total of 15 billion yuan of offshore renminbi-denominated government bonds in Hong Kong for three consecutive years since 2021.

In 2023, Shenzhen's total economic output reached 3.46 trillion yuan and its total export volume has ranked first among mainland cities for 30 consecutive years. In the first half of 2024, the city's total economic value was 1.73 trillion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 5.9 percent, the municipal government said.

"With a longer term of maturities in this bond issuance, this will exert a positive and supportive impact on the offshore yuan-denominated bond market by enriching product types," Hong Kong Monetary Authority Executive Director (External) Kenneth Hui Wai-chi added.

"The decision by the Shenzhen government to issue a 10-year bond on top of a two-year bond, a three-year bond and a five-year bond for the first time, will help establish a more comprehensive yield curve for local governments by creating a benchmark for long-term maturities, and improve the interest rate transmission mechanism," said Zhao Zhongliang, head of the finance bureau of Shenzhen.

"By introducing a long-term bond product, Shenzhen can diversify the product structure of the offshore renminbi market that can offer a wider range of investment choices for investors," Zhao said.

Briefly

Guangxi ships more goods to Vietnam

In the first seven months of 2024, a total of 6,850 twenty-foot equivalent unit containers of goods were shipped via China-Vietnam freight trains departing from South China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, marking a 16-fold increase year-on-year, according to China Railway Nanning Group Co Ltd. In July, a total of 1,922 TEU containers were shipped, surpassing the total shipment volume for the entire first quarter of this year. The China-Vietnam freight train service, launched in November 2017, has seen the number of trains rise from fewer than five per month to

three trains per week.

Central bank conducts reverse repos

China's central bank conducted 7.1 billion yuan (\$993.6 million) of seven-day reverse repos at an interest rate of 1.7 percent on Thursday. The move aims to keep liquidity reasonable and ample in the banking system, the People's Bank of China said. A reverse repo is a process in which the central bank purchases securities from commercial banks through bidding, with an agreement to sell them back in the future.

XINHUA — CHINA DAILY



A view of a plant of China Baowu Steel Group Corp in Ezhou, Hubei province. LI YALONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Steel industry to further green push

Goal is sustainable and high-quality development despite challenges

By LIU ZHIHUA
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China's steel industry is expected to further green transformation in pursuit of sustainable and high-quality development despite challenges, experts and government officials said.

Liu Bingjiang, chief engineer of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, stressed the importance of maintaining strategic focus and tenacity within the industry for advancing low-carbon transformation.

"Supported by digital and intelligent advancements, we are integrating green practices into the steel industry, persistently advancing high-quality development by safeguarding our ecological and environmental integrity," Liu said. The steel industry has been playing a substantial role in enhancing China's air quality through a series of initiatives like supply-side structural reform, ultra-low emission transformation and vigorous energy efficiency enhancement programs.

"Yet, the industry continues to grapple with the arduous tasks of pollution reduction and carbon mitigation, with underlying structural issues yet to be fully addressed," he said.

"With just over a year remaining to finalize the ultra-low emission transformation of the steel industry,

the goal for (more than) 80 percent of the country's crude steel production capacity to meet the transformation targets remains unchanged."

Currently, 43 percent of China's crude steel production capacity has completed full-process ultra-low emission transformation, and 39 percent has completed the transformation in key links, data from the ministry showed.

The steel industry's emissions have decreased by 60 percent, with emission performance reaching international leading levels, compared to 2018.

The average PM2.5 concentration in the 10 cities with top steel production capacities decreased by 24 percent in 2023 compared to 2018. Among them, the average PM2.5 concentration decreased by 31 percent and 30 percent over the period in Tangshan and Handan in Hebei province, respectively, which are the top two cities for crude steel production in China.

In addition, by the end of 2023, the profitability of steel enterprises that had completed the ultra-low emission transformation was 2.6 times that of other steel enterprises.

Ding Zhijun, an official of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, highlighted the steel industry's significant contribution to the national economy and the promotion of new industrialization.

He said that accelerating the green and low-carbon transformation of the steel industry is essential for building a modern industrial system and promoting new industrialization.

Energy conservation and emission reductions are the only way forward for the high-quality development of the steel industry, he said.

Huang Dao, deputy chief engineer of the China Iron and Steel Association, highlighted the important role of policies in promoting the green, low-carbon and high-quality development of the steel industry.

The advancement of energy conservation and carbon reduction initiatives within China's steel industry should be meticulously aligned with policy mandates. It is essential to translate policy initiatives into tangible actions by the enterprises within the industry, he said.

Through the three key actions of ultra-low emission transformation, vigorous energy efficiency enhancement and digital transition, the industry should foster collaborative growth with partners in the green production ecosystem, thereby generating a stronger collective drive and impetus toward a green, low-carbon economy, he said.

They made the remarks at a forum on energy conservation and carbon emission reduction of the steel industry, which was held recently by the China Metallurgical Industry Planning and Research Institute in Beijing.

Beauty giants adapting to Chinese preferences

By WANG ZHUOQIONG
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International beauty and skincare giants in China are shifting their focus to performance-based products from luxury offerings to better serve increasingly practical Chinese consumers.

This trend reflects a strategic adaptation as companies like L'Oreal and Procter & Gamble respond to changing consumer preferences in China, where functionality and value for money are becoming more important than high-end branding.

Tina He, a beauty analyst at Mintel Group, a consumer product consultancy, said: "Chinese consumers are becoming more practical, prioritizing function-based quality over high-end price tags. This shift in consumer behavior presents an opportunity for high-end skincare brands to attract new customers by offering more entry-level products."

First-half global sales of L'Oreal, the global beauty leader, rose 7.3 percent year-on-year to 22.12 billion euros (\$24.21 billion), driven by strong performance across all divisions, particularly in dermatological beauty and consumer products.



This shift in consumer behavior presents an opportunity for high-end skincare brands to attract new customers by offering more entry-level products."

Tina He,
beauty analyst at Mintel Group

Nicolas Hieronimus, CEO of L'Oreal, said he is pleased with the company's performance, highlighting the acceleration of L'Oreal Luxe, the dynamism of consumer products and continued market share gains in dermatological beauty and professional products, which saw a remarkable 16.4 percent like-for-like growth (that is, sales growth achieved by the same number of stores a year ago — a measure adjusted for new or divested businesses).

On the Chinese mainland, L'Oreal's dermatological division has made significant strides, with SkinCeuticals and CeraVe leading the charge. However, the beauty market in China faced a downturn in the second quarter, partly due to tough comparisons with the previous year and ongoing low consumer confidence, said the company.

In North Asia, growth was primarily led by dermatological beauty and professional products, bolstered by the success of Kerastase. L'Oreal Paris and Maybelline New York drove low single-digit growth in the consumer products division, according to its financial report.

Meanwhile, P&G, another international beauty giant, reported a 9 percent year-on-year decline in fiscal year 2024 in China, due to soft market conditions and specific challenges faced by its SK-II brand. Despite these setbacks, P&G's baby care business saw a 6 percent year-on-year sales growth.

Andre Schulten, chief financial officer of P&G, said of the Chinese market prospects, "We expect it over time to go to maybe mid singles (single adults aged 31 to 45), so more in line with what we see in other developed markets."

Analyst He said Chinese domestic beauty brands should use unique ingredients like herbs to differentiate themselves in the market.



An employee works on a solar panel production line in Suqian, Jiangsu province. WANG LI / FOR CHINA DAILY

China to overhaul electricity system for green growth, energy security

China has unveiled an action plan to speed up the building of a "new electricity system" as part of the country's efforts to pursue low-carbon development and ensure energy security.

The plan, jointly issued by the National Development and Reform Commission, the National Energy Administration (NEA) and the National Data Administration, outlines steps to be taken in nine areas between 2024 and 2027.

Chinese authorities will work to increase the transmission of clean electricity through the grid using advanced power generation, regulation and control technologies.

As wind and solar power generation in China's deserts and desertified areas is increasing, there is a growing need to transmit the clean energy to electricity-consuming regions, the NEA said in a news release on the plan.

China aims to raise the total installed capacity of wind and solar power generation facilities in deserts and desertified areas to 455 million kilowatts by 2030. Currently, cross-regional transmission lines mainly transport coal and hydro power.

In the document, China also plans to upgrade its coal-fired power plants to achieve a "substantial reduction" in carbon emissions.

"Coal-fired power will remain a crucial source of reliable electricity supply in our country. To achieve the goal of peaking carbon emissions, it is necessary to accelerate the low-carbon transformation (of this sector)," the NEA said.

China's new-energy vehicle market has been steadily advancing in recent years, with sales of such vehicles up 32 percent in the first half of 2024, creating enormous demand for charging facilities in the country.

In the plan, China pledges to expand charging infrastructure for electric vehicles, strengthen the integration and interaction between EVs and the power grid, and establish an array of standards for charging infrastructure.

