

Sharp skills

Knife-cut noodle chef carries on family legacy, slicing way to culinary prowess CHINA, PAGE 4



Joint effort on space-based research floated WORLD, PAGE 7



On the growth path

Reform policies inject fresh impetus into private sector BUSINESS, PAGE 8

# CHINA DAILY

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XI'S VISION | REFORM AND OPENING-UP

## Lasting efforts on mediation reap success

Progress in quest for peace reflects nation's commitment, persistence, say observers

By ZHANG YUNBI zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

China has made major moves over the past week aimed at brokering peace for two of the world's most prominent hot spot issues — the Ukraine crisis and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

In addition to the progress made on those matters, Beijing's envoys on different issues have continued visits overseas over the weekend, holding talks to further facilitate peace and development.

Officials and scholars said that Beijing's lasting efforts are paying off, and that these practical actions serve to implement the China-proposed Global Security Initiative and also help to shape an external environment for the country to move forward on the Chinese path to modernization.

Following China's success in enabling rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran last year, Beijing hosted talks for internal reconciliation between Palestinian factions in the past week, and the factions'

representatives signed the landmark Beijing declaration on Tuesday for ending division and strengthening the national unity of Palestine.

Leaders including United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomed the signing of the Beijing declaration. Guterres urged the factions "to follow up on the commitments that were made in Beijing and the declaration they signed on to", said Stephane Dujarric, the UN chief's spokesman.

Kabir Taneja, a fellow with the Strategic Studies Programme at the Observer Research Foundation in India, said: "For Beijing, hosting these Palestinian groups is not a

first. The previous meeting between Fatah and Hamas hosted by the Chinese government took place only recently, in April."

The engagement demonstrates China's wish to be a major country that is "noninterventionist, and stands for peace and reconciliation", Taneja wrote in a recent article.

Maged Refaat Aboulmagd, an ambassador member of the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs, said the fact that China has brought Palestinian factions together shows great "courage and wisdom" on the part of Beijing.

"This is the kind of soft power that China needs to export to the world and exercise more and more, and we

would love to have China more active also in these fields and beyond," he said.

In addition, Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on Wednesday. "China's role as a global force for peace is important," Kuleba said.

Furthermore, starting on Sunday, Li Hui, special representative of the Chinese government on Eurasian affairs, will visit Brazil, South Africa and Indonesia to carry out the fourth round of shuttle diplomacy on the Ukraine crisis.

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WORLD WATCH By Kostas Gouliamos

### Country committed to deepening reforms in new era

The third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China unveiled concrete reforms and detailed policies. The four-day meeting, attended by 199 members and 165 alternate members of the Central Committee, highlighted new reform packages that are pertinent to Beijing's economic, cultural and social orientation in the new era.

The plenum communiqué reflected China's intention to deepen existing policies in a persistent and resolute way, prioritizing issues of economic development and security, which will guide China's opening-up for years to come. According to the document, China must "achieve a healthy interaction between high-quality development and a high level of security".

The security issue is of paramount importance, and the plenum is incorporated with the government's goal for a steady progress of Chinese modernization. Beijing constantly seeks common ground through signature programs to resolve cooperation difficulties, challenges and conflicts that have increasingly been a driver of international instability.

Within this international framework, President Xi Jinping, while addressing the 24th Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Astana, Kazakhstan, called on member nations to ensure security in the face of real threats and tense geopolitical relations by adhering to the bottom line of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security. It should be noted that in view of the current risks and challenges, Xi proposed the Global Security Initiative in April 2022, envisioning a new path to security. Since several Western nations led by the United States and NATO are constantly stirring up tensions and conflicts or imposing unilateral sanctions, strengthened dialogue over confrontation is of critical importance to advancing security and ensuring peace.

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### Beijing Central Axis wins global recognition



Photos of the Central Axis in Beijing are displayed on a screen upon its inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List during the 46th session of the World Heritage Committee in New Delhi, India, on Saturday. Stretching 7.8 kilometers north to south through the heart of Beijing, the Central Axis is an ensemble of palaces, public buildings and gardens that governs the overall layout of the old city area of the Chinese capital. JAVED DAR / XINHUA See more, pages 3, 11

## China, Italy pledge to promote stable trade relations

By ZHOU JIN zhoujin@chinadaily.com.cn

Premier Li Qiang called on Sunday for China and Italy to work together to strengthen dialogue at various levels and promote optimized and balanced bilateral trade, in an effort to foster a more mature and stable relationship.

The two countries should enhance cooperation in areas such as shipbuilding, aerospace, new energy and artificial intelligence as well as boost mutually beneficial cooperation between small and medium-sized enterprises, Li said during a meeting with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

On Saturday, Meloni kicked off her first visit to China since assuming

office in October 2022, aiming to stabilize Italy's relationship with its strong economic partner.

Her five-day visit comes months after Italy pulled out of the Belt and Road Initiative at the end of last year. In 2019, it was the only Group of Seven member to sign a BRI cooperation document with China.

After their talks on Sunday, Li and Meloni witnessed the signing of a series of cooperation agreements in areas including industry, education and environmental protection.

Italy is China's fourth-largest trading partner in the European Union, while China is Italy's largest trading partner in Asia.

Li said that China supports its enterprises to carry out cooperation in the European country and hopes

that Italy will provide a fair, safe and nondiscriminatory business environment for Chinese enterprises.

He called on the two sides to advance people-to-people exchanges, especially make efforts to jointly host a series of activities to commemorate the 700th anniversary of the death of Marco Polo, a legendary Italian explorer who is viewed as a symbol of the historical ties between the two nations.

Li also expressed the hope that the EU will view China's development in a rational manner, see Beijing as a partner, and promote dialogue and cooperation.

China and the EU have been embroiled in trade friction since the group's decision earlier this month to impose provisional tariffs of up to 37.6 percent on electric vehicles imported from China.

Meloni said that Italy is willing to play a positive role in helping stabilize EU-China relations. Rome is committed to developing a long-term, stable and sound relationship with Beijing, and is ready to explore new forms of cooperation, she said.

On Sunday, Li and Meloni also attended the opening ceremony of the seventh meeting of the China-Italy entrepreneurs committee.

The meeting was attended by over 150 entrepreneurs from both sides, including Italian tire maker Pirelli, energy company ENI and defense group Leonardo, as well as wine producers and luxury fashion enterprises.

Li told the business leaders that the sustained development of Sino-Italian comprehensive strategic partnership will bring more stable

expectations, broader opportunities and more abundant resources to bilateral trade cooperation.

He called for the two sides to support their enterprises in tapping into the potential of cooperation in smart manufacturing, new energy and biomedicine.

Beijing will further ease market access for and guarantee equal treatment of foreign and domestic enterprises, in order to provide more support and convenience for foreign businesses investing and operating in China, he said.

On Sunday, Li also met with visiting President of Timor-Leste Jose Ramos Horta.

He said that China would like to strengthen cooperation with the island nation on infrastructure, connectivity under the BRI framework and expand cooperation in a wider range of areas including agriculture, fisheries, poverty reduction and tourism.

### Diving for gold



Chang Yani (right) and Chen Yiwen pose on Saturday with their gold medals for the women's synchronized three-meter springboard at the Paris Olympic Games in France. The duo won the first gold for the Chinese diving team. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY See more, page 15

## STIGMA LIFTED ON DEALING WITH WORKPLACE STRESS

Courses help employees cope with mental health issues, assist colleagues

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai zhouwenting@chinadaily.com.cn

Gao Dongzhi is in the business of dealing with complaints, mostly from agitated people demanding a refund.

He heads the air ticket service team at a Shanghai-based online travel agency. Every day, dozens of employees on his team answer phone calls from customers around the world. The nature of the work



means the people they are dealing with are rarely calm.

In late May, Gao participated in a course about mental health in the workplace. The intention of the course, jointly provided by the Shanghai Mental Health Center, or SMHC, and the Shanghai Pilot

Health Promotion Center, or SPHPC, was to empower participants to help themselves and those around them deal with mental stress at work.

Gao said that by studying the basics of mental health and self-help methods for groups and individuals, he had mastered some emotional management skills, allowing him to assist stressed co-workers.

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# PAGE TWO



## Stress: Building resilience key to mental health

From page 1

Since November, the courses have been provided four times for nearly 300 participants, including doctors, corporate managers, and human resources specialists. The courses will be expanded to more districts in the city, the organizers said.

"Under the current context of VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity), how to improve the psychological resilience of employees to adapt to the changing social development and organizational changes of enterprises are what enterprises and individuals are concerned about," said Si Xinli, executive director of SPHPC.

Si said small investments in workers' mental health and emotional management are of great value, "as they can bring happiness and productivity, and will contribute to an encouraging business environment."

He Yuan, vice-chairwoman of the Shanghai Medical Trade Union, was one of the course participants. She said as industries and life move ahead at a fast pace, it is important to help healthcare workers master the knowledge and skills to cope with job stress and perform "psychological first aid".

"Many people run about between work and their family day after day, leaving little time for themselves. As they are the backbone of society and the pillar of their families, it will be good for their families and all of society if they have the right mental state," she said.

The course lecturers, mostly clinical doctors from mental health hospitals, used real cases during the classes. Participants were asked to use what they had learned to spot potential psychological challenges for co-workers who may be in a similar situation, and devise ways to talk to them and ease their concerns.

"The first step is to identify stress in the person," said Zeng Qingzhi, one of the lecturers and a doctor specializing in public health from SMHC.

"There are stress signals from various systems of the human body, as well as signals from emotions, interpersonal relationships, and behaviors.

"For example, typical signals include stopping taking good care of oneself, a lack of concentration, holding a persistently negative attitude toward themselves and their surroundings, insomnia, relying on alcohol and smoking more often than usual, and withdrawal from the company of family, friends, and colleagues," she said.

### Burnout, you know it

Li Li, deputy head of the Psychological Health Promotion Department at SMHC, said work burnout usually begins when a person sees no meaning in their job anymore, it seems overly demanding, or they feel they are not being properly rewarded.

"When a person enters a condition of burnout, it's like a phone needs to be charged as soon as possible. When someone is in a state of 'power emergency' for a long time, it may pose various physical and mental health risks," she said.

However, unlike physical health problems, mental health ones usually take longer to recover from, and have a heavier impact on the people involved

and their families, said Si, the executive director of SPHPC.

"If someone has a broken leg, they can still type with their hands and they can still think and express themselves. But if they are confronted with a serious mental challenge, such as depression, it may not allow them to work," he said.

Citing British studies, Zeng said that more than half of employees around the world do not tell their bosses they feel overstressed, and one in four of those who quit say it is because they can't cope with the pressure at work.

Globally, anxiety and depression affect 300 million and 280 million people respectively, according to World Health Organization data. Nearly \$1 trillion is lost every year due to the reduced productivity of workers afflicted by depression and anxiety, research conducted by WHO experts showed.

"A certain level of pressure functions as a propeller to move forward life and work," said Zeng.

"People usually take the initiative to cope with such pressure, and will be at the peak of efficiency and perform well. But if stress continues to rise, some may start to behave in a sluggish way, make more mistakes, and feel fatigue, exhaustion and even collapse."

Zeng added that instead of dodging stress, it's important to make it manageable.

### The art of listening

When dealing with stressed people, listeners need to be patient and express sympathy through their body language and speech. They also need to prepare for discussions with the stressed person by finding a private space with chairs and items such as water and tissues, said the lecturers.

Gao, who works at Ctrip, said he learned from the course that crying is not something bad, and is a way to vent emotions. Some clients are quite blunt and even rude when expressing their dissatisfaction in a complaint phone call, he said. This makes some of his staff feel uncomfortable and even depressed, and some even burst out crying.

Gao said he used to attribute such reactions to their immaturity, and thought customers should be prioritized in a work situation. He would

instruct his subordinates to control their emotions and ignore their feelings.

"However, now I'm aware I can do better," Gao said.

"Next time, if a colleague is in this situation, I'll let him or her release their emotions first and then listen to his or her experiences and feelings in a private space.

"Perhaps I'll replay the recording of the phone call with the colleague, and put ourselves in the customer's place and try to sympathize with their emotions. This way, we can understand they're not targeting us and we'll feel less hurt."

Psychologists said that in a society undergoing rapid development and evolving knowledge and technologies, many people easily enter a stressful state.

"They may feel like an automobile racing ahead at super fast speed, being coerced to operate at an accelerated pace," said Li. For example, she said, as technologies such as artificial intelligence continue to progress, some peo-

ple may be afraid their jobs will become redundant.

### Under pressure

Workers can also place pressure on themselves, especially the younger ones. Compared with previous generations, they tend to have a higher pursuit of values at work and seek more self-realization, said Li.

Bu Tingmei, a participant in the course and a human resources worker at China National Offshore Oil Corporation, a large offshore oil and gas producer, said she recently noticed a young colleague's dedication to her work appeared to be on the decline.

Bu later learned the colleague had relocated from her hometown to Shanghai to follow her boyfriend, but they had soon broken up. Other factors, including constantly working overtime and the colleague's parents being ill, had also contributed to the co-worker's depression.

Bu said she learned from the course that it is important for colleagues in such a situation to provide company for a depressed co-worker, show support, and share their workload. They can also encourage them to receive proper mental health treatment if the situation has affected their normal life and work, has lasted for two weeks, and shows no improvement after trying self-adjustment.

Sun Yan, a doctor from the Disease Prevention and Control Department at Shanghai Changning District Mental Health Center, said that when mental health is talked about in the workplace, it cannot be isolated from other aspects of a person's life.

"Mental health in the workplace can be related to challenges from superior-

subordinate relationships, career development, and interpersonal conflicts in the workplace," he said.

"But it can also derive from family and marriage and parent-child relationships among many other things. All these elements can affect work."

Li said new arrivals in a big city may feel pressure and anxiety because some colleagues appear to have a higher quality of life such as making exciting arrangements for the weekend. Such anxiety does not derive from the work itself, but from the workplace environment, she said.

Meanwhile, superiors who show respect can boost an employee's sense of growth at work and help reduce their anxiety.

"Rewards at work are free in many cases. For example, they can be compliments from managers, colleagues or clients. Such inspiration is an important component of a career experience and can motivate us to press ahead, even if we feel tired and are going through a difficult time at work," said Sun, from the Changning District Mental Health Center.

### Removing stigma

Awareness about mental health has been on the rise in recent years, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic when it was discussed a lot, experts said. Doctors noticed that a rising number of patients are taking the initiative to seek mental health help, compared with the past when it was considered a stigma.

"As the public's mental health literacy continues to improve, and mental health is increasingly mentioned in the media, people will gradually come to understand that individuals with mental health challenges are not a minority, and they will abandon their prejudice," said Li.

"We hope that one day, mental health will be treated and managed in the same way as chronic physical diseases such as hypertension and diabetes," she said.

The decline in the stigma attached to mental health challenges is particularly noticeable in young people, especially those born after 1990.

"Factors, including better education in general, a more tolerant culture, and a stronger desire for inner growth, mean young people have a higher requirement for their mental health," said Li.

"Many teenagers seek medical assistance before their parents have the idea of sending them to therapists. Also, they usually present a better psychological perspective when talking about their situations than past generations as they will mention their families and how they were brought up," she said.

ART BY LU PING / CHINA DAILY



Li Li, deputy head of the Psychological Health Promotion Department at the Shanghai Mental Health Center, outlines signals of stress at a workplace psychology course in Shanghai in April. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## TOP NEWS

## US urged to return to right track

Foreign minister says bilateral relationship is at critical juncture, needs to be stabilized

By CAO DESHENG  
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Amid accumulating risks and challenges in relations between China and the United States, Beijing has again urged Washington to return to a rational and pragmatic policy toward China and to properly manage their differences, in order to promote a stable, healthy and sustainable bilateral relationship.

During a meeting in Laos on Saturday with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Foreign Minister Wang Yi warned that the bilateral relationship is at a critical juncture and needs to be stabilized, requiring managing risks, properly handling differences, eliminating disturbances and promoting cooperation.

Wang, who is also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, also reiterated China's position on the Taiwan question, which is at the very center of China's core interests. Beijing has said on many occasions that the Taiwan question is the first red line that must not be crossed in China-US relations.

Wang emphasized that "Taiwan independence" is incompatible with peace across the Taiwan Strait. "We will counter every provocation by the 'Taiwan independence' forces, keep narrowing the space for 'Taiwan independence', and work toward the goal of a complete national reunification," he said.

The meeting took place at the request of the US side on the sidelines of a series of meetings of the foreign ministers of Southeast and East Asian countries in Vientiane, the capital of Laos.

It also came as China-US relations continue to be mired in a situation in which the US does not refrain from moving to contain and suppress China, although the diplomatic, financial, law enforcement and climate teams of the two sides, as well as the two militaries, have maintained communication in the past three months.

Blinken's stop in Laos was part of his visit to multiple Asian nations, including Vietnam, the Philippines, Singapore and Mongolia.



Foreign Minister Wang Yi (right) shakes hands with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken during their meeting on Saturday in Vientiane, the capital of Laos. KAIKEO SAIYASANE / XINHUA

## Inside

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In June, the US State Department approved arms sales to Taiwan, including drones and missiles, for an estimated \$360 million, a move that Beijing criticized, saying that Washington was sending a serious, erroneous signal to separatist forces seeking "Taiwan independence".

Furthermore, on July 12, US President Joe Biden signed into law the so-called Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act, which China considers to be another manifestation of Washington practicing hegemonism, manipulating the rhetoric of democracy and freedom, and interfering in China's internal affairs.

During a news conference at the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting held in Brazil on Thursday, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said she would press China to address the country's macroeconomic model that has led to what she called "overcapacity".

Beijing criticized Yellen for engaging in a political show to shift the blame for the US' domestic problems to China, saying that the real purpose

behind the US' hyping of China's so-called new energy "overcapacity" is to contain China's advantage in the new energy industry.

Wang told Blinken that China's policy toward the US has always been consistent and follows the principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation.

He criticized Washington for adhering to the wrong perception of China, and said China is not the US and does not want to be. He also said that China does not seek hegemony or power politics and, as a major country, has the best record on peace and security.

During the meeting, Wang also urged the US not to stir up trouble and undermine maritime stability regarding China's Ren'ai Reef in the South China Sea.

He said that China has reached a temporary arrangement with the Philippines to manage the situation, and the Philippines should honor its commitments to refraining from sending construction materials to its illegally grounded vessel at China's Ren'ai Reef.

Both sides also exchanged views on the Ukraine crisis, the situation

in Gaza, and the Korean Peninsula, among other matters.

On the Ukraine crisis, Wang said that China's position is fair and transparent, and it will continue to promote peace talks. He urged the US to stop abusing unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction.

China rejects false accusations and will not succumb to pressure or blackmail, and it will take resolute measures to protect its major interests and legitimate rights, Wang said.

Blinken said Washington is committed to stabilizing US-China relations and adheres to the one-China policy.

The US looks forward to maintaining regular communication with China for cooperation on anti-drug efforts and artificial intelligence and in other fields, he said, adding that the US is willing to manage differences with China to avoid misunderstandings and miscalculations.

Both sides agreed to maintain communication at all levels and further implement the important consensus reached at the San Francisco meeting in November between the two heads of state.

## Beijing Central Axis listed as World Heritage Site

By CHENG YUEZHU  
and WANG KAIHAO

A centuries-old example of Chinese urban planning and architecture has received global recognition.

The 46th session of the World Heritage Committee in New Delhi, India, announced on Saturday that the Beijing Central Axis — "A Building Ensemble Exhibiting the Ideal Order of the Chinese Capital" — has

been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, becoming China's 59th World Heritage Site.

The Central Axis in Beijing is an ensemble of palaces, public buildings and gardens that governs the overall layout of the old city area of the Chinese capital.

Stretching 7.8 kilometers north to south through the heart of Beijing, the newly inscribed World Heritage Site comprises 15 components. At the northern end of the axis are the Bell Tower and Drum Tower. It then runs south through Wanning Bridge, Jingshan Hill, the Forbidden City, the Upright Gate, the Tian'anmen Gate, the Outer Jinshui Bridges, the Tian'anmen Square Complex, the Zhengyangmen Gate, the Southern Section Road Archaeological Sites, before terminating at the Yongdingmen Gate at the southern end. The Imperial Ancestral Temple, the Altar of Land and Grain, the Temple of Heaven, and the Altar of the God of Agriculture are located on the east and west sides of the Axis.

