

Target gold

Dedication, discipline, resolve help shooting star hit bullseye at Olympics
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Guangxi offers sanctuary for white dolphins
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Key economic tasks set out by leadership

Political Bureau highlights domestic demand, emerging sectors, opening-up

By MO JINGXI and OUYANG SHIJIA

A key meeting of the Communist Party of China pledged on Tuesday to step up macroeconomic support in the second half of this year, with greater focus on expanding domestic demand, cultivating emerging sectors and widening opening-up in a bid to meet the nation's annual growth target for 2024.

The economic priorities were set out as the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee held a meeting to analyze the performance of the world's second-largest economy.

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, presided over the meeting, two weeks after the third plenary session of the 20th CPC Central Committee adopted wide-ranging policy measures to forge ahead with the nation's reform and opening-up drive.

According to a statement issued after the meeting, the CPC leadership highlighted challenges including mounting negative factors from the external environment, lack of effective demand domestically, lingering risks in key sectors and "growing pains in the transition between old and new growth drivers".

"We must enhance our awareness of risks and worst-case scenarios, come up with proactive responses, maintain strategic resolve, and strengthen our confidence in development," the statement said.

The policymakers required fully leveraging the role of economic structural reform as the spearhead and promptly introducing a series of reform measures that are "mature, effective and achievable".

They emphasized the need to encourage entrepreneurship and move faster to help Chinese companies become world-class through reform, innovation and fair competition.

More effective macroeconomic policies must be consistently carried out, focusing on the issuance and use of special-purpose bonds, improvement of the fiscal expenditure structure and financial support for the real economy, the statement said, adding that the exchange rate of the renminbi should remain generally stable at an adaptive, balanced level.

Provincial-level regions serving as economic powerhouses should

continue to take the leading role in economic development, the policymakers said.

To boost domestic consumption, they also said economic policies should focus on increasing the incomes of residents through multiple channels and spurring spending in sectors such as tourism, elderly and child care, housekeeping and other services.

While calling for cultivating more emerging industries and future-oriented industries, they warned against "vicious competition" among peer companies.

They required removing all market access restrictions for foreign investment in the manufacturing sector and promoting trials and demonstrations for expanding opening-up of the service sector, in order to stabilize the inflow of foreign investment.

Regarding the real estate sector, the meeting stressed efforts to ensure the delivery of housing projects and accelerate the development of a new model for the sector.

It called for steps to improve and implement comprehensive local debt resolution plans and create conditions to expedite the mitigation of debt risks associated with local government financing platforms.

"We must strengthen assistance and support for low-income populations and develop a tightly woven social safety net," the statement said.

The meeting also reviewed a set of provisions on rectifying formalism to alleviate the burden on the grassroots level, emphasizing that pointless formalities and bureaucratism that affect the implementation of the Party Central Committee's decisions and plans must be firmly rectified.

Prior to the meeting, the CPC Central Committee held a symposium on Friday with non-CPC personages to seek opinions and suggestions on the country's current economic situation and economic work for the second half of the year.

Xi, who presided over the symposium, said the difficulties and challenges that China's economic development is currently faced with are problems that arise during the process of economic development and transitioning, and can certainly be overcome through persistent efforts.

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Xi congratulates Venezuela's Maduro on reelection

By ZHANG YUNBI zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory message on Tuesday to Nicolas Maduro on his reelection as president of Venezuela, saying that China will always firmly support the nation's efforts to safeguard its national sovereignty,

national dignity and social stability. Since Maduro took office, he has led the Venezuelan government and people in advancing on a development path suited to the country's national conditions, and "has made remarkable achievements in the cause of building the country", Xi said in the congratulatory message. This year also marks the 50th

anniversary of the establishment of China-Venezuela diplomatic ties.

Xi said the two countries are "good friends with mutual trust and good partners in seeking common development", adding that China will steadfastly support Venezuela's just cause of opposing external interference.

"I attach great importance to the development of China-Venezuela

relations and am ready to work with Mr President to continue to lead the China-Venezuela all-weather strategic partnership to new heights for the betterment of the two peoples," he said.

On Monday, the National Electoral Council of Venezuela proclaimed Maduro as president-elect for the 2025-31 term, Xinhua News Agency reported.

Doing the country proud



Table tennis players Wang Chuqin (right) and Sun Yingsha (left) celebrate with coach Xiao Zhan on Tuesday after beating Ri Jong Sik and Kim Kum Yong of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea 4-2 to win the mixed doubles final at the Paris Olympics. LIU XU / XINHUA

Chinese tech companies shining at Paris Olympics

By FAN FEIFEI fanfeifei@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese tech companies are employing their cutting-edge cloud computing and artificial intelligence tools to enhance live broadcast experiences and athletes' performances at the ongoing Paris 2024 Olympic Games, a move that experts said demonstrates China's growing technological prowess and independent innovation capabilities.

The participation of Chinese companies in the prestigious sporting event is not only revolutionizing the way that audiences view the competition, but is also helping to improve the international recognition and influence of these enterprises while

boosting their competitiveness on the global stage, the experts added.

More than two-thirds of the live broadcast signals are being disseminated by Chinese tech heavyweight Alibaba Group's cloud broadcasting services.

Alibaba Cloud, the cloud computing arm of Alibaba, which is a worldwide partner of the Paris Olympics, and the Olympic Broadcasting Services have jointly launched OBS Cloud 3.0 to help media outlets get images and videos of the Games.

The OBS, a subsidiary of the International Olympic Committee, oversees the distribution of event coverage.

A total of 11,000 hours of Olympic content is being distributed to more than 200 countries and regions with

the help of Alibaba Cloud's global cloud infrastructure, reaching billions of viewers worldwide.

Cloud computing has become the main method of remote distribution to media rights holders for the first time in the history of the Olympic Games, taking over from satellite broadcasting, which was launched during the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo, Alibaba Cloud said in a statement.

Given its benefits of low latency and high resilience, content transmission through the cloud platform has outperformed other methods of distribution in terms of scalability, flexibility and cost, while increasing the stability and agility of broadcasting of the world's largest sporting event, industry insiders said.

Alibaba Cloud is also providing AI-enabled multicamera replay systems at the Paris Games. These systems have been deployed at 14 venues to cover events in 21 sports and disciplines. The systems provide slow-motion replays, giving global viewers a more immersive experience by transforming live footage into precise 3D models, and allowing sports fans to access detailed information for deeper analysis of such performances.

Chinese AI company SenseTime is working with China's basketball team to offer AI-driven sports data analysis and advice on strategies for the competition.

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HK should leverage three mega trends for its future

Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu has pulled off many significant achievements in his first two years in office. A historic milestone was reached with the enactment of local legislation to implement Article 23 of the Basic Law.

Much progress has been made in battling Hong Kong's public housing crisis. A total of 4,400 light public housing units are scheduled to be available early next year for inhabitants of unsafe subdivided cubicles. The waiting time for public housing applicants is forecast to go



down to 4.5 years in 2026-27. Relaxation of immigration policies has enabled around 120,000 professionals and other workers to replenish Hong Kong's workforce. The economy is on a steady recovery path. Visitor arrivals in the first half of this year, at 21 million, represent a 64 percent increase compared with the same period last year. Initial public offerings of blockbuster stocks have slowed, but the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region continues to excel in wealth management, financial innovations and functioning as the largest offshore renminbi pool. There is much to celebrate.

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Deadly deluge



India's National Disaster Response Force personnel carry out rescue operations on Tuesday after a landslide in Wayanad, in the state of Kerala. Landslides triggered by torrential rain in the southern state have killed at least 100 people. AFP See *story*, page 5

XIZANG SET TO SOAR AS OUTDOOR SPORTS HAVEN

Region aims to develop climbing, trekking and other attractions

By PALDEN NYIMA and DAQIONG in Lhasa



With its stunning landscape and soaring mountains, the Xizang autonomous region is rapidly developing its massive potential as a destination for climbers and other outdoor sports enthusiasts.

Seasoned climber and guide Ngakwang Dorje, 41, established an outdoor sports business more than a decade ago and is ready to ride the coming tourism wave.

Born at the foot of Qomolangma, the world's highest mountain, which is known as Mount Everest in the West, he spent the early part

of his life herding animals and traversing the region.

At 18, he was selected to train as a professional climber at Xizang's mountaineering guide school in Lhasa, the capital of the region.

After years of training, he emerged as a top climber and certified mountaineering guide, and has scaled the 8,848-meter summit of Qomolangma several times. He has also conquered many mountains above 7,000 meters in the region.

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Tibetan skier Yudron Lhamo is an emerging mountaineering athlete who won China's first world championship in the sport last year.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Outdoor: Embarking on high adventures

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In 2013, he co-founded the Xizang Snow Eagle Alpine Outdoor Sports Co, which offers a range of outdoor activities including climbing, hiking, trekking, and vehicle tours. "We expect more people, especially younger generations, to engage in outdoor sports in Xizang, not just wealthy people from coastal cities or abroad," he said in an interview with China Daily.

Conquering Xizang's towering mountains is high on many visitors' agenda, but there are safety restrictions involved, he said.

Climbers targeting peaks above 5,000 meters in the region, have to apply for a permit in advance, according to the General Administration of Sport and the sports bureau of Xizang. Applications need to detail each climber's personal information, proposed climbing routes and related plans.

Outdoor sports companies such as Xizang Snow Eagle can organize expeditions for Chinese nationals on mountains not exceeding 8,000 meters. Potential climbers are vetted for their mountaineering experience and physical capabilities. The mountaineering events above 8,000 m organized by the authorities would also invite international professional mountaineers.

Climbers cannot proceed beyond certain levels, such as 6,000 m, unless they prove themselves capable at lower levels, Ngakwang Dorje explained.

He knows full well the potential danger on the ice and snow.

In the autumn of 2008, he was climbing Mount Shishapangma when he slipped from a snow bridge and dangled from a rope ladder in midair for a few minutes. "I was frightened at first, but I gradually calmed down under the encouragement of my partner Tsering Dondrub," he said.

Optimistic outlook

In recent years, the regional sports bureau and the local mountaineering association have provided support for the growth of outdoor companies. Between 2021 and 2023, the government gave them free office space and training areas.

There are about 10 outdoor sports companies in the region operated by locals and staffed by graduates of the mountaineering guide school, said Chen Ming, a spokeswoman for Xizang Snow Eagle. The school has trained more than 200 locals in recent decades, she added.

The development of outdoor sports in Xizang was discussed by domestic and international participants at the 4th China Xizang Trans-Himalaya Forum for International Cooperation held in Nyingchi in early July.

Pan Shihua, assistant to the president of the China Sports Industry, said at the forum outdoor sports can become a new engine to drive the local economy.

The region is rich in outdoor sports resources, including high-altitude snow-capped mountains, pristine forests, lakes and grasslands, he said.

Xizang has the potential to become a global destination for outdoor sports, and Pan believes it should focus on establishing itself as a world-renowned mountain sports destination. This could be achieved by hosting international and domestic mountain sports competitions.

Serge Louis Koenig, foreign affairs director of the National School of Mountain Sports in



Competitors take part in the cycling leg of an ironman triathlon in Kongpo Gyada county, Nyingchi, Xizang autonomous region, in July.



A team competes at the Basum Tso International Rafting Open in Konpo Gyada county in April.

France, told the forum that Xizang had the world's greatest mountains, a vast territory, varied and well-preserved natural resources, and vibrant local traditions. These, coupled with ongoing socio-economic development, made the region a "promising breeding ground" for outdoor sports, he said.

While the mountains in Xizang are higher than the Alps in Europe, this could help authorities maintain the pristine environment while developing the outdoor sports industry.

"The land here is much higher, but it is perhaps also an advantage to naturally limit

mass tourism with its negative impacts, particularly on the environment," Koenig said.

He suggested diversifying leisure activities across all four seasons to meet a wide range of recreational demands.

Camping, rafting, skiing, hiking, and other activities have consistently ranked high in online search popularity since 2022, according to the online travel platform Mafengwo.

According to data from the Chinese online travel agency Ctrip, in the first

half of 2023, the volume of orders related to outdoor sports increased by 79 percent compared with the same period in 2022.

Touching the sky

Businesswoman Wang Xueyi, 28, from Shenzhen, Guangdong province, joined an organized three-day hiking trip near Mount Kulha last week. She said it had been a long-term dream of hers to experience the wild beauty of Xizang firsthand.

"The landscape in Xizang is very beautiful, with endless blue skies, white clouds, colorful prayer flags, sacred snow-capped mountains, and jade-like lakes," said Wang.

"In people's minds, Xizang is far away and hard to reach, but many people desire to go there," Wang said.

She was also impressed by the cultural and religious aspects of the region.

"The clouds seem within reach," she said. "The rocks are perilous and towering, the snow-capped mountains are pure, white and sacred. Although the altitude can be challenging, I felt very happy experiencing the vastness and magnificence of Xizang," she said, adding she plans to return to Xizang after her positive experience.

Guide Ngakwang Dorje said Tibetans respect and worship the high mountains as they are considered sacred and must be protected. While providing outdoor services generates an income for locals, sharing an understanding of their significance with visitors is equally important, he said.

Instead of "conquering" a sacred mountain, a Tibetan would walk around it in a clockwise direction as a religious observance to ask for protection from the mountain gods, Ngakwang Dorje said.

"Climbers from the West and people from other parts of China have a desire to conquer the mountains by reaching the top, this is very different from our belief," he said.

"For us, all the climbing and all the work we have been doing is all a job."

Peak performance

Xizang is also proving a rich breeding ground for homegrown talent in mountain sports.

In recent years, the Chinese National Mountaineering and Skiing Team has selected an increasing number of

young athletes from

Xizang, training them

to compete in various

competitions. Approximately 10

young athletes

from the region account for roughly half the national team, said Nyima Tsering, head of the regional sports bureau. Ski mountaineering, which combines snow mountain climbing with skiing techniques, will make its debut at the 2026 Winter Olympics.

Tibetan athlete Yudron Lhamo has emerged as China's ski mountaineering sensation by winning multiple medals at international ski mountaineering competitions in recent years.

Her victories include dominating the U20 women's sprint category at the International Ski Mountaineering Federation World Championships in Spain last year to become China's first world champion in the sport.

"I think that Tibetan athletes hold their greatest advantage in terms of willpower and endurance in winter sport," said Yudron Lhamo.

An official ski team was established in the region in 2018 to support China's national strategy of encouraging 300 million people to participate in winter sports — a government commitment to the all-around development of ice and snow sports.

Koenig said as Tibetans are born, live and work at altitudes between 3,000 and 5,000 m above sea level their genetic characteristics are different from average people. They have better capability for exertion at high altitude, which requires great cardiovascular capacity.

"This is the case for ski mountaineering, Nordic skiing, biathlon, trail running, mountain cycling. It is certain that with advanced technologies for the preparation of athletes, the Tibetans would be on many podiums," he said.

Koenig also praised the founding of the mountaineering guide school in Lhasa, which he said had set the benchmark in the country and Asia for mountaineering sports. "This project was created and is managed by locals, with training aimed at a stratum of the population vital for the future, for young people," he added.

As part of a consensus reached at the forum, Xizang signed the "Framework Agreement to Enhance Exchange and Cooperation in High-Altitude Mountaineering" with Nepal.

In recent years, the region has hosted an increasing number of outdoor sports events including mountain climbing, white water rafting, and mountain biking, which have attracted domestic and international competitors. The third race of the 2024 China Mountain Bike League was held near the Biri National Forest Park of Nyingchi on June 29, attracting 16 professional representative teams from various Chinese provinces, autonomous regions, and cities along with amateur enthusiasts.

During this year's Dragon Boat Festival holiday, Nyingchi also hosted the China-Nepal Friendship Dragon Boat Race. The event, which featured dragon boat sprint races, attracted eight dragon boat teams from Nepal, Singapore, and across the country.

In April, the region hosted multiple rafting competitions in Nyingchi's picturesque Konpo Gyada, including the first international water sports competition in the region.

The event drew 128 participants from 30 domestic and international teams and took place in the Drasumtsu National Forest Park.

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Seasoned climber and guide Ngakwang Dorje leads a climbing expedition.

By PALDEN NYIMA and DAQJONG in Lhasa

The export of clean agricultural products from Nepal to the Xizang autonomous region is expected to take off, benefiting thousands of rural farmers, a Nepalese official told a recent forum.

Ganesh Prasad Timilsina, former chairman of the National Assembly of Nepal, was speaking as a guest at the 4th China Xizang Trans-Himalaya Forum for International Cooperation forum in Nyingchi, Xizang.

He shared his expectations on future exports of agricultural products from Nepal's high-altitude regions to Xizang at a roundtable meeting.

Nepal to expand agricultural exports to region

Timilsina said 77 percent of Nepal's land area is covered by hills and snow-capped mountains, giving the region significant potential for year-round agricultural production.

"These regions not only supply food and income for local communities, but also preserve vast knowledge of cultural heritage and conserve indigenous livestock and crops. Agriculture and livestock breeding in these regions provide a stable livelihood for the local population," Timilsina said.

"Livestock like yaks, sheep, and goats, as

well as herbs, serve as the primary sources of income for people living in snow-capped mountain regions," he said, adding that cattle, buffaloes, goats, chickens, and fish constitute the main sources of income.

He believes that the production of herbs, pesticide-free organic fruit, fish, meat, and dairy products will increase exponentially in Gandaki province and other Nepalese regions.

"By utilizing the water resources in Nepal's hilly and snow-capped mountain regions,

Nepal can take pride in supplying agricultural products, fruit, fish, meat, and dairy products to the inhabitants of the Xizang plateau and other arid regions," he added.

Tsering Phuntsok, vice-chairman of the Xizang autonomous region government, said since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, with the great support of the central government and the assistance of the people across the country, comprehensive rural revitalization has been deepening in the region. Agriculture and ani-

mal husbandry have seen steady growth, and farmers and herdsmen have been enjoying a better life brought by the overall development.

In 2023, the per capita disposable income of rural residents in Xizang reached 19,924 yuan (\$2,738), an increase of 9.4 percent.

Rich in natural resources, Xizang boasts 16 million hectares of forests, 84.3 million hectares of grassland, water resources of 439.4 billion cubic meters, over 9,600 identified species of wild plants, and more than 4,000 agricultural germ plasm resources.

"The valley areas of the region are the main production areas for highland barley and the cold pastoral areas are advantageous regions for yaks," he said.

TOP NEWS

Festive show

People dance beside a campfire on Monday to celebrate the Torch Festival, a traditional holiday of the Yi ethnic group, in the Weining Yi, Hui and Miao autonomous county in Guizhou province. A host of cultural and tourism activities were held during the festival, which falls on the 24th day of the sixth month of the Chinese lunar calendar. The festival lasts for three days and three nights. YANG WENBIN / XINHUA



China to take steps to expand foreign trade

By ZHONG NAN
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Amid rising protectionism and geopolitical risks, China will implement a series of measures in the second half of the year to sustain and enhance its positive foreign trade trajectory, customs officials said on Tuesday.

The measures include creating a conducive institutional framework to expand intermediate goods trade, facilitating imports of advanced technology equipment and key components, and supporting the growth of new business formats such as cross-border e-commerce and overseas warehouse operations.

Speaking at a news conference in Beijing, Lyu Daliang, director of the General Administration of Customs' department of statistics and analysis, said these initiatives aim to bolster China's global trade competitiveness and ensure long-term stability and growth.

Despite facing challenges such as unilateralism and the disruption of global supply chains, Lyu said that

supported by the advantages of a vast domestic market and a complete industrial system, along with various policies to stabilize exports, the country's foreign trade will experience steady growth in the next phase.

Chinese exporters, driven by a marginal improvement in external demand and their own technological innovations, stimulated a new momentum in foreign trade in the first half of the year, providing the world with innovative and high-quality products, he added.

China set a new record in the first half, with foreign trade reaching 21.17 trillion yuan (\$2.92 trillion), a year-on-year increase of 6.1 percent, while exports surged 6.9 percent on a yearly basis to 12.13 trillion yuan, customs statistics showed.

The global upward cycle in technology and green transformation will continue to benefit the exporters of China's semiconductors, mechanical and electrical products, vessels and electric vehicles, creating structural growth potential for the country's exports in the second half, said

Wang Xiaosong, a professor at the Renmin University of China's School of Economics in Beijing.