By the end of June, the total number of charging piles in China had reached 10.24 million units, an increase of 54 percent year-on-year, official data showed.

Last week, an NEA spokesman said that his administration was promoting the building of charging facilities in rural areas to tap the potential of EV sales, and one-third of the country's provincial-level regions had built charging piles in towns and villages.

Tuesday's document also specifies measures aimed at ensuring the stable operation of China's electricity system and boosting the development of the power

distribution network.

China's electricity consumption, a key barometer of economic activity, recorded robust expansion in the first half of this year, climbing 8.1 percent to nearly 4.66 trillion kilowatt-hours. To power the world's second-largest economy, the country needs a reliable supply of electricity.

Adhering to the path of green development, China has committed to the dual carbon goals of peaking carbon emissions by 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality by 2060, in a much shorter time span compared with developed countries.

XINHUA — CHINA DAILY

COMMENT

Editorials

PLA has South China Sea showboating of US and some of its allies under control

Australia, Canada, the Philippines and the United States began a two-day air and naval exercise on Wednesday in disputed waters in the South China Sea.

Samuel Paparo, who heads the US "Indo-Pacific" Command, said in a joint statement that the maneuvers were to uphold "unhindered" passage in the South China Sea, and the four nations "stand together to address common maritime challenges and underscore our shared dedication to upholding international law and the rules-based order".

In an apparent response to their show of force in the waters, the Southern Theater Command of the People's Liberation Army organized a joint combat patrol in the sea and airspace near Huangyan Island in the South China Sea to test the reconnaissance and early warning, rapid mobility, and joint strike capabilities of the theater troops.

When it comes to military activities that disrupt stability in the South China Sea, create hotspot issues, and undermine regional peace and stability, the PLA said in a news release that "all is under control".

According to the Philippine military, three Chinese navy ships "tailed" the allies' maneuvers off the western coast of the Philippines.

All the regional countries, including the Philippines, are well aware that such exercises are just an excuse for the US to flex its muscles in the Asia-Pacific as an integral part of its overall China-containment strategy.

The waters of the South China Sea would arguably be home to the most peaceful and stable international trade routes were it not for the military activities of the US and some of its allies. Calling white black, Washington simply coerces and cajoles US allies in the region and beyond to sail under its false colors.

Most of its allies, including the other three countries taking part in the exercise this time, as well as Japan, have actually kept their communication channels with China open and stable. Their efforts to strengthen win-win cooperation and communication with China have markedly intensified recently, taking advantage of many multilateral and bilateral occasions.

The uncertainties in the US' domestic political situation are growing with the approach of the presidential election, and an increasing number of US allies have begun distancing themselves from the Joe Biden administration's China-containment strategy, particularly in the fields of economy, industry, trade and technology, where they were sustaining huge losses in exchange for a thank-you pat on the back from the US. The de facto bankruptcy of the Biden administration's "chip war" testifies to the reluctance of the US' allies to go all-in with the US.

The only reason why the US club still seems in good shape when it comes to security-related initiatives is that the other club members have nothing to lose by acquiescing to the US' demands on this front as long as there is no open conflict with China.

They are also convinced that Beijing will clearly differentiate them from the US provided they maintain healthy and stable bilateral ties with China, discerning their roles, intentions and circumstances are distinct from those of the US.

Beijing's willingness and openness to maintain normal and relations with them, despite their provocative antics, is in sharp contrast with Washington's coercive and hypocritical approach to relations with them. The more the latter tries to force its allies to stay in rank, the more they will balk at the fence. The US values displays of loyalty, however shallow; China cares about practical results.

By doubling down on its China-containment endeavors, the Biden administration is trying to give US voters an impression that "all is under control". But the harder it does that, the more it sends the opposite message.

Japan's nuclear plea lacks usual emotive power

Seventy-nine years ago on Aug 9, a United States B-29 bomber dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Nagasaki, killing around 40,000 people in an instant, and another 30,000 from radiation poisoning by the end of the year.

Three days before that, a nuclear weapon was used for the first time, when the US dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima, killing some 70,000 people instantly, and tens of thousands more from radiation poisoning within a year.

Those have been the only times nuclear weapons have been used in war since their development. The deaths and devastation they caused led to the establishment of what was intended to be a strict international regime to prevent the proliferation and use of such lethal weapons of mass destruction.

Despite the obvious impossibility of abolishing nuclear weapons any time soon, a global consensus has been maintained against their proliferation and use.

The annual memorial events in Hiroshima and Nagasaki have thus become fitting occasions for the international community to renew the collective commitment to this regime and a future free of nuclear weapons.

Japan, as the first and only victim of nuclear attacks to date, has taken advantage of the ordeal to remind the rest of the world of the horrors of a nuclear apocalypse. And rightly so.

At Tuesday's commemoration, citing "an imminent risk to human survival", the mayor of Hiroshima described the abolition of nuclear weapons as "a pressing and real issue that we should desperately engage in". Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida vowed to do his utmost in pursuing "realistic and practical measures" to build momentum toward that goal within the international community.

But such rhetoric does not ring with the same emotive power this year as it used to, given Japan's own renewed embracing of nuclear weapons.

While Japan has adopted and upheld the Three Non-Nuclear Principles, under which it has pledged non-possession, non-production and non-introduction of nuclear weapons, it has not forsaken the US' extended nuclear deterrence as an integral part of its security guarantee.

It did a disservice to the commemorations' no-nuclear plea that came just days after Tokyo and Washington reaffirmed the latter's commitment to "extended deterrence", which includes nuclear weapons, for the former's protection.

No wonder the Russian ambassador to Japan said on Monday the US-Japan alliance is posing a nuclear threat to its neighborhood. The Russian diplomat put Kishida's strong support for the so-called extended deterrence as "particularly cynical" given the anniversary of the atomic bombings.

Tokyo cites Russian threats of the use of nuclear weapons in its ongoing conflict with Ukraine as well as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's development of nuclear weapons to support its need for the US' nuclear security umbrella.

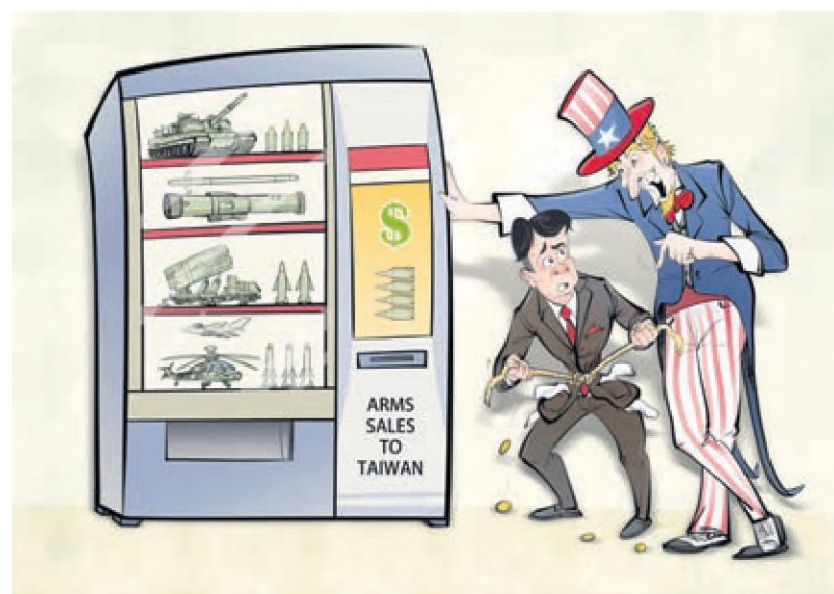
To the general public, particularly people in neighboring countries, however, Japan's calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons appears conspicuously ironic this year given it is discharging nuclear-contaminated water into the ocean in open disregard of nuclear safety. Immediately following the passionate appeals from Hiroshima, Japan started its eighth release of such water from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. Reportedly, 7,800 tons of wastewater will be discharged by Aug 25.

A spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Tokyo has criticized the Japanese side for being "irresponsible" by ignoring international concerns. Multiple countries, including China, have expressed concerns about the safety of the discharges, the long-term reliability of the purification facilities, and the effectiveness of monitoring arrangements.

It is fully justified for China to urge Japan to cooperate in setting up an independent international monitoring mechanism and allowing the substantive participation of stakeholders.

The discharge of nuclear-contaminated water from the Fukushima nuclear power plant "is by no means a private matter of the Japanese family"; it concerns the global marine environment and the health of all humankind.

Luo Jie



Opinion Line

Young players come of age at this year's Paris Olympics

The Paris Olympics is a stage for athletes to show their character. Zheng Qinwen, the women's singles tennis player, and the Chinese men's swimming team made history, breaking the long-standing Western monopoly in these categories and demonstrating the confidence of the young Chinese generation.