The complex comprises imperial palaces and gardens, imperial sacrificial buildings, ancient city management facilities, national ceremonial and public buildings and remains of the original central axis roads.

"It is an important symbol that embodies prominent characteristics of Chinese civilization, highlighting Beijing's exceptional status among the famous ancient capitals of the world," Li Qun, director of the National Cultural Heritage Administration, said in an interview with China Global Television Network on Saturday in New Delhi.

"It has had a profound impact on the history of urban planning and construction worldwide and serves as a Chinese case for the preservation and sustainable protection of ancient capitals," Li added.

Construction of the Central Axis began in the 13th century and was completed in the 16th century. It has undergone constant refinement over the past centuries and continues to influence Beijing's urban development to this day.

The World Heritage Committee acknowledged that the Central Axis in Beijing meets the World Heritage List selection criteria No 3 and No 4: It bears unique or exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization that is living or has disappeared, and is an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape that illustrates significant stage or stages in human history.

Ernesto Ottone, UNESCO's assistant director-general for culture, speaking at a celebratory event in New Delhi later on Saturday, said that Beijing's intricate urban planning draws inspiration from Confucian philosophy with a history spanning thousands of years and which flourishes even today. The preservation and design of urban heritage are not only about protecting the past but also about constructing a better future, he added.

According to the National Cultural Heritage Administration, the Central Axis in Beijing provides exceptional material testimony to the philosophy of "neutrality and

harmony" prized in Chinese tradition. It is an outstanding example representing the mature stage of the urban central axis of Chinese capitals, and also the best-preserved capital central axis in China.

"(The Beijing Central Axis) is the product of some of the best urban planning in history," said Christa Reicher, a professor at RWTH Aachen University in Germany and a UNESCO chair for cultural heritage and urbanism, in an interview with Xinhua. "It is regarded as the 'spine of the city's culture' and a magnet for tourists from all over the world."

Lyu Zhou, director of the National Heritage Center at Tsinghua University, said that this paradigm of city planning can be traced back to *Kaogongji* (Book of Diverse Crafts), a section of the Confucian classic *Rites of Zhou* that was compiled more than 2,000 years ago. The milestone work outlines the rituals and order in the planning of a capital city.

The Forbidden City and the markets at the Bell Tower and Drum Tower area correspond to the book's account of "court in the front, market in the back". The tome speaks of "an ancestral temple on the left, an altar of land and grain on the right", which is reproduced in the Imperial Ancestral Temple and the Altar of Land and Grain, located symmetrically on the east and west sides of the Central Axis.

"It is a carrier of traditional Chinese concepts and beliefs, constructing a symbol for national order and witnessing the formation of the Chinese cultural tradition of inclusion and diversity," Lyu said.

The lead-up to the inscription began in 2012, when the axis was added to China's tentative list for World Heritage Site status. It was emphasized in the Beijing Master Plan (2016-35), a guideline document for general development of the capital city that was released in 2017.

Between 2020 and 2023, an action plan for comprehensive protection of the axis was put into practice. Various efforts including renovation of historical buildings, related archaeological research, improvement of the environment, and activities to encourage wide participation of the public in this process followed.

"Through this process, the historical pattern and historical charm of the Central Axis in Beijing are gradually being restored and vividly reproduced, with continuous improvement in the living environment and urban landscape along the axis," said Chu Jianhao, deputy director of the Beijing Municipal Office for Conservation and Management of Beijing Central Axis.

The official submission for inscription was made to UNESCO in January 2023, followed by an evaluation by International Council on Monuments and Sites in August. After addressing evaluation feedback, the council recommended the inscription in May.

"The inscription marks a new starting point. China will adhere to the World Heritage Convention, and continue making efforts to protect and restore heritage buildings, mitigate the impact of natural disasters, encourage public participation, strategically guide tourism development, and improve the capabilities of property interpretation and presentation," Li from the National Cultural Heritage Administration vowed at the session in New Delhi on Saturday.

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## Mediation: China seen as sincere in promoting peace, talks

From page 1

"We are committed to pursuing common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, and to resolving disputes and differences through dialogue and consultation and enhancing security through cooperation," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said on Friday.

Observers said Beijing's quest for peace is not a passing fancy or an empty slogan, but is based on decades of persistent, long-term engagements.

Niu Xinchun, executive director of the China-Arab Research Institute at Ningxia University, said that behind many nations' approval of Beijing's mediation efforts is the fact that "China has followed the global trend, and China has responded proactively to the call of the international community".

Wang Yiwei, a professor at Renmin University of China's School of International Studies and director of the university's Institute of International Affairs, said China's commitment to promoting peace and talks and to mediation diplomacy is "sincere, all-encompassing and long-lasting".

"From Afghanistan and Africa to the South Pacific, we have Chinese envoys who have been traveling and shuttling for mediation or for local development," he said.

"China's efforts in bolstering global security are holistic, taking care of many areas such as climate

security, infrastructure security and digital security," he added.

The past week's successes and progress in mediation followed the conclusion of the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China earlier this month.

The plenary session stated that China must "remain firm in pursuing an independent foreign policy of peace", be dedicated to promoting a community with a shared future for mankind, put into practice the common values of all mankind, and implement the Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative and Global Civilization Initiative proposed by President Xi Jinping.

As part of Beijing's actions to further realize these visions, Foreign Minister Wang was in the Laotian capital, Vientiane, from Thursday to Saturday to attend a series of meetings of the foreign ministers of Southeast and East Asian countries.

On the sidelines, he met in bilateral settings with high-ranking diplomats, including those from the United States and the European Union. During these talks, nations and regional groupings vowed their willingness to work more closely with China to advance peace.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said she appreciated China's efforts to promote reconciliation and unity among the Palestinian people, and she expressed her country's readiness to contribute to the implementation of the Beijing declaration.

David Borrelli, high representative for foreign affairs and security policy of the European Union, said the EU attaches importance to the peace proposal put forward by China and Brazil in May for the political settlement of the Ukraine crisis.

Wang said that "the most urgent task now is to cool down the situation", adding that China has always been committed to promoting peace, talks and a political settlement, and Beijing supports the EU in playing a leading role.

## Reforms: Innovation key to fostering new growth drivers

From page 1

The third plenum provided a common, interconnected, transactional and diverse security concept underpinned by a holistic approach.

The communique featured more than 300 actions, which will be implemented over the next five years to achieve a more innovation-driven model amid international hazards, both economic and geopolitical. Focused on Chinese modernization, new quality productive forces and high-quality development, the third plenum vowed to strengthen and boost China's technological innovation capabilities to foster new growth drivers and to advance sustainable Chinese modernization.

Innovation in technology is central to President Xi's thought. In many speeches, he has urged efforts to engage in the global innovation network, hoping that academic communities will serve as pioneers at the vanguard of science and technology. Recently, he underscored the significance of sci-tech modernization and innovation in pursuing Chinese modernization and high-quality development. China has made new inventions in basic cutting-edge research and new advances in strategic high-tech domains. It is not a coincidence that the third plenum also called for education system reforms to better foster talent in strategic fields by mobilizing nationwide resources, to attract overseas talent, and to foster a stronger nexus between universities and needs of society with the aim of tackling national and global challenges.

Besides security, technological innovation and educational reforms, the document also elaborated on reforms to support social welfare and improve income distribution. It called for a "two-way flow of urban and rural factors", narrow-

ing the gap between urban and rural areas and "deepening reform of the land system".

Furthermore, part of the 60 points under 15 areas of the third plenum's resolution is also the proclamation to "increase local governments' autonomous fiscal resources and expand tax sources for local governments". This is a reform with the aim to advance domestic demand and local government finances by gradually allowing regional authorities to receive more consumption tax while more revenue would shift from the central to local reserves.

Other policy targets, pertinent to new reforms, included boosting affordable housing, improving job opportunities for young people and the standard of living for the elderly.

As global conflicts are intensifying and small and weak countries categorically oppose imperialism and hegemonism, the new reforms are in alignment with China's inter-related global initiatives as well as with the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and the vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind.

Moreover, the communique reiterated China's commitment to a new development philosophy, focused on high-quality economic development driven by all-around innovation. Meanwhile, key technologies, education, sci-tech development and talent function are expected to be the foundation for Beijing's objective of a sustainable Chinese modernization in the new era.

The author is a former rector of the European University Cyprus, an ordinary member of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts and director of the CASS-EUC China Studies Center. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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## CHINA

## ‘Knife-cut noodle’ chef slices way to success

Zhao Xiping carries on family legacy as a fifth-generation inheritor of time-honored technique in Shanxi province

By ZHU XINGXIN in Taiyuan and CHEN LIANG

The northern province of Shanxi, where the mighty Yellow River slices through the Loess Plateau, has long been considered as the heartland of cooked wheaten food in China.

With a culinary history dating back centuries, Shanxi boasts over 1,000 distinct varieties of wheaten dishes, each a testament to the region's deep-rooted connection to this versatile grain.

Among them, *daoxiaomian*, or “knife-cut noodles”, is undoubtedly the most famous. The dish, which was first made during the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), is a testament to the region's rich culinary heritage and its generations of skilled noodle masters.

In 2008, the technique behind the dish was added to the national list of intangible cultural heritage.

Zhao Xiping, 43, is a fifth-generation inheritor of Zhao Laoqi's knife-cut noodles legacy. Zhao Xiping honed his skills from a young age, learning the secrets of this treasured craft from his father in Datong, Shanxi, where the first Zhao Laoqi noodle shop opened.

When he was 18, he decided to become a professional noodle-maker. Armed with expertise garnered from his ancestors, he ventured to Taiyuan, the provincial capital, in 2004 to bring the family's brand to more diners.

“In Shanxi, every family knows how to make knife-cut noodles,” Zhao said. “Our family's recipe originated in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). It's a legacy passed down through generations, and now it's in my hands.”

Every day starting at 11 am, Zhao Laoqi's Knife-cut Noodle Shop comes alive and is soon bustling with activity.

Zhao Xiping and members of his team are busy working in the kitchen. With each slice, as thin as a silverfish, gracefully arcing through the air before landing in the boiling water, Zhao's hands paint a mesmerizing picture of culinary artistry. The rhythmic movements of the knife against the dough, the little splashes of the noodles hit-



Clockwise from top: Zhao Xiping displays his noodle-cutting technique to Diana Pukhova, a Russian diner, in his noodle shop in Taiyuan, Shanxi province. Pukhova enjoys a bowl of knife-cut noodles at Zhao's restaurant. Zhao works in the kitchen of his restaurant.

PHOTOS BY ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

ting the hot water and the tantalizing aroma of the food filling the air create an immersive experience for customers.

The secret lies in the dish's meticulous preparation. Zhao expertly combines water and

flour, kneading the dough until it reaches the perfect consistency.

His method: “1 jin (500 grams) of flour, 4 liang (200 grams) of water, knead at dawn for the best flavor”. The moment of truth arrives as the knife dances across

the dough, effortlessly gliding with an impressive speed of 200 slices per minute, each noodle a precise 60 centimeters in length.

Recalling his early days, Zhao said he was initially drawn to the art of knife-cut noodles simply

because of his love for cooking and the satisfaction he received from creating delectable dishes.

However, as he matured, he realized the deeper significance of his family's legacy.

The realization dawned on him

during his travels outside of Datong, where he found that knife-cut noodle shops were still a rarity.

After finding initial success when he opened his shop in Taiyuan in 2004, Zhao experienced a series of setbacks. He launched a new branch in 2006 and another in 2007 in the Shanxi capital, but the expansions proved challenging, he said.

Improper site selection led to a lack of foot traffic, so he had to temporarily close them all in 2007. Determined to learn from his mistakes, he traveled across the country to look for business opportunities, study business management and explore different culinary traditions.

A pivotal moment came during a conversation with a friend, who suggested that he highlight the cultural significance of knife-cut noodles and his family's history with the dish at his restaurants.

He took his friend's advice and reopened his noodle shops in 2008 with decorations celebrating the business tradition of Shanxi merchants and the culture of the region and the dish.

Today, stepping into a Zhao Laoqi restaurant is an immersive experience. Zhao Xiping has managed to transform moments of enjoying a traditional delicacy into a cultural experience.

After meeting and talking with Diana Pukhova, a Russian woman who studies at Shanxi University, Zhao said he is thinking about introducing knife-cut noodles to other parts of the world.

“I am planning to bring the noodles to Russia,” he said. “I think we can bridge cultures through the universal language of food.”

He also plans to establish a training center in Taiyuan and pass on his skills and knowledge to a new generation of noodle masters.

Wang Wendong contributed to this story.

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## Pick trash, win gifts

By MA JINGNA in Lanzhou and CHEN MEILING

The scenic Mingsha Mountain and Crescent Spring in Dunhuang, Gansu province has started an innovative measure for environmental protection.

As per the initiative named “Exchange garbage for gifts”, whoever visits the tourist attraction can get a garbage bag from the staff at the site, collect the trash, including theirs, and then redeem the trash for souvenirs such as key chains, cardholders and fridge magnets for free.

The program launched on July 11 has been gaining momentum and getting a big thumbs-up from the visitors as well as sanitation workers. Moreover, the program began at the right time in July, being the month of the beginning of summer vacation and a peak period for travel. The popular attraction receives more than 30,000 tourists daily, and great effort is needed to maintain the serenity of the spot.

Mingsha Mountain, meaning Echo Sand Mountain in English, and the Crescent Spring, a crescent-shaped lake surrounded by giant sand dunes, are popular among tourists from home and abroad. The visitors can ride camels, climb the sand mountain and slide down, while enjoying the unique oasis and natural scenery.

However, as the sand is soft, it is impossible to install garbage cans on the mountain, and it poses a big challenge to the garbage cleaners at the site. With the number of tourists booming, the workload of sanitation workers became heavy, according to Qiu Shuai, property manager of the attraction.

“We have more visitors compared to previous years, and some of them accidentally leave trash on the mountain. This puts a lot of pressure on our cleaning staff, especially because the



Visitors ride camels to Mingsha Mountain in Dunhuang, Gansu province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

mountain is sandy, making it difficult to walk. We have assigned cleaning personnel to pick up trash halfway up the mountain or at the mountaintop, but our efforts are far from sufficient,” he said.

“Therefore, we are appealing to everyone to take action together. While going up or down the mountain, please pick up any trash you see, including your own, put it in plastic bags, and bring it down the mountain. In exchange, we will give you a beautiful gift from the scenic area. This exchange of gifts is not only a way to thank visitors but also a form of remembrance. Taking these gifts home will help you recall the moment you spent here,” he added.

The nonprofit activity begins at 8:30 pm every day, and one hour later, tourists can exchange gifts. It's expected to last till mid-October when the flow of tourists dwindles.

Qiu added that although giving the souvenirs away for free involves some cost, “it is negligible in terms of the value given to environmental protection in the scenic area”.

Wu Jianzhong, a member of the cleaning crew, said he feels happy seeing a lot of tourists voluntarily picking up trash after the activity kicked off, which has largely helped in his work.

“In the past, the entire mountain was littered with water bottles, plastic bags and tissues. And sometimes, we

would have to work from 6:30 am to midnight,” he said. “The most challenging task is to collect tissues. Sometimes they get buried in the sand, so we have to use special tools to scoop them out. Also, a worker can carry down at the most two bags of garbage from the mountain top each time.”

“Thankfully, there is hardly any garbage left now. Making it clean is what makes it beautiful,” he added. Besides garbage, Wu and his colleagues also search for cellphones, watches and other valuables tourists accidentally lose in the sand.

Yang Lu, a tourist from Tianjin, gave a thumbs-up to the activity. “It teaches children that they should not litter, and garbage should not be thrown around randomly. It should be disposed of in the right place. Everyone should protect the environment so that our society can become healthier,” she said, adding that she had a great time at the attraction with her child.

The scenic spot has been hosting an evening concert every night and welcoming tourists to join in the singing, which has attracted a lot of people.

From Jan 1 to July 18, it received more than 1.73 million tourist visits, up 31.98 percent year-on-year.

Contact the writers at chenmeiling@chinadaily.com.cn

## Drama brings classic science book to life

NANCHANG — Sounds of labor such as farming, sericulture, smelting and pulling bellows blended with the rhythm as dancers joyously depicted the contentment and comfort that ancient people derived from these activities. The dance drama adaptation of the Chinese science classic *Tian Gong Kai Wu*, or *The Exploitation of the Works of Nature*, commenced its nationwide tour recently in Xiamen, Fujian province, bringing to life a nearly 400-year-old masterpiece.

The book, compiled by Song Yingxing, a scientist who lived during the late Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), was first published in 1637 during the reign of Emperor Chongzhen. It offers a summary of ancient China's manufacturing and farming techniques, earning recognition as an encyclopedia of science and technology from that time.

Known as the world's first comprehensive treatise on agriculture and handicraft production, the pioneering work has since been translated into multiple languages, including English, Japanese, French, German and Russian.

The eponymous drama, co-produced by the Jiangxi Cultural Performance Group and the Beijing Dance Academy, is helmed by Chinese filmmaker Lu Chuan, known

“It is a novel endeavor to showcase craftsmanship through dance. I felt invigorated and proud of traditional Chinese culture.”

Hu Wenjun, resident in Xiamen, Fujian province

for directing the movie *Mountain Patrol* and the Hangzhou Asian Games' opening ceremony.

“Song was profoundly intrigued by the ingenuity and creativity of laborers,” said Xu Binbin, director of the Song Yingxing Memorial Museum, located in Song's home county of Fengxin, Jiangxi province.

“During his six trips to the capital to take the imperial examinations, or *keju* in Chinese, he made multiple visits to farmlands and workshops along the way, meticulously documenting his observations on agricultural techniques and craftsmanship,” Xu said.

Lu said, “The drama revolves around Song's quest, portraying his

journey to gather the techniques and tools and emphasizing the craftsmanship of ancient Chinese laborers. The graceful dance infuses vitality into this science encyclopedia, which may otherwise seem cold and dull.”

Hu Wenjun, who headed to the theater in Xiamen after finishing work to watch the show, found himself captivated by the spectacular choreography. “It is a novel endeavor to showcase craftsmanship through dance. I felt invigorated and proud of traditional Chinese culture,” he remarked.

According to Xu, Chinese craftsmanship had a significant global impact over four centuries ago, catalyzing a technological revolution in handicraft industries across Asia and Europe.

“The dance drama transcends language barriers, allowing people of different ages and nationalities, especially the younger generation, to gain insights into China's scientific and technological development,” Lu said.

The tour will run through October, visiting cities including Beijing, Nanjing, Wuhan, Nanchang and Chengdu, according to the show's producers.

XINHUA



Artists perform in dance drama, *Tian Gong Kai Wu*, in Nanchang, Jiangxi province, on May 31. LIU ZHANKUN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

# TEA 2024 ELT CHINA ASSEMBLY

## Students urged to better grasp cultures

More exchanges will foster stronger ties between China and other nations, experts say

By ZHENG CAIXIONG  
in Zhuhai, Guangdong  
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Chinese and foreign students are urged to further strengthen communication and cooperation so they can better understand their countries' true situations and cultures.

Experts and scholars attending the 2024 Global English Education China Assembly said the expansion of exchanges between Chinese and foreign students would help foreigners studying in China to better understand the conditions, culture and customs of the country. In turn, this will help increase mutual trust among Chinese and foreign students and contribute to the establishment of good relations between China and other countries in the following years, experts said.

The 2024 Global English Education China Assembly, which was jointly organized by China Daily, Beijing Normal University and Shanghai International Studies University, took place in Zhuhai, Guangdong province, from Friday to Sunday.

One of the event's seminars focused on international education collaboration. The seminar attracted educational institutions, teachers and students from around the world.

Cheng Aimin, a professor from Nanjing University in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, said domestic universities and colleges should work to enhance foreign students' empathy toward Chinese culture and the nation's real situation, help them bet-



Participants pose for a selfie at the 2024 Global English Education China Assembly in Zhuhai, Guangdong province, on Friday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ter understand China and correctly view China's policies and guidelines as they study.