The shift in developed countries from service spending to increased demand for goods will also drive China's exports this year, Wang said.

Zhao Zenglian, vice-minister of the GAC, said that innovation will effectively boost the confidence of Chinese manufacturers and China's high-quality development will enable global trade partners to share the opportunities of its vast market.

The sentiment is in line with the latest data. China's exports of high-tech products rose 6 percent year-on-year in 2023, accounting for 18.7 percent of its total export value. Additionally, exports of domestic brands grew 9.3 percent on a yearly basis last year, making up 21 percent of the overall exports, according to customs data.

Dismissing the "overcapacity" narrative of some Western countries, Zhao said that China's new energy products are not overproduced. Instead, Chinese companies are

supplying tech-intensive green products to many parts of the world, contributing significantly to the global fight against climate change.

"Protectionist moves will only lead to self-isolation, while openness and sharing pave the way for prosperous development," Zhao added.

KTK Group Co — a manufacturer of industrial equipment and electronic products based in Changzhou, Jiangsu province — has further expanded its sales and service networks in regions such as Central Asia, South Asia and the Middle East, while its business operations in the United States market have been restricted by the US Department of Commerce since 2020.

Gao Feng, the company's vice-president, said they have received orders exceeding 100 million yuan in these regions in recent years.

"Emerging markets have become a new growth driver for our overseas business operations, particularly for our interior systems and seats designed for various types of trains," Gao said.

Trends: Integration with mainland, tech bring about changes

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Yet, as Zheng Yanxiang, director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR, pointed out in his speeches on the special administrative region's 27th anniversary, change is sweeping across the globe, and Hong Kong needs to work out a way to deal with the twin challenges of change and continuity. "Change is a constant. The change occurring in the global order unseen in 100 years is accelerating. Hong Kong should seize the initiative to create new opportunities," Zheng urged. The central government's commitment to upholding "one country, two systems" is unwavering, but the special administrative region needs to push ahead with reforms to keep abreast of change. Similar sentiments were expressed by Xia Baolong, director of the Hong Kong and Macao Work Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, in his speech delivered on National Security Education Day on April 15.

Three mega trends that are unfolding will have a decisive impact on Hong Kong's future. They are occurring in the following areas — Hong Kong's accelerating integration with the Chinese mainland, technological breakthroughs in artificial intelligence, and the

reshaping of the world order consequent on the rise of China.

On Hong Kong's integration with the mainland, the trend is irreversible and it will have a major impact on Hong Kong's population makeup, the character of its society and the shape of its future economy. This is evidenced by statistics showing Hong Kong residents continuing to visit mainland cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area in large numbers. They are going farther and farther north, and with policy adjustments being made by governments on both sides of the boundary to make it easier for Hong Kong residents to visit and work there, more and more Hong Kong residents will likely choose to settle on the mainland.

Such an outflow of people and consumption dollars will cause short-term disruption to the local economy, but the Hong Kong government is in the process of tapping into the mainland for talent, in particular technological talent, to help the city jump-start its technological parks. As a latecomer in going after quantum computing, AI and microelectronics, the holy grail of all would-be tech hubs, Hong Kong welcomes the engineers and tech talent from the mainland to fill the advanced manufacturing facilities, the labs and

data centers being planned. Longer term, the influx of such talent will have a transformative impact on Hong Kong's population and economic structure.

Last March, Sam Altman, the founder of OpenAI, transfixed the world with the generative ability of his ChatGPT-4. In a race to emulate each other, scientists are building smart computers, some of which are displaying capabilities exceeding those of humans. More and more AI tools are being used to do work hitherto undertaken by humans. Some AI tools have partnered with humans as co-pilots, while some have shown human-like biases and resistance to control. AI will bring sweeping changes to the workplace. The expectation is that AI advancement will create new jobs and open up new frontiers of knowledge, but before that happens, many jobs may be cut. The world will soon be consumed with the wonders wrought by AI as well as issues related to AI governance.

Finally, the United States-led "liberal" international order, which has dominated the world since World War II, is showing increasing signs of cracks and fracturing into different geopolitical blocs. The crisis in Ukraine has shattered Europe's semblance of political stability. It abruptly ended Germany's

warming ties with Russia because of the former's dependence on Russian gas and turned Russia into a pariah in Western eyes.

The US "China threat" fallacy and the consequent adoption of a de facto "decoupling" policy toward China have accelerated China's drive toward self-reliance, the formation of its own circle of friends, and the expansion of the BRICS group to include more emerging and nonaligned countries.

Against this backdrop of a shifting world order, Hong Kong must strive hard to maintain and expand its international space so that its external trade and economic relations can continue to flourish. Given its unique position sandwiched between the Chinese mainland and the West, Hong Kong should make greater use of its value as a channel for communication across different cultural and political frontiers, and help the country ease tensions and win more friends.

These mega trends pose challenges that Chief Executive John Lee would do well to take on in the next few years to ensure Hong Kong's long-term success.

The author is convener of the Executive Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and a legislator. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Sino-African relations to be strengthened

Upcoming summit of forum likely to boost solidarity, cooperation between two sides

By WANG QINGYUN
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Leaders of China and countries in Africa will gather in Beijing for the 2024 Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in September, a key gathering widely expected to enhance solidarity and cooperation between the two sides.

The three-day summit, scheduled to start on Sept 4, will have the theme "Joining Hands to Advance Modernization and Build a High-Level China-Africa Community with a Shared Future", according to the Foreign Ministry.

A series of events will be held, including an opening ceremony, a welcoming banquet, parallel and high-level meetings, a conference of Chinese and African entrepreneurs and bilateral meetings, ministry spokesman Lin Jian said on Tuesday.

A senior officials' meeting will be held on Sept 2 and a ministers' meeting on Sept 3 to make preparations for the summit, Lin said, adding that the Chinese and African sides are maintaining close communications and consultations on the preparation work.

The gathering will come six years after the last FOCAC Summit was held in Beijing in 2018. "The upcoming summit will 'open up new horizons for the development of China-Africa ties', Lin said.

Li Wentao, director of the Institute of African Studies of the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, said that in a world with increased turmoil, the 2024 FOCAC Summit holds "great significance" in terms of promoting fairness, justice and inclusiveness in the global order.

China and Africa are not only important members of the Global South, but also forces that champion world peace, Li said, adding that he expects both sides to strengthen communications on

major international issues, as well as enhance alignment of their development strategies, at the summit.

China, the largest trade partner for Africa for 15 consecutive years, has pushed forward cooperation with the continent in a series of fields under the framework of FOCAC, a forum established in 2000 and covering 53 African countries and the African Union Commission.

Cooperation between China and Africa is rapidly growing in a number of fields, including industrialization, infrastructure, trade and agriculture.

Bilateral trade reached a record high of \$282.1 billion in 2023, and China has invested more than any other developing country in Africa, the Ministry of Commerce said, adding that Chinese companies have invested in a number of fields, such as construction materials, automobiles, home appliances and agricultural product processing.

The country has become "one of the most important external impetuses" for Africa's development over the past two decades, Li said.

Lin, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, said that "mutual respect, equal treatment and joint consultations are important characteristics" of FOCAC.

Li, the researcher, said that China carries out its cooperation with Africa on the basis of consultations, instead of imposing its own will on African countries.

This is an important reason for the strong traditional friendship and high level of political mutual trust between the two sides, he said.

China and Africa, which are both making vigorous efforts in their modernization drives, will likely take the upcoming summit as an opportunity to exchange their experience in promoting growth and discuss further cooperation to boost shared development, Li said.

Games: Overseas influence of Chinese brands expanding

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The company's AI-powered platform can analyze each athlete's state of motion and the trajectory of the basketball's movement in real time, and give immediate feedback by constructing 3D models and leveraging 3D motion capture algorithms, with a goal of improving athletes' training efficiency and their performance in the competition.

Wang Peng, a researcher at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, said, "The application of China's state-of-the-art digital tech at the Paris Games has improved the viewing experience for spectators around the world, and showcased Chinese companies' leading position in tech frontiers and their strengths in technological innovation."

By participating in and providing

technical support for the world's largest multisport event, Chinese tech companies are enhancing their brand awareness and influence in the international market, Wang said. Their participation will let more overseas audiences learn about China's rapid progress in cloud computing and AI technologies, he added.

Chinese tech company Baidu Inc is offering an AI auxiliary training system, which is based on its ChatGPT-like product and large language model Ernie Bot, for the Chinese diving team. It can understand complex instructions from coaches, record athletes' diving posture and actions, and score their real-time movements, in order to provide precise quantitative assessment and scientific guidance for training and competition, according to Baidu.

Economy: More policy measures expected to support growth

From page 1

China has targeted its economic growth at around 5 percent for 2024. Official data showed that the country's gross domestic product grew 5 percent year-on-year in the first half of the year.

Looking to the next half of the year, Zhou Maohua, a researcher at China Everbright Bank, said the policy focus will be on stabilizing

growth, preventing risks and deepening reforms.

Citing measures mapped out by the key meeting, such as speeding up the issuance of local government special bonds and driving large-scale equipment upgrades and trade-in deals for consumer goods, he said the moves will help stimulate market vitality and strengthen the growth momentum for consumption and domestic demand.

Li Daokui, director of Tsinghua Uni-

versity's Academic Center for Chinese Economic Practice and Thinking, said the country is on track to meet its annual growth target of around 5 percent this year, as the country is poised to launch a number of policy measures to support growth in the remainder of the year.

Li said he remains "quite optimistic about China's economic growth in 2024", and he expects to see gradual stabilization in prices and recovery in

confidence among businesses, investors and consumers amid strong policy stimulus in the next half of the year.

As the broader economy still faces headwinds, he said a package of measures is needed to defuse local government debt risks, boost consumer sentiment and stabilize the housing sector.

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CHINA

Ancient blade tech found on plateau

By PALDEN NYIMA and DAQIONG in Lhasa

Chinese scientists have discovered the oldest-known microblade technology site on the south bank of the Serling Tso Lake in the Xizang autonomous region, adding to the historical timeline of early human activity on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.

Microblade technology refers to the creation of small stone blades, which were commonly used for blade inlays on bone or wooden handles in hunter-gatherer cultures.

1,100
stone artifacts
unearthed at Site 3 of the Niadi Site in Xizang

At an altitude of over 4,500 meters, the discovery at Site 3 of the Niadi Site along the lake is characterized by typical microblade technology products, with over 1,100 stone artifacts unearthed, according to the research team.

The research by a team from the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology, the region's institute of cultural relics protection and the cultural bureau of Nagchu city, was published recently in Science China: Earth Science.

According to the CAS institute, the findings offer a glimpse into the activities of early human populations in the plateau's hinterland approximately 11,000 to 10,000 years ago.

The analysis of the microblade technology revealed that wedge-shaped and semi-conical stone cores were used, similar to techniques found in the late Paleolithic period in North China. The similarities point to the extensive migration and settlement patterns of the time.

Zhang Xiaoling, a researcher at the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Paleoanthropology, said that the discovery confirms that between 11,000 and 10,000 years ago, microblade technology had already reached the heart of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, which is of great significance in discussing the process of early migration and evolution of humans in high-altitude environments.

"Microblade technology, as a highly distinctive stone tool production technique, reflects the close connection between the North China region and the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau during the late Pleistocene to early Holocene," Zhang said, adding that the period of large-scale diffusion of microblade technology groups on the plateau was a key period in the formation process of the ancestors of contemporary Tibetan people.

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Colorful sight



Hot air balloons take off during the Fourth Hot Air Balloon Carnival of Zhangye Colorful Danxia at Zhangye Colorful Danxia Scenic Spot in Gansu province on Monday. The event, which began on Monday and ends on Wednesday, will see 36 balloons take part in six flying performances. WANG JIANPING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Xinjiang aims to develop into intl aviation hub

Comprehensive guideline issued to boost its high-quality development

By LUO WANGSHU luowangshu@chinadaily.com.cn

To build the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region into an international civil aviation hub for Eurasia and promote the high-quality development of its civil aviation sector, the Civil Aviation Administration of China and the regional government have released a comprehensive guideline.

The guideline focuses on three areas: building Urumqi, the capital of the region, into an international hub for the civil aviation system; establishing a comprehensive air route network linking big and medium-sized cities inside and outside Xinjiang; and improving airport infrastructure in the region.

Urumqi airport will serve as the core, and airports in Kashgar, Korla, Yining, Turpan, Hotan, Karamay and Aral will act as auxiliary hubs. They will connect with regional branch airports and general aviation airports, forming a multilevel transportation hub covering the entire region and integrating with other transportation modes, according to Zhang Qing, development planning department director of the CAAC.

"The network will establish international air routes from Urumqi to Central Asia and Europe, and domestic routes connecting Xinjiang with other parts of China," she said. "This will enhance Xinjiang's role as a gateway to Central Asia and a bridge between Asia and Europe."

The first phase of the plan, lasting until 2027, focuses on infrastructure development and improving air transportation services. The second phase, from 2027 to 2035, will focus on improving overall performance.

"By 2035, the Xinjiang civil aviation industry will have achieved high-quality development, with significant improvements in safety, service quality, operational efficiency and green development," Zhang said. "Urumqi airport will be a strong competitor in the Eurasian market, and regional airports will play a more prominent role, ensuring air services cover the entire region."

Zou Yiwei, head of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission in Xinjiang, said, "Realizing this goal will greatly promote economic and trade exchanges and cultural interactions between the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region and neighboring countries and regions."

The guideline also includes measures to create an air service networks linking Xinjiang to urban clusters including Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei, the Yangtze River Delta, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and the Chengdu-Chongqing region, Zou said.

Implementation of the guideline is expected to propel Xinjiang's aviation industry into a new era of growth, boosting regional trade and tourism, and contributing to its economic development, he added.

As trade and tourism between China and Eurasia continue to flourish, a surge in demand for air travel is expected, said Pan Yixin, executive vice-president of the China Air Transport Association.

"We are seeing a tremendous demand for direct flights and increased frequency of service between China and Central Asia and the Middle East," Pan said.

That was evident during a recent visit, where aviation authorities, airlines and airports in countries such as

Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, expressed a strong desire to expand their connections with China, he said.

China Southern Airlines, one of China's major airline companies, is eyeing expansion at the company's general manager, Han Wensheng.

The company plans to increase the number of aircraft deployed at Urumqi to 90 by the end of next year, representing a 30 percent increase from 2019.

"Leveraging the advantages of the cargo compartments of China Southern Airlines' passenger aircraft and its extensive international and domestic route network, we will build urban cargo stations, vigorously develop transit routes, and allow Xinjiang goods to go out and bring advanced industries to the region," Han said. "We will also enhance the cargo gathering and distribution capacity of the Urumqi hub."

Qi Qi, deputy head of the Management College of the Guangzhou Civil Aviation College, said Xinjiang's civil aviation industry is experiencing rapid growth, with Urumqi setting a record for single-runway takeoffs and landings in China.

"Urumqi has a unique geographic advantage, serving as a bridgehead for China's westward opening-up policy and a core city in the Silk Road Economic Belt," Qi said, adding that within a 4-hour flight radius, Urumqi covers the core cities of five Central Asian countries, reaching an area with a population of over 1.4 billion and a GDP of over \$10 trillion.

However, the limited resources at Urumqi Airport, such as the single runway, still pose a challenge to its development as an international hub.

"Although the airport is planning a second runway and new terminal, it takes some time," he said.

Documentary filmmakers observe people and places, he said. For example, he is currently making a documentary about rural children in Yunnan province and he finds them as complicated as any children elsewhere, with their own failures and successes.

"What I am filming is the commonalities of people," Jones said. "No matter how strange the places I go to, I find people there are more or less alike. From their expressions and their behavior, I can relate to their feelings."

Du Zhanyuan, the head of China International Communications Group, said he hopes Chinese and international directors and filmmakers can join hands to record the footprints of China's reform and opening-up, the hardworking Chinese people and how the country develops, and share it with the world.

From small angles and personal perspectives, they can reflect grand themes and present a trustful and respectful image of China to the world, he said.

University class aims to foster computing talent

By LIU KUN in Wuhan and ZHAO RUIXUE

Hubei province's Wuhan University has attracted the attention of prospective students who have outstanding admission scores with a new course called the Lei Jun Class that will focus on computer science and technology.

The class is named after the founder and chairman of Chinese tech company Xiaomi Corp, who is a famous university alumnus.

The university said 30 students will be enrolled in its first year, with half being those who sat the college entrance exam, or *gaokao*, and the rest selected from freshmen enrolled in other majors.

The class will be tailored to cultivate future leaders in innovation and entrepreneurship.

Among the enrolled students is Wang Weixi, a graduate of Enshi Prefecture High School, who said he is intrigued by the opportunity of guaranteed eligibility for further studies at the master's and doctoral levels.

"There are risks and opportunities in being part of the first cohort of this class, but I am eager to take on the challenge," he said. "I have a keen interest in computer science, and the Lei Jun Class provides us with unparalleled resources to pursue our aspirations in this sector."

Students in the class will have access to distinguished mentors in innovation and entrepreneurship and professionals from the computer science and technology industry.

The mentors will provide personalized guidance to Lei Jun Class students, aiding them in their academic pursuits, research

endeavors and practical engineering activities, the university said.

The students will also have access to a wide array of educational resources, including exclusive internship opportunities at top-tier companies and dedicated funding for participation in overseas study programs and academic conferences.

The class offers a more flexible credit recognition and evaluation system, allowing students to tailor their academic and career development plans to their individual goals. Du Bo, dean of the university's School of Computer Science, said at a news conference in May.

"Students in the Lei Jun Class will get the best academic resources, teaching resources, engineering practice resources and alumni resources of Wuhan University," Du said.

Lei donated 1.3 billion yuan (\$179 million) to his alma mater in November to support fundamental research in mathematics, physics, chemistry, literature, history and philosophy, as well as innovation in computer science and technology.

Other universities offer similar classes, and the Turing Class at Peking University, which was initiated in 2017, is also committed to cultivating the next generation of leaders in computer science.

Some universities have developed special classes in other fields. One example is the Qian Xuesen Class at Xi'an Jiaotong University, in Shaanxi province, which aims to cultivate engineering talent.

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Representatives from the Taiwan Coast Guard Administration offer flowers to pay tribute to the deceased during a memorial service at the Jinmen funeral management office on Tuesday. WANG CHENGHAO / XINHUA

Bodies of two fishermen returned to mainland

By ZHANG YI zhangyi1@chinadaily.com.cn

The family members of two fishermen from the Chinese mainland involved in a fatal boat accident near Jinmen, an island administered by Taiwan, brought their bodies back on Tuesday, concluding months of negotiations between the two sides.

Accompanied by representatives from the Red Cross Society of China branch in Jinjiang, Fujian province, the family members engaged in discussions with Taiwan authorities to address issues related to the incident.

On Feb 14, a fishing boat from Fujian was reportedly mistreated by Taiwan authorities in the waters near the Jinmen area, causing all four fishermen on board to fall into the sea. Two of the fishermen died, while the other two were rescued and later returned to the mainland.

The incident stirred outrage on the mainland, with many criticizing the Taiwan authorities for alleged excessive force and a lack of thorough investigation into the matter.

The bodies of the two mainland fishermen, along with the detained fishing boat, were returned to the mainland on Tuesday after an agreement was reached.

On Tuesday morning, about 100 people, including family members of the deceased fisher-

men and representatives from both sides, gathered at the Jinmen funeral management office for a joint memorial service. The ceremony included offerings of incense, flowers, fruits, and bows of respect to honor the deceased.

At the memorial site, Chang Chung-lung, head of the Taiwan Coast Guard Administration, extended his apologies to the families, acknowledging their suffering and expressing condolences.

Subsequently, representatives from the Taiwan Coast Guard Administration, Jinjiang Red Cross Society, Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council and Straits Exchange Foundation and the Jinmen county government paid their respects and offered condolences to the families.

Li Zhaohui, a senior consultant from the Jinjiang Red Cross Society, said that the two deceased fishermen could finally return to their hometown, while their families received the belated apologies they had been waiting for.

He urged the Taiwan authorities to earnestly implement the terms of the agreement and promptly disclose the truth of the incident, conduct a fair investigation, and take appropriate actions against those involved.