Zheng, 21, is the first Chinese and/or Asian player to make it to the Olympic women's tennis final and win gold. Chinese swimmer Pan Zhanle not only won gold in the men's 100-meter freestyle with a new record time of 46.40 seconds. In the men's 4x100 meter medley relay, China broke the United States' 40-year gold medal monopoly to win in 3 minutes 27.46 seconds, drawing global attention and debate.

For a long time, Western countries have dominated the field of tennis and swimming, not only because training is expensive, but also

because some developing countries lack the foundation for these sport events. This also creates a certain stereotype that African players perform better in track and field events that rely on power or endurance, Asian players are mainly good at diving, shooting, gymnastics, small ball and other technical sports, while European and American players have an advantage in swimming, tennis, big ball and canoeing and other fields that require both skill and power.

Pan, 20, and his Chinese peers defied the stereotype in Paris by being physically stronger and faster than their US competitors, and demonstrated to the world the confidence and ability of the Chinese younger generation.

Zheng said his motivation came from watching former Chinese 110-meter hurdler Liu Xiang make history at the 2004 Athens Olympics to motivate herself.

The success of these Chinese athletes in Paris also comes from a more international environment, scientific way of training, and their continuous participation in world sports events which has improved their competitiveness.

There is no doubt that China has written a new Olympic chapter in the fields of tennis and swimming, which were traditionally dominated by participants from Western countries. These improved performances come from China's more open environment and strong scientific, technological and economic hard power. In the future, whether it is in sports, science and technology, culture and other fields, the Chinese people will continue to work hard, actively participate in global competition in a more open environment, and constantly surpass themselves with stronger national confidence and scientific and technological strength to make new achievements.

— 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS HERALD

Brain-computer interface takes baby steps forward

Fudan University in Shanghai has set up a Neuromodulation and Brain-Machine Interface Center on Aug 3, just a day after Elon Musk said that Neuralink had implanted a brain-computer interface into a second patient. The company implanted a device into the brain of a paralyzed patient to allow the latter to use digital devices via the mind in January.

The brain-computer interface involves a series of technologies across various research fields. Medical science is used to detect and interpret the brain's signals, material science to produce wires that won't harm the part of the brain where they are implanted, chip science to

minimize the size of the implanted device and the heat it generates, and computing science to decode the brain's signals and code corresponding signals to send back. The new research center is bringing together and tapping the services of hospitals, a big data institute, a national key lab on integrated circuits, as well as institutes on brain science and technologies.

The rich research resources have laid a sound basis for the domestic research team to take steps forward in brain-computer interface technology, which has been developing from the stage of just reading content emanating from human brains to writing desired content to send back to the brain; the latter

helps the visually impaired to "see" the world by receiving signals that directly go to their brains.

Now an emerging hot research topic is an interface based on the former two, so that a patient with the brain-computer interface implant can control things by merely thinking about them. This will help people with paralysis to move robotic arms and fingers. Yet this is still one step from the final integration of the human brain and cyber intelligence in which the former can absorb knowledge from digital reserves or even duplicate a mind in the digital space. The brain-computer interface technology is still in its infancy.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Giving the spur to world-class Chinese enterprises

This year, 133 Chinese enterprises entered the Fortune Global 500 list. However, it should also be noted that while some leading enterprises in some industries have formed strong international competitiveness, compared with world-class enterprises, Chinese enterprises still have much room for improvement in research and development, branding and management.

The central authorities have recently stressed the need to promote entrepreneurship and accelerate the construction of world-class enterprises as a priority in the latest round of reform and opening-up and in the pursuit of innovation and fair competition.

To this effect, the government should not only double down on its efforts to improve the market environment, but also the cultivation of entrepreneurial spirit as a driving force.

The authorities should treat all types of enterprises equally and ensure that private enterprises have access to production factors and the market on an equal footing with State-owned enterprises. Access to the property market and bankruptcy exit should be lubricated, as these can contribute to healthy market competition. The government should enhance its supervision and improve the services it provides so as to solve the practical problems of enterprises. The development of world-class companies cannot be independent from that of the rule-of-law and well-performing governance.

Entrepreneurship is the intellectual support and driving force for enterprises to create greater economic and social value. The government should guide entrepreneurs to closely follow innovation to improve their core competitiveness and risk resistance capabilities, actively promote technological

innovation, management innovation, and business model innovation.

The authorities should also create the necessary conditions to encourage and guide entrepreneurs to broaden their international vision, and help the enterprise to go global with products, technologies, standards, and brands. At the same time, the enterprises need to substantially improve their ability to adapt to changes in the international market and prevent risks in the international market, and enhance their global resource allocation and integration capabilities.

That being said, entrepreneurs should take advantage of the support of the country to actively practice the entrepreneurial spirit, improve the efficiency of enterprise resource utilization and management level, so they can add momentum and vitality to the country's economic growth.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

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COMMENT

Cai Rong

Institutional opening-up for global integration

China was the world's largest exporter and second-largest recipient of foreign direct investment in 2023, marking a milestone in its opening-up policy. To further integrate into the global economy and contribute more meaningfully to global development, the recent third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China outlined five key areas for the next phase of opening-up: steadily expanding institutional opening-up, deepening foreign trade structural reform, further reforming the management systems for inward and outward investment, optimizing the layout for regional opening-up, and refining the mechanisms for high-quality cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative.

Institutional opening-up means a higher level of opening-up. It aims to align domestic institutional frameworks with international trade and economic rules, and break down systemic and regulatory barriers to enable the free flow and efficient allocation of resources between domestic and international markets.

First, institutional opening-up is set to become a driver of high-quality development. As global trade rules evolve, traditional models of opening-up are no longer sufficient to promote foreign trade. Institutional opening-up focuses on the alignment and coordination of rules, standards, and systems, helping optimize the domestic business environment, improve economic efficiency, and provide robust institutional support for China's foreign trade, investment and economic cooperation. This will facilitate the shift from high-speed growth to high-quality development.

Second, institutional opening-up will enhance the stability and prosperity of the global supply chains. As the world's largest manufacturing country and the second-largest economy, China plays a critical role in the global supply chains. By deepening institutional opening-up, China can strengthen cooperation with other countries, and help integrate and optimize the global supply chains, contributing to global economic stability and fostering shared prosperity.

Third, institutional opening-up will also help reform the global economic governance system. China has always advocated for a multilateral trading system centered on the World Trade Organization, promoted regional trade agreements such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, and sought the membership of free trade agreements like the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement. By deepening institutional opening-up, China aims to influence global economic governance and contribute to the creation of a fairer international economic order.

China is now a leading player in international trade. In 2023, its exports

reached \$3.38 trillion, much higher than the second-largest exporter, the United States. According to the WTO, China has become a major trading partner of more than 120 countries and regions, maintaining its position as the world's largest goods trading country for several years.

Besides, China's trade network continues to expand. By the end of 2023, China had signed 22 free trade agreements with 29 countries and regions, which account for about one-third of its total foreign trade. The trade volume under the framework of the RCEP reached 12.6 trillion yuan (\$1.73 trillion) in 2023, a 5.3 percent increase from the year before the agreement came into effect in 2022. China's exports to the other RCEP member states grew by 16.6 percent, 4.6 percentage points higher than its overall export growth during the same period.

China is also a major international investor. In 2023, the country ranked second globally in direct investment destination (after the United States) and third in direct investment sources (after the US and Japan). Despite a notable decline in global cross-border investment, China's

share of both FDI and ODI has significantly increased.

In the financial sector, China has gradually eased market access restrictions for foreign investment, including removing limits on foreign ownership in banking and insurance institutions. By the end of last year, foreign banks and insurance firms had established many branches in China, significantly increasing their total assets and market share.

Yet China should engage in more cooperation negotiations to create an environment conducive to international trade. The CPTPP is a high-standard free trade agreement, and China could leverage the RCEP negotiation mechanism to align the rules on e-commerce, intellectual property rights protection and competition policy with those of the CPTPP.

Further, by joining the DEPA, a crucial digital economy agreement, China can play a bigger role in global digital governance.

Making China's trade rules compatible with new global trade rules and exploring pilot programs in specific industries or regions are important tasks the govern-

ment needs to fulfill. And by improving the negative list management and further opening up the financial market, the government can benefit China's financial sector. China should also expeditiously establish a cross-border payment system and strengthen financial security mechanisms.

Last, China should continue to implement existing multilateral and bilateral trade agreements, and promote sustained and healthy growth in foreign trade and investment. The RCEP has already reduced regional trade costs and improved supply chain links, bringing tangible benefits to China's trade partners. And by refining the mechanisms for high-quality cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative and leveraging existing agreements, China can harness advanced resources, eliminate barriers to marketization, and unleash its vast market potential.

The author is deputy secretary-general of the Peking University HSBC Business School Think Tank. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Jasna Plevnik

No power can destroy the Chinese dream

Leaders in Europe and the United States, multinational corporations and international institutions are studying the resolution of the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China to get an idea about China's new reform path, because it will influence the global economy.