Such institutions should help Chinese students improve their ability to explain Chinese culture and boost their cross-cultural communication skills, allowing them to become ambassadors for economic and cultural exchanges and tell China's stories well, Cheng said.

Zhang Yanli, dean of the School of Chinese Studies and Exchange at Shanghai International Studies University, called for the further development of international communication capabilities and the creation of a more diverse national education system for international students studying in China.

"Chinese higher education institutions should organize activities for international students to participate in Chinese cultural activities, and cooperate with organizations and communities to promote interactions between international students and Chinese society," she said.

Such events would help international students better understand China and build a comprehensive perception of the nation, Zhang said.

During the seminar, foreign students studying at Jiangsu University in Zhenjiang, Jiangsu, talked about how they are deeply interested in China's long history and rich culture and impressed by the country's scientific and technological develop-

ment and innovation capabilities.

Steiner Melanie Cujilema Campos, a native of Ecuador, said China has become a global leader in technology and innovation, particularly in 5G, artificial intelligence and e-commerce.

"But the rich history and traditions of China are evident in daily life, from the architecture of ancient temples to the celebration of festivals such as the Spring Festival and the Mid-Autumn Festival," said Campos, a business administration postgraduate student at Jiangsu University.

The food culture in China is diverse and fascinating, and each region has its unique flavor and specialties, which reflect the varied

geography and history of the country, she said.

"That's why every time I have the opportunity to explore local cuisines, I enjoy every moment and cherish them with great emotion," she added.

Angelina Lisovenko from Russia said she has been exposed to the rich cultural heritage of China through various cultural events, festivals and traditions.

"The university has also facilitated interactions with local communities, allowing me to gain a deeper appreciation for the customs and values prevalent in Chinese society," said Lisovenko, who is majoring in international education at Jiangsu University.

### What they say

As a language learner and speaker of several languages, I have always recognized the crucial role of communication. When I



arrived in the Republic of North Macedonia as a refugee from Bosnia and Herzegovina, I could barely speak a word of Macedonian, which became my third language. In those challenging times, I turned to English. It became my bridge to a new life, a tool that enabled me to communicate and connect with those around me. This personal journey highlights the importance of language learning. It's about building bridges and making connections.

Technology is important, but it is not the main and most important part of learning. Technology will have an even more prominent place in the future with the development of artificial intelligence, but we should look at AI and technology only as assistants and supporters in our teaching practices.

**Aleksandra Popovski Golubovikj**, president of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language

Task-based teaching views learning as taking place holistically and incidentally as learners perform tasks. In a task-based lesson,



there is no attempt to specify what language learners will learn. In fact, different students may end up learning different [aspects of a] language as a result of performing the same task. Learners learn naturally by performing tasks and focusing on form while communicating.

Sometimes teachers and students find task-based language teaching threatening because it is so different from the kind of teaching they are used to. As a result, they may resist trying to do task-based language teaching. It is important that students have a clear understanding of how communicative competence in a language is acquired and how performing tasks can help them develop communicative competence.

**Rod Ellis**, distinguished research professor at Curtin University in Australia

Enhancing the education of international students about China's national situation is an urgent and highly valuable task.



Education about the nation's conditions should include historical contexts, current realities and comparative national conditions. It is essential for international students to perceive China and understand China's national conditions and cultural knowledge. This helps students form a basic knowledge framework and an accurate understanding of contemporary China.

By enhancing students' ability to articulate China's national conditions, we can cultivate their intercultural communication skills, making them ambassadors for economic and cultural exchanges between China and other countries. Improving students' empathy toward China's national conditions and culture can guide them to better understand the country, correctly view China's policies and eliminate stereotypes.

**Cheng Aimin**, professor at Nanjing University

Young people increasingly use multimodal languages. Various means such as language, images, sound and actions all play significant roles in international communication. Visual language has become a crucial element in international communication, as seen with the impactful image of [former US president Donald] Trump after he was attacked.



In the future, Generation Z will be the primary global audience. As natives of the digital age, they are relatively receptive to China's path but also tend to live a more relaxed and laid-back life. This has led to the emergence of new language usages such as "Buddha-like youngsters". How to connect these trends with the grand narrative of China's path to modernization is a key question.

**Wu Ying**, professor at Shanghai International Studies University

ZHAO YIMENG

## Chinese foreign language scholars gaining global recognition

By ZHAO YIMENG  
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China's academic research in foreign language education has greatly improved in recent years, with a significant number of Chinese scholars publishing academic papers in high-level international journals, experts said during the Global English Education China Assembly in Zhuhai, Guangdong province, which concluded on Sunday.

Zheng Yongyan, editor-in-chief of the international journal *Language, Culture and Curriculum* and the co-editor of the journal *System*, said a growing number of authors from Chinese institutions are making their presence known in top-tier publications traditionally dominated by Western scholars.

Every year, 20 to 30 Chinese scholars in the field of foreign language education are recognized as highly cited researchers by Elsevier, a global information analytics company, and some are among the top 2 percent of the most cited scholars, said Zheng, who is also a professor at Fudan University in Shanghai.

"The data indicates that Chinese foreign language educators are gaining a stronger voice globally, and relevant publication of international academic papers has reached

a significant scale," she said.

Peng Jian'e, an oft-cited Chinese scholar and professor at Shantou University in Guangdong province, said the improving capabilities of Chinese researchers have contributed to their rising citation rates in international journals.

"Chinese scholars' high research sensitivity and their ability to quickly master cutting-edge research methods have resulted in high-quality outcomes," Peng said.

Peng's research has focused on the willingness and readiness of second language learners to communicate, which resonates with many teachers of second languages — especially those who teach English.

"Students in English classes tend to remain silent, making it crucial to study the factors influencing students' willingness to communicate," Peng said.

She adopted an ecological perspective and a multimodal discourse analytical approach in her studies, which were considered innovative at the time and contributed to the high citation rate of her research.

Ren Wei, a professor of linguistics at Beihang University in Beijing, believes the key factors contributing to the high citation rate of Chinese scholars include the



Participants browse posters about foreign language education during the assembly in Zhuhai, Guangdong province, on Friday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

high-quality publication of research and extensive international collaboration.

"Papers should not only offer theoretical innovation but also provide strong practical implications, which will attract widespread attention and citations," said Ren, who is also a highly cited scholar.

China provides abundant research resources and data for academic studies in the field of foreign language education and thus has a large number of foreign language learners and teachers.

"However, compared to international standards, there is still a gap in the country's foreign language education research, particularly in terms of internationalization," Ren said.

Some studies still depend on introducing and applying Western theories, lacking original research outcomes, he said.

"The biggest challenge for our team is how to maintain the distinctive characteristics of research in China while further enhancing the internationalization and innovative

capacity of our results," he added.

Zheng, the editor, also highlighted the role of dialogue and exchange with international scholars to understand their concerns.

"It is especially important to articulate our approaches in a way that international scholars can understand," she said.

The ability to set agendas is one of the ways China is aiming to achieve international academic discourse power, and the nation is making progress as many scholars begin to serve as editors-in-chief and associate editors of major international foreign language journals, she added.

Given that current academic publications are predominantly in English, she suggested that Chinese researchers focus more on multilingual communication to advance studies in the field of foreign language education.

"If our research findings in foreign language education could be published in other languages, such as Spanish and Arabic, they would have a greater impact on more countries and regions around the world," Zheng said.

Young scholars are expected to engage in more challenging research with more complex data in the years ahead, which will have a greater impact in the field, she added.

## Star Project to improve education in remote regions

By ZHENG CAIXIONG

The public welfare Star Project is expected to expand its coverage to reach more remote and underdeveloped areas in China by working with partners in different fields to benefit more teachers and students.

Initiated by the Organizing Committee of the Global English Education China Assembly, the project aims to provide training for English teachers in county-level areas by enhancing their professional skills and promoting the high-quality and balanced development of education.

Liu Tingting, an English teacher from Guiyang No 7 Middle School in Guizhou province, said the Star Project has benefited teachers and students in rural areas over the years.

According to Liu, the project is committed to providing teachers

with richer training and development opportunities, enhancing their educational philosophy and ensuring they can adapt to the needs of current education reform and sustainable development.

The project actively encourages teachers to engage in teaching innovation and practical exploration, opening up broader horizons for their professional growth, she said.

"For students, the project is committed to providing them with higher quality educational resources and learning environments, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to enjoy a more equitable and excellent foreign language education," she said.

Liu, a Star Project award winner, said the award has greatly enhanced her confidence and provided her with abundant learning resources and valuable opportuni-

ties, allowing her to participate in academic exchanges, practical projects and related activities.

"These experiences have not only broadened my horizons, but also deepened my understanding of the history and development trends of foreign language education," she said.

"The Star Project award is not only a recognition of my career, but also a motivation and encouragement for me to continue work in the future. And this honor has also inspired my strong sense of responsibility and mission, making me cherish learning opportunities even more and constantly pursue excellence and self-improvement," she said.

"I hope to gradually narrow the gap in foreign language education between Guizhou, a less-developed region in China, and developed provinces through the unremitting

efforts of foreign language teachers, and ultimately achieve integration with international foreign language education," she added.

Liu was in Zhuhai, Guangdong province, to participate in the 2024 Global English Education China Assembly, which took place from Friday to Sunday. The event was organized by China Daily, Beijing Normal University and Shanghai International Studies University.

Peng Lun, secretary-general of the organizing committee of the 2024 Global English Education China Assembly, said, "We will also strengthen the construction of online training platforms, allowing teachers to receive high-quality training anytime and anywhere, and improve their teaching level."

"Through these measures, we hope to further promote education-

al equity and help more children achieve their dreams," she said.

According to Peng, the Star Project has organized 12 online public welfare training courses and one offline event in the past year.

Four teachers have won awards, and more than 100,000 teachers have benefited from the project, she said.

Peng said experts agree that the biggest challenge facing English education and promotion in China is the significant regional differences, with large disparities in educational resources between urban and rural areas, as well as between the eastern, central and western regions, resulting in relatively low levels of English education in some remote and underdeveloped areas.

The quantity and quality of English teachers still cannot meet the demand, especially in remote and underdeveloped areas, where many schools find it difficult to recruit teachers with high-level teaching abilities, she added.



# COUNTDOWN TO CIIE BEGINS

Major companies, organizations and countries signing up for exhibition space at November event

By MA LINMIAO  
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Preparations are in full swing for the seventh China International Import Expo, which is set to take place from Nov 5 to 10. With the countdown now at 100 days, the expo's progress and highlights are being revealed, celebrating past milestones while promising innovations and fostering new global partnerships this year.

### International participation

To build momentum and engage a global audience, the CIIE Bureau has launched a worldwide promotional campaign, including roadshows and story collection initiatives.

These efforts aim to highlight the expo's role in fostering international trade and cooperation, inviting more attendees from around the world.

To date, the seventh CIIE is set to welcome more than 50 countries and international organizations at the Country Exhibition. This year's expo will also see first-time participants, including Norway, Benin, Burundi and UNICEF. These nations and organizations are gearing up to present their unique cultural and economic offerings through meticulously designed exhibits. Emphasis will be placed on bilateral cooperation achievements, demonstrating the enduring friendships and collaborative efforts between China and these parties.

"The Country Exhibition has become a platform where countries can improve their global image and increase their international presence," said Sun Chenghai, deputy director-general of the CIIE Bureau. "Countries from five continents are set to be a part of the exhibition this year, with strong engagement from those



A news conference held in Shanghai on Wednesday briefs journalists on the preparations for the seventh China International Import Expo, which is scheduled for November. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

involved in the Belt and Road Initiative."

### Global innovation

"Participating in the CIIE is very rewarding, as it gives us the chance to introduce our latest innovations to Chinese consumers," said Bernd Wagner, CEO of WS Audiology China, during a pre-expo supply-demand matching meeting on July 24.

Over the years, companies from 173 countries and regions have made appearances at the CIIE and carried out tentative transactions worth \$424.23 billion. More than 2,400 products, technologies and services have debuted at the annual expo.

The 2024 Enterprise and Business Exhibition continues to be a cornerstone of the CIIE, featuring six main areas: food and agricul-

tural products; automobiles; the intelligent industry and information technology; consumer goods; medical equipment and healthcare products; and trade in services.

Innovation is to be the buzzword for this year's Business Exhibition as the expo will, for the first time, feature a special section for new materials. This area is to spotlight cutting-edge technologies and advancements and promote innovation and development in the sector.

The New Materials special section will feature newcomers like Aptiv and Alstom, highlighting the growing influence and rising popularity of the CIIE.

Moreover, the automobile exhibition area is being curated with a focus on inviting exhibitors from the autonomous driving sector,

the low-altitude economy and new energy storage solutions, showcasing the key elements of future mobility.

Meanwhile, this year's health and elder care zone — committed to displaying the world's leading healthcare products, technologies and services for the elderly — aims to unlock new momentum and develop the "silver economy".

According to the CIIE Bureau, more than 360,000 square meters of the business exhibition area has been booked, outpacing that of the sixth edition. A greater number of professional visitors are expected to attend the expo and mix with more potential trade partners this November.

More than 150 global companies have signed up for seven consecutive years, continuing the story of mutual cooperation and

success. Global Fortune 500 companies like Mitsubishi Corporation and tech company NTT will make their first appearance at the trade fair this year.

Besides industry giants, small and medium-sized enterprises will be able to find ample opportunities at the CIIE.

Sun said the expo will assist targeted matchmaking events, helping SMEs connect with potential buyers and partners. The exhibition layout has been optimized to enhance the visibility and effect of SME booths, ensuring each receives the attention they deserve.

The newly expanded African agricultural products subsection is set to become another big hit this year. This section will spotlight unique offerings from these countries, promoting greater economic inclusion and show-

ing the rich diversity of global agricultural products.

### Advocating globalization

Continuing its tradition of leadership philosophy, the seventh Hongqiao International Economic Forum will take place alongside the CIIE, with a strong focus on promoting inclusive and beneficial economic globalization and topics including artificial intelligence, new energy storage, industrial growth and sustainability.

One of the forum's highlights will be the release of the World Openness Report 2024, followed by an international seminar. This report, a flagship publication of the Hongqiao Forum, will provide in-depth analysis and insights into global trends and policy recommendations for fostering a more inclusive world economy.

This year's CIIE and HQF Gala will continue to precede the opening ceremony. The gala will offer enhanced services such as early information disclosure to facilitate networking with forum guests. Media interactions will also be introduced to increase visibility.

"The Hongqiao Forum not only fosters trade and economic exchanges but also conveys a positive energy of openness and development to the world," said Einar Tangen, senior fellow of Taihe Institute. He looks forward to the seventh Hongqiao Forum promoting the concept of openness, sharing development opportunities and bringing more inspiration to the world.

With the 100-day countdown to the seventh CIIE underway, more than 30 early birds such as L'Oréal, Honeywell and Jaguar Land Rover have reserved their exhibition space for the eighth CIIE in 2025 at a signing ceremony, covering an area of more than 20,000 square meters.

"The CIIE is once again ready to offer unparalleled opportunities for businesses, nations and organizations to showcase their achievements, forge new partnerships and contribute to a more inclusive and prosperous global economy," Sun said.



## STAY IN CONTACT

By MA LINMIAO

As the 100-day countdown to the seventh China International Import Expo begins, the official launch of the CIIE Newsletter has been announced.

This newsletter is designed to highlight the CIIE's progress and achievements, provide up-to-date exhibition information and foster the exchange of ideas among participants.

Readers can explore ded-

icated sections like "CIIE Updates", "CIIE Stories", "CIIE Voices" and "CIIE Partnerships", along with the latest exhibition news from the National Exhibition and Convention Center (Shanghai), the venue of the annual CIIE.

Don't hesitate to scan the QR code and embark on your CIIE journey!



## Share your China International Import Expo stories

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Since its debut in 2018, the China International Import Expo has been held every year without fail. Scheduled for Nov 5-10 in Shanghai, the CIIE is a showcase of China's new development paradigm, a platform for high-standard opening-up and an international public good.

Located by the Huangpu River and designed in the shape of a four-leaf clover, the National Exhibition and Convention Center (Shanghai) is the venue for the CIIE. It has welcomed guests from around the world to present "CIIE Stories" that embody and celebrate the timeless themes of openness, cooperation, innovation and win-win results.

Organizers are inviting CIIE participants, or those whose life or work has been influenced by the CIIE in any way, to share their stories.

This solicitation is international and organizers said they hope to receive real stories related to the CIIE from around the globe.

An entry email needs to be titled "CIIE Stories" and sent along with an attachment. It can include, but is not limited to, text, images or videos and should be sent as an email attachment. The applicant's name, cellphone number and job title/position need to be included in the main body of the email. Both Chinese and English are accepted languages.

Applicants can send their email to [ciestories@cie.org](mailto:ciestories@cie.org) or refer to the relevant announcements on the official website of the CIIE: [cie.org/zh/en/](http://cie.org/zh/en/).

"If we select your proposal, we will contact you for an interview," according to a staff member.

Outstanding works will be shared via the CIIE's official WeChat, Weibo, website, overseas social media accounts, newsletters and partner media.

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## WORLD

# Reflecting on 45 years of US-China ties

Hundreds gather at San Francisco event, hear from top envoy about successes, challenges

By CHANG JUN in San Francisco  
junchang@chinadailyusa.com

The more than 200 people who gathered in San Francisco to commemorate the 45th anniversary of the establishment of China-US diplomatic relations heard insights from China's ambassador to the United States and exchanged ideas on maintaining stable ties between the two countries.

Ambassador Xie Feng, in a recorded speech played at Saturday's event at the Hyatt Regency, called the establishment of the China-US relationship in 1979 not only "a milestone in China-US as well as international relations", but also "a significant event that benefited the two nations and contributed to world peace and prosperity".

Bilateral trade has since grown more than 200-fold, accounting for one-fifth of global trade; two-way investment has topped \$260 billion, he said.

Xie said that more than 5 million people traveled across the Pacific every year before the COVID-19 pandemic, adding that the two nations have worked together to combat terrorism, financial crises and climate change and assumed responsibilities on almost all global challenges.

"The relationship has grown into one of the most deeply intertwined bilateral relationships with the broadest areas of shared interest and cooperation," he said.

While he detailed the positives, Xie also told the audience that antagonism harms both sides while partnership benefits all.

The root cause for the ups and downs over the past few years is that the US side looks at China as its main competitor, said Xie, and some even refer to China as an "existential threat".

"Containment and regime change, typical in the Cold War years, are short-sighted and dangerous, as pointed out already by many fair-minded people," he continued.

"The key is to manage differences properly, not allowing them to dominate the relationship," Xie said.

The ambassador also noted that "decoupling leads to nowhere, and we need to work together to win-win results".

More than 70,000 American companies are sharing in the dividends of China's development, with exports to China supporting 930,000 American jobs, according to Xie.

"If the US really gets 'disadvantaged', how is it possible for cooperation to have lasted for 40 to 50 years? Is it really in the US interest to focus solely on containing China, even at the cost of abandoning free trade, market principles and the spirit of contracts?" Xie asked.

"Trade war, industrial war and tech war have no winners. Decoupling will not bring the wanted results," he continued. "Statistics show that ending the permanent normal trade relations with China

would lead to a \$1.6 trillion economic loss for the US."

Amy Tong, secretary of Government Operations in California, moved from China's Guangdong province 40 years ago with her family to the Golden State.

She said her father, now in his mid-80s, is still active in the Chinese community. "Why? Because I do feel it's very important to continue to provide insight and leadership in fostering mutual understanding and cultural exchanges to build the bond (between the two countries)."

California Governor Gavin Newsom appointed Tong to lead people-to-people exchanges with China.

"Facing the most critical juncture between our two nations, the California government has added people-to-people exchanges to the workload in addition to climate change and economic exchange with China," she said.

Jin Lan, president of the Oregon-based China Council, recently celebrated with friends from home and abroad the 20th anniversary of his grassroots organization.

In two decades, Lan and the council have sponsored conferences, exhibitions and seminars to bolster people-to-people exchanges and have hosted delegations from various parts of China.

Lan told China Daily that while many US politicians have an "adverse perception of US-China relations" now, "We will foster a more nuanced culture of grace between the peoples of America and China."