"The two sides are from one family," he said, highlighting the close relationship between Jinjiang and Jinmen.

IP Plan 2024 launched in Hunan

By ZOU SHUO in Changsha zoushuo@chinadaily.com.cn

The "Image Possibilities" Coproduction Plan 2024 has started soliciting proposals for short videos, short and long documentaries and adaptations of existing videos from home and abroad to tell Chinese stories.

The launch ceremony for IP Plan 2024 was held in Changsha, Hunan province, on Tuesday, with the event hosted by China International Communications Group, CCTV-9, Discovery Channel and Hunan Broadcasting System.

The first IP Plan, from 2022 to 2023, saw 62 documentaries win support.

Apart from soliciting videos and documentaries that have already been made, the plan also invites creative ideas and offers teams professional training, guidance and funding in video making and adaptation as well as media exposure,

according to the organizers.

Outstanding proposals will be broadcast on CCTV-9 and other international media channels.

The plan encourages filmmakers to understand what's happening in China and what the true China is, they said.

Malcolm Clarke, a British documentary filmmaker and a mentor for IP Plan, said it is getting more difficult to find a platform and an audience for Chinese content in the West.

There is a political decoupling happening right now and there is also informational decoupling when it comes to getting Chinese-based films a wide audience in the West, he said.

China's rise is seen by many people in the West as a challenge to Western values and economic domination, Clarke said. What that means is that documentaries and programming that show China's technological progress, how it

builds, how it expands, and its scientific discoveries are very interesting in the West, but also somewhat threatening, he said.

"However, if we understand the true nature, kindness and integrity of the Chinese people, then all the technology, all the inventions, all the great developments technologically, can be seen in the context that we can trust the Chinese government and the Chinese people," he said. "We need to develop trust."

There is a need for more filmmakers from all over the world — and more filmmakers from China — to be making films about China, Clarke said.

Arthur Jones, British filmmaker and documentary director and a participant in the first IP Plan, said language can be a barrier for foreign filmmakers and directors when making films about China, but can also be an advantage as they can make the film as an outsider.

WORLD

Tariff hike fears send importers scrambling

Trump-Biden duties on China impact jobs and harm consumers, experts say

By HENG WEILI in New York
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Footwear retailers and other importers in the United States may have to put on their running shoes in a rush to bring in goods before tariffs on China get raised again.

Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump, who kicked off the tariff spree on Chinese imports in 2018 when he was US president, earlier this year floated the idea of putting a 60 percent tariff on all imports from China and 10 percent on all imports worldwide.

"That (possibility) is obviously driving a lot of interest for our members about how to start to bring in products maybe prior to some of those decisions to push duties up," said Matt Priest, the president and CEO of the Footwear Distributors and Retailers of America.

He said it would "obviously impact costing and our consumers, who ultimately pay the price of those duties".

Priest made the comments at a Port of Los Angeles webinar on July 17 about monthly container traffic at the California port, where two-thirds of US shoe imports arrive.

Port of LA Executive Director Gene Seroka said that footwear traffic is a top 10 driver of import volume at the port "year after year". More than 90 percent of the shoes sold in the US come from Asia — from China, Vietnam and Indonesia, Priest said.

The US footwear industry imports 2.5 billion pairs of shoes a year and already pays \$4 billion a year in tariffs, according to footwearnews.com.

In 2019, Trump's second round of

tariffs added a 15 percent duty on about half of the footwear imports from China. He cut the rate to 7.5 percent in 2020.

Priest said the industry has seen weaker purchasing power from people in households making under \$100,000 a year, and they could face higher costs buying shoes in the back-to-school season.

"Footwear is kind of the barometer of the overall health of the economy because people need to buy shoes," he said.

In an interview with Fox News Sunday on Feb 4, Trump dismissed the notion of a "trade war" with China but said of the 60 percent tariff idea, "maybe it's going to be even more".

Trump imposed tariffs on an estimated \$380 billion worth of Chinese goods in 2018 and 2019. The administration of US President Joe Biden has kept most of those levies in place, and in May, raised some others on an additional \$18 billion in Chinese imports, such as electric vehicles and semiconductors.

In a July 18 speech at the Republican National Convention, Trump said he would welcome Chinese EV companies, if they built factories in the US.

"Those plants are going to be built in the United States, and our people are going to man those plants," he said, or he would impose tariffs as high as 200 percent on the cars entering the country.

Priest said there's been a "run on capacity to get product in" ahead of the start of the higher tariffs on electric vehicles on Aug 1, which has led to a spike in shipping container rates.

Gary Hufbauer, a nonresident senior fellow at the Peterson Insti-

tute for International Economics in Washington, told China Daily that higher tariffs could present a dilemma for the Federal Reserve, which has signaled it would eventually cut interest rates.

"More tariffs will certainly add to inflation and make the Fed's job harder. My guess is that the Trump and Biden tariffs added about one percentage point to the CPI (consumer price index) between 2018 and 2023, in other words about 0.2 percentage points annually for five years.

'High probability'

"If Trump is elected, I see a high probability that he will slap high tariffs on virtually all US imports from China," Hufbauer said. "Trump has talked about a 60 percent rate; my forecast is that he will at least go for 40 percent.

"China will retaliate. This will cause an enormous amount of trade diversion, both Chinese and US exports. It will also cause some outright trade destruction, maybe on the order of \$200 billion annually," he said.

"That's bad news for the world economy. A few other countries will be tempted to increase their own tariffs or nontariff barriers, if only to dampen the effects of trade diversion. All told, this will shave something off world economic growth, perhaps 0.1 percent," he said.

In a June 26 article, Erica York, senior economist and research director with the nonprofit Tax Foundation's Center for Federal Tax Policy, wrote that the current Trump-Biden tariffs amount to an average annual tax increase on US households of \$625.

York estimated that the current tariffs would lead to the loss of 142,000 full-time equivalent jobs.



Rescuers help residents move to a safer place after multiple landslides in the hills of Wayanad in Kerala state, India, on Tuesday. REUTERS

More than 100 killed in India landslides

NEW DELHI — Multiple landslides triggered by torrential rains in southern India have killed more than 100 people, and many others are feared trapped under the debris, local authorities said on Tuesday.

The landslides hit hilly villages in Kerala state's Wayanad district early on Tuesday and destroyed many houses and a bridge, but authorities have yet to determine the full scope of the disaster.

Rescuers were working to pull out people stuck under mud and debris, but their efforts were hampered because of blocked roads and unstable terrain.

At least 106 people were killed in the landslides, 128 injured and dozens unaccounted for, state authorities said on Tuesday evening. Local Asianet TV put the death toll higher at 120.

Television visuals showed rescue workers making their way through

rocks and uprooted trees as muddy water gushed through, with many houses destroyed. Vehicles swept off the roads were seen stuck in a swollen river.

Authorities mobilized helicopters to help with the rescue efforts and the Indian army was called upon to build a temporary bridge after landslides destroyed a main bridge that linked the affected area.

"We are trying every way to rescue our people," state Health Minister Veena George said.

In a post on X, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was "distressed by the landslides in parts of Wayanad", a hilly district which is part of the Western Ghats mountain range.

Modi announced a compensation of \$2,388 to each of the victims' families.

The Indian Meteorological Department said the state has had heavy rainfall over its northern

and central regions, with Wayanad district recording up to 28 centimeters of rain in the past 24 hours. Downpours have disrupted life for many, and authorities closed schools in some parts on Tuesday. More rains were predicted throughout the day.

Kerala, one of India's most popular tourist destinations, is prone to heavy rains, flooding and landslides. Nearly 500 people were killed in the state in 2018 in one of the worst floods.

"Monsoon patterns are increasingly erratic and the quantum of rainfall that we receive in a short spell of time has increased," said Roxy Mathew Koll, a climate scientist at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology. "As a result, we see frequent instances of landslides and floods along the Western Ghats."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Trade agency expands network in US capital

By MINLU ZHANG in Washington
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A Chinese agency promoting international trade and investment between China and foreign businesses "expanded its circle of friends" in the US capital on Tuesday, a move that an American trade group sees as a "positive sign" for bilateral trade relations.

The China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), founded in 1952, is an organization that strengthens the bonds between Chinese and foreign businesses and advances international economic and trade exchanges.

The agency, which opened a representative office in Maryland in 1988, moved to a new location in Washington on Tuesday, sharing the same building with the US Chamber of Commerce. Around 130 business representatives from about 60 US companies and 40 Chinese companies attended the opening reception.

Chinese Ambassador to the United States Xie Feng noted that in February and July, CCPIT was the agency hosting delegations from the US Chamber of Commerce, and then the US-China Business Council.

"The representative office of CCPIT has served as an important bridge and bond within the Chinese and American business activities. It has played an important role in strengthening bilateral economic and trade relations," Xie said.

Tuesday's event followed the July 18 conclusion of the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China.

"The session has made the arrangements for opening-up, including steadily expanding institutional opening-up, broadening market access and effectively protecting the legitimate



Chinese Ambassador to the United States Xie Feng attends the ribbon-cutting ceremony at the opening reception for the new location of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) in Washington DC on Tuesday. MINLU ZHANG / CHINA DAILY

rights of foreign investment companies," Xie said.

He emphasized that it represents "a clear signal of China's commitment to expanding a high-level opening-up".

China "will continue to forge a world-class business environment that is market oriented, law based and international, offering even greater opportunities for businesses from all countries," he said.

Xie told the business representatives that "we welcome you to continue the investment and business ties with China, to share in the dividends of this high-quality development".

"This will bring benefits to both our two peoples and help the two countries to embark on the right way to get along in the new era under the principle of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation," he said.

A delegation from the board of directors of the US-China Business Council visited China last week.

Ren Hongbin, chairman of the CCPIT, along with a delegation of about 50 Chinese business representatives paid a reciprocal visit this week.

In the first half of 2024, bilateral trade between China and the US grew by 2.9 percent year-on-year, and the number of US companies investing in China increased by more than 20 percent over the same period the previous year, with the amount of actual investment doubling, according to Ren.

He said that the industrial chains and supply chains are deeply integrated between the two countries. Last November, companies from the US sent the most exhibitors from a

foreign country to the China International Supply Chain Expo, the world's first national exhibition focusing on supply chains.

Cliff Seagroves, principal deputy director of the Office of Foreign Missions of the US State Department, said he was pleased to see CCPIT's new location finally opening in the heart of Washington.

"We're confident that this space will help bridge the gap between United States and China and strengthen our economic cooperation for both US businesses and Chinese businesses," he said.

Craig Allen, president of the US-China Business Council, said the opening of the new office is a positive sign for returning to a growth track, increasing trade and investment and benefiting the people of both countries.

Charles Freeman, senior vice-president for Asia of the US Chamber of Commerce, said: "We're living in the age of small yards and high fences. ... It's up to the business communities to move past all the frictions and the challenges and really implement what is at the heart and soul of the US-China relationship, which is the people-to-people relationship.

"There is no question in my mind, whenever someone asks are the United States and China, are we actually going to enter into some real conflict? I say no. Because the relationship between people is so strong and so permanent that I think it can overcome," he said.

The Chinese delegation visited New York on Monday, continued to Washington DC and Maryland on Tuesday, and will proceed to Seattle next.

US insurers suffer as wildfires rage

By MAYZHOU in Houston
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As wildfires in California burn hundreds of thousands of hectares and threaten houses, home insurers in the United States reported their biggest loss of the century last year.

A report by AM Best, a credit-rating agency, said that "the segment suffered a \$15.2 billion underwriting loss in 2023, more than double the losses seen in the previous year." The loss last year was also the worst this century, with \$14.8 billion in losses in 2011 the next highest.

In 2023, there were a record 28 weather and climate disasters, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA, with total damages of at least \$92.9 billion. For comparison, the annual average for such events between 1980 and 2023 was 8.5.

The Claims and Litigation Management, or CLM, an organization for claims and litigation professionals, estimated that Hurricane Beryl on the US Gulf Coast, the first hurricane of 2024, would cost the US insurance industry between \$2.5 billion and \$4.5 billion. Furthermore, they estimated more than 100 wildfires are raging in the United States, with the largest burning in California.

According to California fire officials, the Park Fire, the sixth-largest wildfire in California history, had burned more than 149,700 hectares as of Monday — an area larger than the city of Phoenix — with 134 structures destroyed.

Population trends show residents increasingly moving toward regions that are more prone to hurricanes, severe convective storms or even wildfires."

David Blades, associate director of industry research and analytics at AM Best, a credit-rating agency in the US

Another wildfire, the Borel Fire, destroyed the historic mining community of Havilah, where only a few buildings were left standing, according to the Los Angeles Times. An evacuation order was in effect for the town with a population of 250.

According to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, about 294,000 hectares have burned in the state this year as of the past weekend, with 232 structures destroyed.

In Oregon, the 2024 wildfire season so far has burned 462,000 hectares, according to the Oregon Fires and Hotspots Dashboard. The Durkee Fire, the largest active blaze, has burned about 121,000 hectares, with 23 structures destroyed.

Multiple fires are also burning in Utah and Colorado.



Fire crews battle a blaze on the highway near Dales, California, on Monday. NIC COURRY / AP

A wildfire in the Canadian Rockies' largest national park is still not controlled, according to the Jasper National Park Facebook page. An estimated 30 percent of houses and businesses in the popular Canadian resort town of Jasper, Alberta, were incinerated as a wildfire continued to roar through the area. The fire forced thousands of visitors, seasonal workers and residents to flee Jasper.

Major reason

The AM Best report said one of the major reasons for the increased losses is population migration into areas where weather-related events are occurring more frequently.

"The US population overall grew 7.4 percent between 2010-2020 but rose 10.2 percent in the South and 9.2 percent in the West during the period," said David Blades, associate director of industry research and analytics at AM Best. "Population trends show residents increasingly moving toward regions that are more prone to hurricanes, severe convective storms or even wildfires."

According to the US census, California, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Texas and Washington accounted for 53 percent of US population growth between 2010 and 2020. All six states are prone to severe weather-related events.

Christopher Graham, senior industry analyst at AM Best, said that if the Category 5 Hurricane Andrew in 1992 occurred today, the damage could double due to population growth. At \$58.6 billion in damages, Hurricane Andrew is rated as the most costly catastrophe for the US between 1900 and 2023.

For the flood-prone South, more buildings mean less nature to absorb rainfall, thus causing more flooding, according to Graham. "The same goes for California with the wildfires. Building in areas more prone to wildfires and then human activities create more wildfires" and "there are a whole lot of human activities in the area that's prone to catastrophes exacerbating catastrophes," Graham said.

Agencies contributed to this story.

BUSINESS

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Officials: Data push will boost digital economy

NDA deputy head says it is key to nurturing new quality productive forces

By FAN FEIFEI
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China's emphasis on building basic systems for data and bolstering the development and application of data will strongly boost the high-quality development of the country's digital economy and unleash the value of massive data resources, said officials and experts.

Shen Zhulin, deputy head of the National Data Administration, said China has made great strides in developing the digital economy and promoting the construction of digital infrastructure like computing power networks, emphasizing that the country's digital economy has become an important engine for nurturing new quality productive forces, with its scale ranking second in the world.

He said the proportion of added value of core digital economy industries in the country's GDP has been increasing, while innovative achievements in cutting-edge digital technologies like integrated circuits, artificial intelligence and quantum information are emerging at a faster pace.

Shen made the remarks at a news conference regarding the China International Big Data Industry Expo 2024, which will be held in Guiyang, Guizhou province, from Aug 28 to 30.

He said this year's expo will showcase the latest trends and achievements of big data industry both at home and abroad comprehensively. The expo focuses on six main topics covering the industrialization of digital technologies, the digital transformation of industries, the value of data, digital governance, digital infrastructure and data security.

During the three-day event, prominent experts and scholars will be invited to deliver keynote speeches, while the latest policies, applications and research results in the big data industry are scheduled to be released by government departments, research institutes and participating enterprises, he said.

Major tech enterprises such as Huawei Technologies Co, Alibaba

Group Holding Ltd, Tencent Holdings Ltd and Baidu Inc as well as three telecom carriers have confirmed their attendance. The expo has been held in Guiyang since 2015 and is the first of its kind in China, forming a communication platform for pivotal achievements in the big data industry.

Often dubbed China's big data hub, the mountainous province of Guizhou is China's first national big data comprehensive pilot zone. It has been promoting the big data industry as the backbone of its high-quality social and economic development.

Jing Yaping, director of the Big Data Development Administration of Guizhou, said the province will take further steps to speed up the construction of computing infrastructure and intelligent computing centers, and bolster the application of industry-specific large language models or LLMs.

Noting that data has become a new type of production factor and serves as the key element of the digital economy, Jing said the province has made great efforts to improve the basic systems for data by introducing a series of policy measures, promote the circulation and trading of data and build up data center clusters so as to unleash the massive value of data elements.

To seize the opportunities from the fast-developing artificial intelligence or AI technology, Ma Ningyu, mayor of Guiyang, stressed the need to bolster industrial application of AI-powered LLMs by providing high-performance computing power and high-quality data and accelerating the construction of LLM training platforms, as well as expand the application scenarios of data elements in more fields.

Xiang Ligang, director-general of the Information Consumption Alliance, a telecom industry association, said it is important to build computing network infrastructure and data exchange centers, explore data pricing mechanisms and value assessment systems, and accelerate the establishment of a unified domestic market for data elements.



A view of the headquarters of the China Securities Regulatory Commission in Beijing.

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Reform seen aiding stock market's long-term development, stability

By SHI JING in Shanghai
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The long-term trend of the A-share market's sound development remains unchanged as the central regulators deepen capital market reform to ensure market stability and fair trading, said experts.

In a meeting on Monday, the China Securities Regulatory Commission, the country's top securities watchdog, said efforts will be made to secure the stable operation of the stock market. It also said it will step up research on market risks and come up with workable solutions. Market entities will be given full play to stabilize the market performance and improve market expectations, said CSRC officials.

Meanwhile, the countercyclical adjustment mechanism for IPOs should be completed. Capital market tools such as bonds, futures and regional equity markets should be better used to aid the recovery of the real economy, the CSRC said.

Sun Jinju, vice-president of Kaiyuan Securities, said the countercyclical adjustment for IPOs started in the third quarter of 2023, temporarily slowing new floats. So, only 34 new companies went public on the Shanghai and Shenzhen bourses in the first half of this year, down from 131 IPOs during the same period of 2023.

The temporary tightening grip over IPOs can further balance financing and investment in the A-share market while alleviating the liquidity pressure, said Sun.

Policies for foreign investors

have also been improving. The People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, and the State Administration of Foreign Exchange, jointly released a set of regulations on Friday to optimize the cross-border capital management for qualified foreign institutional investors and renminbi qualified foreign institutional investors.

The QFII and RQFII registration procedures will be further simplified. The RMB deposit accounts for them to trade securities and derivatives will be merged. While only foreign currencies were allowed for remittances of QFIIs and RQFIIs in the past, both RMB and foreign currencies will now be allowed for such remittances, according to the new regulations that will take effect on Aug 26.

According to PBOC officials, the new regulations will set up a simple, open and unified capital management system for onshore securities investment. Investments of QFIIs and RQFIIs in China will be more convenient, which will be conducive to improving the quality of China's capital market opening-up.

Meanwhile, the regulators have been eliciting public opinion on raising the traffic fees generated from high frequency trading, a part of quant trading.

"Institutional investors should serve as the market's dampers and equalizers, which the market will welcome. If the strategies they adopt boost market performance instead, the market will get spooked and have concerns," said Zhu Liang, chief investment officer for US asset man-

ager Alliance Bernstein in China.

Recent performance of some quant funds in China appears to suggest they were instrumental in boosting market performance. So, it may be time to lower the funds' impact on both the market and market sentiment, as some investors appear to be a little bit distressed at the moment. The CSRC's suspension of securities lending and the central bank's recent cuts to key interest rates are part of the regulators' efforts to restore market confidence and stability, said Zhu.

Since January, the central regulators have expressed support or introduced key policies, including the nine-measure document released by the State Council, China's Cabinet, in April to advance the high-quality development of the capital market. These have addressed the most frequently raised market concerns and demonstrated the regulators' resolve to safeguard the capital market, said Meng Lei, China equity strategist at UBS Securities.