The third plenary session, which concluded on July 18, ushered in a new period of reform, opening-up and socialist modernization. "It marked the start of a new journey of comprehensively deepening reform in the new era with systematic and holistic plans" to advance Chinese modernization and realize national rejuvenation, as well as achieve high-quality development and improve people's livelihoods.

The effects of this phase of Chinese modernization will also spill over to the Belt and Road Initiative, Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative.

Despite some economists and other experts claiming that China's economic growth has already peaked and may not grow further, the Chinese economy has continued to grow since the third plenary session of the 11th CPC Central Committee in 1978 which signaled the launch of reform and opening-up. China's economic growth would not have continued for so long if its development model was not upgraded to adapt to the changing domestic and global situations.

How does the world react to China's new transformative path toward building an innovative, green and smart society through further advancement of its forces

in green technologies, AI, and semiconductors which are crucial for every country's growth and favourable positioning in the global economy?

China's investments in Hungary can be seen as part of China's "shared development" praxis in high-quality manufacturing. At the end of last year, BYD announced it would build an electric vehicle (EV) manufacturing factory in Hungary to consolidate its presence in the European Union and ensure its EVs conform to the EU's standards. In July, BYD signed an agreement with Turkiye to establish an EV plant there to realize the same goal.

Recently, Italy and China, which already are comprehensive strategic partners, signed a three-year action plan to deepen cooperation in sectors such as technology, infrastructure and green energy, bucking the trends of "de-globalization", "decoupling" and protectionism.

Italy sees China's breakthroughs in high-tech as an opportunity for Italian industries and enterprises to upgrade their technologies and engage in high-quality economic cooperation with their Chinese counterparts. Perhaps the same thinking prompted Stellantis, a multinational automobile manufacturing corporation formed in 2021 through the merger of Italian-American conglomerate Fiat Chrysler Automobiles and the French PSA Group, to enter into a joint venture with Leapmotor, a Hangzhou-based company specializing in develop-

ing EVs, three months ago.

By deepening bilateral and multinational cooperation with other economies in green technologies and products, Italy can set an example for other EU member states that plan to accelerate their green transition.

Equally important, according to official data, Germany's investment in China grew by 18.1 percent in the first six months of this year, indicating confidence that the Chinese economy will continue to grow. In fact, more and more foreign direct investment is flowing into China's hi-tech manufacturing sector, which will help China realize reform goals.

European countries' deepening cooperation with China to develop high-quality products and services is in total contrast to some other Western countries resorting to protectionism, imposing sanctions, engaging in geopolitical competition and announcing plans and initiatives similar to those that China has already launched to play zero-sum games.

Strengthening cooperation with China in high-quality products and services requires a new way of thinking and being open to new forms of cooperation like those that China has already presented, described and implemented "shared development" in its global initiatives.

The EU may face more severe development problems than it has in the past five years if it continues to serve the US' strategic and economic interests, especially by increasing NATO's budget and intensifying its geopolitical activities, because the allocation of more funds to NATO will increase its financial problems. According to NATO data, the defense budgets of

NATO members in Europe, and Canada, increased by nearly 18 percent this year alone, the highest in decades.

The US has spent the past seven years spreading falsehoods about China's growth, projecting it as a threat to the West, which unfortunately have influenced the EU's leadership. The whole world will suffer if the US continues to curb China's rise.

However, the Joe Biden administration has made clear its intention of further curbing China's rise and isolating it from the international trade by restricting the export of some high-tech products, especially advanced semiconductors, to China. In fact, the US has taken many more measures, including imposing sanctions on Chinese entities, to suppress China globally.

But Chinese companies are already designing advanced chips to offset the impacts of the Biden administration's decision, while the Chinese government is advancing the country's global initiatives to promote shared development and uphold multipolarism. And countries around the world, whether they be US allies or not, admire China for its resilience and progress.

Moreover, the US tried to persuade and/or coerce many countries to not join the Belt and Road Initiative, but it didn't succeed in its design. This reminds me of what former Croatian president Stjepan Mesić likes to say: no one has the power to destroy the Chinese dream.

The author is president of the Geoeconomic Forum Croatia. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



Chen Weihua

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Can VP candidate Tim Walz bring sanity to US' China policy?

There have been heated debates over the past few days on whether Tim Walz, whom Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris has chosen as her running mate, can help the incumbent US vice-president win the 2024 presidential election on Nov 5.

One of the debates has focused on Walz's "China experience". After graduating from Chadron State College in Nebraska in 1989, Walz taught for a year at Foshan No 1 High School in Guangdong province under a program organized by WorldTeach, a US non-profit organization.

From the 1990s to 2003, he and his wife Gwen operated "Educational Travel Adventures" which organized summer educational tours to China for high school students. Walz has visited China some 30 times, and speaks some Chinese.

While Walz is said to be a critic of China for its "human rights record", as a congressman, he told the news media in 2016 that "I don't fall into the category that China necessarily needs to be an adversarial relationship ... Two of the world's great superpowers, there are many collaborative things we can do together. I am hopeful on that."

Sadly, such words are considered politically incorrect today in the US, where every politician is trying to prove he or she is the greatest critic of China regardless of how ignorant or absurd he/she may sound. Therefore, it is no surprise that some Republicans have already used Walz's old comments to portray him as being soft on China.

The rest of the world hopes China and the US resume their cooperative relationship instead of engaging in confrontations.

China has been a favorite bogeyman in the US, especially during election campaigns, for decades.

Since he has visited China about 30 times and spent a year teaching in a school in Foshan, Walz knows more about China than most US politicians and is capable of making more rational and informed decisions on US-China relations.

However, whether the 60-year-old will remain cool-headed and still base his thinking on facts or kowtow to the huge China-bashing pressure is a big question.

What will Walz say about China when he debates Republican vice-presidential candidate J.D. Vance, whose wife, Usha, too, taught in China at the Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, as a Yale-China Teaching Fellow.

Vance once said that "the Chinese have a foreign policy of building roads and bridges and feeding poor people". But just days after becoming Donald Trump's running mate, he called China the biggest threat to the US.

I hope Walz does not join the race to the bottom in Washington's China bashing. I also hope he helps bring the most consequential bilateral relationship of the 21st century back on track. After all, Sino-US relations will decide whether our generation and the future generations will live in peace and prosperity or engage in a new Cold War marked by divided political blocs.

I hope the debate on China during the rest of the 2024 US presidential race is based on facts and reasoning instead of being marred by ignorance, hysteria and sometimes racism.

Walz was right when he said that there are many collaborative things China and the US should work on together, because the world cannot tackle key global issues, from climate change, pandemics and nuclear non-proliferation to global governance, global development and regional conflicts, without the collaboration between China and the US.

The rest of the world hopes China and the US resume their cooperative relationship instead of engaging in confrontations. The world also hopes the US stops playing zero-sum games.

I was part of a great fellowship program based at Macalester College in Minnesota in 1998 where I made many good friends, including with the farmers with whom I stayed in Minnesota, a small city of only 1,200 people at the time.

And I hope Walz, the Minnesota governor, helps bring sanity to Washington when it comes to the US' policy toward China and helps reverse the trend of deteriorating bilateral relations. That is a daunting task, and should be a wake-up call for all US politicians.

GLOBAL VIEWS



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

ANTOINE ROGER LOKONGO

Integration propeller

The Belt and Road Initiative is a dynamic driver of Africa's development

Last year marked the 10th anniversary of the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative. The initiative, which aims at boosting connectivity, trade and cultural exchanges among the Belt and Road countries, was inspired by the ancient Silk Road of over 2,000 years ago, that linked China with Europe, up to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.



President Xi Jinping gave the ancient Silk Road routes a new lease on life when he proposed the building of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road in 2013. All countries are welcome to participate in the realization of this grand vision of connectivity. The aim is to boost connectivity in order to promote modern development in multiple fields, including: manufacturing, new technologies (such as batteries), renewable energy, trade-enabling infrastructure (including pipelines and roads), the information, communication and technology (data centers, for instance), resource-backed deals (for example mining, oil and gas), and high visibility or strategic projects (among them railways), as listed by the Green Finance and Development Center, a Fudan University-based independent think tank. Since then, the BRI has become a flagship program of international development cooperation.