Academic and scholarly interaction is a major component of the exchanges, said Scott Rozelle, an economic policy researcher and professor at Stanford University.

As the co-director of the Stanford Center on China's Economy, Rozelle led his students through his Rural Education Action Program to conduct research and study trips in China.

"Among the most productive research collaborations in all academia — including science, technology, engineering and mechanics, and social science and humanities — is between scholars in the US and China," Rozelle told China Daily.

"The number one relationship that is behind the China-US academic exchanges. It's us (scholars) really behind the inventions, new technologies," he said.

Chinese scholars and students also frequently visit the US, giving lectures to increase research enthusiasm and strengthen collaboration.

"We will always be great friends as long as we continue our people-to-people relations," said David Haubert, Alameda County supervisor for District 1. "If you go there (China), you will understand."

Haubert has been to China 16 times in 10 years and visited 25 cities. "The hospitality of Chinese people is overwhelming," he said.

## Young victims mourned



Members of the Druze minority mourn during the funeral of their relatives at the village of Majdal Shams in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights on Sunday. A rocket strike at a soccer field in the village has killed at least 11 children and teens, the deadliest strike on an Israeli target along the northern border since the fighting between Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah began. LEO CORREA / AP

## US-China space cooperation could help fight climate change

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco  
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China's recent retrieval of the first-ever samples from the far side of the moon has renewed talks about the possibilities of the United States and China joining in space-based research programs aimed at addressing global challenges, particularly climate change.

"The US and China each have very innovative space programs, and one area, for example, where the US and China could work together today would be space-based solar," Daniel Kammen, a professor of energy at the University of California, Berkeley, and founding director of the university's Renewable and Appropriate Energy Laboratory, told China Daily.

Space-based solar power, a concept involving the collection of solar energy in outer space via satellites and its distribution to Earth, has been gaining traction globally. As countries worldwide invest in research and development for the technology, international organizations are simultaneously pushing for net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The decreasing costs associated with launching materials into space have made the idea of deploying large, kilometer-square, mylar solar panels — which beam power back to Earth using microwaves — increasingly feasible.

Kammen, who was a coordinating

lead author for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Nobel Peace Prize-winning report in 2007, suggested that the US and China could challenge each other to collaborate on making space-based solar a reality.

He emphasized the continuous nature of this energy source: "Space-based solar is on 24/7. There is no nighttime in space. And so, adding space-based solar could be beaming power to Los Angeles to Beijing, to Guangzhou to Shenzhen to San Francisco."

Both nations already have made significant strides in this field. In the United States, Caltech's space solar power prototype, launched into orbit last year, has successfully demonstrated its ability to wirelessly transmit power in space and beam detectable power to Earth for the first time.

Meanwhile, NASA is developing technologies that will indirectly benefit space-based solar power, including projects focused on autonomous systems, wireless power beaming and in-space servicing, assembly and manufacturing, according to a NASA report early this year.

China, for its part, has achieved a milestone in its efforts to build a space solar power station in 2022. The China Academy of Space Technology has plans for a space high-voltage transfer and wireless power transmission experiment to be conducted in low Earth orbit by 2028,

as outlined in its 2022 publication in the journal *China Space Science and Technology*.

Kammen acknowledged the political sensitivities surrounding such collaboration, particularly regarding data transfers and information-sharing. Despite those challenges, he saw opportunities for cooperation in other areas as well, such as fusion power.

He cited the advanced research being conducted at Tsinghua University and China's fusion reactor as potential areas for joint efforts in deployment and new research.

Drawing inspiration from popular culture, Kammen referred to the movie *The Martian*, in which a stranded American astronaut is rescued through a joint effort between the US and China. He saw the fictional scenario as an example of how the two nations could work together in reality, combining their respective technological strengths to achieve common goals.

"There's an opportunity to work peacefully together in space, to show that no matter who's going to be on the moon next, we have a chance to do clean energy in space as a bridge," said Kammen.

Both countries have interests in lunar exploration, with the discovery of significant water ice on the moon opening up new possibilities. Potentially high-value materials on the moon, as well as resources on Mars and asteroids, present further opportunities, he said.

## NASA rover finds hint of microbial life on Mars

WASHINGTON — NASA's Perseverance Mars rover has discovered a spotty, arrowhead-shaped rock with features that could hint at microbial life billions of years ago on Mars.

During its exploration on July 21 of Neretva Vallis, an ancient river valley on Mars, the Perseverance rover encountered a captivating rock known as Cheyava Falls.

The Perseverance science team analyzed the rock using X-rays and lasers, revealing the presence of white calcium sulfate veins, a reddish middle area, and small off-white splotches on the rock.

"On Earth, these types of features in rocks are often associated with the fossilized record of microbes living in the subsurface," said David Flannery, an astrobiologist at Queensland University of Australia and a member of the Perseverance science team.

While the features observed in the rock suggest the possibility of microbial life on Mars during a warmer and wetter period, alternative explanations such as high temperatures rendering the environment uninhabitable cannot be ruled out. To confirm whether the rock indeed contains evidence of microbial life, further examinations on Earth are required.

However, the NASA Mars sample return mission has faced challenges, including budget overruns and significant delays, pushing its expected completion to the 2040s.

In light of these constraints, NASA is actively exploring alternative approaches to expedite the return of Mars samples, aiming to achieve this goal sooner and at a lower cost.

Separately, NASA and SpaceX said on Friday they plan to launch the SpaceX Crew-9 mission, a crew rotation mission to the International Space Station, no earlier than Aug 18.

The international crew will lift off from Kennedy Space Center in Florida aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket and Dragon spacecraft, they said in an announcement.

Crew-9 is the ninth crew rotation mission with SpaceX to the ISS under NASA's Commercial Crew Program.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



To the left of the rover is the arrowhead-shaped rock nicknamed Cheyava Falls. NASA VIA NEWSCOM

## ASEAN FMs reaffirm unity, peace and cooperation

By PRIME SARMIENTO in Hong Kong  
prime@chinadailyapac.com

Foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations concluded their 57th ministerial meeting on Saturday, reaffirming the bloc's commitment to implementing the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, strengthening ASEAN centrality and promoting regional peace, security and stability.

A joint communique was signed at the end of a series of meetings held in Vientiane, capital of this year's rotating chair Laos. It lays the groundwork for the upcoming ASEAN Summit, scheduled to take place in Laos in October.

The foreign ministers pledged to resolve disputes peacefully in accordance with international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the communique said.

Lao Foreign Minister Saleumxay Kommasith underscored the importance of maintaining ASEAN unity amid global political upheavals at the meeting.

Additionally, the 31st ASEAN Regional Forum foreign ministers' meeting called for enhanced cooperation on ferry safety, counterterrorism, combating transnational crime, and disaster reduction.

Indonesia's Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said on X of the

"We recognized the strategic importance of our region for our peace, security, stability and prosperity, as well as for those of our external partners."

Joint Communique of the 57th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting

need to strengthen the ASEAN Regional Forum for preventive diplomacy, by focusing on emerging challenges, reinforcing efforts to ensure maritime stability and ensuring that the forum remains an inclusive process.

The ministers reaffirmed the forum's role as the "leading regional security forum" in the Asia-Pacific for fostering constructive dialogue and cooperation among its participants.

Mustafa Izzuddin, a senior international affairs analyst at Solaris Strategies Singapore, said the communique reaffirmed the importance of peace and security in the region.

He said it aligns with the "ASEAN

ethos", which adheres to international law and UN conventions, supports the diplomatic resolution of conflicts, advocates for the protection of civilians in the spirit of humanitarianism and focuses on sustaining global peace.

James Chin, a professor of Asian Studies at the University of Tasmania in Australia, said the communique revealed the group's concern regarding the Myanmar crisis.

ASEAN foreign ministers reiterated their commitment to the Five-Point Consensus agreed by ASEAN leaders, which will serve as the "main reference" for addressing the Myanmar crisis.

"We recognized the strategic importance of our region for our peace, security, stability and prosperity, as well as for those of our external partners," they said in the communique.

Efforts commended

They also commended Alounkeo Kittikhoun, the special envoy of the ASEAN Chair on Myanmar, "for his efforts since his appointment in early 2024 as we continue to promote progress in the implementation of the (Five-Point Consensus) in its entirety".

"We appreciated his efforts to continue reaching out to parties concerned in a sustainable manner and are confident in his resolve to help

the people of Myanmar to achieve an inclusive and durable peaceful resolution that is Myanmar-owned and led for peace, security and stability in the region," the communique said.

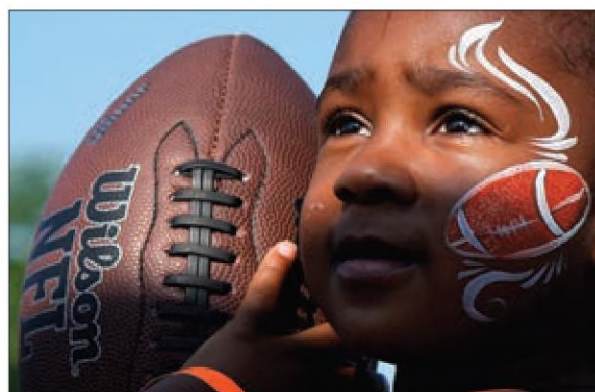
The ministers have likewise committed to upholding regionalism and multilateralism and stressed on the importance of adhering to key principles, shared values and norms enshrined in the UN Charter, the ASEAN Charter, the Declaration on Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality, among others.

Singapore's Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan said the region needs to remain as "an oasis of peace, stability and security", said a report published by The Straits Times.

The joint communique added, "We reiterated our commitment to intensifying our work toward a people-oriented, people-centered, and rules-based ASEAN, and continued to encourage the meaningful participation of the people, societies and other stakeholders in the ASEAN Community building process."

ASEAN also urged for the peaceful resolution of tensions in the South China Sea, condemned attacks against civilians and public infrastructure in Gaza, and called for the immediate cessation of hostilities in both Gaza and Ukraine.

## Future quarterback?



Ros' Prince, 3, from Chicago, looks at the target before she prepares to throw a ball in the Chicago Bears Fans Zone during an NFL football training camp in Lake Forest, Illinois, on Saturday. NAM Y. HUH / AP

## BUSINESS

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## Fresh impetus for China's private sector

Chinese firms seen playing a big role in national projects and on the global stage

By CHENG YU  
chengyu@chinadaily.com.cn

At a recent key high-level meeting, China resolved to foster a business-friendly environment and create more opportunities for the private sector. This, said government officials and industry experts, will boost the private sector's confidence and ensure advanced productivity for future economic growth.

Their remarks emerged after the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China this month resolved to further deepen reforms comprehensively to advance Chinese modernization.

Han Wenxiu, executive deputy director of the Office of the Central Committee for Financial and Economic Affairs, said at a news conference in mid-July that as per the resolution, China will enhance the long-term mechanism for private companies to participate in major national projects.

The country will also support capable private enterprises in leading national initiatives to make breakthroughs in major technologies and provide private enterprises with greater access to major national scientific research infrastructure, he said.

"As the rule of law offers the best business environment, China will formulate and introduce a private sector promotion law," he said, adding that more efforts will also be made to remove barriers to market access, so that the competitive areas of infrastructure are open to market entities in a fair manner.

Liu Junhai, a professor and head of commercial law at the Renmin University of China in Beijing, said: "The private economy itself is a symbol of advanced productivity, and encouraging the development of the private economy will inject new productivity into economic growth in a timely manner."

"A proposed new law on driving the private economy, for instance, aims to provide private enterprises with a more stable, transparent, fair, safe and predictable legal business environment. Such a business environment itself will help promote more productivity as well."

Elaborating, Liu said that promoting the nation's private economy should drive the equal status, common development, fair competition, mutual cooperation, equal supervision and equal protection for private enterprises, so that they can participate in market competition openly, fairly and justly.

CITIC Securities also predicted that China is expected to launch more detailed policies in treating State-owned enterprises and private enterprises equally from an institutional and legal perspective.

A report on private economy development of the State Council, China's Cabinet, showed that private companies accounted for 92.3 percent of the country's total number of business entities in 2023, a significant increase from 79.4 percent in 2012.



An employee works on a chip production line in Jiujiang, Jiangxi province. ZHU HAIPENG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Robot arms are used on the production line of a machinery manufacturing plant in Hefei, Anhui province. CHEN JIALE / FOR CHINA DAILY



A view of the digital production line of a tire manufacturer in Xingtai, Hebei province. WANG LEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Luo Zhi, director of the research center for the new private economy at Wuhan University, said in an article that some private companies have a weak sense of gain, as in some regions, the public service system for small and medium-sized enterprises is incomplete, leading to high institutional transaction costs for private enterprises.

Amid such challenges, the anticipated law on the development of the private economy is expected to be "practical, effective and highly operable", said Gao Zicheng, chairman of the All-China Lawyers Association.

Gao suggested that measures to protect and remedy the legal rights of private enterprises should be included in a separate chapter. So should be separate measures to guide mechanisms for law enforcement, inspections and assessments of the private economy.

"More detailed measures include implementing tax policies

that benefit small and micro-sized private enterprises, like deferred, reduced or exempted corporate income tax and value-added tax for eligible enterprises to reduce the burden on those private enterprises," Gao said.

He further suggested that the share of private enterprises in government procurement should be increased through measures like setting procurement demand standards, reserving procurement quotas, price evaluation discounts and priority procurement.

Over the past decade, the import and export volume of private enterprises increased by an average 11.1 percent annually, and private firms accounted for around half of the country's total imports and exports. Since 2019, private enterprises have become the largest foreign trade entities in China, the report said.

Wang Peng, a researcher at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences,

said: "More importantly, private enterprises stood undoubtedly at the forefront of technological innovations and the digital economy in recent years, especially in fields like new energy, information, communication, biopharmaceuticals and AI."

"Thus, the country's latest call to enhance the long-term mechanism for private companies to participate in major national projects will greatly shore up confidence and drive their passion for more technological innovations."

Wang also said the call acquires added significance amid rising geopolitical tensions, as the United States and the European Union seek to suppress China's rising prowess in emerging sectors like chips and new energy.

Earlier, Chinese authorities had identified a group of major scientific and technological areas that private enterprises can take a lead in, like industrial software, cloud comput-

ing, artificial intelligence, industrial internet, gene and cell medicine, and new energy storage.

Su Meng, chairman and CEO of Beijing Percent Technology Group Co, a leading private-sector provider of data science products, said eligibility criteria for companies to participate in major national projects used to be relatively high. "Many private enterprises usually found it hard to meet all those criteria," he said.

"With the latest efforts, private enterprises are expected to have more opportunities to contribute to major national science and technology projects and make more innovations on a global scale."

The latest efforts in this direction are, in fact, a follow-up on recent steps like a series of supportive policies to guide the private sector, experts said.

The National Development and Reform Commission, the nation's

top economic regulator, unveiled in July last year a major guideline to guide the private sector. It also set up a special private sector development bureau in September to offer targeted support for private firms.

Recent years saw increasing number of private companies playing a role in major infrastructure projects in transportation, water conservancy and railways.

Thanks to such efforts, Chongqing One-Tale Electric Co Ltd has received special support from the NDRC to establish a sensor technology service platform, said Tian Yongchao, head of research and development at the company, a private-sector provider of electrical equipment.

"After the platform's completion in June next year, it is expected to help improve the sensor industry chain in Chongqing and Southwestern China as a whole."

Song Xiangqing, a professor of government management at Beijing Normal University, said that from now on, private companies are expected to have more opportunities to play a big role in major national projects related to infrastructure, new urbanization, transportation and hydraulic engineering.

"The government wants to remove those barriers that hinder the development of private-sector enterprises and to enable them to participate in market competition at a higher level and in a larger field. It would activate the intrinsic ability of private-sector enterprises to innovate and become more competitive on the global stage," Song said.

## Striking a balance in support extended to SOEs, other enterprises

## REPORTER'S LOG

By Cheng Yu

If you pay close attention to what Liu Junhai, a professor and head of commercial law at Renmin University of China in Beijing, has to say on China's efforts to enact a new law to promote the country's private sector, you can't but be mightily impressed.

"We should reject State-owned companies portraying themselves as heroes, and private-sector companies portraying themselves as victims, and multinational corporations acting as

if they have the right to dominate," Liu said recently.

His view sums up very well the challenges faced by China's business entities in an economy where State-owned enterprises, due to their dominant position, appear to lack motivation to innovate, while private-sector companies tend to wallow in the narrative that they are at the receiving end of unfair treatment.

In China, SOEs often dominate sectors considered strategically important: energy, telecommunications and defense. Private firms have a large presence in consumer goods, technology and the services sector.

To be sure, China needs both public and private sectors to grow at a healthy clip. That underscores the

need to foster a more balanced and fairer economic environment for both sectors to flourish.

Earlier this month, the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China resolved to further deepen reform comprehensively, to advance Chinese modernization. In many ways, deepened reform could be the answer that can balance the two sectors.

The plenum's resolution said that China will enhance the long-term mechanism for private companies to participate in major national projects. The country will also support capable private enterprises in leading national initiatives to make breakthroughs in major technologies and provide private enterprises with greater access to major national

scientific research infrastructure.

Wu Haitao, general manager of Kejian, a private producer of sealing tapes, noted that in the aerospace sector, which has very high requirements for components, SOEs hardly cooperated with private enterprises before.

But thanks to a coordination mechanism between several local governments, the company has successfully reached the procurement process of planemaker Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China.

Two of high-temperature resistant vacuum tapes developed by Kejian have successfully entered the supply chain of China's domestic large aircraft industry, Wu said.

"With the momentum, the output of the company this year is expected

to increase by more than 30 percent year-on-year," he said.

Industry experts said that private enterprises and SOEs can supplement each other well, as private firms are more agile, innovative and efficient, while SOEs often have more resources and support from the government.

However, private firms are more vulnerable to fluctuations in supply and industry chains, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath, they said.

A document released by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and 10 other ministries seeks to help private firms. The document said China will boost the full integration of all aspects of SMEs, including industry, supply and data chains, to

promote advantageous interaction.

It also proposed guiding large enterprises to share their design and development abilities, and to open up their equipment and laboratories to smaller counterparts.

Xu Xiaolan, a former vice-minister at the MIIT, told a news briefing: "More efforts will be made to help private enterprises lower operating costs, ease their difficulties in accessing funding and debt collection, and assist them in growing demand."

With the country's latest resolution, future policies are expected to address the need for both private enterprises and SOEs, and ensure that both sectors can thrive and contribute to the country's economic growth.

# BUSINESS



Oren Kaniel (right), CEO and co-founder of AppsFlyer, talks with Ronen Mense, president and managing director of AppsFlyer Asia-Pacific, at this year's MAMA, an industry event, in Sanya, Hainan province, in June. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## China, Europe develop stronger auto industry ties

SHENYANG — At the Tiexi plant of BMW Brilliance Automotive Ltd in Northeast China, rows of sleek electric vehicles await global delivery. Just a street away, an auto parts factory buzzes with activity, crafting components for vehicle assembly.

The auto parts factory, which belongs to Gestamp — a Spanish firm specializing in the design, development and manufacture of precision metal components — is one among many auto parts suppliers surrounding the plant, located in Shenyang, capital of Liaoning province.

With European automotive giants like BMW entrenching themselves in the Chinese market, a large number of supporting suppliers have been prompted to set up facilities nearby, which fosters closer integration between the Chinese and European automotive sectors.

Ren Tingfu, general manager of Gestamp's Shenyang factory, said the facility has steadily expanded its production capacity with substantial cumulative investments since its establishment in 2012.

"To meet growing demand from our clients, we invested in expanding the automotive component project in 2023, which will soon be operational," Ren said.

Gestamp, which began operations in China in 2007, now operates 14 factories and two research and development centers, employing more than 5,000 people in China.

"China boasts a vast, innovative and dynamic auto market," said Antonio Lopez Arce, CEO of Gestamp's Asia division, emphasizing the strategic importance of the company's strong investment and considerable cooperation in China. "We continue to introduce our cutting-edge ... chassis, battery box technologies and products to China."

In recent years, China's auto market has accelerated its shift toward new energy vehicles, prompting significant investment and expanded production from European automakers.