In this sense, there is limited room for the A-share indexes to further head south as supportive policies will impart upward momentum, he said. As more long-term capital in the form of pension funds, social security funds and insurance capital will continue to flow into the A-share market, the average value of A-share companies will be enhanced in the long run, he said.

The benchmark Shanghai Composite Index shed 0.43 percent to close at 2879.3 points and the Shenzhen Component Index slid 0.54 percent on Tuesday.

CEEC hits carbon capture milestone

By LIU YUKUN
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Asia's largest CO₂ direct air capture (DAC) device by capacity, "CarbonBox", has successfully completed reliability testing, said major developer China Energy Engineering Corp Ltd, marking a further advance of China's development of carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS) technologies.

"DAC is an emerging CCUS technology that can use low-carbon energy sources such as wind, solar and geothermal to directly capture carbon dioxide from the air and achieve net or negative carbon emissions," said Zhu Lijun, a member of the device's research and development team.

Adopting the DAC technology, CarbonBox was co-developed by a CEEC subsidiary and Shanghai Jiao Tong University, holding complete proprietary intellectual property rights. It can efficiently capture CO₂ directly from the air or from different concentrations of emission sources and directly output different concentrations of CO₂ according to downstream application needs.

Zhu said that a single module of the device can capture more than 100 metric tons of high-concentration CO₂ annually from the air with a purity of 99 percent. Altogether the device can absorb around 600 tons of CO₂ per year, offering massive carbon resources for the generation of green methanol and green aviation fuel.

To tackle the problem of high energy consumption and high costs of DAC devices, Zhu said the development team innovated the capture device structure and core support components.

600 tons

amount of CO₂ that the device can absorb each year altogether

Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University, said CCUS is a crucial technological choice for balancing energy security and carbon reduction. With increasing global energy market volatility, heightened post-COVID development pressures, and challenges posed by the limited share and intermittency of renewable energy sources, many countries, especially developing ones, approach energy restructuring cautiously. Against this backdrop, ensuring stable energy supplies while promoting carbon reductions has become equally imperative.

Lin said CCUS technology, primarily applied in high-emission sectors such as coal-fired power generation, petrochemicals and steel production, facilitates large-scale low-carbon utilization of fossil fuels. It plays a pivotal role in global energy and green security transformation and serves as a significant technical means for countries to reduce carbon emissions while maintaining stable fossil fuel consumption.

A report jointly commissioned by the Administrative Center for China's Agenda 21 and two other institutes revealed that China has nearly 100 planned and operational CCUS demonstration projects, spanning industries such as electricity, oil and gas, chemicals, cement and steel. More than half of these projects have been completed and are operational, with a CO₂ capture capacity exceeding 4 million tons per year and injection capacity surpassing 2 million tons per year.

Briefly

Milestone achieved for expressway

Transportation connections between central provinces will further improve as construction of the Shouxian-Yingshang section of the Hefei-Zhoukou Expressway reached a new milestone. The last major step in construction of the section — an overpass above the Fuyang-Lu'an Railway — was completed by China Railway 24th Bureau Group Corp last week, the State builder said on Monday. Upon completion of the highway, road journeys between Anhui and Henan provinces will further improve, boosting integrated development of the central part of the nation.

China's cross-border e-commerce trade up

China's cross-border e-commerce trade totaled 1.22 trillion yuan (\$171 billion) in the first half, up 10.5 percent year-on-year, Customs data showed on Tuesday. Growth was boosted by supportive policies, including the establishment of pilot zones for cross-border e-commerce development and facilitation of Customs clearance.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

JinkoSolar's Saudi plant set to go live in 2026

By ZHENG XIN
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JinkoSolar, the world's largest solar panel producer by shipments, said its planned factory in Saudi Arabia, which will be the world's biggest manufacturing plant for N-type solar cells and modules, is expected to become operational in early 2026 and help produce solar cells with record efficiency.

It will be the company's fourth overseas unit after the ones in Malaysia, Vietnam and the United States and will enable JinkoSolar to not only meet local demand, but also export technology, patents, experiences and services globally, said Qian Jing, vice-president of JinkoSolar.

"The Saudi Arabian market enjoys better credit, sufficient financing resources, stable conditions, policy support ... and has become one of the fastest-growing regions for new energy development in the Middle East," she said. "Its robust industrial foundation makes it an excellent choice for Chinese photovoltaic companies looking to expand overseas."

The company announced plans to build the largest overseas manufacturing plant for N-type solar cells and modules in July, partnering

with Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund. N-type solar cells feature higher efficiency and stability and reduced degradation.

With an investment of around \$1 billion, the facility, JinkoSolar's most significant overseas investment to date, is expected to have an annual production capacity of 10 gigawatts for high-efficiency solar cells and modules once operational, and will be the largest manufacturing base for Chinese photovoltaic products abroad, the company said.

JinkoSolar has already established a strong presence in Saudi Arabia with a 70 percent market share, said Qian.

Li Xiande, chairman of JinkoSolar, said the collaboration with Saudi Arabia marks a significant milestone in the company's global expansion efforts. The partnership will further enable JinkoSolar to optimize its global manufacturing and marketing infrastructure, thereby boosting its global competitiveness.

The new venture not only underscores JinkoSolar's commitment to global growth, but also highlights the strategic importance of the Middle East as a key market for renewable energy, said Nicholas Lua, an analyst specializing in the



An employee works on the solar panel production line of JinkoSolar in Hefei, Anhui province. RUAN XUEFENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

solar supply chain at global consultancy Rystad Energy.

Such projects will leverage the strengths and resources of both countries, serving as a model for international cooperation in combating climate change, Lua said.

"These gigawatt-scale announcements have the potential to significantly boost domestic solar manufacturing in Saudi Arabia, allowing the country to harness the Middle East's exceptional solar energy potential of over 2,000 kilowatt-hours per square meter annually in solar irradiation," he said.

Solar manufacturing in Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries could further enhance the global presence of Chinese solar

companies, Lua added.

According to Qian, with the phasing out of low-end capacity in China, the company is confident that its market share will increase to 20 percent in 2024 from 15 percent last year, further solidifying its position both domestically and internationally.

Although the current cost of solar power has dropped below that of coal-fired power, solar energy will only become fully competitive when the combined cost of solar and energy storage matches that of coal-fired electricity, she said.

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

BUSINESSFOCUS

Medical LMs evolve, touch more lives

China's core AI industry worth 500b yuan, with over 4,400 related firms

By ZHENG YIRAN
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At Xuanwu Hospital, Capital Medical University in Beijing, a radiologist is processing a case of head and neck computerized tomography angiography with the help of an artificial intelligence diagnostic doctor system, which takes only about 3 minutes to confirm the diagnosis.

The AI doctor system at the radiology department of the public 3A-grade hospital does most of the work pertaining to reading the imaging as well as generating reports in advance, a far cry from earlier when the radiologist needed more than 100 mouse clicks and about 30 minutes to complete the diagnosis.

The new system has dramatically improved productivity and diagnosis, a scientific paper published in British natural sciences journal *Nature Communication* and North American clinical radiology and allied sciences journal *Radiology* showed.

About 1,100 kilometers away in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, at a small primary hospital, a doctor is conducting an ultrasound test on a female patient to scan for possible breast cancer risk. As the doctor scans the patient, the AI doctor system installed there detects lesions simultaneously, greatly assisting in completing and improving the results.

"AI technologies are exerting great influence on the healthcare industry, both in preventive care and treatment solutions," said Anne Ma, CEO of Shukun Technology, the provider of the AI doctor system. "With the latest evolution of generative AI, it is possible for us to build a personalized AI doctor for every human being. We are very passionate and inspired by the vision."

China, which has several medical AI companies like Shukun Technology, is speeding along in the AI industry's fast lane.

According to data from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the total scale of China's core AI industry has reached 500 billion yuan (\$68.97 billion), and the number of related enterprises has exceeded 4,400.

China's medical large model industry is set to witness a period of explosive growth between 2023 and 2027, with its market size forecast to

reach 22.25 billion yuan by 2030, a 36 percent growth from the estimated level in 2029, a report on the industry released last year by Beijing-based think tank EO Intelligence showed.

By October, there were 238 large models, or LMs, in China, of which medical LMs totaled nearly 50, covering areas such as patient inquiries, doctor assistance, drug research and development, and medical popular science.

Compared to conventional medical AI, medical LM is more like a human brain, which is capable of understanding human language, completing logical deductions and generating final results. For a healthcare industry that is replete with conversation scenarios and data, LM has natural application advantages, experts said.

Currently, there is a wide range of application scenarios for medical LMs.

Researchers from Fudan University in Shanghai and the University of Massachusetts in the United States recently had their latest medical LMs take the US Medical Licensing Exam, and the results showed AI surpassing 70 percent of medical students.

In a study on the potential and limitations of clinical applications of medical LM, *Nature*, a world-leading multidisciplinary science journal, also acknowledged the prospects of medical LMs and was optimistic about its potential in producing imaging reports, completing protein sequences, and other tasks.

Doctors are maintaining an open attitude to the proliferation of medical LMs.

In the field of oncology, for example, most oncologists hold a positive attitude toward the application of AI, said a recent report conducted among healthcare professionals by Dingxiangyuan, an online health information services provider. Doctors, it said, are constantly understanding its true value through clinical practice and applications.

The demand for large-scale modeling technology from enterprises has risen accordingly.

According to US market consultancy Gartner's research earlier this year, over 60 percent of Chinese enterprises plan to deploy generative AI within the next 12 to 24 months, and healthcare is one of the most important application scenarios.



Above: An artificial intelligence diagnostic system is presented during a medical supply expo in Shanghai in April.

Left: Doctors check a radiology image using Shukun Technology's AI doctor system in Beijing.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

22.25 billion yuan

expected market size of China's medical large model industry by 2030, according to Beijing-based think tank EO Intelligence

source medical big data globally, and AI companies have limited direct access to data.

However, as AI technology matures, a large number of hospitals are joining hands to create disease imaging and third-party testing databases.

Data volumes are showing exponential growth, and the difficulties AI companies face in developing new indications have sharply decreased, leading to an increase in the richness of medical AI products. The future scenarios of AI-assisted diagnosis will be more diverse, which can better assist doctors, experts said.

Bo Wenxi, vice-chairman of China Enterprise Capital Union and chief economist at wealth management firm IPG China, said that the market scale of medical LMs is expected to grow significantly in the next five years.

Specifically, subcategories, such as personalized diagnosis and treatment, drug R&D, assisted diagnosis, remote consultation, medical popular science, and smart device integration, are expected to show significant development.

Zheng Shanjie, head of the National Development and Reform Commission, the country's top economic regulator, said China will take solid steps to accelerate the development of new quality productive forces, boost industrial innovation via technological innovation, speed up the upgrading of traditional industries and foster emerging industries.

Zheng said the NDRC will constantly carry out practical measures, especially in the area of life sciences, high-end manufacturing and digital technologies, to facilitate companies doing business in China.

Talk around the application and commercialization of LMs in the medical field is ever present, but is it really helping doctors and patients?

"Speaking of AI, we physicians from the imaging department may be the ones that benefit the most. AI is able to replace our preliminary work, such as reading images in the first place and making primary assessments. However, we still need to read images and make diagnoses by ourselves," said a physician surnamed Qin, who works at Beijing Chaoyang Hospital, Capital Medical University.

Through big data and deep learning, medical LMs cut intermediate links, recommend diagnosis and treatment plans for doctors and patients, and enhance work efficiency to a large extent, said Zhang Shule, a columnist at people.cn, citing diagnosis and treatment as examples.

However, because of the complex-

ity of many diseases, medical LMs are often not able to complete the entire diagnosis and treatment procedure.

"This pain point requires sufficient and vertically segmented big data accumulated for different cases, to provide deep learning models for diagnosis and treatment reference, in order to minimize the misdiagnosis rate of doctors. However, such a large amount of data cannot be accumulated solely by one city or province, and require nationwide data exchange and reference to foreign cases, which is somehow difficult to achieve," Zhang said.

Experts also said that the serious nature of healthcare, a lack of interconnectivity in data, and the industry's zero fault tolerance make the commercialization of medical LMs difficult.

Qu Fang, an investment consultant at Wanlian Securities, said: "Currently, there are several pain

points in the commercialization of medical LMs. On the one hand, there are risks of patient data privacy leakage, including data creation, storage and transmission. Leaked patient data may run the risk of being used for illegal activities."

"On the other hand, there is a significant deviation in the accuracy of the model. At present, it is not possible to accurately apply LMs in clinical applications. The complexity of patient treatment is difficult to achieve through simple AI models. Each patient has a different constitution, and the development and treatment response to their symptoms are also different. While AI plays an important role in assisting analysis, more experienced doctors are needed to make judgments. The risks of technological iteration, and legal and ethical issues should also be noted," he added.

Currently, there is a lack of open-

High-tech leap making remarkable changes to country's healthcare system

Ten years ago, as a student at the School of Communication at the University of Miami, the United States, I was most impressed by how easy it was to make an appointment with a doctor at the campus health center, compared to my hometown Beijing.

The whole process was highly digitalized, quick and smooth. Entering the center, I registered on a machine, received a number, and waited to be called. Within a few minutes, a nurse took me to a primary inquiry room, asking about my symptoms. Then, without having to wait, I got a triage and was taken to the doctor's room. The diagnosis and treatment processes subsequently were also smooth affairs, with all my health records stored digitally.

Unfortunately, 12,000 kilometers away in China, we were relying on handwritten medical records back then. This was especially difficult if a patient had to revisit, as they needed to carry all the documents for the doctor's reference.

A document gone missing would be troublesome. For a doctor, the process was also cumbersome as it involved deciphering a colleague's handwriting.

In 2017, I completed my studies and started a career as a healthcare



Zheng Yiran
Reporter's log

journalist in my home country.

And, in the past seven years, I have seen AI making remarkable changes to the medical system in China, fundamentally altering people's lives.

Here is an example. At Shanghai General Hospital affiliated with the Shanghai Jiao Tong University, a woman surnamed Li, 65, often visits a doctor. She opens her payment app Alipay on her mobile phone and asks the AI attendant, "I suffer from dry eyes. Which department do I need to go to?"

Within seconds, she receives relevant medical advice and registration service notifications on her phone.

After registration, Li asks the AI attendant about her waiting time, and receives voice and text prompts — "You can see the doctor soon. Currently, patient number 66 is with the doctor, and there is one patient waiting. You will need to go to room 15, Zone A, Floor 3 in Building 7."

With the help of AI-empowered in-hospital navigation, Li follows the route and arrives at the consultation room without a hitch.

Usually in hospitals, many elderly people have difficulty reading text, and are not accustomed to online operating procedures. Therefore, the hospital has introduced AI attendants, which has become immensely popular, said Fan Junxiang, deputy head of the information department of Shanghai General Hospital.

"AI attendants in hospitals provide patients with 24/7 companionship and guidance; they understand and respond to the needs of patients through natural language processing, improving patients' medical experience. AI attendants simplify the medical process through AI technologies, reducing the learning cost for seniors and bringing great convenience to this group," he said.

AI has also made the doctor's consultation process simpler for ordinary folk.

Apart from AI attendants, AI is able to read medical imaging. It is also capable of writing a medical record in just 15 seconds.

In addition to providing convenient services, the combination of AI and healthcare has great



Visitors check out a medical recovery large model during the World Artificial Intelligence Conference in Shanghai on July 5.

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potential in business.

According to statistics from International Data Corp, the global AI application market is estimated to reach \$127 billion by 2025, with the healthcare industry accounting for one-fifth of the total size.

China Merchants Securities said the global AI plus healthcare market, which is currently valued at \$5 billion, will continue to maintain rapid growth.

In this wave of AI plus healthcare, large-scale internet companies are laying out their strategies.

Tech giants such as Google and Microsoft, as well as pharmaceutical companies such as Eli Lilly and Sanofi, are all stepping up their efforts in the field.

On Dec 13, Google officially announced its medical LM, combining a series of models tailored to the healthcare industry. The

model is currently open to Google Cloud customers in the US.

US chipmaker Nvidia has launched 25 new micro-services based on medical scenarios, helping global healthcare companies improve efficiency through generative AI. Currently, nearly 50 application providers worldwide are using Nvidia's medical micro-services.

In China, technology firms and pharmaceutical companies such as iFlytek, Baidu, Cloudwalk, and Winning Health Technology Group Co Ltd have successively laid out vertical large-scale models in the medical field.

Guo Tao, an angel investor and expert in the business sector with over 20 years of experience, said: "In the next five years, with the advance of technology and the gradual maturity of the market, the market size of medical large-scale models in China is expected to reach 100 billion yuan (\$13.8 billion)."

"Key development directions include improving the accuracy and reliability of the model, expanding its application in clinical decision-making assistance, personalized treatment plans, drug research and development, and self-management by patients."

THE HANDS OF TIME

Editor's note: Traditional arts and crafts are supreme samples of Chinese cultural heritage. China Daily is publishing this series to show how master artisans are using dedication and innovation to inject new life into heritage. In this installment, we delve into the cultural roots of folding fans.

Fanning a resurgence in a cool identity

Master artisans dedicated to a craft established deep in the national psyche, **Zhao Xu** reports.

Nearly three decades have passed, but 77-year-old Xu Jiadong still remembers the day when he first went into a bamboo forest with his father to handpick the ones that he would later use to make the ribs of folding fans.

It was in early January in Anji county of eastern China's Zhejiang province, where a special type of bamboo known as *yu zhu*, or "jade bamboo", grows in abundance.

That's where Xu, then in his late 20s, was given lessons by the old man while breathing in the chilly mountain air.

"For the purpose of fan-making, bamboo can neither be too young nor too old — it has to be big and sturdy enough while at the same time fine-textured. Generally speaking, plants that have grown to 5 years old are the most desirable," Xu says.

"One thing my father always asked me to look for was the natural layer of white, waxy substance coating the plant."

This is bamboo wax, and when scraped off, the green color underneath is revealed — thus it's known as "jade bamboo". The wax shields the plant from excessive moisture loss and pests, giving it a smooth, suave quality long admired by Chinese fan-makers including Xu and his father.

"Artists from ancient China, especially those living in turbulent times, often painted wind-swept or slashed bamboo plants, inspired equally by their unbreakable and flexibility," says Wang Yimin, an ancient Chinese painting expert from Beijing's Palace Museum.

"It's also worth noting that *fu*, the Chinese character for bamboo nodes, also means integrity and rectitude."

By the time the folding fan became popular in the country in the 14th century, bamboo had long entered the Chinese visual and literary iconography, a powerful symbol for those who would like to think of themselves as men of virtue.

"Fans made of sandalwood or ivory may be called rare or valuable, but they are nowhere near



From top: Fan-maker Xu Jiadong, 57, a pair of fans made by Xu; detail of Xu's fan; and an ancient painting from Boston's Museum of Fine Arts shows a couple having fun with fan-painting.

elegant, and therefore, not for one who's aesthetically cultivated," according to Shen Defu, a man of words who lived between the 16th and 17th centuries.

Precision and spontaneity

Aesthetic sophistication — it's in that indefinable, even unfathomable, concept that Xu's ultimate challenge lies. "It's all there in the lines and in each and every turn — some rather abrupt, some so gentle that they are hardly perceptible — that the lines took," says Xu, celebrated today as one of the country's best makers of folding fan ribs.

"As long as you get graceful lines, you get graceful forms."

That gracefulness is best appreciated when a folding fan is folded, with two pieces of bamboo slips holding the entire fan together. As these two pieces taper down from top to bottom, they follow distinct curves in designs named beautifully and evocatively — "the shoulder of a beauty," for example.

Typically, these two pieces — dubbed "the main ribs" as compared to the "minor ones" in between them — would fan out a little toward the very end. "Swallowtail" is the name assigned to one specific type of design concerning this end part.

"Controlled spontaneity" is how Wu Jiajun, a pharmaceutical salesman who has been training with Xu during his spare time for the past three years, describes "what it takes to produce that level of artistry that my teacher has arrived at."

"Having the good luck to observe the master while he's at work, I realized that more often than not, the contour of a main rib is decided within a few applications of the carving knife — there's only one knife for the entire process," Wu says.