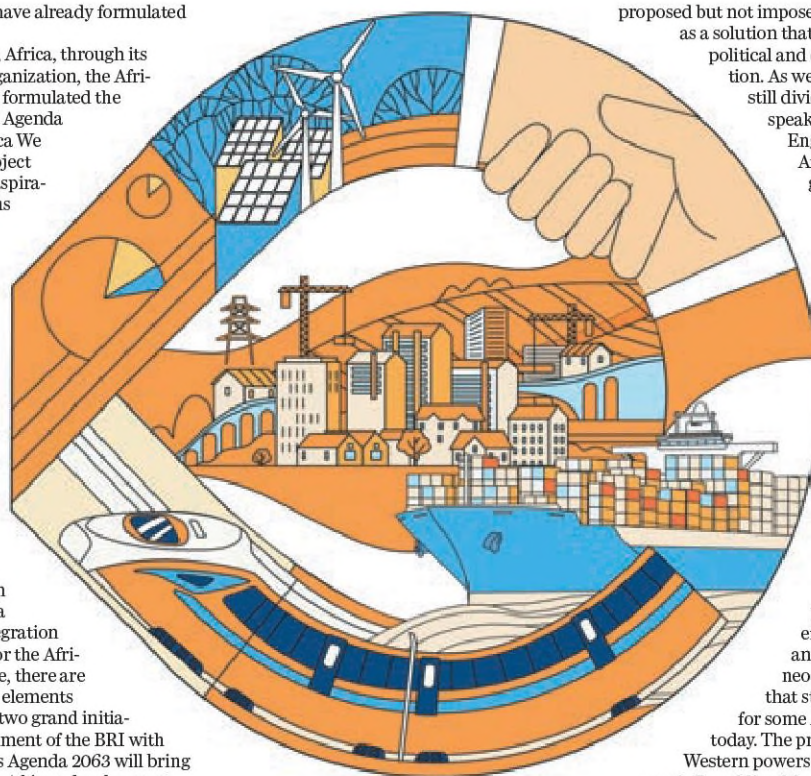
Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the fastest growing areas for BRI engagement, making it a good example of South-South cooperation.

The BRI has no hidden agenda in its bilateral and multilateral implementation in Africa. Unlike the West with its Cold War mentality, the initiative does not seek to carve a "zone of influence" in which "other competitors have to be driven out". China only comes in as a partner, not a colonial master. The BRI only fits in or aligns itself with the agenda Africa itself has already laid out or with strategies Afri-

can countries have already formulated themselves.

For instance, Africa, through its continental organization, the African Union, has formulated the "African Union Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want". This project stipulates the aspirations of Africans and its implementation mechanisms to realize them, which includes integrating Africa by solving the infrastructure deficit. As the BRI has embraced Africa as partner and African Union's Agenda 2063 takes integration as the means for the African renaissance, there are some common elements between these two grand initiatives. The alignment of the BRI with African Union's Agenda 2063 will bring more vitality to African development.

Take another case: the African Continental Free Trade Area, which is one of the flagship projects of the African Union's Agenda 2063. The AfCFTA is the world's largest free trade area creating a single, continent-wide market that unites 54 countries with a combined GDP of \$3.4 trillion. The aim is to enable the free flow of goods and services across the continent and boost the trading position of Africa in the global market. Since you can't have an integrated continental market without an integrated continental infrastructure network, China's



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

This kind of the resurgence of Cold War mentality, bloc confrontation, politicization and weaponization of economic and trade relations should be rejected.

proposed but not imposed BRI offers itself as a solution that leads to Africa's political and economic integration. As we know, Africa is still divided into French-speaking Africa, English-speaking Africa and Portuguese-speaking Africa, which is a legacy of Western colonialism.

And this legacy is the main factor behind or the root cause of the most deadly conflicts in Africa. Some African countries still jump on the bait that Western powers throw at them as part of their efforts to "divide and rule", a tenacious neocolonial practice that still proves effective for some African countries today. The proxy wars which Western powers wage in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and for the control of strategic minerals needed for a new high-tech and green economy speak for themselves.

Ten years on, every African who takes an objective view cannot fail to see that China's BRI is offering a way out for Africa to free itself from this kind of neocolonial stranglehold. After supporting the liberation struggle in Africa, China, through such initiatives as the BRI is supporting Africa's economic liberation, proposing a win-win partnership to achieve shared development and common prosperity.

Africa needs unity, peace and development. To achieve this, Africans need to beat their swords into ploughshares by turning the colonial borders inherited from colonialism into highways and railways. And China is very good and very efficient at building such things. The Tanzania-Zambia Railway, China's first flagship free-loan infrastructure project in Africa, built from 1970 to 1975, was built with this in mind. It alleviated the isolation in which the British colonizers left the region and opened it up to trade.

Moreover, the BRI's implementation in Africa is very inclusive. It does not just target areas rich in natural resources in the continent. It is in the framework of the BRI that naturally resourceless countries such as Ethiopia have had their national infrastructures highly modernized. In contrast, if you consider for instance the decision of the United States and the European Union to finance the reconstruction of the Lobito Atlantic Railway Corridor, which stretches across Angola to link the Katanga mining regions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Zambian province of Copperbelt, it is in order "to challenge China's dominance in key African trade corridor". That is clearly not paving the way toward shared development and common prosperity. This kind of the resurgence of Cold War mentality, bloc confrontation, politicization and weaponization of economic and trade relations should be rejected. We must all uphold win-win cooperation which initiatives such as the BRI stand for.

The author is a professor of international politics and strategies at Joseph Kasavubu University in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and a senior visiting research fellow at Peking University's Institute for Global Cooperation and Understanding. The author contributed this article to China Daily, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

SONG WEI AND CHEN YUMENG

Igniting the African dream

China-Africa vocational education cooperation will inject sustained impetus into Africa's industrialization and modernization

Since Africa's first Luban Workshop — a platform for hands-on learning and technical skills development — was launched in Djibouti in March 2019, China has built 12 such workshops in Africa, with the aim to help Africa realize the development and innovation of vocational education through localized vocational training.

In the meantime, thanks to strong financial support from the Chinese government and Chinese enterprises, more and more African youth are coming to China to study and further their education, taking innovative practices such as e-commerce for poverty alleviation, digital economy and green development back to Africa.

The African Union's Agenda 2063 clearly lists industrialization as one of the seven development goals. The constantly upgrading China-Africa cooperation in vocational education is becoming an important driver of Africa's industrialization, helping Africa break through the talent bottleneck that restricts its industrialization.

In recent years, China and Africa have strengthened cooperation in the field of vocational education and achieved noticeable outcomes.

On the one hand, under the framework of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, the Chinese government has trained African talents that Africa urgently needs so as to help Africa develop its economy and improve its people's living standards. In January, the China-aided vocational skill training center in Angola was launched, aiming to provide stronger talent support for the sustainable development of Angola.

On the other hand, when investing in Africa, Chinese enterprises attach top priority to training local talents to help Africa turn its demographic dividend into a developmental advantage.

For example, since 2014, AVIC International Holding Corporation, a subsidiary of the Aviation Industry Corporation of China, Ltd, has co-hosted the Africa Tech Challenge with the Kenyan Ministry of Education. Since its launch, more than 1,300 competitors have been trained and participated in the competition, and nine local vocational schools have been receiving funds from the AVIC. So far, 24 students have studied in China thanks to support from the AVIC and nearly 100 trainees have been recruited by local Chinese enterprises.

China's CITIC Construction has established the CITIC Centenary Vocational School in Angola to help African youth, especially women, improve their skills for employability. The project aims at supporting Africa's industrialization and women's empowerment while meeting the company's own employment needs.

However, given the laggard development of industrialization in Africa and Africa's economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, China-Africa vocational education cooperation also faces multiple challenges.

To start with, there still exists a funding gap for vocational education assistance to African countries.

At present, China's education and training assistance for Africa is still mainly short-term technical training programs supported by the government, which is not enough to meet the talent needs of Africa's industrialization. More support is needed for the establishment of vocational education and training colleges and bases in Africa. In the meantime, the construction of a pool of experts dispatched to Africa to carry out vocational training should be strengthened. All this requires greater support in the form of grants.

Second, a coordination mechanism should be established among the Chinese government, enterprises and vocational training schools.

Some Chinese enterprises have been exploring the African market for many years, and they can provide tailored training to African youth based on their own employment needs. China's local vocational education and training schools have the know-how for combining theory and practice in education. How to comprehensively leverage these advantages is a challenge for the Chinese government.

Third, there is a sharp increase in the demand for vocational training in Africa due to the rising youth unemployment rate. Africa has a large young population. However, many African youth lack career guidance and do not have the skills needed in today's changing job market, leading to a surge in the unemployment rate.

Take Kenya, the third-largest economy in sub-Saharan Africa, as an example. A lack of necessary vocational skills among the country's large young population has resulted in a very high unemployment rate in Kenya, second only to South Sudan and Rwanda among East African Community members. According to Afrobarometer's Pan-Africa Profile 2023, employment, economic development and healthcare are the top issues that Africa's youth want their governments to address. Across 39 African countries surveyed in 2021-23, to change the unemployment is the top policy concern of 18- to 35-year-olds.

In the future, the advancement of China-Africa cooperation in vocational education requires the concerted efforts of all parties.

First, financial support should be increased.

China should beef up its vocational education assistance to Africa, and encourage African countries to cooperate well in vocational education, so as to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of China's grants.

Second, a communication and collabora-



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

tion mechanism between the government and enterprises needs to be established.