In April 2024, BMW announced an additional investment of 20 bil-

lion yuan (\$2.77 billion) in its production base in Shenyang to localize the manufacture of a new generation of BMW models by 2026. Volkswagen AG established its largest R&D center outside of Germany in China, focusing on the development of intelligent networked vehicles.

Furthermore, German auto supplier ZF Group launched an NEV auto parts industrial park in Shenyang in 2023, with an approximately 2.2 billion yuan investment. Bosch, another German parts supplier, has expanded its NEV core components and autonomous driving R&D and manufacturing base in Suzhou, East China's Jiangsu province, and it is slated to be operational later this year.

Optimism among carmakers and auto parts firms is buoyed by rising demand in the Chinese market. The China Association of Automobile Manufacturers said that in the first half, NEV production and sales in the country had reached 4.93 million units and 4.94 million units, respectively, marking year-on-year increases of 30.1 percent and 32 percent.

In recent years, more Chinese automakers and supply chain companies have begun establishing factories in Europe, engaging in technological collaborations concerning NEVs.

In April, Spanish auto company Ebro-EV Motors and China's Chery Auto signed a pact to develop NEVs through a joint venture in Barcelona. Additionally, Chinese automaker BYD in December 2023 announced the establishment of an NEV production base in Hungary to help bolster local green energy ecosystems.

"In the 1980s, the establishment of SAIC Volkswagen Automotive Co Ltd, a JV of Volkswagen AG and China's SAIC Motor, significantly bolstered China's auto industry. Today, China's strides in NEVs benefit nations worldwide, reflecting mutually beneficial cooperation," said Cao Xudong, CEO of Momenta, a Chinese autonomous driving solutions provider.

XINHUA



Visitors check out a new energy sports car displayed at the World Intelligence Expo 2024 in Tianjin in June. ZHAO ZISHUO / XINHUA

## AppsFlyer positive on Chinese market opportunity, growth

AI to drive companies to innovate at faster pace with fewer resources

By CHENG YU  
chengyu@chinadaily.com.cn

Not every country in the world can replicate China's success in digital development, and so will it be in the artificial intelligence era, said Ronen Mense, president and managing director of AppsFlyer Asia-Pacific.

Expressing confidence about the Chinese market, Mense said he expects AppsFlyer, an Israeli mobile marketing analytics company, to show stable growth in China this year and is looking forward to greater growth momentum from the market.

In an exclusive interview with China Daily, Mense said the company has been lucky to focus on China from the very beginning, making the nation's growth story intricately linked to the company's for a decade.

"With China's mobile internet leadership and robust engineering talent pool, AppsFlyer has gained great momentum here in the Chinese market," he said.

He said that AppsFlyer's vision to prioritize the Chinese market years ago has paid off.

"As we help Chinese companies to grow overseas, Chinese companies also helped us to develop, which are bringing mutual benefits and wins," he added.

AppsFlyer, founded in 2011, has developed technology that allows app owners to identify where their most profitable users originate from, such as a Google Search, and more. The company is also considering an initial public offering early next year, according to a Bloomberg report.

Despite an economic slowdown and geopolitical challenges on a global scale, Mense said China

will continue to be "critical" for AppsFlyer.

"China will continue to be important for us, even in the next 10 years," he emphasized.

On the company's growth expectations in China over the next year or two, Mense projected a 15 to 20 percent annual market growth in the Chinese market.

"It is driven largely by advancements in AI," he explained. "AI is a driving force, which will enable companies to innovate with fewer resources and at a faster pace."

To meet such a need, the company is committed to leveraging AI in its services, including the development of AI-driven products like creative analytics and fraud detection tools.

Mense also highlighted the company's efforts in building a platform grounded in measurement, interpreting data signals to enhance privacy preserving collaborations among marketers.

Addressing concerns about the

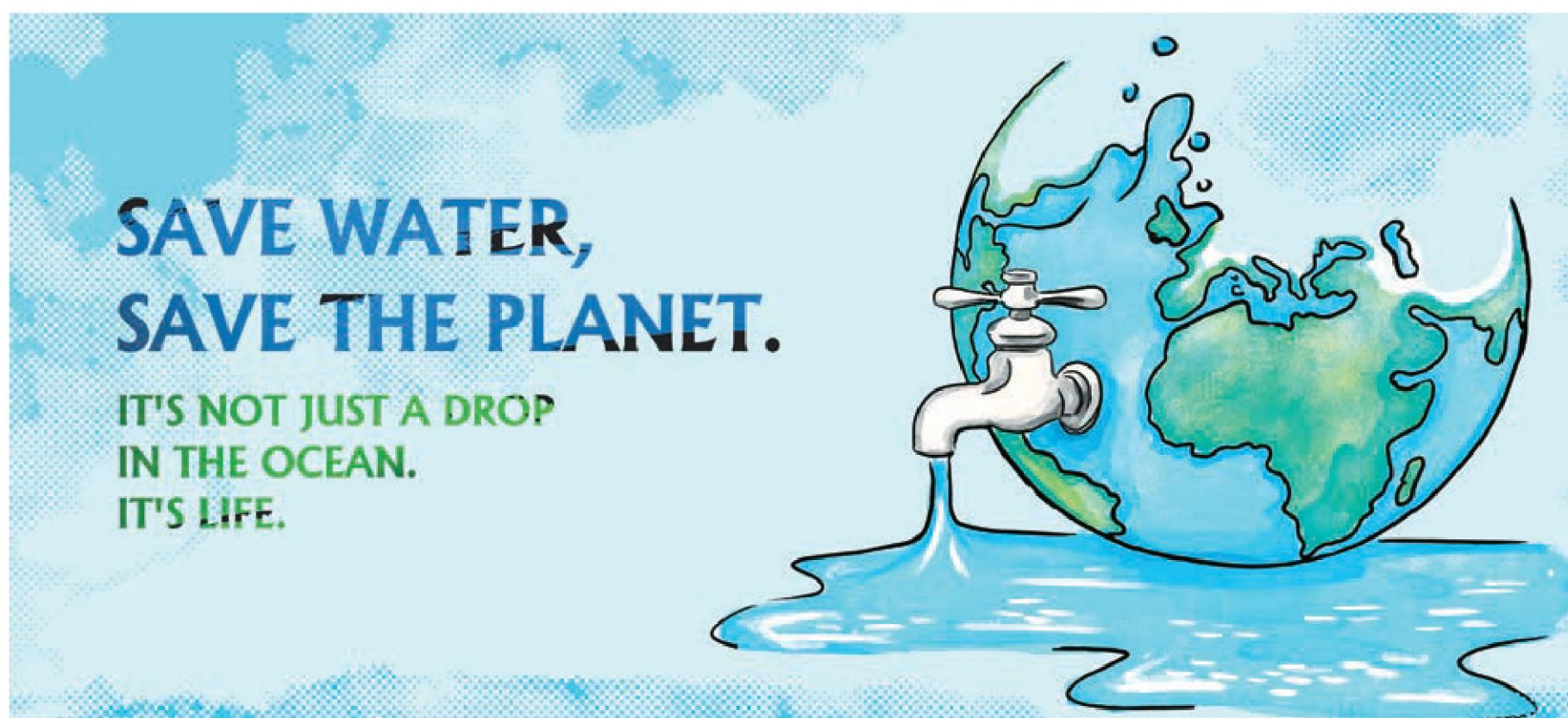
potential slowdown of China's mobile internet market, Mense said not every country in the world can replicate China in terms of mobile applications, and so will the case be in the AI era.

"TikTok, Shein and many other things, it wasn't until all of a sudden that they are everywhere," he said. "It almost happened overnight in China and it took a long time for this to happen."

"By leveraging strengths in supply chain management, technology, and market understanding, Chinese firms are well-positioned to succeed on the international stage," he added.

He said that it is also where foreign companies like AppsFlyer see "vast opportunities" and remain committed to the Chinese market.

"Looking into the future, AppsFlyer is poised to continue supporting Chinese companies in their global endeavors, fostering mutual growth and success," he said.



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## BUSINESSINSIGHT

## China contributes to global cooperation, economy

## EAGLE EYE

By Wang Xi

Historically, the third plenary sessions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China mainly focused on major economic and social reforms of the nation, set the direction of the country's reforms and aimed to address strategic issues with distinct characteristics of the times.

For instance, the third plenary session of the 11th Central Committee of the CPC, held in late 1978, proposed the reform and opening-up drive, which changed China and influenced the world in a profound way. And in 2013, the third plenary session of the 18th Central Committee of the CPC heralded a new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

By using history as a mirror, we can understand the rise of the nation and the enormous contributions of China's economic development since the 18th National Congress of the CPC in 2012 to the Chinese people and to the rest of the world. It also allows us to better understand how the third plenary session of the 20th CPC Central Committee, held from July 15 to 18, will inject new momentum and vitality into the Chinese and global economy in the new era.

Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, the Chinese economy has achieved an average annual growth rate of 6.1 percent, ranking tops among the world's major economies for several years. In 2023, China's economic scale accounted for 18 percent of that of the global economy, up 7 percentage points compared to 2012. The country is now the second-largest economy in the world.

China has also made a leap in per capita income with an average annual growth rate of 5.7 percent. China's per capita GDP has exceeded \$12,000 for three consecutive years, firmly placing it in the upper-middle-income country group.

With such remarkable economic achievements, China — which has a huge population of 1.4 billion — has not only realized a per capita GDP of over \$10,000 and built a large-scale modern economy, but also injected new vitality and stability into the world's economy.

China has always been a firm supporter of trade globalization. Economic globalization has brought development opportunities to the world. It provides opportunities for a broad range of developing countries to pursue economic growth and advance industrialization to eliminate poverty.

Since joining the World Trade Organization in 2001, China's economy has gradually integrated into global economic development, making solid strides in terms of alignment with rules and institutional opening-up.

In recent years, China has implemented a series of measures to open up to the outside world, including shortening the negative list for foreign investment access, encouraging foreign investors to increase investment, promoting construction of the Hainan Free Trade Port and strengthening intellectual property rights protection, which have helped optimize the country's business environment and attract foreign investment.



CAI MENG / CHINA DAILY

China has been actively promoting the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, demonstrating its determination to support rules-based free trade and multilateralism. The Belt and Road Initiative proposed by China has also become an important tool for relevant countries and regions to expand trade, promote investment and push forward interconnectivity.

China has always been a leader in global green economy transition. Since proposing its dual-carbon goals in 2020, China has unwaveringly fulfilled its commitments, accelerated the transformation of its energy structure and promoted the leapfrog development of renewable energy.

According to a report by the International Energy Agency, in 2023, newly installed global capacity of renewable energy reached 510 million kilowatts, with China contributing more than half.

China's wind and photovoltaic products have been exported to more than 200 countries and regions, helping many developing countries access clean, reliable and afford-

able energy. In 2022, China's renewable energy power generation was equivalent to reducing approximately 2.26 billion tons of domestic carbon dioxide emissions.

The exported wind and photovoltaic products helped other countries reduce carbon dioxide emissions by about 573 million tons, totaling a reduction of over 2.8 billion tons, accounting for about 41 percent of the global carbon emissions reductions over the same period.

China is the stabilizer of global inflation. While major global economies are experiencing widespread inflation, China's price levels have remained generally stable. Price stability is an important external manifestation of macroeconomic stability, and it also relies on the stable operation of the country's economic system.

Looking back at the past 30 years of global economic development, when a country's macroeconomy is stable, price levels are often relatively stable. However, during external shocks, economic overheating or slowdowns, significant changes in balance of payments

and drastic exchange rate fluctuations, prices are prone to significant volatility.

It is reasonable to claim that the stability of global prices is inseparable from the stability of the global economy, and China has served to be the ballast of the global economy. Unlike the aggressive macro-governance strategies often adopted by the United States and Europe, China has consistently pursued responsible macroeconomic policies and avoided flooding the economy with excessive liquidity.

The country has focused on preventing and resolving major risks, enhanced the levels of food and energy security and deepened macroeconomic policy coordination with major global economies.

In the recovery environment intertwined with the COVID-19 pandemic and unprecedented changes, China has been exporting precious large production capacity and price stability, rather than an inflation crisis or economic and social shocks.

China is also a provider of a large market for consumption and investment. In the era of globalization, the international market is

not only a testing ground for enterprises from various countries, but also a crucial channel for enterprises to build their core competitiveness.

Enterprises can leverage the international market to facilitate capital flow, shift industrial focus and undergo mergers and acquisitions to optimize and reorganize production resources, ultimately achieving endogenous development.

From the perspectives of market scale, consumption capacity and innovation capability, no other region in the world can replace the Chinese market. China not only shares its super-large market with enterprises from various countries, but also shares the advantages of its human capital market and intermediate product market with multinationals. This stabilizes the sales terminals of enterprises from various countries while ensuring the security of their supply chains.

China is a stabilizer for global economic growth. Amid ongoing geopolitical tensions and high global inflation, the current global economy is in a complex and volatile recovery phase, urgently requiring stability and transparency.

As the world's second-largest economy, China's steady economic development not only helps boost global economic confidence, but also helps drive global economic growth. China's economy has established a solid long-term foundation for positive development.

China is the only country with all industrial categories listed in the United Nations industrial classification, with its value-added manufacturing accounting for about 30 percent of the global total and ranking first in the world for 14 consecutive years.

At the same time, China continues to share new development opportunities with other countries. In the context of rising global economic risks and rampant protectionism, China consistently adheres to the principle that the more it develops, the more it opens up, and thus actively creates a first-class business environment that is market-oriented, law-based and international. While providing driving forces for global economic growth, China also brings stability to the global economy.

Chinese-style modernization is a crucial historical journey to achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Building a "basically modernized country by 2035 and a fully modernized strong country by 2050" is the greatest dream of the Chinese nation.

Looking back at history, reform and opening-up have been key decisions to determine the fate of contemporary China and the only path to developing socialism with Chinese characteristics and realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

The 20th CPC Central Committee made a series of major decisions on how to comprehensively deepen reforms. It introduced systematic major blueprints to advance Chinese-style modernization with the determination to overcome all obstacles, effectively addressing the problems of unbalanced and inadequate development in the country. It is set to bring new driving forces for innovative, coordinated, green, open and shared development of both the Chinese and global economy.

*The writer is an assistant professor at the School of Economics, Peking University. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

## Key meeting shows way for nation's long-term development

## MAIN STREET

By Xiao Lisheng

The third plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee, which concluded earlier this month, is expected to inject new momentum into China's high-quality economic development and structural transformation.

From a macroeconomic perspective, China's economic growth has remained stable in recent years, with the long-term positive trend of the fundamentals unchanged. Despite the increasingly complex and severe international environment, China's actual GDP growth in 2023 reached 5.2 percent year-on-year, successfully meeting the target set at the beginning of the year. In the first quarter of this year, China's actual GDP growth rebounded to 5.3 percent year-on-year, laying a solid foundation for achieving the annual growth target of 5 percent.

At the same time, China's high-quality economic development is steadily advancing, with continuous optimization of the economic structure and steady improvement in quality and efficiency.

Since the reform and opening-up in late 1970s, China's industrial structure has seen significant changes. From 2015 to 2023, the shares of the primary, secondary, and tertiary

industries in actual GDP fell 0.17 percentage points, declined 9.08 percentage points and rose 9.25 percentage points, respectively, to 7.61 percent, 37.61 percent, and 54.78 percent, with services gradually replacing industry as the leading sector of the national economy. This shift indicates a deeper structural transformation in the Chinese economy.

First, the Chinese economy's dependence on traditional drivers such as real estate has significantly decreased. Since the mid-1990s, China's urbanization process accelerated, raising the urbanization rate from 29.04 percent in 1995 to 63.89 percent in 2020, which had generated substantial new housing demand and increased the real estate sector's contribution to the economy.

Following the introduction of a new development model for real estate at the 2021 Central Economic Work Conference, China's economic development entered a new phase, with the real estate industry's impact on economic growth continuously declining. From 2021 to 2023, investment in real estate development grew by 4.4 percent year-on-year, then fell by 10 percent and 9.6 percent year-on-year, respectively, with its share in fixed-asset investment dropping from 27.1 percent to 22.05 percent.

Supported by a series of new economic drivers, China's fixed-asset investment and actual GDP growth have remained stable. Despite negative growth in real estate investment over the past two years, infrastructure investment has been strong, and manufacturing has entered a new equipment renewal cycle, effectively offsetting the drag from the

decline in real estate investment.

In 2022 and 2023, China's fixed-asset investment grew by 5.1 percent year-on-year and 3 percent year-on-year, respectively, and from January to May this year, it rose by 4 percent year-on-year. These trends indicate that China has completed a preliminary transition from old to new growth drivers.

Second, financial support for the real economy has become more efficient. During China's economic transformation and upgrading, the correlation between economic growth and credit growth has weakened. For a long period, China's social financing, the broad money supply or M2, and loan growth maintained double-digit growth rates, with high correlations to real economic growth.

In the past two years, the pace of credit expansion has slowed significantly. As of May this year, social financing and M2 grew by 8.4 percent and 7 percent year-on-year, respectively, hitting record lows. However, actual GDP growth has not declined correspondingly. This change is mainly due to a shift from debt-driven growth models, such as real estate and local financing platforms, to the rise of asset-light service industries and the positive substitution effect of direct financing, leading to a "gear shift" in overall credit demand.

Additionally, measures to curb capital arbitrage and regulate the practice of manually processing interest subsidies have revitalized inefficient financial resources. Overall, the efficiency of the financial system in supporting the real economy has significantly improved.

Third, emerging industries have become increasingly competitive. Although the share of the secondary industry, represented by manufacturing, in GDP has declined during China's economic transformation, it does not indicate deindustrialization similar to Japan.

On the contrary, China's manufacturing sector has been moving toward high-end, digital and green development. In 2022, the added value of strategic emerging industries, represented by new-generation information technology and high-end equipment, exceeded 13 percent of GDP. In 2023, the production of high-tech products such as solar cells, new energy vehicles and power generators increased by 54 percent, 30.3 percent and 28.5 percent year-on-year, respectively. The combined export value of electric vehicles, lithium batteries and solar cells surpassed 1 trillion yuan (\$137.6 billion) for the first time.

Finally, regional economic coordination has improved. Benefiting from an increasingly comprehensive infrastructure network and supportive policies, China's regional economic layout has continuously optimized. From 2012 to 2022, the GDP shares of central and western regions increased by 0.8 and 1.8 percentage points, respectively, narrowing the per capita GDP gap with the eastern region, thus laying a solid foundation for high-quality development and common prosperity.

While recognizing the achievements in China's economic structural transformation and high-quality development, it is essential to address the current challenges and diffi-

culties. In April, a meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee pointed out that the economy still faces significant challenges, including insufficient effective demand, as evidenced by weak consumer willingness and investment growth slowdown in certain areas and substantial pressure on business operations due to rising upstream raw material prices and sluggish downstream demand, resulting in poor corporate profitability.

Challenges also include risks in key areas such as the real estate market, small and medium-sized financial institutions, local government debt, inefficient domestic circulation with obstacles in building a unified national market, and increasing complexity, severity and uncertainty in the external environment, with more complex and volatile economic, financial, trade policies and geopolitical situations.

In summary, despite certain difficulties and challenges, China's economy has broad development space and potential in the long term.

The third plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee demonstrates China's firm determination to comprehensively deepen reforms in the new era. It provides policy support and institutional guarantees for stable economic growth and enhanced growth potential in the medium and long term, helping China's economy navigate through challenges and achieve steady progress.

*The writer is a researcher at the Institute of World Economics and Politics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Meloni's visit expected to be booster, raising relationship to a new level

China's measured reaction to Italy not renewing relevant cooperation documents of the Belt and Road Initiative in December showed its tacit understanding that Italy's move largely stemmed from external pressure.

Italy's decision, after about one year's struggle, was clearly incompatible with the Italy-China Year of Culture and Tourism resumed the year before, and came at the height of Washington's exhortations that its allies stay away from China.

Both Rome and Beijing were careful to keep the door ajar to each other, and some positive exchanges between the two sides this year prove the door is reopening even wider than before.