"Sometimes, the knife would glide through the material in an extended motion; other times, it makes quick, decisive cuts. Either way, there would be absolutely no repeat of the same movement. One has the feeling that the master, guided by his own instinct, always gets to say what he has intended to say with just one fluid and resolute stroke of the knife."

In that sense, there's not much difference between carving the fan ribs and painting a fan. The latter, done in classical Chinese style with an

ink brush, is also characterized by a combination of precision and spontaneity.

"One thing my father taught me was to think of the knife as a brush," Xu says.

"In fan-making, polishing is routinely done to the carved ribs, but my father often reminded me not to overdo it. Don't gloss away all the traces of your knife, he would say. Because they are indicators of an authentic work of art."

A portable piece of art

It's fair to say that a beautiful set of fan ribs takes the work of both man and nature. While the monochromatic "jade bamboo" (also known as *mao zhu* or tortoiseshell bamboo) exudes an understated elegance, other types favored by fan-makers feature

naturally formed patterns that have been compared, among other things, to spots carried by sika deer, a species native to East Asia.

"In Chinese, we call the deer *meihua bu*, or 'the plum-blossom deer', and the bamboo 'plum-deer bamboo,'" says Xu, pointing out that the unique pattern has formed on the plant as a result of microorganism infection.

For those in the know, the plum tree, which typically goes into bloom during winter, is one of "the four noble plants" in Chinese culture — the other three being the bamboo, the chrysanthemum and the orchid. A standard subject for literati painters — those with a high level of education — from ancient China, all four make frequent appearances on the fan surface both then and now.

"Literati culture, which was fostered by the educated elite of ancient Chinese society, had for more than a millennium exerted a major influence on Chinese art-making," says Wang from the Palace Museum.

"It was only with an understanding of that, can one begin to see the Chinese folding fan not just as something to drive away the summer heat, but a portable piece of art, almost every detail of which is dictated by the sensibilities of the literati group."

Ironically, although the fan ribs are essential parts of a fan, for many years in the 20th century, they had been overlooked, taken out and thrown away by antique dealers who would only keep the painted fan surface.



From top: Li Yunlei in the middle of fan-painting; a fan showing the calligraphy work of Ma Xiangjun; and bamboo fan ribs with patterns formed as a result of microorganism infection.

"That situation has completely changed over the past decades. The art and antique market has taught everyone a lesson as to the aesthetic and financial value of handcrafted fan ribs, both old and new," says Xu.

Both Xu's and his father's creations had been sold at auctions for prices between 30,000 to 200,000 yuan (\$4,140-\$27,600).

Xu's father first learned to make fan ribs in the mid-1940s when he was around 15. And he did so as an apprentice in a fan-making workshop in Suzhou — there were about 40 to 60 in the city in those days, says Xu.

His studio's rear window opens up to one of the numerous canals, which the eastern Chinese city in Jiangsu province has been known for throughout history.

"Historically, 'made-in-Suzhou' had been a brand name of its own, denoting consummate craftsmanship infused with the region's long-standing tradition of literati culture," says Xu.

"Over centuries, the folding fans produced by the Suzhou artist-artisans had traveled the waterways between the city and the rest of China, where they commanded their followings."

The old man, who brought his son into the world of fan-making when the latter was 20, continued to make fans until his own passing in 2020 at the age of 87.

"What my father always insisted on doing as a fan-maker was to do it all by himself, which is rare these days since most masters would delegate part of the job to an apprentice," Xu says. "Personal involvement in every step of the fan-making process allows one to carry on his aesthetics."

That process starts with the selection of bamboo, something Xu still does every January in Anji county.

"The bamboo plants I have chosen are boiled to prevent parasites, before they are sun-dried and stored in my studio, for another five years," says Xu. "That's the amount of time needed for the material to contract gradually so that there will be no tiny cracks on the fan ribs that would eventually come out of them."

"But bamboo, even in the form of a fan, will never stop aging, sometimes taking on slightly darker colors."

"All one ever needs to feel its story is to hold it in hands."

Contact the writer at zhaoxu@chinadaily.com.cn



Over centuries, the folding fans produced by the Suzhou artist-artisans had traveled the waterways between the city and the rest of China, where they commanded their followings.

Xu Jiadong, fan-maker

By ZHAO XU

One day in the early 1920s, Luo Yingsong (1872-1924), one of China's most talented playwright-cum-Peking Opera impresarios of the time, bought an unpainted folding fan from a powerful collector-official with 40 gold ingots.

The main ribs of the fan are carved out of a special type of bamboo whose round, dark-colored patterns, resulting from microorganism infection, were reputed to have been formed as the sad tears of two bereaved ladies fell on the plant.

They were grieving the death of their husband, the legendary Emperor Shun whom some Chinese historians believe lived between 2200 and 2300 BC.

Equipped with the fan, Luo then knocked on the door of the much-revered painter Qi Baishi (1864-1957), whose brilliantly painted pair of butterflies would later appear on one side of the fan, along with his calligraphic transcription of a butterfly-themed poem by another of his equally renowned contemporaries.

There was now only one thing left to do: to record the event on the other side of the fan, which Luo did himself, noting that the fan "was meant as a birthday gift for Mr Mei" (Mei Lanfang, a master performer of Peking Opera).

Having written in the same inscription that "a thing (of beauty) will certainly be passed down

across generations", Luo probably wouldn't be surprised when the fan was put up for bid nearly 90 years later during an auction held in Beijing in November 2011, when it fetched 322 million yuan (\$44.4,100).

Yang Danxia, an expert on ancient Chinese painting from Beijing's Palace Museum, was at the auction preview.

"If anything, the story offers glimpses into a rather exclusive circle populated by Beijing's cultural elite at the time," she says.

One gathering place for its members was Lai Jin Yu Xuan Tea House, located today inside the former imperial altar-turned Zhongshan Park in central Beijing. The name of the tea house is a reference to a piece of writing by eighth-century poet Du Fu, on friendship.

"It was no coincidence that the tea house was where the daily activity of *dou shanxi* (fan contest) took place," says Yang.

According to her, a person entered his fan into this contest the moment he stepped into the tea house, the arrival announced by the crisp snap of a fan opening at a flick of the owner's wrist.

"Think about a Rolls-Royce coming to a halt in front of a luxury hotel, with its powerful engine letting out a deep roar. What that car did for its owner, a fan could do," she says.

A folding fan, apart from fanning gentle waves of cool air, could also be a veritable work of art, a

statement accessory testifying to the standing of its carrier, especially in cultural circles.

That's why we get the folding fan apart from other types of fans that had appeared in Chinese history. For example, the circular-shaped *tunshan*, or palace fan, was used almost exclusively by women," says Yang.

According to Yang, despite their modern usage, both the folding fan and the palace fan probably originated as items of etiquette.

Held up to face level, they served as small screens between a fan holder and another person who was most likely in a much-higher position, so that the former wouldn't be looking up directly into the latter's eyes during a meeting between the two.

"This was especially true when an audience was given by an emperor to his subjects. It is believed that in ancient Japan, court officials may have initially done so with a bamboo slip, with its official-facing side written with a summary of what the man had planned to say to the emperor," Yang says.

"Sometimes one needs a few reminders to appear totally calm and prepared in front of the big boss."

"And when you are holding more than one such slip and spreading them out in front of your eyes, you get a fan."

In 1978, a multilayered, red-lacquered make-up

Cultural roots spread in elegant style



Middle: A red lacquer box from the Southern Song period (1127-1279), featuring a lady holding a folding fan on its cover, from Changzhou Museum in Jiangsu province. Left: A fan painted by Emperor Xuanzong (1399-1435), from Beijing's Palace Museum. Right: A fan painted by contemporary painting master Qi Baishi (1864-1957) was given to Peking Opera maestro Mei Lanfang (1894-1961) as a birthday gift.

box was discovered in Changzhou city, eastern China's Jiangsu province, in a tomb dating to the Southern Song period (1127-1279).

In the design on its cover, highlighted in gold, two well-dressed young ladies appear in the middle of a manicured garden, waited on by an attendant. While the one on the left is holding a

palm leaf of a fan, the one on the right holds a painted folding fan whose bamboo ribs are clearly discernible.

"This is the earliest archaeological proof so far found for a folding fan, although it's essentially a visual depiction. As to real objects, the earliest ones we have now date back to the early Ming

Dynasty (1368-1644)," says Yang, pointing to a fan within the collection of the Palace Museum, which is believed to have been painted by Emperor Xuanzong (1399-1435), the fifth emperor of Ming.

With a maximum width of 151 centimeters, this particular one is a lot bigger than an average

folding fan, and was probably meant for the wall. On one side of it, the emperor painted a loosely robed scholar-recluse writing under a pine tree, a hand-scroll of reclining lying on the ground nearby.

"The image was embedded in China's literati culture, which celebrated a life lived away from all the chaos and trappings of the world," says Yang.

"Throughout China's Ming and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, painting, calligraphy and poetry were dubbed 'the three perfections' and were required of a cultured man. A folding fan was carried around as a showcase, if not of a man's own literary and artistic talent, then at least his taste in such matters."

That might explain why, within those six centuries, many who had established themselves in the overlapping worlds of art and poetry had created fan art.

"One challenge lies with compositional arrangement: You have to be mindful of the shape of a fan and the limited amount of space you are given," says Ma Xiangjun, a Suzhou-based calligrapher who has inscribed more than a few folding fans made by Xu Jiadong, a much-celebrated local fan-maker.

"Meanwhile, a fan is opened, bit by bit. And whoever is creating fan art needs to be able to visually guide his viewers through that experience."

"A window with a view" — that's Yang's metaphor for the framed picture contained within the fan's surface. "What is that view made up of? Sometimes it could just be a bunch of lush flowers; other times, it comprises a serene landscape of misty mountains and meandering rivers," she says.

One contemporary Chinese painter who has worked for decades with ink and brush and has often painted folding fans is Li Yunlei.

"A fan is half of an umbrella," Li remembers hearing his saying growing up in Hangzhou city, East China's Zhejiang province, where the rain is copious.

That was in the early 1980s when locally made folding fans with bamboo ribs were exported in large quantities in exchange for foreign currency. Yet, Li had to wait for a few more years for similar products to be sold in local stores. In previous decades, folding fans, considered part of "the trivialities of a bourgeois life", had disappeared from view. And when they did reappear, Li the middle-school student immediately bought one.

"I walked through the campus waving a fan, making myself the subject of ridicule for my fellow students," he recalls laughing.

Having held a small exhibition for his painted fans in June, Li describes his personal style as "merging the traditional with the modern, with an element of quirkiness thrown in."

"As an artist I'm very fond of water. When I'm painting a fan, I love to see water pool up a bit within its pleats," he says.

Next year, he plans to invite a group of artists to Anji county in Zhejiang, where there's a local fan-making industry. "They'll be painting folding fans with whatever material they choose and in whatever style they prefer," he says.

"I want to show them the various possibilities with a Chinese folding fan."

With that being said, Li notes the folding fans' growing popularity with the younger generation who find them perfect matches for their period costumes. "At the beginning they may simply consider it cool to flutter a fan, like I did in middle school. But eventually some of them will be drawn into the world behind it, where the beauty is in the details," he says.

Asked for an example, Li points to the soft crystalline shimmer given out by the papery surface of a fan. "The effect has resulted from sprinkling and pressing ultrathin flakes of silver onto the pristine paper," he says.

"People call it 'rain and snow'."



Online Watch the video by scanning the code.



The scenic Lunang International Tourism Town is a major project supported by Guangdong province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Aid-Xizang Program spurs decades of development

Strong support from Guangdong boosts widespread growth across Nyingchi city

By YUAN SHENGGAO

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Aid-Xizang Program. The program was proposed by the leaders of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China at the third Central Conference on Tibet in July 1994, which called for dispatching groups of personnel from regions at various levels in China to Xizang to provide needed support on a regular basis.

As an active participant of the program, Guangdong province has been aiding the city of Nyingchi of the Xizang autonomous region over the past three decades, serving as a driving force for its long-term stability and high-quality development.

Between 1994 and 2024, Guangdong dispatched nearly 1,000 professionals in 10 groups to Nyingchi to offer assistance. The South China province has also invested more than 13.4 billion yuan (\$1.85 billion) in more than 900 projects in the city, as reported by Xizang Daily.

These endeavors have covered various domains, including the development of local characteristic industries, enhancement of livelihoods, infrastructure construction, talent development and fostering cultural exchanges.

The results of these efforts are evident in the remarkable growth of Nyingchi's economy, with the city's GDP soaring from 290 million yuan in 1995 to more than 23 billion yuan in 2023.

Guangdong's aid initiatives have played a pivotal role in establishing local industrial clusters, such as the yak industry and modern agricultural parks for Tibetan pigs, edible fungi and tea production.

Notably, the tea industry in the city's Metog county stands out as a significant success story, with the introduction of tea varieties from Guangdong leading to significant growth in tea cultivation and increased incomes for local farmers.

Zhong Dong, a tea farmer in Metog county, expressed his delight and gratitude, saying that "with the guidance of aid-Xizang experts, my family's tea farm has flourished, enabling us to earn more than 40,000 yuan annually from tea farming, a substantial portion of our total income. I am confident in the future of tea farming."

Furthermore, Guangdong's aid efforts have extended to the tourism sector, a key pillar of Nyingchi's economy. The establishment and enhancement of scenic spots in various regions, coupled with the promotion of tourism cooperation alliances, have significantly boosted the city's tourism revenue, reaching a record high of 11.6 billion yuan in 2023.

One shining example of Guangdong's efforts in assisting local tour-



Clockwise from top: Lunang has evolved into an emerging tourist destination in Nyingchi city after receiving crucial support from Guangdong. Doctors from Guangdong offer medical services to residents in Metog county in Nyingchi. A farming technician from Guangdong (left) inspects a rice farm in Metog with local resident.

ism is the development of the township of Lunang in Nyingchi.

The township is located in a valley in the east of Nyingchi. Hundreds of Tibetan-style houses are dotted throughout the valley, which features a bubbling stream, surrounded by blossoming grasses and shrubs, farmlands and thriving spruces. And far away, snowcapped mountains can be spotted, emerging through the dense mists.

Despite an altitude of more than 3,000 meters, this is a place ideal for living, farming and herding. Local Tibetans, who have been there for many centuries, usually refer to this place as "the habitat of immortals".

But today, tourism has been added to the traditional industries of farming and herding, resulting in drastically increasing revenue.

Phuntsok, a resident in Lunang's Tashigang village, was among the pioneers to operate a bed-and-breakfast business by the No 318 National Highway — which links Xizang and Sichuan province — more than a decade ago, offering services to tourists with his rustic food and simple lodgings.

Because of a large tourism development project in Lunang more than 10 years ago, Phuntsok has seen unexpected growth in tourist numbers and revenue.

"There weren't many tourists in the village back in the 1990s, but since the area was turned into an international tourism town, both the tourism infrastructure and service quality have improved dramatically, and tourism has become a main income source for the villagers over the past few years," Phuntsok said.

Wang Chen, deputy director of the Lunang management committee, praised the project, which is called Lunang International Tourism Town, as a significant move to "make this hidden pearl (of Lunang) shine". Planned by the Guangdong provincial government and the government of Xizang, and with funding from Guangdong, the project started construction in 2011.

The project was operational in 2016, and quickly became an attractive tourist destination.

Wang is from Guangdong and was assigned to Lunang as an official for the Aid-Xizang program.

"Since Lunang International Tourism Town was built, almost every household has run a family homestay or other operations. Local residents' incomes have increased year-by-year," Wang said. He added that there are 12 hotels and 73 guesthouses in Lunang, offering more than 2,000 jobs to locals.

Tenzin, 27, for instance, is a local

resident working at a five-star hotel in Lunang. "I am paid more than 6,000 yuan a month," Tenzin said. "The hotel is close to my home, making it possible for me to manage my own homestay in my spare time."

Tenzin said he cherishes the opportunity to work at a premium hotel. "The pay is good. And I can learn advanced hotel management skills in my daily work, which are also applicable in operating my own homestay," Tenzin said.

According to local statistics, Lunang received 860,000 tourists in 2023, generating tourism revenue of nearly 90 million yuan.

Overall, Guangdong has directed more than 80 percent of its aid funds and projects to grassroots initiatives, underscoring its dedication to rural vitalization and improving the lives of farmers and herders. In education, Guangdong has supported the construction of schools and dispatched more than 2,400 teachers and other staffers, further strengthening the educational sector in Nyingchi.

As Guangdong's aid to Xizang continues to have a tangible influence on the region's development, it stands as a testament to the enduring partnership and collaborative efforts between the two regions, fostering growth, empowerment and prosperity in Xizang.

Education investments see local students thrive

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Many families in the Xizang autonomous region wanted their children to enjoy high-quality education near their homes, with a standard on par with the developed regions of China. Now they are seeing their expectations become true with schools established with the help of other regions Beijing, Jiangsu and Shanghai.

Choyang Lhamo, a resident in Lhasa, the capital city of Xizang, is one of the parents with a child being offered such an opportunity.

"I'm happy to see that our son had the option — to stay in a local school with the same quality as the excellent schools in regions like Beijing and Jiangsu," the mother said.

Beijing municipality and Jiangsu province began to build their experimental schools in Lhasa in 2014. Choyang Lhamo's son is now a student in the Jiangsu Experimental Middle School in Lhasa.

The school not only enrolls students in Lhasa, but also those from across Xizang.

Karma Chuwang is a second-year student at the middle school. He is from a herders' family in the county of Gerze in Ngari prefecture.

"The school has basketball and football fields, a stadium and lifts, as well as all kinds of electronic devices for teaching," Karma Chuwang said. "We didn't have those luxuries in my former primary school in Gerze."

In line with the autonomous region's "three exemptions" policy, students from farmers' or herders' families, as well as those from low-income urban families, are exempted from costs of meals, accommodation and tuition.

According to Yin Fei, headmaster of the school, Jiangsu province has dispatched hundreds of teachers to work at the school. "These teachers have brought in their advanced teaching experience and enhanced

the school's faculty."

Wu Sudong is one of the teachers from Jiangsu. He said he has been deeply impressed with the students' strong willingness to learn.

"The students are so eager to learn that they will not be confined to their desks. They sometimes approach me to ask questions and better interact," Wu said.

Yin said the Jiangsu teachers' activities are not limited to the school. They have traveled extensively across the rest of Xizang to share their experiences and insights with local teachers.

Their most recent move was a visit to Drachen county in Nagchu city in June. The Jiangsu teachers had held exchanges with local schools and shared their expertise with local teachers.

Like Beijing and Jiangsu, Shanghai has also injected its advantageous educational resources in Xizang by establishing an experimental school in the city of Shigatse.

Established in 2004 with funding from the Shanghai municipal government, the school is one of the earliest educational assistance projects in Xizang.

Since that year, Shanghai has invested a total of 100 million yuan (\$13.76 million) into this school, making it one of the few schools in Xizang that offer 12-year schooling from the primary to senior middle school stage.

Zhang Xiaobo, an Aid-Xizang official from Shanghai and headmaster of Shigatse Shanghai Experimental School, said one of the missions for Shanghai's educational assistance in Shigatse is helping to improve the weak links of the local education sector as a whole.

For this purpose, Shanghai has invested another 200 million yuan in various schools in Shigatse to improve infrastructure, train teachers and build digital platforms for teaching.



From top: A teacher from Guangdong gives a lecture to students at a school in Nyingchi's Metog county. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY. Students play basketball at the campus of Jiangsu Experimental Middle School in Lhasa. ZHANG RUFENG / XINHUA

ADVERTORIAL

COMMENT

Editorials

Biggest regional risk factor is US destroying trust and cooperation

Historical complexities used to be the single most important factor in the way of claimant countries resolving their territorial disputes in the East and South China seas. That is no longer the case, as actors from beyond the region, led and orchestrated by the United States, have stepped deeper into the troubled waters, and it is the US that has now become the most prominent factor in the growing frictions between China and its neighbors.

As a key part of the US' divisive tactics aimed at isolating China, the disputes have increasingly become an integral part of its international discourse seeking to portray China as an aggressive lawbreaker. As the recent verbal exchange between Beijing and its most prominent critics reveals, this now focuses on which country — China according to US propaganda networks — should be held accountable for the escalating tensions. In this way, the US has successfully managed to incorporate the disputes into its China strategy while misrepresenting its own actions as meaningful contributions to a just resolution of the disputes.