Cooperation between enterprises and the government should be strengthened to improve China's vocational education assistance for Africa. The government can provide financial support for enterprises and enterprises can undertake the construction of training bases. Together, they can build integrated learning, internship and employment platforms for African students to learn professional skills and achieve sustainable development of vocational education in Africa.

Third, China should provide more career guidance for African youth in accordance with Africa's development strategies.

Young people are an important force driving Africa's industrialization. We should not only provide vocational education and training assistance for Africa, but

also help them better adapt to changes in the job market after they return home.

Closer vocational education cooperation between China and Africa will help further align the Belt and Road Initiative with the African Union's Agenda 2063, the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the development strategies of African countries, thereby consolidating the talent foundation for Africa's development and injecting sustained impetus into Africa's industrialization and modernization.

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LIFE

CULTURAL JOURNEY



From left: At a reopening ceremony held in late June at the Qinglian (Green Lotus) Temple in Jincheng, Shanxi province, experts introduce the restoration techniques applied in the temple, which was damaged by heavy rain in 2021. The temple regains its former glory. Its painted sculptures from the Tang (618-907) and Song (960-1279) dynasties are a key attraction. PHOTOS BY ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

Spirit of vitalization

Restoration and protection of ancient structures shows a community determined to succeed, report **Wang Qian** and **Zhu Xingxin** in Jincheng, Shanxi province.

Located in Jincheng in Shanxi province, the Qinglian (Green Lotus) Temple is known for its painted sculptures from the Tang (618-907) and Song (960-1279) dynasties. Following its reopening in June — it was damaged by heavy rain in 2021 — the wooden temple has regained its former glory, and is attracting many tourists.

Bai Xuebing, deputy director of the Shanxi Cultural Relics Bureau, says that longer rainy seasons and more frequent flash flooding caused by climate change are the main factors threatening ancient buildings in the province.

To Bai's delight, the temple has been restored to its original splendor thanks to a renovation project sponsored by the China Foundation for Cultural Heritage Conservation and the Beijing Bytedance Foundation. Ten million yuan (\$1.40 million) was spent on the restoration of four of its ancient structures over a three-year time frame.

Bai believes this is a good example of how social organizations can get involved in ancient restoration projects.

Known as a treasure house of historical architecture, Shanxi is home to 28,027 ancient buildings, most made from wood and mud brick, according to data compiled during the third national cultural relics census.

Among them, 421 are registered as national-level key sites. In Jincheng alone, there are 58 wooden structures from the Song and Jin (1115-1234) dynasties, which are about 1,000 years old and they account for more than 30 percent of the national total.

Thanks to the region's dry, windy climate and low rainfall, the structures, most of which were constructed on high platforms, have been well-preserved.

Although they have stood the test of time, Bai knows that the changing climate, heavy rain and fluctuating humidity challenges their structural integrity.

"Both rainwater and groundwater, along with atmospheric condensation, are directly influenced by the climate, and can penetrate the fabric of heritage structures in various ways," Bai says. "This, combined with the effects of freeze-thaw cycles and microorganisms,



accelerates the deterioration of their surfaces."

Among the structures threatened by climate change is the Qinglian Temple, which was seriously damaged during a deluge in October 2021. The average rainfall in Shanxi for October is 31.1 millimeters, but between 8 pm on Oct 2 to 8 am on Oct 7 that year, the province experienced an average of 119.5 mm of rain.

Jiao Kai, a staff member of the Jincheng Cultural Relics Protection Research Center, and who is stationed at the temple, still remembers torrents of water rushing down the mountains, rocks falling, roads being blocked, and the temple being flooded.

"The water rushed out of the gate like a river," he says, adding that there was even a small waterfall for two hours.

"I felt that if it continued to rain, the temple could collapse."

All the 21 buildings in the temple area experienced leaks, with their tiles loosening and cracking. Most of the rafters were no longer viable, and boards became severely rotted.

For Jiao and his colleagues, the most urgent task was to prevent the



From top: A bird's-eye view of the restored Qinglian Temple.

Thanks to a renovation project sponsored by the China Foundation for Cultural Heritage Conservation and the Beijing Bytedance Foundation, 10 million yuan (\$1.40 million) was spent on the restoration of four of Shanxi's ancient structures over a three-year time frame.

buildings from collapsing to protect their precious contents.

They wrapped the statues in plastic sheets and, after the rain stopped, steel scaffolding was erected over the most important buildings.

Meanwhile, the provincial government sent 10 teams of experts out to rain-hit areas around Shanxi, where they found that 1,783 ancient buildings had been affected by the storm. A charity project was swiftly

initiated, and the Shanxi Ancient Architecture Group won the bid to renovate the temple.

Li Tianshu, deputy general manager of the group, knows it was not easy to restore the temple to its former glory. His team turned to ancient solutions, including methods used by those who originally built them.

In order to retain historical authenticity, the Jincheng City Cultural Relics Protection Research Center set up the country's first ancient building rain and grass prevention experimental base next to the Qinglian Temple in 2022.

"Besides ancient methods, we also paid attention to waterproofing techniques to tackle potential downpours in the future," Li says.

Based on the *Yingzao Fashi* (State Building Standards), the oldest extant Chinese technical manual on buildings published in 1103, the experts agreed on seven methods to protect roofs against harsh weather, which also provided guidance to the restoration.

As a consultant and supervisor, 73-year-old Si Choufu from Zezhou county is passionate about the resto-

Both rainwater and groundwater, along with atmospheric condensation, are directly influenced by the climate, and can penetrate the fabric of heritage structures in various ways."

Bai Xuebing, deputy director of the Shanxi Cultural Relics Bureau

ration of ancient buildings. In the late 1970s, when the carpenter was in his 20s, he visited the temple and was astonished by its carved corridors and *dougong* (interlocking wooden brackets) roofs.

He pondered ways of stopping moss and grass from growing on the roofs and finally remembered that in the past, lime was used in roof repairs, but that it was rarely used anymore. Si decided to give it a try.

His hunch proved correct when after adding lime to repair materials, grass and moss no longer grew on the roofs.

Bai views the restoration of ancient artifacts as a race against time, and feels that if they are not properly protected in time, some exceptionally valuable treasures may be lost.

As a province with one of the biggest troves of ancient architecture in China, Shanxi is committed to the restoration and protection of these structures. In 2008, as part of the national cultural relics' 11th Five-Year Plan (2006-10), 105 ancient edifices built before the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) in southern Shanxi were restored. In 2017, the province launched an experimental program enabling enterprises to "adopt" ancient buildings and support their daily maintenance.

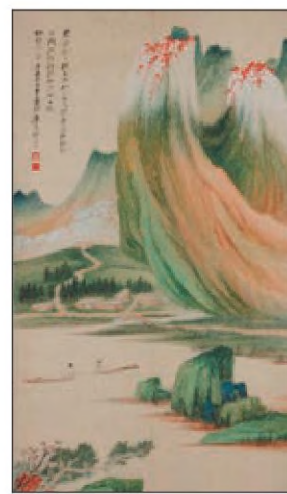
With many heritage sites scattered across the province's remote areas, which are not rated, experts say that threats from natural disasters like torrential rain are accelerating their disappearance.

Contact the writers at wangqian@chinadaily.com.cn

What's on

Master and disciples

Zhang Daqian (1899-1983) is a figure of luminosity in the 20th-century art scene, who left an oeuvre that showcases his mastery of various subjects and themes, and is well-versed in both figurative and abstract styles. Zhang is also known for his social skills that won him an extended circle of friends and disciples by which he increased his fan base. Zhang built a studio named Dafengtang with his brothers to take in students, many of which later grew to be successful artists. A long-term exhibition at Tianjin Museum is dedicated to the role of Dafengtang in shaping the art landscape of the 20th century. On display are over 80 paintings by Zhang, his disciples from home and abroad and their students, including



He Haixia and Tian Shiguang, two artists of great reputation. *9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 62 Pingjiang Dao, Hezi district, Tianjin. 022-8388-3000.*

Eternal spiral

The 2022 film *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, which won Michelle Yeoh an Academy Award for Best Actress, also spotlighted its poster designer James Jean. Born in Taiwan, Jean was 3 years old when he moved to the United States with his family. He has since created a mythological world of drawings, paintings and installations that feature mind-bending scenes and energetic colors. After traveling to Shanghai, Chengdu in Sichuan province and Shenzhen in Guangdong province, Jean

brings his thrilling show *Eternal Spiral IV* to Beijing's Today Art Museum until Nov 10.