Italian Minister of Enterprises and Made in Italy Adolfo Urso visited China earlier in July, when an ancient Roman cultural relic exhibition in Beijing was becoming a national hit in China, laying the groundwork for the ongoing visit by Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni from Friday to Tuesday.

During his visit, Urso said that China is an indispensable market for Italian companies and a key partner. The cooperation between China and Italy in the fields of green technology, electric vehicles, and public buses is becoming increasingly important, marking a new stage in the strategic partnership between the two countries.

The five-day length of Meloni's first visit to China after taking office for nearly two years and her packed itinerary, including meeting with not only the Chinese leadership but also the business community and cultural representatives, indicate that Meloni's visit should not be viewed as one to repair ties, but one that aims to upgrade the relationship.

No wonder Italian tire-maker Pirelli, energy group ENI, defense group Leonardo, wine producers and several Italian luxury fashion groups including Dolce&Gabbana are among the companies invited to attend an Italy-China business forum addressing cooperation in sectors such as automotive and green technology that was held in Beijing on Sunday and Monday.

Italy is the fourth-largest trading partner of China within the European Union, and China is Italy's largest trading partner in Asia. Given the high complementarity between the structure and development stage of the two economies, that China's exports accounted for about two-thirds of the \$71.76 billion bilateral trade last year, which dipped 7.2 percent from 2022 due to aforementioned reasons, means the Italy has great potential to boost its exports to the Chinese market. In particular, its high-tech and advanced products, food, and high-end consumer goods have great potential. And it has every reason to deepen cooperation with China in pharmaceuticals, biomedical engineering, green technology and electric mobility.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the China-Italy comprehensive strategic partnership. China has indicated that it is looking to work with Italy through this visit to cement the traditional friendship between the two countries, promote the Silk Road Spirit, strengthen mutual understanding and trust, deepen practical cooperation and people-to-people and cultural exchanges, pursue the steady and sustained growth of China-Italy and China-EU relations, and jointly contribute to a more peaceful, stable and prosperous world.

Reportedly, Italian President Sergio Mattarella will visit China in October to commemorate the 700th anniversary of the death of Marco Polo, a famous Italian visitor to China. China and Italy are both countries with an ancient civilization. A sound and stable China-Italy relationship is in the interest of both countries and peoples, and contributes to inter-civilization exchanges and mutual learning.

As well as working on ways to release the potential of the broad common interests between China and Italy that remain largely untapped in various sectors, the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts are likely to feature in Meloni's discussions with the Chinese leaders as Italy is not only an active player in the EU, but also the G20, NATO and G7, in which it serves as the chair country this year.

## Healthy business ties platform for stability

According to the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, Ren Hongbin, the council's chairman, is leading a delegation of Chinese entrepreneurs to visit the United States. The reciprocal visit after the one to China by US business executives a few days ago, represents a Chinese endeavor to create a positive scenario for bilateral business ties amid the souring of political ties.

The CCPIT also operates in the name of the China Chamber of International Commerce, and is registered as a nongovernmental national trade facilitator.

The exchange illustrates Beijing's desire to preserve operational China-US economic and trade relations via communication at nongovernmental levels. But it also carries very high hopes for fostering a correct US perception of China at a time when Washington is planning to further tighten the screws to stymie bilateral scientific and technological exchanges with China.

The visits have followed swiftly on the heels of the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, which initiated a new round of reform and further opening-up. That means more opportunities will be created that foreign businesses can profit from. That is the message Beijing wanted the visiting US executives to take home with them, and one their Chinese counterparts are taking to the US.

Four days after the key CPC meeting, a delegation of US business executives led by the US-China Chamber of Commerce Chairman of the Board Rajesh Subramaniam arrived in China. Not only the timing, but also the roster of visitors, including key executives of Micron, Goldman Sachs, Apple and Boeing, were highly symbolic. Beijing wants to assure the outside world about its continuous commitment to reform and openness, and showcase the enduring interest in the potential of the Chinese market.

According to a CCPIT spokesperson, the US business delegation came at its invitation, met with Vice-Premier He Lifeng and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, visited key economic and trade authorities, and compared notes with Chinese business leaders. Both He and Wang elaborated on the central leadership's focus on more reform and openness. Wang urged the visitors to present to the US government, Congress and all walks of life a real comprehensive image of China, contribute more objective, positive, rational voices and help the US form a correct understanding of China.

The Chinese leadership has on various occasions stated that it believes the hope for improved China-US relations lies in the two peoples, and its foundation lies at the nongovernmental levels. The CCPIT initiative was based on the conviction that the two countries' business communities are important preservers of and contributors to bilateral relations, who want bilateral ties to stabilize and move forward, said the CCPIT spokesperson. A core objective of the Chinese business delegation, according to her, is to inform the US business community about the CPC plenum. Per Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning, the over 300 major reform measures the plenum endorsed sent to the rest of the world a strong message about China's resolute dedication to reform and opening up.

As Wang Yi told US State Secretary Antony Blinken on the sidelines of the ASEAN foreign ministers meeting in Vientiane, capital of Laos, on Saturday, Beijing finds Washington's "erroneous understanding of China" problematic. Wang told the latter the CPC plenum is a key to understanding the Party as well as the present and future of China.

After putting forward a comprehensive package of reforms at its latest plenum, the Party is committed to ensuring its goals and objectives are well understood both at home and abroad. China hopes its opening-up drive will be better appreciated and advanced through increased exchanges and cooperation with the global community.

Li Min



## Opinion Line

## Capital receives recognition for its preservation of history and culture

At the 46th session of the World Heritage Committee in New Delhi, India, on Saturday, "Beijing Central Axis: A Building Ensemble Exhibiting the Ideal Order of the Chinese Capital" was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, becoming China's 59th World Heritage Site.

The Beijing Central Axis (BCA) runs through the north and south of the city's heart, with its origins dating back to the 13th century. It has evolved continuously over time, resulting in what is today the longest, completely traditional imperial city axis in existence worldwide, spanning 7.8 kilometers in length.

The BCA presents an imperial city paradigm as described by ancient Chinese scholars. It embodies the Chinese civilization's philosophy of "middle" and "harmony", demonstrating the imaginative and creative capabilities of Chinese

civilization in urban planning and construction. Hence, the BCA is hailed by many as the "soul and spine of Beijing".

To better protect and develop the BCA, in 2011, the Beijing Municipal Government proposed applying for World Heritage status, and in 2012, the BCA was included in the Tentative List for China's World Cultural Heritage. After a journey of 12 years, the bid for World Heritage status has been successful.

In protecting its heritage sites, the nation has not only safeguarded the historical context but also been improving people's livelihoods. In the process of applying for World Heritage status, the BCA was taken as a focal point to drive the comprehensive restoration of time-honored buildings in Beijing, while the residential houses nearby have also been renewed and upgraded so as to make them more

comfortable for the inhabitants, which provided a Chinese approach and experience for ancient city conservation to the whole world.

For instance, the renovation project for the Bell and Drum Towers region followed a principle of "restoration as if untouched", which greatly enhanced the visual corridor of the Bell and Drum Towers landscape and revived their distinctive old city charm. But it also made living conditions more convenient and comfortable for residents, thereby attracting more supporters and participants to join in the preservation efforts of the area that's part of the BCA.

With World Heritage status as a new starting point, the BCA will continue to shine with renewed vigor through further protection efforts and better support cultural heritage preservation.

— CHINA MEDIA GROUP

## Cooperation might help find living space

It is, of course, too early to claim that the "leopard spots" found by NASA's Perseverance rover in reddish rock located in the Jezero Crater of Mars may be a sign of extraterrestrial life.

Perseverance's instruments show that the rock contains organic compounds, carbon-based molecules that are building blocks of life as we know it, and the reddish rock that has been called "Cheyava Falls" after a feature in the Grand Canyon in the United States has whitish striations of water-deposited calcium sulfate, while the "leopard spots" contain molecules of iron phosphate, which would be a potential source of food for subsurface microbes.

But organic compounds can be formed by both biological and nonbiological processes. That's why the NASA scientists have been cautious about the discovery stressing that "further research is needed" to determine if life

existed on Mars billions of years ago.

But if that proved to be the case it would rewrite at least part of the solar system's history: There has always been a debate among scientists about whether life originated on Earth or if it was brought to the planet by extraterrestrial planets or rocks. If there was life on Mars at some point it would give support to the latter theory. And if that was the case, the asteroids in the solar system might be considered of higher value because they might be carriers of life from billions of years ago; It would also reinforce the famous comparison that Mars is the past of Earth and Venus its future.

That's why the significance of the news from Perseverance should not be underestimated — the possibility of life having ever existed on Mars remains slim but there is now a pointer to that possibly. But how to prove that will be a

major challenge for mankind because the US, although being the first nation of the world having sent a mission to Mars and having accomplished the Perseverance mission in 2021, hasn't announced any plan to bring the samples back to Earth yet, as a round trip to Mars will involve far more complicated technologies and much higher costs than a single trip.

Which in turn means there is ample space for international cooperation. China has sent its Tianwen 1 mission to Mars that has proved the resilience and reliability of its technologies, with a further plan to be the first country to bring samples back from Mars. The rocks on Mars are of huge research potential for scientists, and by working together the two countries could raise the odds of such a challenging mission being a success.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

## What They Say

## Olympics about more than winning gold

The 33rd Summer Olympic Games officially opened in Paris on Friday. Athletes from around the world are competing to showcase their talents, following the Olympic motto "Faster, Higher, Stronger - Together".

One of the largest global sporting events, the Olympics attract billions of viewers worldwide. For most audiences, the most thrilling moment of the Olympics is undoubtedly the moment when a gold medal is won.

Chinese people have a profound understanding of the Olympic gold medal. The 1984 Los Angeles Olympics marked the first time that New China sent a team to participate in the Olympics, as well as the first time a Chinese athlete, Xu Haifeng, won gold. The whole country erupted in joy when he won the men's 60-shot free pistol event, which was a historic moment that was widely celebrated nationwide. At that time, the significance of

winning an Olympic gold went far beyond the sports competition itself; it greatly enhanced the national pride and confidence of all Chinese people and significantly improved the nation's international image.

But people now are paying more attention to the athletes' competitive spirit and the athletes' efforts are no longer simply measured by whether they win a medal or not. People now understand and respect every athlete's efforts whether he/she wins a medal or not.

For example, at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, a member of the Chinese women's gymnastics team fell from the bar during the asymmetric bars event, yet despite the accident that doomed her chances of achieving a high ranking, she still insisted on completing the competition. Her spirit of not giving up and persisting to the end deeply moved both the audience present and those watching on TV. After the competition, this athlete received warm

applause for her insistence on participating to the end.

On the Olympic stage, gold medals are no longer the sole criterion for measuring an athlete's value. An increasing number of viewers appreciate the athletes' fighting spirit, pursuit of their dreams, and the effort and hard work that have brought them to the peak of their sport. No matter the outcome, as long as the athletes exhibit the Olympic Spirit, they will win the applause of their compatriots.

At the ongoing Paris Olympics, we wish Chinese athletes all the best and hope they will inspire themselves to new heights with the Olympic Spirit, continuously strive for excellence, dare to break through their personal limits. As viewers in front of the screen, we should not only applaud those who win gold medals but also give our applause to all athletes who embody the Olympic Spirit through their competitive endeavors.

— JSHINA.COM.CN

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## COMMENT



China and the World Roundtable | Paris 2024 Olympics

**Editor's note:** The Paris 2024 Olympic Games have brought together thousands of athletes, officials and spectators from across the world to celebrate human excellence, raising hopes that the Games will also foster global solidarity, and promote peace and harmony. Three experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

David Jobin

## What Paris Games' emblem really means

Undeniably, 2024 marks a milestone in my professional life. From the initial drafts on office paper, to the screens on our laptops and countless discussions in the meeting room, the symbol of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games has transformed from a mere idea to a vibrant reality.

Now, this emblem is flying high over the sky of Paris, gracing public transport, welcoming people from around the world, and appearing on T-shirts, hats and tote bags.

The symbol of the Paris 2024 Games is not just a sign, an icon or a logo; it is an idea. An idea rooted in the very essence of the Olympic motto: "The most important thing is not to win but to take part."

So, when we took part in the competition to create this logo, what did we have in mind?

Beautiful is boring. A symbol does not need to be conventionally beautiful; it needs to be meaningful, especially for the Olympics, a moment when the world unites to celebrate human excellence. The Olympics represent the top performances of human beings. But the Games belong to all the people. We designed the logo to shine a light on those who are often overlooked — the marginalized, the unseen, the voices in the shadows.

The image of a woman in the logo is a testament to this belief. Sports are often associated with muscle, power and strength — attributes traditionally linked to a male image. By placing a woman at the forefront, we have spotlighted those who are ignored, forgotten and left behind.

Paris 2024 will be the first Games where the numbers of female and male athletes will be equal. Back in 1900, Paris became the first Olympic venue to have women, 22 female compared with 975 male athletes. The Paris 2024 Games will also be the first time when the Paralympic and Olympic Games share the same logo, emphasizing that no distinction should be made between men and women when we talk about Olympics or the Olympic Spirit.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

The Olympic Games are about creating awareness that what we have in common far outweighs our differences. The pursuit of excellence, mutual respect and shared goals unites us. When we chose a human face — a woman's face, neutral and universal — we wanted all men and women to feel represented. It symbolizes a human face looking toward the future, holding out hope. This positivity unites us. The Paris 2024 Games' emblem serves as a *trait d'union*, a link that bridges

the difference, divergence and disagreement gaps. It reminds us that through sports, we find common ground, fostering a sense of global community and understanding.

When we think about the Games, we leave conflicts, divergences and disagreements behind. We think about humanity — people running to surpass their limits, jumping to go beyond and diving into the infinite challenge of human capabilities. As Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the International Olympic Com-



The author is founder of Royalties Paris, creative agency of Paris 2024 symbol.

mittee, said in 1892, "It is clear that the telegraph, railways, the telephone, the passionate research in science, congresses, and exhibitions have done more for peace than any treaty or diplomatic convention."

He hoped that "athletics will do even more".

Ancient Greek culture was steeped in a competitive spirit. It was part of the Greeks' education: young Greeks were encouraged to be the best, always and everywhere, and to outdo all others. The modern Olympic Games bring forward model athletes to serve as role models for the youth of the world, to compete, but with respect. In a turbulent and increasingly divided international landscape, competition drives economies forward, but participating in sport as a respectful competition sets an example beyond the sporting arena.

Being together, running against each other, but cheering together for human achievements celebrate the human spirit. A neutral and soft symbol for the event reminds people of softness, kindness and the Olympic Spirit. The Paris 2024 Games' emblem encourages us to compete with respect and to recognize that, in the end, it is not about winning but about taking part, together, in this grand celebration of human potential.

The Paris 2024 Games' symbol is more than just an emblem of an Olympics; it is a representation of our shared humanity.

It speaks for the unheard, bridges our differences and promotes respectful competition. In particular, the Paris 2024 Games, which mark 60 years of Sino-French relations, bridge two cities, Paris and Beijing, forging a linkage of history and beliefs. Together, we can build a world where our commonalities are celebrated and differences respected.

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

Jiang Yiyi

## Catalyst to the growth of tourism and other sectors of France

The Olympic Games, the largest and most influential global sporting event, have far-reaching impacts on the host city's (even the host country's) economy, tourism and the environment. The Paris 2024 Olympic Games have become a major drive for tourists heading to Europe, creating a ripple effect across various sectors, particularly tourism, which could boost the economic growth of France, and even Europe.

The 2024 World Tourism Barometer has forecast that the number of global tourists could reach 1.3 billion by the end of the year, marking a robust recovery in the post-COVID-19 era, and recent data show a notable increase in bookings for Paris-related travel products. Tongcheng Travel has reported a 70 percent increase in flight bookings from major Chinese cities to Paris in July, nearly a 150 percent increase in hotel bookings and a 225 percent rise in group tour bookings to France.

Also, Airbnb has reported more than a fivefold increase in bookings for accommodation in the Paris region during the Olympics, with travelers from over 160 countries and regions flocking to the French capital. This surge in bookings reflects a broader trend of pent-up demand for international trips, especially those that offer a blend of cultural, wellness and sports.

Tourists nowadays seek immersive experience that offer cultural insights, health benefits and physical engagement. This trend aligns with the concept of Olympic tourism. For example, participating in a marathon or watching a sports game in a new city has become a popular lifestyle choice, particularly among the younger generations.

This shift in tourism preferences is also evident in the way people plan their trips. The integration of sports and travel, especially around major events such as the Olympics, provides a unique value proposition. Travelers look forward to not only a sporting event but also the overall experience of being in a vibrant city such as Paris, which offers a rich blend of history, culture and modernity.

In anticipation of the influx of tourists, the French government has prioritized the Olympics as a key event of 2024, implementing a range of measures to accommodate foreign tourists and enable them to fulfill their travel goals. The measures include streamlining the entire tourism process, making visa applications more convenient, increasing flights and introducing digital payment services. For example, TLS visa application centers have reopened in 15 Chinese cities, and many French locations now accept WeChat Pay and Alipay, making it easier for Chinese tourists to travel to France.

France has also improved its tourism services by training travel agency employees and offering diverse entertainment and recreational activities. The country is also showcasing its cultural, natural and sports heritages, with major Olympic-related events set to be held at iconic Parisian and French cultural and tourist sites such as the Eiffel Tower, the Grand Palais and Les Invalides. These efforts aim to extend tourists' stay and enhance France's competitive edge as a tourist destination.

The policy adopted by France to prepare for the Olympics reflects a deep understanding of the multifaceted benefits that such a global event can bring. By focusing on providing overall better tourist experiences, France aims to leave a lasting impression on visitors, encouraging them to return to and explore more of the country.

The Olympics give unprecedented opportunities to the host city to develop its tourism sector. The long-term benefits extend far beyond the event per se, contributing to sustained economic growth and enhancing the city's global profile. These benefits can be categorized into three areas.

To begin with, it can expand the scale of the tourism industry because the Olympics will see a massive influx of international tourists into Paris, generating significant economic benefits. A recent International Olympic Committee report and the estimate of the Paris 2024 Organizing Committee say the tourism revenue during the Olympics could be between €1.4 billion (\$1.51 billion) and €3.6 billion.

Paris is expected to reap the economic benefits in the post-Olympic period too. The enhanced tourism brand value of Paris might attract more tourists to the city in the future. And the improvement in Paris' infrastructure and its increased global exposure as an Olympics host city will create a lasting legacy that would benefit the tourism industry for years to come.

Second, it will boost the city's tourism brand. The Olympics put the host city in the global spotlight, which is nothing less than a global advertisement. The Beijing 2008 Olympics, for example, significantly boosted the city's global image and attractiveness as a tourist destination. Similarly, through elevating Paris' brand, the Paris Olympics are likely to boost the tourism industry's growth.

The visibility and media coverage that come with the Olympics offer unparalleled marketing opportunities. As the world watches the Olympics, Paris' charm, culture and hospitality will be broadcast to millions, if not billions, of people across the world. This exposure is invaluable, and will help build a strong tourism brand that will attract visitors long after the Games.

And third, it will leave behind a sustainable Olympic legacy. Sustainable use of the Olympic legacy can help integrate it into the host city's overall tourism development. The World Travel & Tourism Council has forecast that France's tourism industry will grow at the rate of about 3 percent a year over the next decade, with its scale reaching €297 billion.

Post-2008 Beijing Olympics, venues such as the Bird's Nest (National Stadium) have been transformed into multi-functional hubs for sports, tourism and commercial activities. Likewise, Paris aims to maximize the value of its Olympic facilities by ensuring they remain active and accessible to people by hosting a variety of events, from concerts to sports competitions, and integrating these venues into the city's cultural and social fabric.

The 2024 Olympics offer a unique opportunity to Paris to boost its tourism industry. The Games will attract a large number of international visitors, providing immediate economic benefits to Paris, enhancing its image as a leading global tourist destination. The comprehensive preparations that the French government has made and the sustainable use of the Olympic venues will ensure the benefits of hosting the Olympics extend far beyond the two-week event.

Thus Paris is set to gain not only in terms of immediate economic benefits but also in building a lasting legacy that will continue to attract tourists and drive economic growth for years to come.