On Sunday, the foreign and defense ministers of the United States and Japan held their "2+2" security talks in Tokyo. On Monday, the foreign ministers of the QUAD security alliance, which groups Australia, India, Japan and the US, also met in the Japanese capital. A common topic of both meetings was China as the allegedly destabilizing actor in the region.

Labeling China as the "greatest strategic challenge" in the "Indo-Pacific", the US and Japanese ministers tried to blame all troubles in the East and South China seas on China. Moreover, without calling names, the QUAD foreign ministers raised concerns about what they claimed to be "militarization of disputed features, and coercive and intimidating maneuvers" in the East and South China seas in a separate statement.

The US-Japan and QUAD rhetoric about the need to counter "growing security threats" from "an increasingly assertive, provocative Beijing" only serves to show the nature of their game regarding the maritime disputes in the waters of the East and South China seas, which is to escalate the tensions between claimant US allies and China.

It is thus the US and Japan that are the real threats to regional peace and stability. Although they claim to promote regional peace and a rules-based international order, they are actually forming blocs, cobbling together exclusionary groupings, manipulating political games and creating confrontations.

China firmly opposes these countries using the pretext of "opposing coercion" to actually engage in group confrontations. The regional consensus that held sway, before the US decided the disputes could be of use to it, is that bilateral maritime issues could and should be addressed through direct dialogue and negotiation with the countries concerned.

While there seems no prospect of it happening, the US and Japan should stop scare-mongering, inciting antagonism and confrontation. But with the US and its regional allies intent on playing their game, such entreaties will only fall on deaf ears.

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin promised the US forces in Japan will be upgraded to a joint force headquarters with expanded missions and operational responsibilities. And he is expected to announce a \$500 million military financing package for the Philippines in Manila.

Since the US loves nothing better than military escapades, despite their tendency to prove disastrous misadventures, that does not bode well for the region unless its allies can keep it in check.

India has much to do to woo Chinese firms

Although the latest call from some Indian finance and industry officials to ease governmental restrictions on Chinese investment in India is a welcome sign, those Indian policymakers still hesitant to adopt that suggestion, citing an overreliance on China, need to know that even if New Delhi reopens its door to Chinese companies, India might not be able to recover the appeal it had for the latter before 2020.

On the sidelines of a series of foreign ministers' meetings hosted last week by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in Vientiane, the capital of Laos, the Indian foreign minister urged his Chinese counterpart to address issues between the two countries with a sense of mission and urgency, conveying the haste with which the Indian side is looking to Beijing to at least give it a ladder to climb down so that it can better explain at home the necessity of reopening doors to Chinese companies and investment.

The Sino-Indian relations should not be defined by the border frictions between the two neighbors. It was from 2020 that New Delhi started taking the tensions with China as an excuse to pave the way for its diversionary tactics to implement its nationalist and jingoist strategies at home. The Narendra Modi government not only took the border disputes as a pretext to desinicize Indian industry, information and investment sectors in support of its "Made-in-India" plan but also used it as an open sesame to join Washington's China-containment clique, in a bid to speculate on the latter's reshoring strategy as both a destination for US investment and a manufacturing base exporting to the US market.

However, the lackluster business environment of India, which has poor infrastructure, an underdeveloped industrial base, a lack of contract spirit and skilled labor and inefficient governmental system have prompted many multinational corporations from the US and other developed economies to give up on India. Both the Indian government and these Western investors are well aware that none of these problems can be easily addressed in the short term, offsetting the country's advantages in cheap labor prices.

What makes China hard to be replaced by India or any other developing country is its relative strengths in these areas. These have made it the major trading, logistics and investment partner of most countries in the world and an irreplaceable link in global supply chains.

That the China-India trade volume has stayed largely steady at round \$110 billion to \$130 billion with Chinese exports to India rising continuously over the past four years, despite New Delhi's "de-risking" efforts, proves China's indispensability to India as a source of mechanical and electrical goods, chemical products and base metals and products, which are of strategic importance to India's manufacturing and export industries.

New Delhi should be reminded that, in the face of its continuous suppression of Chinese companies, apps, technicians, entrepreneurs, investors and reporters, Beijing has exercised considerable restraint and refrained from taking any substantial retaliatory measures, which would have been fully justified to defend its core interests.

The restrictive measures targeting Chinese entities represent only the tip of the iceberg. Only easing them will not pull Chinese investors to India. Not to mention the Chinese companies have found better investment destinations with much better business environment than India over the past four years from where they can more easily access their markets.

The past four years should be enough to remind the Modi government of the limits its nationalistic approach imposes on India. It is the cold shoulders India has met from Western companies and the proved failure of the Modi government to fill the gap left by Chinese companies and investors in industry, technology, investment and exports fields, and the job market that have prompted some to urge the government to reconsider the possibility of reopening India's door to Chinese businesses. That New Delhi eased its visa control to Chinese technicians, engineers and skilled workers earlier in July should also be seen as part of its policy adjustment.

The Modi government clearly knows that its moves so far are far from enough to help Chinese entities rebuild their confidence in India; that entails a systemic change of its China policy.

Luo Jie



Opinion Line

Measures to bring financial market on to a healthier development track

Despite remarkable economic development over the past decade, the performance of China's stock market has been very mediocre inviting criticism from investors over its securities regulator.

That explains why the public has attached great importance to the meeting the China Securities Regulatory Commission held on Monday to roll out measures to further deepen the reform of the capital market and list key points of work for the remaining months of the year.

The CSRC said it will work harder to effectively maintain the smooth and steady operation of the capital market and make greater efforts to help the capital market serve the recovery of the real economy by reinforcing the foundation of the capital market, putting in place stricter supervision and management, and breaking institutional obstacles and structural problems.

In view of the recent volatility in China's

A-share market and the serious insufficiency of investor confidence, these commitments from the top capital market watchdog are timely and also necessary.

At a time when China's economy is transitioning to high-quality development, it is necessary for the country's capital market to remove those institutional obstacles and structural problems through deepened reform to accelerate the building of a safe, standardized, transparent, open, dynamic, and resilient capital market that is commensurate with China's economic strength and status in the world.

At Monday's meeting, the CSRC vowed to establish a long-term mechanism to enhance the internal stability of the capital market to better serve the country's efforts for high-quality scientific and technological self-reliance and the development of new quality productive forces. It also said greater efforts will be made to enhance the inclusiveness and adaptabil-

ity of the capital market system, improve support policies for private equity and venture capital, and enhance the service capacity for scientific and technological innovation enterprises. The CSRC will further improve the regulatory system and mechanism covering all participants in the market and all business areas, and smooth the channels for the protection and relief of investor rights.

All these measures, including a set of measures released by the State Council on June 15 to facilitate the high-quality development of venture capital firms, and the eight new measures issued by the CSRC four days later to deepen the reform of the STAR Market of the Shanghai bourse, are expected to help plug some existing loopholes in China's capital market, boost investor confidence, and bring the long-volatile market back onto a healthier and more sustainable development track.

— WU YIXUE, CHINA DAILY

Patents highlight China's shift in IPR focus

The number of valid domestic patents in China reached 4.425 million in June, the China National Intellectual Property Administration said at a news conference on Monday. The number of high-value invention patents were 12.9 per 10,000 residents, achieving the national target set out in the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25) ahead of schedule.

The numbers not only signify the progress in protecting intellectual property rights in China, but they also effectively empower economic innovation and development. In the first half of 2024, the number of patent transfer licenses issued by universities and research institutions nationwide increased by 22.2 percent

year-on-year. The added value of patent-intensive industries reached 15.3 trillion yuan (\$2.1 trillion), accounting for a 12.7 percent increase in GDP. From January to May, the total import and export volume of IPR usage fees reached 180 billion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 14.1 percent, with export growth at 17.7 percent, which is four percentage points higher than the import growth rate. Clearly, patents are boosting the nation's innovation process.

Protection of IPR can also help form a first-class business environment. With the further advancement of IPR, the newly revised Patent Law and its implementing regulations provide further

legal protection for IPR.

By participating in global intellectual property rights governance, China has successfully joined The Hague Agreement Concerning the International Deposit of Industrial Designs and the Marrakesh Treaty on Intellectual Property rights in copyright and related rights in performances. As of June, the number of foreign valid invention patents and valid registered trademarks in China had reached 919,000 and 2,135,000 respectively.

Currently, China's intellectual property work is shifting from pursuing quantity to improving quality.

— GUANCHANG

What They Say

Action plan shows China-Italy eyeing brighter prospects

The action plan on strengthening the China-Italy comprehensive strategic partnership for 2024-27 was issued on Monday during Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's five-day visit to China that concluded on Tuesday.

Featuring the great width and depth of bilateral cooperation, which ranges from green economy and innovation to high technology, industry and polar and space exploration, the plan is a de facto to-do list that conveys the strong consensus of Beijing and Rome that the two countries have no reason not to focus on substantially strengthening their cross-the-board collaboration. It indicates that they intend to take advantage of their structural complementarity to boost common development and enlarge common interests for the common good of the two peoples, and raise relations to a new level.

That the cooperation projects cover many sectors including electric vehicles and high-tech research, areas in which

both the European Union and the United States are trying to "de-risk" from China, citing security concerns, highlights the strategic autonomy the Meloni government upholds in handling relations with China, judging for itself how Italy's national interests can best be served.

The rich fruits the Italian prime minister has reaped from her first China trip after taking office nearly two years ago, and the bright prospects the implementation of these projects will create for both sides, serve to demonstrate to Brussels, and those developed economies under the sway of Washington's "China threat" narrative, the advantageous possibilities that are presented when the US-made tinted spectacles are discarded when viewing ties with China.

It is hoped that Meloni's visit can help Italy and other countries better understand China's development concept so as to play a constructive role in promoting dialogue and cooperation between China and the EU, and in actively promoting the positive and stable development of China-EU relations.

A healthy and stable development of relations with the world's second-largest

economy is in line with the common interests of all countries and their peoples. Despite Washington's divisive attempts, Beijing's commitment to valuing and developing relations with all developed countries, including the US, has not changed, the win-win nature of the cooperation China seeks with them has not changed, and the friendship between the peoples has not changed.

The Chinese market, industries and talents all represent opportunities for the developed economies. China is willing to share development opportunities with other countries, and welcomes foreign companies to invest in China and is willing to import more quality products from developed economies.

With almost all EU leaders keeping an eye on the US presidential election and looking to hedge against a return to the in-your-face "America-first" policy of the previous US administration, the interest cracks between the US and its EU allies that the current US administration has painstakingly managed to fill with its "value" cement are now bursting open again one after another.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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COMMENT

Cai Fang

New normal beyond 'old' challenges

The development experiences of different countries at different times show that the relationship between population development and socioeconomic development can be mutually reinforcing and mutually constraining. Since the launch of reform and opening-up in 1978, China has benefited from a favorable demographic structure characterized by an increasing workforce, declining dependency ratios, and rising education levels of young workers, which contributed to China's rapid economic growth.

However, population dividends cannot be permanent growth factors. Since traditional growth drivers weaken at higher development stages, economic growth is bound to decline. The experiences of advanced economies prove this fact: economies transitioning from upper-middle-income to high-income status often experience growth slowdowns when their per capita GDP reaches about \$13,000. From 2009 to 2019, upper-middle-income economies with late-stage population dividends saw, on average, 5.4 percent GDP growth, while high-income economies with post-population dividends averaged only 2.1 percent. However, economies with appropriate policy responses can extend the population dividends and achieve smoother growth decline.

China's demographic transition, characterized by people getting old before becoming rich, creates challenges and opportunities. Adapting to the new demographic normal while transforming development modes and fostering new growth drivers still offers China development opportunities. By optimizing and upgrading the industrial structure, intensifying urbanization, and vitalizing rural areas, China can ensure long-term economic growth within a reasonable range.

Besides, to realize Chinese modernization, the country has to first address the new demographic challenges and achieve high-quality population development. Based on China's modernization goals and demographic challenges, the essence and significance of high-quality population development can be summarized as follows:

Moderate fertility levels and stable population size: China's total fertility rate has declined to about 1, far below the world average of 2.3. If this low fertility rate persists or declines further, it will accelerate population decline and aging. Although a decline in the fertility rate is linked to socioeconomic development, China's strict family planning policy in the past, too, contributed to the suppressed fertility levels. So, improving basic public services and reducing the costs of childbirth, childcare, and children's education can help reverse the fertility rate to a more sustainable level.

Optimized regional population distribution and dynamic balance: Regional population disparities reflect the difference in the development levels of different regions. Coastal areas, with low fertility rates but strong economic growth, attract more workforce, resulting in net population inflows. Conversely, some central and western provinces with higher fertility growth rates but relatively low economic growth rates see the exodus of the workforce, while the northeastern region faces low birth rates and high labor outflows. Reversing these trends, even slightly, requires coordinated economic and population policies.

Modern human resources for technological advancement: Beyond the abundant workforce, favorable demographic conditions include continuous entry of better-educated young workers into the labor market and rising human capital. The decline in population growth and rapid increase in the aging population create hurdles for human capital accumulation due to slower improvement in labor quality, older workers with relatively low education levels struggling to adapt to the industrial and technological changes, and structural employment difficulties, complicated further by the rapid development of artificial intelligence technology.

Hence, improving both the quantity and quality of labor is crucial to achieving high-quality population development.

Improving people's living standards for common prosperity: High-quality population development will promote Chinese modernization by aligning the goals and means of modernization. Maximizing population and talent dividends is essential to ensure sustained economic growth. Measures promoting a family-friendly society are conducive to improving basic public services, creating high-quality jobs, boosting human capital and fostering social mobility and individual development.

Moreover, adapting to new demographic trends requires a better understanding of the new economic

situation and the need to take targeted policy measures.

Enhancing fertility rates across life cycles: UN surveys show the desired fertility rate globally is the replacement level fertility of 2.1. Favorable public policies can help raise the fertility rate above the current level in China, as most Chinese couples are reluctant to have two (let alone three) children because the more children they have, the more difficult it would become for them to balance career and family.

Unlocking population and talent dividends: While China's working-age population may not increase in the near future, transferring surplus agricultural laborers and low-productivity non-agricultural laborers to other sectors can increase the supply of non-agricultural laborers. Reforms such as relaxing the household registration restrictions in urban areas can facilitate workers' mobility and resource reallocation, creating tangible reform dividends.

Synchronizing population quality and people's living standards: The alignment of high-quality popula-

tion development and the improvement in people's living standards are significant in terms of policy. The Human Development Index (HDI), which covers per capita GDP, education, and healthcare, aligns with high-quality population development. So, policies to improve the HDI can encourage some couples to have more than one child, as seen in welfare states such as Sweden. When it comes to achieving Chinese modernization, policies to help maintain moderate fertility rates can be integrated with the strategy to build a comprehensive social welfare system.

By adapting to the new demographic trends, China can better promote high-quality population development to achieve sustained economic growth and Chinese modernization, ensuring long-term prosperity and shared development benefits.

The author is a chief expert of the National High-end Think Tank, a division under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Harald Brüning

Global South upholds peaceful coexistence instead of lecturing

The third plenum of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee, held from July 15 to 18, emphasized the CPC's commitment to pursuing an independent foreign policy of peace and devotion to fostering a global community with a shared future, advocating for a fair and structured multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization.

After attending a conference to mark the 70th anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence in late June, I am convinced that they are needed more than ever to make international relations fairer and more equitable.

The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence are the result of China's initiative launched in conjunction with India and Myanmar in 1954, a year after my birth in Germany.

However, I only became aware of the five principles during a junior high school civics class when I was about 15 years old, and what I remember is that I was quite astonished that three "Third World" countries — that's how the developing world was then pejoratively called, although even then it accounted for the majority of humanity — were able to develop such a globally important concept without any involvement of the West, which then dominated international relations. At that time, scores of countries were still under colonial rule or had only recently declared independence, often after painful liberation struggles.

Only as a university student in the 1970s was I finally able to deepen my understanding of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, which I still regard as one of the most important and fundamental principles of global governance, because they are much broader than the 17th century Westphalian system limited to state sovereignty.

Today, the five principles are more topical than ever, considering the tumultuous predicament the world is going through. They are also the Asian value system's important contribution to the ongoing construction of a global community with a shared future for mankind.

For the Global South, in particular, the five principles continue to be the foundation for building a fairer and more equitable international governance system. Moreover, they should now be seen within the context of China's three global initiatives, launched with the aim of promoting human progress: the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative.

I regard China's three global initiatives as a direct follow-up to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, for example, by promoting inclusiveness and mutual benefit, instead of zero-sum games, and respect for the diversity of civilizations, which includes respect for different value systems.

All these aims are, within the ambit of the five principles, the Global South's response to some Western countries' attempt to impose their supposedly "universally valid" socio-political values on countries that have, for centuries or even millennia, developed their own value systems, which should always be interpreted in relation to their respective national, regional, social, cultural and religious context — for instance, the West's emphasis on individualism versus, generally speaking, the Global South's stress on the collective whole. That's why there are, obviously, Asian values, Western values, African values, Latin American values.

On the global security front, one of the most important requirements is to always take into consideration the legitimate security interests of every country. We know what happens if this vital requisite is willfully or carelessly ignored: peaceful coexistence will be at stake.

The armed conflicts currently afflicting Eastern Europe and the Middle East are painful examples of the breakdown of peaceful coexistence caused by perilously ignoring national security interests and neglecting historical grievances.

China has been working hard on solving both disputes through political means and bringing the conflicting parties to the negotiating table such as by hosting various Palestinian factions in Beijing and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba in Guangzhou earlier this month. Both meetings involved Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, one of the world's most seasoned diplomats.

I also believe that the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative and the establishment of BRICS are both direct consequences of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence for tackling global issues.

The five principles "have no expiry date" — they are here to continue the ongoing development efforts by the Global South, home to about three-quarters of our battered planet's population.

One can only hope that the G7 club — supposedly the seven "richest countries" — will finally come around and respect the politico-economic interests of the Global South given the emerging economies including China, India and Indonesia's growing influence.

Obviously, for peaceful coexistence to be maintained, economic development and security concerns need to strike the right balance. Lack of equitable development imperils both national and international security.

That's why the time-honored concept of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence is a work in progress that needs to be cherished and nourished by the international community for the benefit of all — but always by pursuing a realistic and pragmatic approach.

The author is director of the Macau Post Daily. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



Obviously, for peaceful coexistence to be maintained, economic development and security concerns need to strike the right balance.

Liu Junguo

China needs robust water network to withstand all weathers

The third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, held from July 15 to 18, underscored the critical importance of addressing climate change.

Extreme weather events are growing more frequent, as partly evidenced by this summer. And climate change is posing unprecedented challenges to global water security. In recent years, extreme weather events have been causing havoc in many parts of China, posing a big challenge to the country's disaster prevention and mitigation efforts. Therefore, China needs to urgently build a national water network to save water as well as ensure the regular supply of water.

The central authorities issued an outline last year to establish a national, integrated water network by 2035 to better manage water resources, including optimized allocation of water resources, flood control and disaster mitigation, and conservation of water ecosystems.

To effectively plan and establish a national water network, China needs to conduct in-depth research into water networks, improve water allocation, mitigate regional water scarcity, devise and implement a comprehensive plan to save water, and build multi-level local water networks. It also needs to assess the impacts of a national water network on the ecology and environment, better safeguard underground water tables, and use

new technologies such as a "digital twin" system to improve water resource management.

First, remote sensing of water resources should form the basis of the construction of a national water network amid the increasing impacts of climate change. The proposed national water network should be built based on the nature and characteristics of rivers and lakes, water channels, regulation and storage projects, and intelligent regulation. The water network should be a comprehensive system combining judicious allocation of water, mitigation of disasters, and conservation of water sources.

Also, an in-depth understanding of the conditions of rivers, lakes and other water bodies, and water conservancy projects will help build an exhaustive national water network. Thanks to the development of satellites, remote sensing of water sources has been playing a key role in water conservancy. But the remote sensing technology still faces problems such as inaccurate identification of water bodies, faulty underwater geo-positioning, and non-application of water quality inversion models.