It gives the audience a tour of his mind and how diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences have shaped his vision of the world and his art. His study of colors, including videos showing how he shades colors layer upon layer with great patience, and his latest painting highlight the enigmatic, ever-spiral-



ing world he has created. *10 am-6 pm, closed on Mondays. 32 Baiziwai Lu, Chaoyang district, Beijing. 010-5876-0600.*

Weather front

Since 2009, Moon Kyung-won and Jeon Joon-ho, two artists from South Korea, have been collaborating on works that show the power of art transcending barriers of language and culture, creating resonance among audiences. Their joint exhibition *Weather Station*, currently held at Hyundai Motor Studio Beijing, embarks on a journey that inspires imagination, widens vision and offers thought on the future of human society. The exhibition discusses the fierce challenges humans face amid climate change, which has posed



threats to the environment, economic development and social stability. The works present a cross-disciplinary method to show the possibilities art integrating with technology and promoting social progress. The exhibition runs until Feb 9, 2025. *10 am-7:30 pm, closed the first Monday of the month. E-1, 798 Art Zone, 4 Jiuziwanqiao Lu, Chaoyang district, Beijing. 010-5810-1088.*

CHINA DAILY

LIFESHANGHAI



High-rises dominate the skyline on both sides of the Huangpu River in Shanghai, where international cruises attract tourists from home and abroad.

As one of the major events during the Shanghai Summer International Consumption Season, the inaugural Shanghai International Cruise Festival kicked off on Aug 2, marking a new phase in the city's rapidly growing cruise economy.

Since Shanghai took the lead nationwide in resuming international cruise trial sailings in May last year, the city's cruise industry has maintained robust momentum, according to Zhu Min, director of the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Commerce, at a recent news conference.

Zhang Qi, deputy director of the Shanghai Municipal Administration of Culture and Tourism, says in the first half of 2024, Shanghai's cruise port welcomed 89 ship calls carrying around 592,700 passengers, accounting for about 70 percent of the nationwide total and recovering to around 70 percent of 2019 levels.

"We forecast around 260 cruise ship calls and 1.5 million passengers for the full year in Shanghai," Zhang says. "This cruise festival offers a rich array of themed activities allowing more residents and tourists to experience wonderful cruise lifestyles in Shanghai."

Zhang notes that efforts to amplify the effects of facilitation policies such as 144-hour visa-free transit and 15-day visa-free group tours for cruise travel may have paid off. Shanghai is enhancing shoreside collaboration, developing boutique cruise tourist routes, and attracting more international ships by promoting inbound cruise tourism.

"Hosting the inaugural cruise festival allows us to better showcase the vibrancy of Shanghai's cruise economic development and favorable

business environment," Zhu adds.

Zhu explains that the monthlong festival will spotlight the unique features of various cruise lines while integrating with key commercial districts across the city to further blend cruise lifestyles with Shanghai's economic and cultural landscapes.

Highlights include a cruise lifestyle show featuring cruise ship model exhibitions, food events and more across the city. A cruise sports carnival will offer Chinese martial arts performances, health seminars, and other activities.

On Nanjing Road, a major shopping street and a must-see spot in the city, a themed marketplace will promote cruise itineraries, marine cultural creativity exhibitions, and cruise culinary experiences.

Other activities include drone performance shows, family activities hosted by Royal Caribbean Cruises, Adora Cruises, and CM Viking Cruises, as well as open house tours dur-

Slice of floating cities on land

International cruise festival is part of special initiative which aims to welcome visitors to cultural performances and major sports events, **Zheng Zheng** reports.

Travelers from the cruise ship *Mein Schiff* receive gift souvenirs upon arrival in Shanghai in April. PHOTOS BY GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

ing port calls of cruises.

"Beyond the themed events, we will hold the launch ceremony of the festival on Saturday to promote

cruise policies, itineraries, and new cruise tourism products," Zhu adds.

Cruise travel tends to generate significant outside consumption,

with data showing that 75 percent of cruise passengers arriving and departing Shanghai are from other regions or overseas, according to Zhu.

"Cruises are essentially floating cities, so we're bringing that cruise experience onto land through this festival, creating cruise-themed scenarios throughout the city while the real ships are in port," says Zhang Jie, deputy director of the Shanghai Commerce Commission.

Special promotions will also be offered, allowing cruise passengers to receive consumer benefits at designated districts by presenting their cruise tickets during the festival, according to Zhang Jie.

The Shanghai International Cruise Festival is an integral part of the Shanghai Summer initiative, which aims to welcome visitors from across the world over events covering concerts, music festivals, cultural and art performances, and major sports events.

Shanghai Statistics Bureau reported that in the first half of 2024, the city has received over 3.02 million inbound visitors, an increase of 143.5 percent from the same period of last year, consolidating its status as a premier global travel destination. Among them, over 2.2 million are foreign tourists, an increase of 191.5 percent.

Local travel agencies also found positive changes in their business, especially this summer.

Zhou Weihong, deputy general manager of Shanghai Spring Tour, a major travel agency in the country, tells the news portal *jiemian.com* that the number of inbound travel bookings this summer exceeded that of the same period in 2019. It also shows a more diverse range of tourist nationalities than before with more visitors from European countries and America. Their stay in Shanghai was also stretched to two to four days on average this year.

Alongside over 60 events of the Shanghai Summer initiative, including the Shanghai Masters ATP 1000 and the Shanghai International Electronic Music Festival, visitors can enjoy special benefits such as discounts on international flight tickets, hotels, mobile access cards, and consumption coupons.

During the Shanghai Summer campaign period, Chanel held an exhibition at the Power Station of Art titled *Gabrielle Chanel: Fashion Manifesto*, attracting visitors worldwide. This year, leading luxury brands including Chanel, Prada, Hermes, and Louis Vuitton have been bringing major exhibitions and collaborations with Chinese art institutions.

Contact the writer at zhengzheng@chinadaily.com.cn

Madama Butterfly premiere at Grand Theatre is music to your ears

By ZHANG KUN
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Shanghai Grand Theatre is celebrating the opening of its 2024/25 performing season on Friday with the premiere of the Italian opera *Madama Butterfly* in China, a joint production of Shanghai Opera House and the Royal Opera of the United Kingdom.

Three performances of the Puccini opera will take place at Shanghai Grand Theatre on Friday, Saturday as well as a matinee on Sunday.

The year 2024 marks the death centenary of Italian musician Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924), as well as the 120th anniversary of the premiere at La Scala in Milan of *Madama Butterfly*, which remains one of the most beloved opera creations of the composer.

Conducted by Xu Zhong, director of Shanghai Opera House, *Madama Butterfly* will be starring an international cast, with sopranos Federica Vitali and Song Qian playing the title role of Cio-Cio-San and tenors Jorge de Leon and Guo Zizhao playing the leading male role of Pinkerton.

Mezzo-sopranos Annunziata Vestri and Wang Xiaoxi will play Suzuki, the maid and confidante of the heroine, and baritone Christian

Scenes from the previous performances of the Royal Opera's production of *Madama Butterfly*. They provide glances at the stage and costume design for the upcoming joint production in Shanghai. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Federici will play Sharpless, the American consul at Nagasaki.

All the other supporting roles will be performed by artists of the Shanghai Opera House, alongside the chorus and orchestra of the company.

This production marks the third collaboration among Shanghai Opera House, the Royal Opera and Shanghai Grand Theatre, following the successes of *La Traviata* in 1999 and *Manon Lescaut* in 2014.

In October, Zhang Xiaoding, gen-

eral manager of Shanghai Grand Theatre, and Xu flew to London and met Cormac Simms, administrative director of the Royal Opera, when the three sides discussed the detailed plan for a co-production of the opera.

"From our preliminary discussions two years ago, to the busy preparations from last October, till the rehearsals in the scorching heat of Shanghai summer in the past few weeks, we are finally making a dream come true. I believe this mod-

ern and simple-styled opera production will find wide resonance in Shanghai," Zhang said at the new conference for the show on Monday.

Madama Butterfly is very popular with Chinese opera audiences. A number of Chinese vocal artists have achieved international success singing the leading character Cio-Cio-San, such as He Hui, Huang Ying and Zhang Liping.

Nearly 90 percent of tickets for the upcoming performances at Shanghai Grand Theatre were sold off a

week before the premiere, she says.

In 1900, Puccini saw the one-act play *Madama Butterfly* by American producer David Belasco, based on a short story by John Luther Long. He was profoundly touched by the story of a Japanese girl's ill-fated love for an American sailor, and obtained the operatic rights to create a new opera production with lyricists Giuseppe Giacomini and Luigi Illica.

After several revisions following its premiere in 1904, the opera reached its definitive form, and even

today, Cio-Cio-San's aria imagining the return of her husband Pinkerton, *Un Bel di, Vedremo*, remains one of the best-known arias in the soprano repertoire.

Since *Madama Butterfly* premiered in Covent Garden in 1905, the Royal Opera has made many productions of the opera, featuring diverse styles and designs. The current production was created in 2003, directed by Moshe Leiser from Belgium and Patrice Chaurier from France. The choreography and make-up design were adjusted to be more historically realistic, and simpler stage design was adopted, following the trend in the Western opera scene through the past decades.

The Royal Opera has made co-productions with many other companies around the world, but this time things are a little different, according to Simms.

"We have invented a new co-production model in Shanghai," he says. The replica of the set and costumes are made here and stay in China, while the other version stays in London.