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

Yi Jiandong

## Do Olympics really benefit the host cities?

Does hosting a major international event such as the Olympic Games benefit the host city, and does such an event hinder the economic growth of the host city or the host country? The world, including leading intellectuals, economists and other experts, is divided on the question. While many have argued that hosting the Olympics does not lead to accelerated economic development for the host city or country, some have suggested that such events could hinder the development of the host city or country due to the enormous debt they incur to stage such extravaganzas, and the long-term underutilization of venues, which could place a heavy burden on both the host city and country.

Within the global sports academic community, there are at least three viewpoints. One viewpoint is that the host cities and countries, even bidding cities and countries, can expedite their coordinated development by adjusting their plans, including laying greater emphasis on sports, and changing their economic and industrial structures, and consumption patterns.

The second viewpoint is that the substantial short-term investment to host an Olympic Games could lead to a crowding-out effect, and



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the subsequent deterioration of the venues can create a long-term burden for the city. Many examples support this argument, by citing the example of the Montreal 1976 Olympics.

Reports suggest that Canada was repaying the loans it had taken to host the Games for the next two decades.

On the other hand, the Los Angeles 1984 Olympics, under the leadership of Peter Ueberroth, chairman of the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee, changed the perception that the Games are a long-term burden for the host country, with the Los Angeles Organizing Committee ending with a surplus of \$225 million.

Yet later Olympic Games, such as the 2004 Games and 2016 Games, were financial burdens for the host cities of Athens and Rio de Janeiro, respectively.

Some Olympic Games, however, have benefited the host cities — for example, the 2008 Beijing Olympics yielded a surplus of 1.2 billion yuan (\$165 million) and the 2012 London Games resulted in the transformation of East London.

As a scholar who has studied the Olympic Games for many years, I maintain that the Olympics, as the largest global sports and socio-cultural event during peacetime, can thrive under certain conditions, which include a relatively peaceful global environment despite the ideological and political differences. Also, countries and cities experiencing economic growth are better positioned to host the Olympic Games, and can use them to achieve sustainable advancement.

Cities and countries with rapid economic growth can leverage the global platform provided by the Olympics to attract investments, change public attitudes and transform urban landscapes. They can also use the Olympics to bring together global resources to significantly boost the sports, tourism and cultural industries, including global exhibitions and conventions. For instance, the Barcelona 1992 Olympics and the Sydney 2000 Olympics boosted the two cities' tourism and hospitality sectors.

However, the Olympic Games do not automatically increase public participation in sports or boost the local economy. Many scholars say that to promote sports or boost the local economy, preplanning is necessary. Or else, the long-term benefits can't be realized.

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

## GLOBAL VIEWS

WARWICK POWELL

## A positive peace is possible

Extending of NATO's militarized deterrence to the Asia-Pacific is a threat to the region's stability which is the result of codependent and symbiotic peace and prosperity

The ongoing chaos that seems to be the defining characteristic of US domestic politics sets the backdrop for the attempts of the United States to reassert its hegemony across the world through the global expansion of NATO. US political chaos reflects a political economy that is failing to meet the aspirations of the US people, let alone enable the US to recover its position as the unparalleled global military hegemon.

Despite this, or perhaps in part because of this, the US has been doubling down on a strategy aimed at reasserting military preponderance in Asia. The recent NATO summit spoke decisively to this shift in focus, as the failing proxy war in Ukraine exposes the US-led NATO's limitations in doctrine, resources and systems.

By absurdly seeking to blame China for NATO's failures on the Ukraine crisis, the US and NATO have sought to not only rationalize their military failure but to justify the transfer of focus to Asia. Russia's ongoing battlefield successes are now being ascribed to China's support of the Russian military effort, despite the absence of any evidence of such. For NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, China is the "decisive enabler", "inciting the largest military conflict in Europe since World War II".

In raw material terms, the collective Western military industrial complex has been exposed in both qualitative and quantitative terms. Qualitatively, claimed technological superiority has been demonstrated to be false bravado. The cavalcade of *Wunderwaffe* delivered to Ukraine over the past two years has failed to deliver a decisive edge to the proxy Ukrainian military. Quantitatively, the collective Western supply chains simply don't have the wherewithal to repair and replace what's being lost on the battlefield. This is evident in areas such as the produc-

tion of 155mm munitions, in which US and NATO ambitions of expanding output have foundered, as described in detail in a recent Reuters investigation. Monthly production capabilities in the collective West aren't sufficient to replace what's being used by Ukraine, let alone come close to matching the productive output of the Russian industrial system.

Talk is cheap, but the West is no longer able to back it up with walk.

But the talk is actually anathema to the realization of stability and peace. Rather, the ways in which the talk is framed — whereby security is a function of militarized deterrence — is the very source of the instability that they are seeking to mitigate. Deterrence discourse aims to dissuade adversaries from attacking due to the supposed costs of doing so. Yet, such an approach in practice is rarely sustainable, doesn't work in many cases and can actually set up an arms race courtesy of the well-known security dilemma. In other words, deterrence has a high risk of failure.

The deterrence discourse seeks to manipulate the risk environment, without ever addressing the root causes of insecurity. Seeking to out-escalate an adversary may work for a while, buying one time, but it is no panacea to the problems that are causing insecurity in the first place. And yet, the entirety of the US-NATO strategic mindset is anchored by this flawed deterrence frame.

The failure of so-called deterrence in Ukraine and Gaza reminds us all that such an approach cannot deliver the security, peace or prosperity that people demand and deserve.

Rather, what's needed is an effort to develop a positive peace, which was once proposed by Johan Galtung, the father of peace studies. A positive peace addresses the holistic dynamics of stability whereby prosperity and peace are framed as codependent and symbiotic; while a negative peace, characterized by the mere absence of military conflict, is a condition of functional deterrence with all

the associated instabilities and risks.

One cannot achieve peace through security, but security can be achieved through peace. This requires a reframing of peace through the lens of indivisible and holistic security, which intertwines economic prosperity with transnational peacemaking. The security of one or a select few cannot come at the expense of the security of another, or others. This is a NATO-inspired recipe for instability.

The risk to Asian peace and prosperity is from the expansion of NATO to the region, and the US efforts to reclaim lost primacy. Multipolarity is a global reality, and Asia is a veritable case study of multipolarity and a consensus-based methodology of peacemaking, in which prosperity and peace are two sides of the one strategic coin. The foundations of regional peace, by way of the Bandung Declaration some 69 years ago, remain in place.

ASEAN centrality can and should play a cornerstone role in the future configuration of multipolar peace in Asia. Its success in creating the world's largest free trade agreement — the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership — is testament to the success of its understated style and method. Further regional economic integration through trade, investment flows, sovereign data platforms built on standards that enable interoperability, and national currency-based digitalized payments are some of the ingredients for a positive peace.

The US-NATO black thumb of death and destruction, and baked-in escalation risk, are anathema to peace and prosperity in Asia. There are other ways. The spirit of Bandung calls us again.

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MWANGI WACHIRA

## Fast Forward

The third plenary session of the 20th CPC Central Committee set a clear course for accelerated reform and opening-up

The recently concluded, third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China set an ambitious timeline and vigorous tempo for reform in key areas.

The call to accelerate reform and opening-up of China's economy means that efforts such as the State Council's 24-point guideline to attract and harness foreign direct investments will be implemented rapidly. The

guideline seeks to address the most common complaints of foreign investors, such as complex regulations, insecurity of proprietary technology and unfair competition. It also encourages foreign investors to set up research and development projects in China, participate in joint ventures with Chinese partners, take advantage of incentives to base operations in the less-secure parts of China, and bid for non-security projects.

In recent years, China has navigated challenging times judging by the fluctuations in foreign direct investment. According to the World Bank, FDI to China was \$235.37 billion in 2018 but it declined by 20 percent to \$187.17 billion in 2019. This was followed by 35 percent expansion to about \$253 billion in 2020. A second sharp rise (35 percent) in 2021 to about \$344 billion was followed by a 48 percent decline in 2022 to \$180.17 billion. A steady growth in FDI is obviously desirable and the plenary session sought to ensure a calmer and less volatile flow of FDI to China.

Affirming existing policies shows confidence that the factors which make China an attractive destination for FDI — the country's growth potential, large retail market, robust supply chains, good infrastructure, rapidly improving business environment, quality workforce, a growing trade and investment agreement framework — will offset the impact of current tensions.

China's domestic consumption in recent years has been insufficient to drive the economy. This is a major challenge. To make up for the weak domestic consumption, China's manufacturers have turned to exports for growth. This has not been easy given the tensions over trade with the United States and European Union. Recently China's manufacturers rushed to beat the imposition of higher tariffs starting

**The third plenary session of 2024 suggests that there are no radical departures in policies. China is to rush to harness science and technology for innovations in everything, from consumer products to security. The high-tech component of China's economy will likely expand dramatically in the near future.**

in July in the EU and in August in the US. This led to the fastest growth rate in exports in 15 months and a record trade surplus of \$99 billion amid falling imports. It is unlikely that exports will expand as rapidly after the tariffs come into play. This will increase the pressure for growth of domestic consumption to drive the economy and improve the quality of life for all.

The all-important domestic property sector has been weighed down by long-standing excess supply of housing coupled with falling prices.

Earlier this year China's central bank set up a new 300 billion yuan (\$41.2 billion) program. Under this program, the People's Bank of China is providing funds to 21 banks at low interest rates. The banks then issue loans to selected State-owned enterprises. This enables the enterprises to purchase completed but unsold commercial homes and modify them into subsidized housing for low and middle-income citizens.

In the run-up to the plenum, the slogan "houses are for living, not for speculation" had raised hopes for an additional stimulus. But this did not appear. It seems safe to conclude that the preference is to give time for the current stimulus to work its way through the economy.

Given the current geopolitical environment, the plenum discussed science, technology and innovations from a strategic perspective. The need to channel resources into these areas has been mentioned repeatedly at the highest levels in

recent months.

The tension over trade with the EU and the US has constrained China's access to technology. China's response is to work harder in science, technology and innovation to create new quality productive forces to make products for the entire spectrum, from consumer goods to security. Specific actions to invigorate research and development and the practical application of R&D outcomes will clearly be part of the 300-plus list of actions that were promised at the end of the plenum.

At this early stage, fast-tracking the use of science and technology and innovations appears to be paying off. According to China's National Bureau of Statistics, in the first half of 2024, the country's GDP grew by 5 percent year-on-year. Much of this growth was attributed to the use of cutting-edge technology in areas such as the low-altitude economy, new energy vehicles, green energy, artificial intelligence applications and modernizing manufacturing. This is an encouraging sign that pouring resources into science, technology and innovations is a practical way to overcome the limitations of the current geopolitical climate.

For some African countries, the Belt and Road Initiative has become the driving force for their modernization. They were anxious to hear what the plenary session proposed for the BRI going forward.

The plenum proposed to elevate BRI cooperation toward higher quality. But in recent years, the BRI has experienced slow growth weighed down by a shortage of resources and the heavy debt burdens of many African countries. The hope for many African countries is that the forthcoming list of specific actions will include some to modestly expand the Belt and Road.

The third plenary session of 2024 suggests that there are no radical departures in policies. China is to rush to harness science and technology for innovations in everything, from consumer products to security. The high-tech component of China's economy will likely expand dramatically in the near future.

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# LIFE

## LIVING HERITAGE

**E**thnic costumes in China combine rich colors and patterns with style, and their distinctive beauty and grace dazzle people entering a village inhabited by the Dong ethnic group. If they do, they may be fortunate enough to see women making monochromatic dark blue fabric with a metallic sheen that they themselves wear.

It is known as *liangbu* (bright cloth), a special textile that takes a dozen steps to make, and which is a glittering example of handmade Dong cloth.

Located primarily in Guizhou, Hunan and Hubei provinces, and the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, the Dong people have developed a trove of arts and crafts over the centuries, among them Grand Song (*dage*), and wooden architectural structures, such as drum towers and covered wind and rain bridges.

Their traditional dress-making craftsmanship is recognized as a form of national-level intangible cultural heritage, and apparent upon entering a Dong village.

The costumes are mostly made of the Dong cloth, which is a gift of nature, dyed a dark, rich blue, using wild plants to make indigo. Both finished cloth and cotton threads are dyed. The former becomes *liangbu*, while the dyed threads are often woven with white threads to create a variety of patterns.

### Family bond

For the Dong people, *liangbu* has a range of meanings. It is an embodiment of life experience, as well as of wisdom derived from nature, and it helps them cope with cool, moist weather. It continues a time-honored tradition of handicrafting. And it is also a bond connecting family members across generations.

"As a child, I often heard my mother saying that girls needed to learn to make Dong cloth, and that anyone who didn't know how was considered incapable," says Yang Shenghua, a resident of Dali Dong village in Rongjiang county, Guizhou's Qian-dongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture.

The 55-year-old began to learn the craft when she was about 12, under the guidance of her mother Yang Xiuying. She remembers that the process, which begins with spinning thread, was rather difficult for a young girl to learn.

"I learned to weave a meter, and another meter, until I was able to produce a piece as long as my mother could make. I also went to the mountains to pick *bamlan* (indigo woad root, *Isatis indigotica*), an essential ingredient in preparing the dye for the cloth," she says.

The finished dye is made using water from boiled cowhide, and egg whites. The cloth is wrung, scrubbed and pounded, before it is turned into traditional Dong garments — dark indigo outfits with a colorful flower trim for the women, plain for the men.

Hu Xiaomei, a researcher and curator at the Ethnic Costume Museum at the Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology, says that indigo dye has been used for centuries to make textiles. It can be found in many cultures, and its use in making Dong cloth is well-preserved and recognized.

Yang Shenghua says the process of making cloth is complicated and involves many steps, each of which is time-consuming. "It is like a construction project," she adds.

She says that her mother was strict about the making process. "She preferred to leave the cloth to dye for longer than usual to achieve a really dark blue. Then, you had to starch, pound, dye, dry and pound again. ... All I can remember was repeating those steps again and again.

"Once you have made a mistake, you'll make more. This is really frustrating, as you need to start all over, and be focused and cautious to avoid making the mistake again," Yang Shenghua says.

Hu says the cloth is pounded to



**Clockwise from above left:** Yang Shenghua, 55, weaves Dong cloth on a loom, with her mother Yang Xiuying spinning threads by her side at their home in Dali Dong village, Rongjiang county, Guizhou province. Their fellow villagers celebrate Dong culture with songs. Designer Jenny Chou (middle) working with women at a cooperative she founded in the village. Chou making a decorative band.

# A tradition worth dyeing for

The essence and luster of nature are transformed into stylish, practical garments that are deeply symbolic to the Dong ethnic group of Guizhou province, **Lin Qi** reports.



A view of the Dali Dong village. PHOTOS BY LI JIN AND WANG QIQI / CHINA DAILY

flatten the outer layer of cotton threads. This leaves no space between the threads, and tightens its structure.

"The Dong survived by growing rice. They needed thick, tight fabric like *liangbu*, to protect them

from bushes as they farmed in the mountains," she says.

Yang Shenghua says she also learned to make waistbands and head covers out of the cloth, as well as how to do embroidery and lace-work. "We relied on our hands for

our clothes; we were self-sufficient," she adds.

In Dong villages, a mother traditionally gives *liangbu* as a wedding gift to her daughter, and when the daughter later gives birth, the grandmother usually gifts her a

woven patterned baby carrier.

"This is only for the dearest family members," she says.

### Seeds of revival

After Yang Shenghua married, she had less and less time for weaving,

as she was preoccupied with housework, farm chores and raising children and grandchildren.

Then, one day, an architect changed everything.

Taiwan-born designer Jenny Chou, who has a studio in Beijing with two friends she studied with at the Rhode Island School of Design, the United States, visited Dali Dong village for the first time in the autumn of 2015 on a business trip. She happened to see villagers harvesting indigo and soaking it in vats to make dye.

Chou was fascinated by their perseverance, and that weaving was part of the Dong way of maintaining their traditional styles in an industrialized age.

"Making Dong cloth is not a task for one person alone," Chou says. "Spinning and winding thread, weaving it on the loom to produce white cloth, dipping it in the indigo dye, it takes about a year to complete a *pi* (a Chinese measurement of length, roughly equivalent to 33 meters)."

Inspired, she went on to found the Dousa Women's Cooperative, which allows the women of Dali Dong village to not only continue the traditional craft, but also to experiment.

"I've never felt that the traditional and the modern are opposed. What is modern today will someday become a part of tradition," Chou says.

Yang Shenghua was among those who signed up for the courses at the cooperative, which she says allowed her to once again experience the joy of making cloth.

"The craft was passed on from my grandmother to my mother, and then to me. It used to be something that I was told to do because my mother and her mother did it, and I didn't want to be useless," she says. "Now it is something I like doing, because it is part of our tradition and culture.

"I have a small stand in the village, where I sell handmade textiles to tourists, using patterns I designed myself. It's a way of popularizing our heritage so that it finds new life and is carried on."

Chou says Dong cloth can also be used by urban dwellers. It can be made into objects for daily use, like pillowcases, decorations and tissue boxes.

In 2017, she took Dong cloth from the cooperative in Dali Dong village to Beijing Design Week.

"I think that incorporating Dong cloth in fashion design is a natural development, just like Dior has used Dong jacquard fabric in its collection, introducing traditional Dong craftsmanship to more people," Chou says.

She refers to the several outfits on show at Dior's studio in Paris which, under the supervision of Dior's artistic director Maria Grazia Chiuri, have smartly integrated the Dong jacquard, of the classic beige-blue geometric patterns, with the fine silhouette of haute couture to present high quality and a modern outlook.

Such a combination of Eastern tradition and Western design is, according to Dior, to connect people with those industrious women in Dali Dong village, who together weave and dye, and create a variety of patterns that have been sourced from nature and found in the objects and animals in their day-to-day life.

For her part, Yang Shenghua is pleased with developments.

"When I see the color become even darker and more beautiful after every round of dyeing, it makes me happy," she says.

"Finishing a piece of cloth is like completing a gift — it is from nature, from our culture."

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**Online**  
Watch the video by scanning the code.



**From left:** Two outfits envisioned by Dior's artistic director Maria Grazia Chiuri, with traditional fabrics of the Dong people in Guizhou. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY  
Leaves of the indigo woad root, a key dyeing ingredient for Dong cloth. A variety of Dong cloth ready for use. Cushions made of Dong cloth.

## PARIS 2024

SHOOTING

## Hitting their golden target

Young guns shoot to overnight fame, as they show composure beyond their years to win tense final

By SUN XIAOCHEN in Paris  
sunxiaochen@chinadaily.com.cn

While she may be a fan of cute hair clips and puppies like the rest of her peers, Huang Yuting is not your average teenager. As most of her classmates enjoy their summer holiday by hanging out with friends, going to the movies or shopping, Huang, a 17-year-old high school girl from Taizhou, Zhejiang province, will probably have the coolest summer memories of them all — going to Paris and winning an Olympic gold medal.

And it wasn't just any random medal, but the very first gold up for grabs at the Paris Games — in the 10m air rifle mixed team — which got the Chinese delegation off to a scintillating start at the world's biggest sporting extravaganza. Huang, and fellow teen shooter Sheng Lihao, held their collective nerve to outgun South Korea's Park Ha-jun and Keum Ji-hyeon 16-12 with poise and marksmanship beyond their years, winning the high-stakes final at the Chateauroux Shooting Centre, 250 kilometers south of Paris, on Saturday.

Her golden Olympic debut has turned Huang into a household name overnight in China, drawing instant interest in her upbringing, hobbies and even the accessories she wears — just like what happened with her senior counterpart Yang Qian, winner of Team China's first gold in Tokyo three years ago in the women's individual 10m rifle.

The little barrette Huang wore to keep her long hair off her scope on Saturday soon became a trending topic on Chinese social media, reminding fans of a similar situation in 2021, when Yang's "yellow duck" hair clip ended up a best-selling item following her Tokyo Games win.

Younger and fresher, Huang comes across as an even more composed shooter than Yang — who didn't qualify for Paris — as she kept her emotions in check throughout Saturday's final, even after having won the biggest prize of an athlete's career on her first try.