Hence, China needs to adopt technologies such as satellite remote sensing, ground-based monitoring, the internet of things and big data to establish a system that covers water bodies, underwater topography, and remote sensing of water volume. This will allow the country to collect and analyze accurate information for

building a national water network.

Such technologies will not only provide key information for the central authorities, but also reflect the impacts of water resources, and the environment and ecology on society as a whole, which in turn will help the authorities to improve water resource management.

Second, a three-dimensional water scarcity assessment can provide vital technological support for the construction of a national water network. Water scarcity is one of the most serious problems facing the world. Globally, about 4 billion people, or about half the world's population, are exposed to water stress for at least one month of the year, according to a 2023 report by the World Resources Institute. In 2022, a report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimated that 42-79 percent of the world's hydrographic basins would be critically affected from now to 2050, considerably impacting freshwater ecosystems and the capacity of reservoirs to provide an uninterrupted supply of water.

Water scarcity is also the main reason why China should build a national water network. In the past, Chinese scholars, as well as scholars from other countries, focused only on the water volume, not on the water quality and ecological demand of aquatic ecosystems, when assessing water scarcity. In the future, they should attach importance to water volume

and water quality as well as environmental flows, while taking measures to reduce water pollution and restore degraded water ecosystems to ensure a smooth supply of water. Only when the three-dimensional water scarcity assessment framework is taken into consideration can they provide more comprehensive policy recommendations to the government to address the water problems.

Third, the authorities should take measures to restore rivers and lakes to their pristine condition in a phased manner. By gradually restoring damaged ecosystems, the authorities can help restore rivers and lakes not only in China but also in the rest of the world to as close as possible to their original condition, thereby playing a leading role in global water conservation.

Furthermore, gradually restoring the degraded ecosystems can promote green development. The restoration of the water ecosystems will improve the ecological environment, enhance land value and soil health, promote the development of ecological tourism, and facilitate the sustainable development of the proposed national water network.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

TANG ZHICHAO

Balancing an inflated membership

Successful handling of internal relations requires BRICS to become the center stage for global South-South cooperation, instead of a confrontational leverage against the US-led West

At the beginning of 2024, BRICS underwent a historic expansion. Notable among the newly accepted members are four countries from the Middle East — the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iran. Algeria, Kuwait, Bahrain, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Sudan, Türkiye and other countries have also expressed their desire to join the group.



The moves reflect a heightened emphasis on strategic autonomy and national security amid accelerated global and regional multipolarity and intensified great power competition. As Middle Eastern countries increasingly seek economic reform, political independence and diplomatic diversification in regional and global affairs, joining the BRICS is a step in keeping with their interests and strategic needs.

Economic development sits at the heart of the Middle Eastern countries joining BRICS. The economic might of BRICS nations and their ongoing deepening cooperation presents a much-needed leverage for the Middle Eastern members to develop their own domestic economies. In 2023, the five BRICS members accounted for 32.1 percent of global GDP, exceeding the G7 group's 29.9 percent. In particular, China remains the largest trade partner of the Middle Eastern countries. In 2022 alone, China's bilateral trade with the Middle Eastern countries reached \$507.15 billion, with an average annual growth rate of nearly 15 percent over the past five years. These are all alluring factors to the Middle Eastern countries, who wish to

diversify their oil-intensive economies and blunt the influence of Western sanctions through major trade and energy partnerships with the BRICS nations.

The entry of the Middle Eastern players also means gaining political and economic importance. Egypt, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Iran are not only major powers in the Middle East but also heavyweights on the global political and economic stage. The combined population of these four countries is nearly 230 million, while their total land area is spread across 5 million square kilometers, strategically positioned at global transportation hubs. These nations possess abundant energy resources, with Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE collectively holding 32 percent of the world's proven oil reserves and 25 percent of proven natural gas reserves, playing a crucial role in the global oil and gas markets. As regional powers and emerging major economies, these four countries have significant influence in the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia-Caucasus, the Arab-Islamic world, and among developing nations.

The BRICS countries have had development priorities complementary with the Middle Eastern powers, and without the political strings often attached to coopera-



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tion with other developed countries. Trade between India and the Gulf Cooperation Council, for example, continued to rise, with their bilateral trade volume reaching \$154.66 billion in fiscal year 2021-22, which represented an average annual growth rate of 10.6 percent over the past five years. In comparison, in 2022, the trade volume between the United States and

the Middle Eastern countries was \$212 billion. China and India have also replaced the West as the most important crude oil export destinations for the Middle Eastern countries. Under the "OPEC+" cooperation mechanism, Russia has become a strategic partner of OPEC with the Middle Eastern countries as the main members.

Geopolitical considerations are

also a factor. By gaining BRICS membership, the Middle Eastern countries hope to increase their presence in global affairs and expand their regional influence. Iran's entry is aimed at strengthening ties with China and Russia and leveraging BRICS to counter the US. Egypt's entry into the BRICS implies a desire to balance its regional roles in North Africa and the Middle East. The UAE and Saudi Arabia also want to leverage the economic power of the Global South to strengthen their own regional status. While the joint entry reflects to some extent significant changes in the global governance system and a new understanding of the architecture for peace and development in the Middle East, the conflicting interests of each new member reflect a series of challenges that lie ahead of the expanded BRICS. For Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, the main challenge lies in how to deal with the discontent from the US and balance their identity as BRICS members and their status as allies and partners of the US. For Iran, joining BRICS signifies a further step in its "Look East Policy" and its relationship with China and Russia, which could potentially face opposition from pro-Western forces at home. For the BRICS cooperation mecha-

nism itself, embracing many Middle Eastern Islamic countries will also bring about challenges such as integration.

In the future, BRICS needs to position itself with three major identities: a pioneer in global development, a leader of the Global South, and a major platform for global governance. The inclusion of the Middle Eastern countries will help further elevate the status of BRICS countries in global politics, economics, energy and finance. This will enhance BRICS' global representation in the Global South, promote global strategic balance, advance diversification in the international landscape, improve the global governance system, enable BRICS to play a greater role in West Asia, Africa, and the Islamic world, and address regional hotspot issues and challenges.

Integration and reorientation are the chief tasks for BRICS, which must balance the different interests and priorities of its inflated membership. It should be guaranteed that the new members consciously acknowledge and adhere to the key concepts and principles of development as the foundation of BRICS. Successful handling of the internal relations requires BRICS to become the center stage for global South-South cooperation and global governance, instead of a confrontational leverage against the US-led West.

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DING GENG

Archaeology as a weapon? — Western countries vs China

Recently, the British news magazine The Economist published an article criticizing "the use of archaeology as a weapon by the Chinese government" in the context of the archaeological excavation at the Mo'er Temple Site in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. This article reflects the common bias of the Western world toward the Chinese archaeological community.

Modern archaeology is a discipline that uses scientific methods to study the remains and artifacts of the past in order to understand human origins and gain knowledge for the future. However, as developed nations often try to establish their historical legitimacy, archaeology has frequently been used as a weapon by them. The role that Western archaeology has played in the formation of Western-centric perspectives is no exception, and this can be seen through four main aspects.

The first aspect is the tradition of classical archaeology. Since the Renaissance, European scholars have sought to find their roots in the past. Through the systematic collection of ancient artifacts and large-scale excavations of ancient cities such as Pompeii, the long-lost Greco-Roman civilization re-emerged and was viewed by the modern Western countries as the source of its own superiority.

The second aspect is the quest for human history during the prehistoric period. In the 19th century, scholars such as C.J. Thomsen questioned the biblical account of Creation through their study of the Stone Age and the development of the theory of biological evolution. This led to the progressive view of history replacing the degenerative view of history. Against this backdrop, social Darwinism, which regarded the West as the most advanced society, was born.

The third aspect is the use of the "culture-history" research method. This approach aims to reconstruct the ancient cultural and ethnic lineages with archaeological remains,

but has often been misused by racists. The research on the origins of the Germanic people by German archaeologist Gustaf Kossinna, for example, was later exploited by his disciples to support Nazi Germany's theories of racial superiority and genocide.

The last aspect is the processual archaeology that became popular in the second half of the 20th century. This school of thought, based on multilineal evolutionism, seeks to study the universal laws of human social evolution through scientific methods. While it acknowledges the dynamic nature of evolution, it insists on the uniformity of these laws, which are based solely on Western experiences and neglects other voices in human history.

These demonstrate how Western archaeology has been used as a weapon by those in power.

In contrast, Chinese archaeology has never been used as a weapon to undermine others.

Chinese archaeology originated in the 1920s as a result of the introduction of Western knowledge into China, and its main line of development was established by Chinese scholars who had studied abroad, such as Fu Sinian, Li Ji and Liang Siyong. The critical examination trend of ancient history during the New Culture Movement weakened the credibility of Chinese ancient history but failed to provide a new foundation. Scholars from the Institute of History and Philology with Academia Sinica took up the challenge and attempted to reconstruct ancient history using scientific archaeological methods in order to trace the roots of Chinese civilization.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, Chinese archaeology continued the mission of reconstructing ancient history and gradually built a spectrum of ancient Chinese material culture through the study of archaeological materials. It also focused on discussing the productive forces and relations of productions, economic

foundations and superstructures, as well as the stage characteristics of social development in ancient China. This reflective understanding of national heritage and the expectations for the future are undoubtedly valuable.

Since the 1980s, Chinese archaeology has shifted its focus from "reflecting on national heritage" to "reconstructing values". For example, prominent archaeologist Su Bingqi summarized the characteristics of Chinese civilization as being "pluralistic and integrated", "like stars shining all over the sky", and presented a trilogy of the origins of Chinese civilization as "ancient states, regional states and dynastic states". Academic initiatives such as a project to trace origins of the Chinese civilization have reevaluated the complexity of prehistoric Chinese society and outlined the continuity of Chinese cultural lineage.

From a comparison between Chinese and Western archaeology, we can see that the criticism by The Economist is unjustified.

First, the early stages of Chinese archaeology had the intention of "tracing back national history", but this should be understood as a reaction against colonialism and the influx of Western knowledge. From the perspective of cultural pluralism advocated by the Western academic community today, China, as a civilization beyond the Western world, defending its historical roots is beneficial for achieving cultural diversity in the world.

Second, the Western countries mistakenly assume the existence of a "Sino-centric view" as a counterpart to the "Western-centric view" and therefore hold hostility toward the Chinese academic community. However, Chinese archaeology has already surpassed this narrow view. Classic theories such as "pluralistic and integrated pattern" describe Chinese civilization as an open system with multiple structures. Furthermore, Chinese archaeology recognizes the contributions of foreign influences in agriculture, technology, religion, as



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well as the continuous interactions between China and its neighboring regions as important factors in the development of Chinese civilization.

Last, when it comes to the Mo'er Temple Site and archaeological research in Xinjiang, *Xiyu*, a term used to describe today's Xinjiang and Central Asia in the past, had already been within the sphere of influence of central dynasties in ancient China as early as the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24), as evidenced by local administrative mechanisms, languages and written records, and cultural cus-

oms. Although Buddhism originated in India, the Buddhist culture at the Mo'er Temple Site exhibits strong characteristics of China's Central Plains, resulting from Buddhism's eastward transmission to the Central Plains and subsequent flowing back westward combining Chinese features. Scholars such as James A. Millward, who deny the position of Xinjiang in Chinese civilization based on the argument that the political and military control of the central dynasties in *Xiyu* was not thorough enough, fail to understand the concept of diversity and adhere to a nation-state mindset

that emphasizes the boundaries of nation, ethnicity, and culture must coincide. They are the true proponents of Central Plains centrism.

In conclusion, Chinese archaeology is not a weapon but has already developed a perspective that transcends the notion of civilization centrism.

The author is a PhD candidate of archaeology at Peking University. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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

Guangxi offers sanctuary for white dolphins

Conservation efforts see species better protected, sightseeing tourism thriving

By **YAN DONGJIE** and **SHI RUIPENG** in Qinzhou, Guangxi

In the past two decades, the population of Chinese white dolphins in Qinzhou's Sanniang Bay in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region has increased from fewer than 100 to over 300, safeguarding their numbers in the wild and ensuring a sustainable reproduction rate.

The Chinese white dolphin, also known as the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin, is a first-class nationally protected animal and is listed as a vulnerable species on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature Red List.

With an estimated total population of no more than 5,000 individuals, they are mainly found in the nearshore waters of Fujian and Guangdong provinces, and the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. Due to their overall white or pale pink coloration in adulthood, they are called white dolphins.

"Through our observations, Sanniang Bay has a sufficient number of female dolphins of reproductive age, with three to eight dolphin calves born and surviving each year. As long as there is some interaction with the white dolphin population in the waters of Guangdong each year, the genetic diversity of this population can be maintained," said Pan Yue, who moved from Beijing to Qinzhou in 2005 to protect white dolphins.

Sanniang Bay is located at the northern tip of the Beibu Gulf. The people on the coast have made a living from fishing for centuries, and have shared a harmonious coexistence with their neighbors, Chinese white dolphins, for generations.

Especially in the past decade, an increasing number of tourists from around the world have been drawn to the area to sight-see white dolphins. The local fishermen take the tourists out to sea to search for them and make a little extra income on the side.

The rise in tourism has led to more restaurants, shops and hotels in Qinzhou and surrounding villages, and the local people feel that the white dolphins have benefited their lives greatly.

"Twenty years ago there were no tall buildings here. Now, three-to-five-story buildings are everywhere," said Lin Qiang, a volunteer at the Life Education and Chinese White Dolphin Research Conservation Center of Qinzhou Beibu Gulf. The center was set up by Pan Yue's father, Pan Wenshi, a highly respected zoologist, with the aim of protecting the dolphins.

Pan Yue said that the Qinzhou government has made significant concessions to protect the living environment of Chinese white dolphins, a gesture that has deeply

touched their family.

In 2005, the Qinzhou government planned to develop a free trade zone and construct Qinzhou Port in Sanniang Bay. At that time, the then Party secretary Huang Daowei consulted Pan Wenshi to inquire whether this plan would affect the habitat of the white dolphins. Following Pan Wenshi's advice, the government decided to move the port westward, despite the higher construction costs involved.

In 2009, a foreign investment project valued at 3.8 billion yuan (\$522 million) planned to build a shipyard at the mouth of the Dafeng River in Qinzhou. Once again, to protect the white dolphins and the ecological environment, the then mayor Zhang Xiaoqin, decided to abandon the project.

The Qinzhou government has continued to uphold this reverence and protection for the natural environment. Sandun Road, which crosses the bay, divides the sea between Qinzhou Port and Sanniang Bay, with the western side planned for urban industrial development and the eastern side left for the white dolphins. This has become an unwritten rule among the locals.

"Due to human activities dividing the habitat of the white dolphins into small fragments, most groups have lost the ability to naturally reproduce. Perhaps in the near future, they may disappear. Therefore, by conserving this healthy population in Qinzhou, we can ensure the continued existence of this species on Earth," said Qinzhou Mayor Wang Xiongchang.

"To protect the white dolphins is to protect Qinzhou," he added.

"The Chinese white dolphin is the flagship species of this sea area, and its presence represents the stability and health of the ecosystem here. If one day we no longer see it in this sea area, it would indicate a disruption in the chain of life in this region, and humanity would face a crisis," said Zhao Yi, Pan Yue's husband.

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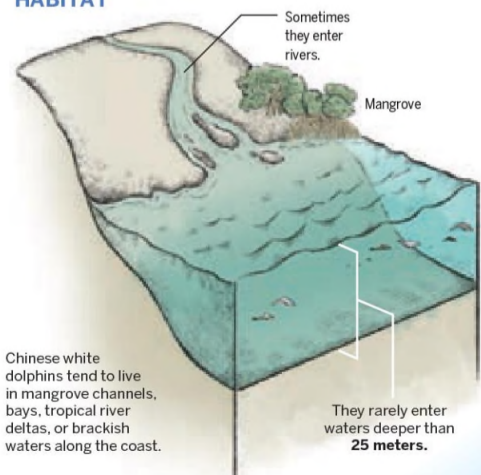
BLOWHOLE

When they surface, white dolphins breathe through a blowhole (opening) on top of their heads. The blowhole closes when they dive.

TEETH

Adult dolphins have a total of 125-135 cone-shaped teeth. Their function is not for chewing, but for hunting.

HABITAT



Oceanic dolphin
Humpback dolphin

- Australian humpback dolphin
- Chinese white dolphin (*Sousa chinensis*)
- Indian Ocean humpback dolphin
- Atlantic humpback dolphin

TAIL
White dolphins swim by swishing their tails up and down. Muscles along the dolphins' back and sides move the tail powerfully.

SKIN
When dolphins swim, they generate a large amount of heat. In order to better dissipate heat and regulate body temperature, the capillaries under the skin become congested, causing the outer skin to appear pink.

DORSAL FIN
They have a short and curved dorsal fin to keep them upright in the water, so that their bodies don't sway from side to side.

FAT HUMP
One of their recognizable features is that they have a hump of fatty tissue under the dorsal fin.

SIZE COMPARISON
Dolphin 2.8 m
Human 1.7 m
Average height of an adult male is 1.7 m.

COLOR CHANGES
Chinese white dolphins are not really white. They are actually gray and spotty when they are younger. Their spots fade and their color changes to pink when they grow older.

- Unspotted calf 0-2 (years old)
- Unspotted calf/juvenile 0-4
- Mottled adult 6-12
- Speckled adult 4-20
- Spotted adult 9-32
- Unspotted adult 25-45

EXTINCTION RISK
← Less risk → More risk →
LC NT **VU** EN CR EW EX
Least concern Vulnerable Extinct

ECHOLOCAATION
Dolphins use echolocation to navigate, locate prey, hunt, protect themselves from predators and communicate.

The melon allows the transmission of the sound waves. The brain receives the sound waves in the form of nerve impulses.

SPEED
Human beings 7.6 km/h
Fishing boat 18 km/h
Chinese white dolphins 22 km/h

A unique blend of environmental factors
There are five freshwater estuaries that drain into Sanniang Bay, including the Jinwo, Dafeng and Nanliu rivers. As the fresh water mixes with the seawater, unique conditions are created that allow an abundance of marine species to survive, not least among them the Chinese white dolphin. This means there is ample food to sustain the dolphins' population, according to dolphin expert Zhao Yi. "Especially at the mouth of the Dafeng River, dense mangrove forests grow, acting as a natural filter. The river water passing through the mangroves undergoes ecological filtration, purifying pollution from upstream human activities and adding more nutrients. This significantly contributes to the improvement of water quality in Sanniang Bay," said Zhao, who, along with his wife Pan Yue, moved to a village near Sanniang Bay in Qinzhou, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, almost 20 years ago to observe and protect Chinese white dolphins. Though their work is tireless, Zhao and Pan said there has not been enough international research into Chinese white dolphins, so understanding them has relied on years of observation to gather data for further protection and study. Based on their observations, Chinese white dolphins prefer living in shallow waters no more than 12 meters deep, a condition that Sanniang Bay meets perfectly. "More importantly, amid human activities and industrial development, Sanniang Bay has received sufficient protection and has not been polluted," Pan said.

— YAN DONGJIE

Sources: Life Education and Chinese White Dolphin Research Conservation Center of Qinzhou Beibu Gulf.

TEXT BY YAN DONGJIE / CHINA DAILY, GRAPHICS BY LI XIAOTIAN AND JORGE CORTES / CHINA DAILY

PARIS 2024

FENCING



Cheung Ka-long of Hong Kong, China, celebrates winning against Italy's Filippo Macchi in the Paris 2024 Olympics men's foil individual gold-medal bout at the Grand Palais in Paris on Monday. AFP

Olympic wins offer golden opportunity for HK fencing

Coach encourages harnessing Paris heroics to inspire a new generation

HONG KONG — Twelve-year-old Hong Kong fencer beginner Lloyd found a new role model over the weekend — “Sword Queen” Vivian Kong Man-wai, who clawed back a 7-1 deficit in the women's epee final to win Olympic gold in Paris.

“I woke up to the pleasant surprise of Vivian Kong (winning),” Lloyd told reporters on Monday at a fencing school in the Central district of Hong Kong, China.

On Saturday, the 30-year-old Kong became only the third Hong Kong athlete in history to have a gold medal draped around her neck after beating France's Auriane Mallo-Breton in front of a fiercely partisan crowd at the Paris Games.

She won 13-12 in the most thrilling fashion, a final, sudden-death point securing victory in the nail-biting contest, after it finished tied at 12-12 after regulation time.

“It was very inspiring. It was just very nice to see the spirit she had,” said Lloyd before starting his fencing class.

“She did not give up, she kept having to climb her way up. She chased the challenge and managed to get the gold medal,” he said. “I was very happy for Hong Kong.”

Later on Monday, in Paris, fellow fencer Cheung Ka-long took home the gold medal in the final bout of the men's individual foil — successfully defending the title he won at the Tokyo Games three years ago.

Kong joins Cheung and windsurfer Lee Lai-shan at Atlanta 1996 as Hong Kong's only Olympic champions.

Kong, a graduate of Stanford University in the United States, has battled back twice from torn cruciate ligaments, one in each knee, to rise to world No 1 and achieve Olympic glory.

In a tearful post-match interview at the Grand Palais — a 124-year-old exhibition hall that Paris transformed into an Olympic venue — Kong said that fencing “in such a beautiful palace was one of my dreams”.

“I didn't want to lose so miserably,” she said about her fightback from the six-point deficit.

“I didn't want to give up without demonstrating the Hong Kong spirit in my fight.”

The impact of Kong's win was immediate, said Lau Kwok-kin, a retired Olympian who now teaches fencing at the school where Lloyd trains in a class of about six youngsters, only one of which is a girl.

Lau said that the school has received more calls from parents of young girls since Kong's victory.

“Vivian Kong being a woman athlete has, perhaps, enabled some parents to see the possibility of their girls winning an Olympic medal,” Lau said.

Lau was the first fencer to represent Hong Kong at the Olympics — competing in 2004 and 2008 — and the 47-year-old attributed Kong's success to the systematic training provided by the Hong Kong Sports Institute.

The government-funded body also provides athletes with better financial support than in the past.

“Back then we didn't have much time for training, and we often did

it after class or work, when we were already tired,” Lau said.

“But now, being an athlete is a full-time job.”

Lau added that the training plan for an elite athlete now covers “everything from retreat, practicing competition techniques and physical conditioning.”

“It is a much more professional model than what we had before — that's why the performances are now better.”

Lau said that the city could uncover more talent if “satellite training bases” outside the Hong Kong Sports Institute could be set up around the city, and if parents could lend more support.

Lloyd, who attends classes three times a week since taking up the sport a year ago, said he “most definitely” wants to be fencing more, but school work takes up a lot of time.

“I still hold fencing very high in my priorities, (but) I might have to cut down on how much I can do in a week, because I have tests to study and prepare for,” he said.

TENNIS

Nadal downed by dominant Djokovic

Novak Djokovic crushed Rafael Nadal 6-1, 6-4 in their blockbuster Olympics clash on Monday as the two titans met for the 60th and possibly final time.

The showdown between the two most successful men's tennis players in history appeared to be fizzling out, before Nadal staged a late fightback to avoid his heaviest-ever defeat by Djokovic.

“I'm very relieved,” said Djokovic. “Everything was going my way, I was 6-1, 4-0 up, but I played a sloppy service game and gave him chances.”

It was 24-time Grand Slam champion Djokovic's 31st win in a rivalry that began on the same clay of Roland Garros in 2006.

“You could feel the tension coming into the match, but also the incredible hype, the incredible atmosphere on the court,” said Djokovic.

“I never thought, back in 2006, that we'd still be playing each other almost 20 years later.”

Nadal admitted Djokovic was the “clear favorite” ahead of their first clash in more than two years, with the Spaniard a shadow of the player who reigned for the best part of two decades at Roland Garros.

While 14 of Nadal's 22 Grand Slams have come in Paris, the 38-year-old has been plagued by injuries in recent years, and he has slumped to 161st in the world.

His participation in the singles in Paris had been in doubt until the last minute.

Djokovic, too, has not had a good season by his high standards, but the 37-year-old Serb rose to the occasion in his pursuit of an elusive Olympic gold.

The top seed raced into a 5-0 lead before Nadal finally got on the board, but Djokovic closed out the set and surged 4-0 ahead in the second. That was when Nadal finally offered some resistance.

Nadal clawed his way back to 4-4, only for Djokovic to break once more, this time making no mistake as he put away his old foe, and perhaps brought down the curtain on one of the greatest rivalries in the history of the sport.

“When this tournament is over, I will take the necessary decisions based on my feelings and desire,” Nadal said regarding his future in tennis.

Djokovic, a bronze medalist on his Olympic debut in 2008, goes on to face Dominik Koepfer of Germany for a spot in the quarterfinals.

Nadal will turn his focus to the doubles, where he is in a “dream team” pairing with compatriot Carlos Alcaraz.

Alcaraz, the reigning men's



Novak Djokovic of Serbia and Rafael Nadal of Spain hug after their Paris Olympics second-round match at Roland Garros on Monday. REUTERS

French Open and Wimbledon champion, saw off Dutchman Tallon Griekspoor 6-1, 7-6 (3) after saving a set point and receiving treatment for an apparent upper leg injury.

Russian, Roman Safiullin will be his next opponent.

Unstoppable Swiatek

Women's world No 1 Iga Swiatek took another step on her quest for gold by powering into the third round.

Swiatek, tested in her opening match under the roof on Court Philippe Chatrier, enjoyed a far more straightforward outing in the bright sunshine on Monday.

The four-time French Open champion underlined her status as the heavy favorite in Paris, swatting home hope Diane Parry aside 6-1, 6-1 to set up a meeting with China's Wang Xiyu for a place in the quarterfinals.

The Pole has won her past 23 matches at Roland Garros, with three clay titles already under her belt this season.

Elsewhere, United States second seed Coco Gauff dispatched Argentina's Maria Lourdes Carle 6-1, 6-1. Next up for her is Wimbledon semifinalist Donna Vekic, who put out former US Open champion Bianca Andreescu.

Italy's Jasmine Paolini, this year's French Open and Wimbledon runner-up, eased into the third round with a 6-4, 6-1 victory over Magda Linette.

Wimbledon champion Barbora Krejickova coasted past China's Wang Xinyu, while Maria Sakkari of Greece also advanced.

Zheng Qinwen, Stefanos Tsitsipas and Casper Ruud were among other second-round winners.

Olympics digest

SWIMMING

'It's a girl' — Murphy finds out child's gender

It's a girl.

That's the surprise message that United States swimmer Ryan Murphy got on the pool deck, as he looked up at his wife,

Bridget Kontinen, in the stands on Monday night at the Paris Olympics.

Murphy won a bronze on Monday in the 100m backstroke.

As the medal ceremony wound down, he saw Kontinen holding up a sign to let him know that their first child, due in January, will be a girl.

“I was walking back around and Bridget was holding up a sign and it said — ‘Ryan, it's a girl!’” he said.

“That was the first time I heard the gender.”

“Honestly, we both thought it was going to be a boy,” he said. “And everyone — like everyone — we were talking to, they thought it was going to be a boy.”

A big fan of the Jacksonville Jaguars, Murphy pointed out that quarterback Trevor Lawrence and his wife also have a daughter on the way.

“I hope our daughters can be friends,” he said.

Murphy won three gold medals in Rio in 2016, and a gold, a silver and a bronze in Tokyo in 2021. He won his



Ryan Murphy

first medal in Paris after finishing behind winner Thomas Ceccon of Italy and Xu Jiayu of China.

As soon as Murphy started talking about his daughter, none of the questions returned to his race. It was all about the baby.

“I think that just kind of lit me up,” he said. “And really brought this night to a whole other level.”

Golden Summer helps relieve scandal fallout

Summer McIntosh's rampaging win in the women's 400m individual medley (IM) at the Paris Olympics on Monday could not have come at a better time for a beleaguered Canadian team that's sinking under the weight of a soccer spying scandal.

World record holder McIntosh left a quality field in her wake, getting to the wall almost six seconds clear of chasing US rivals Katie Grimes and Emma Weyant, in a display of utter domination that was cheered by a capacity crowd at the La Defense pool, and, no doubt, lifted Canadian hearts back home.

It was the type of swim that might be remembered as one of Canada's great Olympic moments, and it might also take something that special to polish the country's tarnished sporting image.

Canadians have been desperate for a sporting hero or heroine to emerge from the dark cloud cast by the drone spying scandal engulfing the women's soccer team, which has seen coaches banned and the Olympic champion's medal hopes hanging by a thread after

er being served a six-point deduction.

It was 17-year-old McIntosh who came to the rescue, with a performance that she hoped made her team proud and provided some inspiration for kids back home.

FENCING

Egyptian fencer carries a 'little Olympian'

Egyptian fencer Nada Hafez had double reason to celebrate after picking up her first victory at an Olympics in the women's sabre event on Monday, as she revealed that she did so while seven months pregnant.

The 26-year-old Hafez, competing at her third Olympics, beat American world number 10 Elizabeth Tartakovsky 15-13 before losing 15-7 to Jeon Ha-young of South Korea in the round of 16 at the Grand Palais.

Later Hafez said that she was proud not only of her performance, but of having competed while expecting her baby.

“What appears to you as two players on the podium, there were actually three! It was me, my competitor, and my yet-to-come, little baby!” Hafez wrote on Instagram.

“I'm writing this post to say that pride fills my being for securing my place in the round of 16. This spec-

ific Olympics was different. Three times an Olympian, but this time carrying another little Olympian!”

Hafez, who previously competed at the Games in 2016 and 2021, said she revealed the news to “shed light on the strength and perseverance of Egyptian women.”

“The roller coaster of pregnancy is tough on its own, but having to fight to keep the balance of life and sports was nothing short of strenuous, however worth it.”

TRIATHLON

Men's race postponed due to Seine pollution

The men's triathlon did not go ahead as planned on Tuesday, as pollution levels in the Seine were deemed to be too high, World Triathlon said in a statement.

The race has been postponed to Wednesday morning, immediately after the women's event, which is scheduled for an 8 am start.

The decision is a blow to organizers, who previously said they were confident that water quality would improve in time for the race, after heavy rains last Friday and Saturday dirtied the river.

The 55 triathletes who were primed to compete on Tuesday now face more uncertainty.

“Despite the improvement in water quality levels over the last few hours, the readings at some points of the swim course are still above the acceptable limits,” organizers said.

World Triathlon met with coaches on Tuesday to provide them with all



Summer McIntosh

the information and the updated schedule for the race, they said.

If levels of bacteria remain too high by Wednesday morning, both the men's and women's races are likely to be postponed to Friday, the contingency day reserved for the events.

For the mixed triathlon relay event on Aug 5, the contingency day is Aug 6.

BEACH VOLLEYBALL

Ex-NBA player Budinger wins Games debut

Chase Budinger has never forgotten how badly he played in his first NBA game. He'll have only good memories from his Olympic debut, though.

The former professional basketball player and his teammate, Miles Evans, beat host France in straight sets on Monday to coast through their opening match of the Paris beach volleyball tournament.

“I tried to use my basketball experience of playing in front of big crowds to be composed,” Budinger said after the pair's 21-14, 21-11 victory. “But it definitely was not like that inside.”

Budinger spent seven years in the NBA, mostly as a bench player for the Houston Rockets and Minnesota Timberwolves, before turning to



Chase Budinger

beach volleyball to fulfill an Olympic dream. “I played awful,” he said, recalling his first NBA game.

“On the bus ride over here, I was telling Miles about my first basketball game, of how nervous I was and how the nerves really got to me,” Budinger said. “I was 0-for-2 (from 3-point range), had two turnovers and one of the shots I had was an airball. So the nerves affected my game play.”

Google irked some viewers of the Olympic Games over the weekend with an ad showing its artificial intelligence program help a girl write a letter to her sports idol.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Google AI ad rankles some viewers

Google irked some viewers of the Olympic Games over the weekend with an ad showing its artificial intelligence program help a girl write a letter to her sports idol.

The “Dear Sydney” ad, intended to adorably tout the capabilities of Google's Gemini AI, featured a dad warmly describing how the tool wrote his daughter a letter to US hurdler Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone.

However, some viewers bashed the ad as promoting the notion that parents should coax their children to rely on AI, rather than learn to express themselves.

“It is one of the most disturbing commercials I've ever seen,” Syracuse University professor of advanced media in residence Shelly Palmer said in a blog post.

“This is exactly what we do not want anyone to do with AI. Ever.”

AGENCIES

PARIS 2024

An unwavering aim

Unshakeable dedication and hard work ensure shooting star Huang Yuting always hits her targets

By CHEN YE in Hangzhou
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Her impassive facial expression, the panda hanging from her bag and, of course, her white hair clip...

Everything about China's shooting star Huang Yuting has come under scrutiny among her growing legion of fans since the 17-year-old prodigy, alongside her partner Sheng Libao, claimed the gold medal in the 10m air rifle mixed team event at the Paris Olympics on July 27.

Two days later, on July 29, Huang added a silver medal to her tally in the women's 10m air rifle final.

It must all be a little overwhelming, even for the seemingly unflappable teen, especially given her small-town roots in an unassuming village in Huangyan district, Taizhou city of Zhejiang province.

A village that can now boast an Olympic champion.

Her parents, both ordinary workers — her father works at a local factory, while her mother

works at a kindergarten — played a pivotal role in setting her on the path to glory.

Each year, the local amateur sports school in Huangyan district selects potential talent from the area's elementary schools. Huang, demonstrating excellent coordination, stability, reflexes and physical fitness, was chosen to receive more formal training.

"At that time, our eldest daughter was a bit skinny, so we wanted her to engage in some physical activity to become more independent," her father explained. "Although we didn't understand much about shooting at first, it was a government program, and we saw it as a good hobby."

Starting at the age of 10, Huang's training regimen was rigorous. She balanced her schoolwork and shooting practice with remarkable discipline. Her daily routine involved heading to the sports school after her regular school hours, training for nearly an hour, and then returning home to complete her homework. Weekends were dedicated to more intensive training sessions.

Her first coach, Lin Kehan, who



Clockwise from top: Teachers and students cheer Huang Yuting on from the gymnasium of her high school in Taizhou, Zhejiang province, on Saturday; Huang pictured after shooting 10.9 in a provincial competition in 2019; Huang with coach Lin Kehan in 2022. PAN KANJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY AND PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

the sport, Huang had already achieved impressive results in provincial-level competitions.

In 2019, she dominated the National U18 Shooting Championships in Nanjing, winning golds in the individual, team and mixed team events.

In 2020, she joined the Zhejiang provincial shooting team, continuing her upward trajectory in the sport.

However, Huang's journey from a small district team to the national team was not without its challenges.

The local training facilities initially lacked electronic targets, which are essential for high-level competition. With the support of the school's principal, the training center was upgraded, significantly improving the quality of her sessions there.

The demands of training often kept Huang away from her family for long periods, and her last visit home was after the Asian Games in November last year.

"She started training away from home in her first year of junior high school," her father shared. "We often only see her once or twice a year. She is always busy training during the Chinese New Year, and never comes home for the holiday."

Despite the distance, her family stays connected with her through video calls. Her mother and younger sister are her main sources of emotional support.

"When we see that she is feeling down, we try to cheer her up with interesting stories and light-hearted conversations. She never talks about the difficulties she faces, and we don't ask. She has always been very independent and never complains," her father said.

Hometown honor

She strives for perfection, Lin observed, noting: "While others might practice one shot, she will practice three. Her dedication to pre-shot routines and practice is also remarkable."

Pre-shot routines involve practicing the shooting action without live ammunition, which is crucial for honing precision.

"Her commitment during these sessions, despite their monotony, speaks volumes about her willpower and determination," Lin said.

Her coaches at the provincial level also noted her exceptional dedication, even though training can be repetitive and dull. It is this level of investment that she has put into her training that is reflected in her results in Paris.

Results that have brought immense pride to her hometown. She is the first athlete from Huangyan district to win an Olympic gold and silver medal, and people there will be hoping they're the first of many more.

"She still has many opportunities ahead," Lin said. "Standing on the Olympic podium is a testament to our collective efforts and dreams."



began working with Huang in 2017, recalls her being a quiet and diligent student. "She was always serious and dedicated, never missing a session," he said.

Recognizing her potential, Lin spoke with Huang's parents to ensure she received the necessary support and the family moved closer to the training facility to accommodate her rigorous training schedule.

It was the encouragement she needed, and Huang's independence and strong work ethic came to the fore.

"She has always been self-sufficient, never relying too much on us for anything," her father remarked. "She organizes her activities and studies meticulously, requiring minimal supervision."

Putting in the work

Her hard work quickly paid off. Only one year after picking up

Chinese shooter Huang Yuting, 17, is in the limelight after winning both a gold and a silver medal on her Olympic debut. XINHUA

By LI YINGXUE
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Yiwu cashes in on Huang's hair-o-ics

After clinching both a gold and a silver medal at the Paris Olympics, 17-year-old Huang Yuting has found herself at the center of a social media buzz. It's not just her outstanding achievements that have people talking; her simple, yet adorable, white hair clip has also become a viral sensation.

"I am happy and satisfied with my first Olympic Games journey," said Huang.

She explained that there is a new rule that states the fringe of her hair is not allowed to fall down, "so I just found a hair clip to hold my hair, it's nothing special!"

As soon as Huang's win was confirmed, an e-commerce client inquired whether or not Wan Chengying, who runs a hair accessory manufacturing business at the Yiwu International Trade Market in Yiwu, Zhejiang province, had the same hair clip Huang wore as she helped shoot China to Olympic gold.

Wan was already prepared — she said yes, and immediately received an order of 40,000 units.

She explained that she has observed that major sporting events often boost the popularity of certain accessories. So, this year, she paid special attention to the Paris Olympics and prepared her factory in advance to meet the anticipated demand.

"The first batch of goods arrived at the e-commerce client's warehouse at 10 am on July 28, and the rest of the orders are being rushed to meet the demand," Wan told Hangzhou Daily.

"I expected the Olympic champion to make the hair clip popular, but I didn't expect the orders to come in so quickly."

Wan explained that most of her store's biggest orders come from e-commerce clients on platforms like



Huang Yuting's white hair clip and the yellow duck clip of fellow Olympic champion Yang Qian have become hot-sellers after the pair won their gold medals. REUTERS AND XINHUA

Taobao and Douyin. These customers are highly trend-sensitive and skilled at creating viral products, which requires a quick response from manufacturers and suppliers.

The hair clip that Huang wore is actually a two-year-old product that Wan has been selling, but it has not been a bestseller, with only about 100,000 units sold before the Paris Olympics.

Wan estimated that, from the time Huang won the gold, to the afternoon of July 29, the orders for the hair clip had already approached 600,000 units — and were still coming.

"I estimate that the hair clip will sell at least 1 to 2 million units. It all depends on how long it stays popular. The longer it lasts, the more units we'll sell," Wan said.

This isn't Yiwu's first such foray

into the market of Olympics-influenced product trends. Three years ago, after Yang Qian won the gold medal in women's 10m air rifle at the Tokyo Olympics, her yellow duck hair clip sparked a massive surge in interest on domestic e-commerce platforms.

Many Taobao stores quickly offered "Yang Qian-inspired" yellow duck clips and carrot hair tie bundles.

At Yiwu International Trade Market, merchants had listed the Yang Qian-inspired hair clips within an hour of her victory, and some had reproduced the popular accessories within 24 hours.

"Yang Qian-inspired hair clips stayed popular for more than six months, and our store alone sold 3 to 4 million units. So, I'm very confident this time," Wan said.

For Yiwu merchants, the rapid pro-

duction of "Yang Qian-inspired" and "Huang Yuting-inspired" products is just business as usual.

"Yiwu's well-established industrial and supply chain systems, combined with high production efficiency and sharp market insight from local merchants, give Yiwu an unmatched ability to create trending products," Jiang Changfeng, head of Yiwu Yuhuan Jewelry Co told Chao News.

The Yiwu International Trade Market, covering 6.4 million square meters, is home to numerous foreign trade stores, among which, more than 800 specialize in sporting goods, positioning the site as a crucial gateway for the Olympics economy.

In addition to Huang-inspired merchandise, the Yiwu market has introduced a variety of Olympics-themed accessories, including earrings featuring the colors of the French flag. These items have proven especially popular in international markets, with strong demand from Europe.

Mao Yixun contributed to this story.