"This means we can share productions without the difficulty of transporting them to-and-from Europe continuously... We would like to stage this production many times in the future and in many other cities of China."

LIFE



With China's summer box-office season in its final stretch, *Deadpool* and *Wolverine* — making their debut as a dynamic duo in the Marvel Cinematic Universe — are stealing the limelight on thousands of silver screens.

As the latest Marvel superhero film, *Deadpool & Wolverine* has raked in over 300 million yuan (\$42.1 million) since its debut on the Chinese mainland on July 26, making it one of the most popular foreign blockbusters in the country.

With Hugh Jackman and Ryan Reynolds reprising their roles as Wolverine and Deadpool respectively, the 126-minute storyline follows Deadpool's invitation to join the Marvel Cinematic Universe from the Time Variance Authority and his decision to enlist a variant of Wolverine to prevent the extinction of his own universe.

For most die-hard Marvel fans, one of the most exciting elements is the return of Jackman as Wolverine, a mutant with special healing powers, whose lethal weapons are a pair of metal claws.

During a promotional tour in Shanghai last month, Jackman revealed that he made the decision to reprise his role during a two-and-a-half-hour drive to Long Island in New York.

"My children were in the back of the car, both with headphones on. I was just driving and thinking about how I encourage them to dream about anything in life. I asked myself what I would want to do with my life if I could do anything," the Australian actor says.

As his thoughts drifted to various ideas, such as learning a musical instrument or building a small house, he realized that he wanted to shoot a movie about Deadpool and Wolverine. So, he pulled over and called Reynolds, coproducer of *Deadpool & Wolverine*, informing him that he had decided to be on board.

"I said 'I'm in' and then I got back in the car and thought I should probably call my agent and tell him," says Jackman.

For Reynolds, the production of *Deadpool & Wolverine* is not the result of a sudden flash of inspiration, but a journey that has taken time.

After the success of the first and second *Deadpool* movies released in 2016 and 2018, Reynolds' masterful portrayal of the titular comic role



Even Hollywood superheroes play ping-pong

Deadpool & Wolverine, biggest grossing R-rated film in the North American market, proves a hit with audiences, **Xu Fan** reports.

Top left: Hugh Jackman during the Shanghai promotional tour. Top: A scene from the film featuring Deadpool and Wolverine. Right: A poster of the film.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

redefined the superhero genre with its irreverent humor, unapologetic ferocity, and a charismatic antihero, propelling his character to pop-culture icon status.

In 2019, The Walt Disney Company finalized its \$71.3 billion acquisition of 20th Century Fox, granting Marvel ownership of X-Men characters, including Wolverine. This paved the way for a movie featuring the pair together.

Reynolds and director Shawn



"The story develops into a tale of friendship. ... It's what makes *Deadpool & Wolverine* so exciting for fans."

Shawn Levy, director

Levy had been pitching ideas for years about developing a *Deadpool* film to Kevin Feige, the president of Marvel Studios, himself a legendary filmmaker known for turning Marvel from a debt-ridden comic studio into a cinematic behemoth. However, their proposals were turned down.

While the creative duo were stuck in deadlock in late 2022, Reynolds received Jackman's surprise call, leading Feige to quickly greenlight

the movie, on one condition: that Wolverine wear his yellow and blue outfit, the character's original look from his comic debut in the early 1960s.

"When both Ryan and I turned up in our full suits for the first time on set, the crew members turned into fans," recalls Jackman.

Sharing more memories of that day, Reynolds recalls that a crew member, whose child was named Logan like Wolverine, told him it was the best day of his life. The staffer said he had never seen Wolverine and Deadpool standing next to each other, despite growing up reading comics featuring Wolverine in his original costume, Reynolds adds.

One of the hardest moments for the actor was when SAG-AFTRA, a labor union representing around 160,000 actors in Hollywood, called a strike in July last year after failing to reach a deal with major studios. The strike led to the suspension of the movie, which was in the middle of production at the time, and lasted for nearly four months.

"When the strike was announced, I was in my *Deadpool* suit. I went and sat in the tent. It must have been 100 degrees (37.7 C) in there. Normally, I would quickly take my suit off because it's so hot. However, this time, I sat in it for about half an hour and didn't want to move. I didn't want to take it off. Every time I've taken it off in the movie, I never know if I'm ever going to put it back on again," recalls the emotional star.

Despite its twists and turns, the film has had a happy ending, becoming the biggest grossing R-rated film of all time in the North American market.

Interestingly, ping-pong, which is currently captivating Chinese audiences watching the Paris Olympics, has been part of the process.

As Jackman and Reynolds refined their comedic chemistry with director Levy, they played each other on a ping-pong table sent to the set by Reynolds' wife, actress Blake Lively, according to the American magazine *Vanity Fair*.

Reynolds said that he and his wife have photos of famous Hollywood duos playing ping-pong. Memorable moments include Henry Fonda and Jimmy Stewart playing a game in 1937, as well as Paul Newman and Robert Redford enjoying a match in 1968, during a break in filming *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*.

Levy, who attended the Shanghai event with the two actors, describes playing ping-pong as a metaphor for the movie.

He elaborates by saying that the dynamic between Wolverine and Deadpool in the film mirrors the essence of ping-pong, involving both competitive back-and-forth exchanges and moments of collaborative teamwork.

"The story develops into a tale of friendship. It's an emotional aspect of Logan that we haven't seen in other movies. It's what makes *Deadpool & Wolverine* so exciting for fans," says Levy.

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China's latest great cinematic plotline continues

By XU FAN

Chinese sports fans are able to gather at hundreds of domestic cinemas to cheer on their favorite athletes on the silver screen during the Paris Olympics.

The livestreaming project is one of the latest offered by the China Film Group Corporation. It is one of 35 State-owned enterprises in nine provinces and municipalities selected to implement a reform that began in 2003, which has reshaped the country's cultural landscape over the following decades.

Pointing out that reforms have deepened since 2010, Fu Ruoqing, chairman of the corporation, said that the country's film industry, which has benefited from the reform, has also undergone significant transformations over the past decade.

When Hollywood director James Cameron's sci-fi blockbuster *Avatar* was shown in domestic theaters in 2010, China was home to 6,200 silver screens, 500 of which could handle a 3D release. The country also had only 22 IMAX systems — the premier facilities for fully immersing audiences in fantastic worlds such as Pandora — which led to headlines about movie fans waiting in long lines

just to purchase tickets.

Currently, China has more than 80,000 screens and boasts the largest number of advanced screens in the world.

CINITY screens, which were introduced to the domestic market by the China Film Group Corporation, represent a leap for the Chinese film industry, as its core technologies were entirely developed by Chinese talent.

Combining the words "cinema"

and "infinity" in its name, CINITY screens are able to show movies filmed using advanced technology, such as the 2016 war drama film *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*, by the Oscar-winner, director Ang Lee.

It was shot at 120 frames per second, five times the standard frame rate of a regular movie. By capturing more frames per second, particularly during action or high-speed sequences, visuals take on a greater

clarity, creating a heightened sense of reality that immerses viewers in the scene.

"Now there are more than 170 CINITY cinema halls in the domestic market, and eight overseas," says Fu.

The world's largest CINITY screen, currently installed at the China Science and Technology Museum, is 29 meters wide and 16 meters tall. A regular screen is usually between 6 and 10 meters tall.

Fu says that he believes that the

innovation and development of cinematic technology will enhance the advancement of the Chinese film industry and elevate the quality of film production.

In the past decade, the China Film Group Corporation has produced over 200 movies, with total box-office revenues exceeding 100 billion yuan (\$13.8 billion).

He says that the corporation is currently working on nearly 90 projects that span a wide range of gen-

res and themes.

One of the most anticipated releases is the sequel to Chen Kaige's *The Volunteers: To the War*, an epic about the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea (1950-53).

In addition, *Until We Find You*, a film that celebrates the 25th anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland, is now in production and is scheduled for domestic release in December.

The Journey of a Legendary Landscape Painting, a film adapted from a poetic dance visualization of Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127) artist Wang Ximeng's 12-meter scroll painting *Qianli Jiangshan Tu* (A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains), is entering postproduction, and is scheduled for release in the near future.

In an effort to nurture new talent, the China Film Group Corporation has started a project to invest 1 billion yuan in 30 to 50 films by young filmmakers. Currently, 15 scripts have been selected from a pool of around 300 candidates.

"In recent years, the Chinese film industry has made remarkable strides, breaking box-office records and demonstrating momentum in areas like technological innovation and global influence," says Fu.

He says that the country, which has ambitions of becoming a cinematic powerhouse by 2035, should concentrate on more engaging narratives while leveraging new technology.



Left: The China Film Group Corporation holds an event to announce that hundreds of domestic theaters are offering livestreams of the Paris Olympic Games. Right: Participants gather at the event to experience the visual effects on the giant screen at a CINITY movie hall.

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