"It's basically all the same, as far as what I need to do in a competition," Huang said during a news conference when asked how different the Olympics feel compared to other events.

"Of course, the Olympics naturally come with greater attention, and I just needed to improve my mental focus to avoid being distracted by whatever happened outside of my control.



Huang Yuting (left) and Sheng Lihao pose after winning the 10m air rifle mixed team gold medal at the Chateauroux Shooting Centre, during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games on Saturday. REUTERS

"Perhaps we looked calm on the outside, but deep inside, we were very nervous. We just didn't show it.

"It's a great honor, a payback for what I've worked so hard for over the past year. It's a new beginning, though. I will start over from zero again," said Huang, who turns 18 in September.

A student-turned-Olympic shooter, like many of her teammates in China's decorated national program, Huang started part-time shooting training in 2016 when she was drafted into a junior sports academy for her imperturbable and resilient character, according to her first coach Lin Kehan.

"She's had a big heart since she was little, and a competitive drive that made her always accomplish her assignments better than expected," Lin said of Huang's raw talent.

Eight years on, the quiet, puppy-loving girl, who fills all her social media profile photos with adorable dog pictures, has impressed at the Olympics as one of world's most fearsome rifle shooters.

Her partner Sheng is not short of talent either.

The 19-year-old from Jiangsu

province built on his silver-winning campaign in Tokyo to finish a step higher on the podium at his second Games in Paris.

Three years ago, Sheng became the youngest shooter — at 16 years and 233 days — to win an Olympic medal, when he finished second in the individual 10m air rifle, an event he is expected to contend for gold in this time around in Paris.

"I just did what I do, and took care of my business," a calm Sheng said after the final, where the Chinese team's 12-6 early advantage was cut to 14-12 toward the final round.

"If the result goes our way, like it did today, we will happily take it and feel honored to win glory for our country. If it doesn't, then I am OK. It won't affect my preparation for the individual event in any way whatsoever."

The final in the mixed event involves the two teams starting from zero, and the men and women each take shots in succession. The winning team in each round earns two points, while both teams each score one point in case of a tie. The first team to accumulate 16 points

or more wins the match.

"Last time competing at the Olympics, I was quite nervous as a rookie. I was not mature enough mentally and technically," Sheng said of his progress.

"I studied each of my competitions, focused more on training and, now, the Olympic gold has come naturally as a result of my hard work — and, perhaps, a little bit of luck."

## Youthful surge

As one of the world's most successful teams in shooting at the Olympics, the Chinese contingent has racked up 67 medals, including 26 golds, at the Games since the country's Olympic debut in 1984.

The surge of youthful power in the sport, underlined by the fact that all four rifle shooters in Paris were born after 2000, has heralded an even stronger future for the Chinese program, which boasts a tradition of identifying and developing talent early on from schools across the country.

Professional and flexible training programs, customized to accommodate student athletes' school

routines, and a transparent domestic trial system for major events, have seen the number of young aspirants mushroom in recent years.

"We've developed a lot of young athletes, who are never shy from taking responsibility and are all keen on proving themselves on the international stage," said Liang Chun, director of the national administrative center of shooting and archery.

The maturing of China's next generation of talent has seen defending Olympic champion pair in 10m air rifle — Yang Qian and Yang Haoran — both knocked out of the Paris 2024 roster, proof of the program's deep talent pool, Liang said.

"They are young, but have both already pulled through many tests. We are confident in their future," Liang said of the success of Sheng and Huang.

"I've always tried to remind our young athletes to not care too much about the results of one particular event. They all have a long way to go, and many more opportunities to realize their career goals."

BADMINTON

## Super Dan inspires Mexican shuttler

After an eight-year wait, Mexican badminton player Luis Ramon Garrido finally made his Olympic debut on Sunday in Paris. Garrido's road to Paris has been long, winding, and often painful — literally. He missed the Rio Olympics due to a viral kidney disease and has since undergone eight knee surgeries to get back on to the court.

However, meeting his idol, double Olympic men's singles champion Lin Dan on Friday in the Olympic Village was a special reward for his perseverance and determination.



Luis Ramon Garrido

He even grabbed a selfie with "Super Dan" on the fringes of the Olympic flame relay.

"I just saw him there, so I just told him that he's my idol. I remember him since I was a little kid watching him play at the Olympics in 2008. He was just unreal. He's my favorite ever badminton player," Garrido explained.

The encounter took Garrido back to 2015, when he was among the world's top 50 players and had secured his spot in Rio after a promising junior career.

He was very close to appearing alongside Lin in Rio, however, a sudden illness struck, an illness which almost killed him.

"I almost lost my life in 2015," the 28-year-old said. "I got an illness called rhabdomyolysis. It's like I was losing my kidneys. They were not processing everything, so I was peeing blood every day."

"I think, at one point, it was 50-50, because if you don't take care exactly the way you have to take care of this illness, it just goes really fast. The doctor told me that if I didn't attend to it properly, in the next couple of days, it would maybe have been the end."

Garrido relocated to Spain for four months for specialized treatment and, after a long journey back to health, he made a triumphant return to the court.

He picked up the sport at an early age from his father, a former professional soccer player who, after hanging up his boots, transitioned to developing sports equipment — including badminton rackets — for a university in Monterrey.

"We started playing in an old gym in the university, just for fun," the Mexican said. "I was practically still a baby, playing badminton in a diaper. I just got addicted to hitting that shuttle."

However, after finally returning from his illness, at the beginning of 2018, Garrido's career faced another demoralizing body blow, when he suffered the first of several knee injuries.

"I destroyed my right knee playing in a tournament," he recalled. "I destroyed everything: the patella, tendon, knee ligaments, and both menisci."

Over the next four years, he underwent eight knee surgeries — five on the right, three on the left.

"It was quite painful. Not only physically, but also mentally," he recalled. "I thought about retiring in 2022, but I couldn't get the Olympic dream out of my mind. I know I'm not going to win a medal, and this is not to be pessimistic or negative; it's just the truth."

"With all the injuries I've had and all the time I've lost, I know my position; I know who I am. I know I'm going to fight, and even if I have to give my life, I will compete," he said.

Garrido revealed that he considered retiring after the Olympics, but now, he knows that he will continue.

"I think I have more energy, more fuel to keep going, even though my body sometimes feels a little tired. But, I believe that I can still do it, and I think I will be here for a long time, and hopefully I can start playing in the big tournaments."

No matter the results in Paris, the world No 67 is thankful he chose to keep playing. "It doesn't matter who is in front of me. Considering everything, it's just a dream to be here."

OIS - CHINA DAILY

## TABLE TENNIS

## China's paddlers win hearts as well as matches

By SUN XIAOCHEN in Paris

Just like the NBA players on the United States' 1992 "Dream Team", China's all-conquering table tennis squad has managed, in its own way, to turn its opponents into fans at the Olympics.

The ping-pong "dream team", undisputed favorite in all five disciplines in Paris, has seen its massive appeal extend from fans back home to a worldwide following, with players of some rival delegations becoming admirers of the dominant, yet approachable, Chinese champions.

While their fellow superstars on the basketball team cause an uproar everywhere they appear in Paris, players on the US table tennis team have found different superstars to look up to at the Games.

"They're all truly the best players in the world. Ma Long is the GOAT (greatest of all time). He's been around for so long, he's a living legend. It will be a dream to be able to play alongside him," US women's singles player Lily Zhang said when asked who she'd pick as a "dream partner" in mixed doubles at a news conference last week.

Starting with Zhang, the most experienced paddler on Team USA, her younger teammates Amy Wang and Rachel Sung both joined the



From left: Lily Zhang, Amy Wang and Rachel Sung of the United States table tennis team reveal that their "dream" mixed doubles partners would all be members of Team China. CHINA NEWS SERVICE

fun discussion of the best possible partner from Team China.

"It would be an absolute honor to play with any of them. The one I really want to play mixed doubles with is Lin Gaoyuan, who is not on the Chinese team this year," said Wang, who cruised past Priscilla Tommy of Vanuatu 4-0 in 25 minutes in her career first Olympic match, and will face Puerto Rico's Adriana Diaz in the women's singles second round on Tuesday.

"I'm his No 1 fan. I met him a few years ago and liked him from that moment. He's a left-hander so we would make a good doubles pair," said Wang, a 22-year-old right-hander who won two Pan-American Games gold medals last year.

And for Sung, Wang's doubles partner and roommate at UCLA, it's a no-brainer to pick nine-time world champion Fan Zhendong as her favorite.

"I would love to play with Fan

Zhendong. I met him the first time about 10 years ago during a trip to China's Liaoning province, and I've admired his game ever since," said Sung, a 20-year-old who won the doubles title with Wang at the Pan Am Games.

"He's the best in the world, and he looks cute to me."

As the table tennis competitions get into full swing in Paris, the best from the rest of the world, despite being left behind by Team China in any number of records and rankings in the sport, mince no words about their ambitions and their biggest motivation — to beat China's aces on the Olympic stage.

"Everyone knows they're the favorites. It's a good sign if I get to play against them because it means I'm in the semifinals," said world No 6, Brazil's Hugo Calderano, the only world top-10 player from Latin America.

"I believe it's possible to do it, and also to beat them. I've done it a couple of times before. You need to be in top form, because they are always well prepared," said Calderano, who stunned Fan in the most recent David-and-Goliath battle to win a WTT tour title in South Korea in March.

"The level of the other countries has risen a lot in the last few years. There are many, many very strong

players who can face the Chinese and challenge them. I'm sure I'm one of them, and I hope to be able to compete against them and perform well."

As aspiring as their challengers are, the mighty Chinese proved their intimidating strength when they got underway in Paris.

All the Chinese men's and women's singles stars have sailed smoothly into their respective second rounds, while the early exit of Japan's reigning Olympic champion mixed doubles pair Hina Hayata and Tomokazu Harimoto on Saturday has all but cleared the way for Team China to achieve its aim of a clean sweep of all five gold medals in Paris.

"We are definitely paying attention to them, but we don't think so far ahead. It's more important for us to focus on each match as it comes," current men's world No 1 Wang Chuqin said of the Japanese team after beating Egypt's Omar Assar and Dina Meshref in the mixed doubles first round alongside partner Sun Yingsha.

"Anybody who is able to represent their country at the Olympic Games is an athlete with a certain level of ability. I hope we'll be able to get better and better as the matches progress," said Sun, the women's top seed.

## CULTURE



Thai fans welcome Labubu at Suvarnabhumi Airport in early July. The doll was invited by the Tourism Authority of Thailand to promote the country's tourism.  
YANG WANLI / CHINA DAILY

# Teddy tempts tourists

Cute economy brings Thai and Chinese youth even closer,  
Yang Wanli reports in Bangkok.

In the newly opened Emsphere shopping mall, a fashion landmark in Bangkok, long lines form in front of a Thai dessert shop during the weekend.

The crowd consists mainly of excited tourists, many of them obsessed not with the cakes or cookies on sale but with a 30-second opportunity to take selfies with a furry doll known as Butterbear.

Fans of the bear, mostly young travelers from China and South Korea, come from afar with a must-do list and photos with the mascot, whose popularity is likened to a pop star.

"Butterbear is one of the Thai top streamers on Chinese social media. She is super cute. A selfie with her will definitely attract comments and likes on the internet," said Wu Qian from Chongqing in Southwest China. She visited Bangkok with her boyfriend in early July. The couple planned their trip to Thailand to coincide with the bear's "picture time," which is limited to weekend afternoons. Every customer is allowed to have just 30 seconds for a photo with the character and the lines usually stretch about two hours.

The major Thai confectionery brand is also reaping the rewards of the bear's popularity, with brisk sales of its products in Bangkok and upcoming shops in China set to offer various items extending to merchandise such as bags and cups with the mascot's image.

Butterbear began drawing attention in May and has about 430,000 followers on Instagram. On Chinese lifestyle app Xiaohongshu and short video platform TikTok, it has attracted nearly 1 million followers in total.

The "cute factor" behind the brand's bear is just one part of its ability to become a viral hit on social media and captivate wide audiences.

"The bear's K-pop dance moves are very interesting and unique," Wu from Chongqing said, adding that it presents "a happy vibe and an easygoing lifestyle."

The successful marketing formula is not entirely new, with the Thai Krungsri Bank coming up with a "dancing banana" that also became popular on social media. Similar to Butterbear's role in bridging cultures, a Labubu toy doll has gone a step further in helping to boost cross-border relations.



Their impact on social media and ability to draw international attention is testament to the universal language of cuteness."

Muangphum Harnsiripetch,  
Thai scholar of international relations

As a popular mascot produced by Beijing-based toy company Pop Mart, Labubu — with its high, pointed ears and serrated teeth — became a highly sought-after item in Thailand after K-pop sensation Lisa of the Blackpink group posted a photo of herself holding a Labubu Macaron toy on social media.

In July, the doll was "invited" to Thailand by tourism authorities to promote the pillar sector. At Suvarnabhumi Airport, it was given the accolade, "Amazing Thailand Experience Explorer."

"My Thai friends asked me to purchase some editions of Labubu that are out of stock or extremely hard to buy in Thailand but may still be available in China. Some editions are also rare in China and you may have more of a chance to get them in the big cities," said Patcharaporn Pomsirigol, a senior Thai student at Zhejiang University.

She said many of her peers aged between 20 and 30 are fans of Labubu or Crybaby — another Pop Mart toy, created by a Thai designer. These toys, at 20 centimeters tall, are usually sold at no more than 100 yuan (\$14) each, but the price from scalpers can be double or fivefold for limited editions.

"They are not just toys, but an art collection, which is cute and carries more meanings," Patcharaporn said, adding that many young people also enjoy the uncertainty and feeling of being surprised by purchasing blind boxes, in which the toys are revealed only when the packages are opened, from retail shops.

## Local advantage

The popularity of the products reflects the enormous potential of the toy doll and art design markets in Southeast Asia, said Jeremy Lee, marketing director of Pop Mart Southeast Asia.

He also emphasized the importance of product localization, which embeds local culture or beliefs into the art toys.



Top: Labubu receives the title of "Amazing Thailand Experience Explorer" from the Thai minister of tourism and sports (middle) and the governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (left). PHOTO PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Above: Butterbear started gaining eyeballs in May and now has nearly 430,000 followers on Instagram. YANG WANLI / CHINA DAILY

"Local designers usually have their works that are inspired by the culture of their home countries," he said, adding that the designs can connect emotionally with local consumers and citing the Crybaby doll that is well-known for its "unyielding spirit."

Another example is the company's beloved Peach Riot toy, which is said to convey a spirit of freedom and individuality. "It is very popular among consumers in North America as the toy echoes the values they recognize. So we hope to cooperate with more local artists and fully release the commercial value of their designs," Lee said.

## Fanning out

In Thailand, Labubu also helps fuel the business of related products, such as costumes, makeup and decorations for the doll. For rare editions, owners and collectors will even buy plastic covers for the doll to keep it in good condition.

"There are also metal teeth braces for Labubu as orthodontics are very popular among Thai people," said Arisa Sriduangjai, a college teacher in Thailand who is also a fan of Labubu. She had a Labubu toy on her handbag and dressed it in a SWAT uniform and a mini plastic rifle.

Arisa is one of the hundreds of Labubu fans who was at Suvarnabhumi Airport on July 3 to welcome its arrival.

"About 80 percent of my colleagues have a Labubu toy. Some have placed them on their office desks and talk to the toy as a friend. For me, the value of the doll is not just on its cuteness, but also as an investment like gold. Some limited editions will be priced much higher in future," said Preeyadee Polwong, 32, who owns more than a hundred Labubu dolls.

To members of the younger generation, the impact from key influencers, either celebrities or internet bloggers, cannot be understated, said Muangphum Harnsiripetch, a Thai scholar who studies international relations.

Different from the older generations in Thailand and China who mostly learned about each other through radio, television and books, he said the internet, with social media in particular, plays a more influential role of promoting cultural exchanges.

"Both Butterbear and Labubu demonstrate the power of cultural fusion, creating a blend that resonates with people across different countries. Their impact on social media and ability to draw international attention is testament to the universal language of cuteness," he said.

Culture and lifestyle are topics that can easily stimulate the common interests of young people from different countries, said Fu Zengyou, a former dean of the Confucius Institute at Chulalongkorn University who stayed in Thailand for decades.

He said Thailand and China have deep cultural connections, in terms of language, art, cuisine and even religious beliefs. Apart from art toys, he said many Thai people nowadays also love the traditional Chinese *hanfu* attire and spicy mala food.

"Culture leads young people to explore the outside world," Fu said.

"Thailand and China are now close partners and the mutual visa exemption is a boost to people-to-people exchanges. People from the two countries should visit each other ... As the old saying goes, 'seeing is believing.'"

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## Two nations' bond deepens over decades

By YANG WANLI

As China and Thailand have benefited from cultural exchange since ancient times, people-to-people exchanges between the two countries are increasingly close, showing unprecedented vitality over the past years with the all-round development of bilateral relations, said Fu Zengyou, former dean of the Confucius Institute at Chulalongkorn University.

Recalling his first trip to Thailand in 1980, Fu said many people from the two countries barely knew each other then, partially due to poor transportation and a lack of communication. The condition had not changed until 1975, when China and Thailand officially established diplomatic relations.

Invited by the Thai government for an exchange program, Fu and two other Chinese scholars who studied the Thai language traveled to Bangkok from Beijing by plane. Back then, there was no direct flight between the two cities and they had to transfer twice at Kunming in Southwest China's Yunnan province and Vientiane, the capital of Laos.

"It was an old flight. When it flew above the mountainous region at the border, we were told to wear life jackets. No one asked the cabin crew for a reason, leaving only an unearthly silence," he recalled.

The plane eventually flew back to Vientiane and took off again after a two-hour repair. Fu's Chinese friends had to bid farewell to the group twice in a day, as the plane returned even before they left the airport.

"It was really an unforgettable and arduous journey," Fu said, making a special mention of four apples given by his neighbor as a farewell gift before he left Beijing. "I should thank her for the wishes of peace and safety for the trip," he said.

During their stay in Thailand, Fu said many Thai people asked him lots of questions about China. Apart from ordinary ones such as whether China had banks or photo studios, many Thai people asked questions that came from bizarre rumors that went far beyond Fu's imagination.

"They asked me if we would kill elderly people aged more than 70 years old and used their bodies as fertilizer. Also, they were curious about my marriage and ask whether my wife was picked from a group of women that were 'arranged' by the government," Fu recalled with laughter.

"Those questions with bias mostly resulted from a lack of mutual understanding for a long time. It exactly indicated the importance of communication. Friendship only forms when you know each other well," he said, adding that language learning played a crucial role in promoting exchanges and deepening understanding between people from different countries.

As co-founder of Thailand's first department of Chinese language that was launched in 1996 at Srinakharinwirot University and vice-chairman of the Thai Chinese teachers' union, Fu said Chinese language learning has been booming among Thai people over the past decades.

"Since Thailand and China built diplomatic relations in 1975, the Thai government has encouraged learning Mandarin thanks to the efforts from Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, who had a leading role in particular," Fu said.

Having been to China more than 50 times, the Thai princess learned Mandarin well and even translated several Chinese novels into Thai. She also made great efforts to deepen the exchanges and cooperation between the two countries in the fields of education, traditional medicine, science and technology, and even aerospace.

"More than building bridges of friendship, Princess Sirindhorn embodies the solid bond that unites China and Thailand," Fu said. Different from the 1980s when few people could speak Mandarin, he said now all Thai schools have Mandarin classes.

Over the past 20 years, about 20,000 volunteer teachers from China have given language classes in Thai schools and helped to train Mandarin teachers for the kingdom.

Tens of thousands of Thai students head to China annually, studying a wide range of subjects, including Mandarin, medicine, IT, science and technology. In China, the number of colleges providing Thai language classes has also increased, from seven in the 1990s to more than 50 now.

"Historically, cultural exchange between China and Thailand has been rich and multifaceted," Fu said.

"As the two countries see closer ties now, people-to-people exchanges will keep upgrading to a higher level and their long-standing friendship will also reach a new stage."



Pop Mart opened its first "Labubu" IP Concept store in Bangkok in early July. Labubu's pop dance has attracted fans for a selfie chance.  
PHOTO PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY