

Bowing out

Japanese PM to step down amid public distrust over fundraising scandals
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Exports of cooling appliances peak in midst of heat waves
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CHINA DAILY

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On the fast track



Indonesian President Joko Widodo (second from right) on Tuesday rides the Chinese-developed Autonomous Rail Rapid Transit system in Nusantara, Indonesia's new capital. Widodo expressed confidence that ART could provide a more sustainable and cost-effective alternative to traditional rail systems in the country. INDONESIAN PRESIDENTIAL PALACE VIA XINHUA

XI'S VISION | GREEN DEVELOPMENT

Nation makes big strides in clean energy

Efforts to promote ecological civilization, seek green transition achieving fruitful outcomes

By **HOU LIQIANG**
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From the shimmering solar panels carpeting the desert to hydrogen-producing facilities humming in inland industrial bases and giant wind turbines lining the coasts, China's green transition is leaving its mark across the country.

Guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization, the nation has steadfastly implemented a series of institutional mechanisms for promoting low-carbon transition, paving the way for a green, sustainable future.

Experts said they believe that the world's second-largest economy will continue to etch more green imprints on its vast territory, as the country advances reforms to promote ecological civilization.

Their confidence comes as China gears up for its second National Ecology Day, which falls on Thursday and has the theme "Accelerating Green Transition in all Areas of Economic and Social Development".

Ecological civilization is a concept promoted by President Xi Jinping for balanced and sustainable development that features harmonious coexistence between mankind and nature.

One of the 10 tenets of Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization is that green development is a profound revolution in the concept of development.

Xi, who is also general secretary of

the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, has attached great importance to the green and low-carbon transition.

When addressing the National Conference on Ecological and Environmental Protection in July last year, Xi emphasized that China should accelerate the green and low-carbon transformation of its development models, maintain green and low-carbon development as the fundamental solution to ecological and environmental issues, accelerate the formation of green production modes and lifestyles, and lay a green foundation for high-quality development.

As part of that effort, an 18-megawatt, semi-direct drive offshore wind turbine was successfully installed in early June at a coastal test base in Shantou, Guangdong province.

With a rotor diameter of 260 meters, it is the world's largest installed offshore wind turbine, according to its developer, Dongfang Electric Corp. Its swept area is more than 53,000 square meters, equivalent to 7.4 soccer fields.

It can generate up to 72 million kilowatt hours of electricity a year, which is enough to meet the annual electricity demand of about 36,000 households, while saving more than 22,000 metric tons of standard coal and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by more than 59,000 tons.

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INDONESIA, CHINESE FIRMS COMBINE TO DRIVE EV GROWTH

Greater environmental awareness, joint ventures increase demand in Southeast Asian country

By **YANG HAN** in Hong Kong and **LEONARDUS JEGHO** in Jakarta



After driving his Wuling Binguo electric vehicle for about half a year, Luthfi, a resident of Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, found the experience of using his

first EV to be "pretty good".
"The (EV charging) is cheap ... and the car is quite small so I can

move on the road easily," said the 45-year-old, who goes by one name. One of the first buyers of a Wuling BinguoEV, a compact electric car launched in Indonesia in December, Luthfi said he chose it because the manufacturer, SAIC-GM-Wuling, has been in Indonesia for seven years,

and the vehicles are made locally. SGMW is a joint venture between SAIC Motor, General Motors and Liuzhou Wuling Motor. It is based in Liuzhou, in South China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region.

See *EVs*, page 2

Reverse brain drain: More Chinese scientists leaving US

By **MAYZHOU** in Houston
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Scientists of Chinese descent in the United States have been leaving the country because of "pull factors" from China and the "push factor" of the China Initiative in 2018, according to a major research study published in an American scientific journal.

The trend suggests a reverse brain drain, and the data for the analysis is extensive.

The study, published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, used Microsoft Academic Graph to analyze trends in the migration of US-based Chinese scientists between 2010 and 2021. The database tracks more than 200 million scientists from over 25,000 institutions worldwide.

Also, a brief on the study, published in July by the Stanford Center on

China's Economy and Institutions, concluded that the discontinued China Initiative "provided scientists of Chinese descent in the US with higher incentives to leave and lower incentives to apply for federal grants". The purported objective of the China Initiative — launched by the Justice Department under the Trump administration and halted in 2022 under the Biden administration — was to reduce economic espionage.

The study identified the working countries of researchers through their academic affiliations in publications and tracked those with Chinese surnames who initially published in the US but later changed their affiliations to institutions abroad.

The study identified 19,955 scientists of Chinese descent who began their careers in the US but left for other countries, including China, between 2010 and 2021. The

number of scientists of Chinese descent migrating out of the US steadily increased from 900 in 2010 to 2,621 in 2021.

The researchers said that contributing to the trend were "pull factors" from China, including the country's large and rapidly growing investments in science, high social prestige, and attractive financial rewards connected to positions in Chinese institutions.

But the analysis also showed a "push factor" in the US. Following the implementation of the China Initiative, departures of US-based, China-born scientists increased by 75 percent, the study found.

The data showed that as of 2021, of those leaving the US, the percentage of scientists moving back to China increased to 67 percent, up from 48 percent in 2010. The life sciences field witnessed the most significant exodus

abroad, with more than 1,000 life scientists leaving in 2021.

The researchers also conducted an online survey of 1,304 US-based scientists of Chinese descent between December 2021 and March 2022 to find out why more were leaving.

The survey results revealed the chilling effect following the China Initiative. About 35 percent of Chinese scientists in the US said that they felt unwelcome; 72 percent didn't feel safe as academic researchers; 42 percent were fearful of conducting research; and 65 percent were worried about collaborations with China.

Of the five possible reasons for "not feeling safe as an academic researcher in the US", the No 1 reason cited by the respondents — 67 percent of them — was fear of "US government investigations into Chinese-origin researchers".

About 45 percent of respondents

said that they now avoid federal research grants, and 61 percent said that they considered leaving the US.

MIT Professor Gang Chen, who had espionage charges against him under the China Initiative that were dismissed in 2022, said publicly that after undergoing the lengthy legal process that damaged his reputation and forced many of his students to adjust their career paths, he was avoiding federally funded research out of fear.

Students from China have been an important source of US-based scientists for more than two decades. The study said that in 2020, of all US doctoral degrees in science and engineering, 17 percent — roughly 5,800 of 34,000 — went to foreign students from China, and the vast majority of those had chosen to stay in the US in previous years.

"It's unfortunate that the China

Initiative has turned out to be a government-sanctioned persecution of people of Chinese heritage," a STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) professor in Houston who spoke under anonymity told China Daily. "The federal government was wrong to prosecute people primarily based on race. It is not a surprise that such a practice has created fear in the community."

An analysis by Race, Racism and the Law, a civil rights group, concluded that of the 148 defendants across 77 cases collected in the FBI database, 130 — approximately 90 percent — were of Chinese heritage.

Only 25 percent of them were convicted, and few of the convictions were related to espionage. The conviction rate was dramatically lower than the Justice Department's 91 percent overall conviction rate.

In June, Marcia McNutt, the president of the National Academy of Sciences, said that while the US still spends the most money of any country on research and development, China is set to soon outpace those investments.

Starmer recalibrates UK foreign policy for global justice

After the Hamas attack on Israel on Oct 7, Israel stopped the entry of food, fuel and medicine into Gaza. When asked by a London-based radio station on Oct 11 if the cutting off of power and water was appropriate, Keir Starmer, leader of the Labour party, said, "Israel does have that right." Although he qualified this by adding "everything must be done within international law", people were aghast.

However, since entering 10 Downing Street as Prime Minister on July 5, Starmer has shown fresh thinking over Gaza. He has not only broken with the approaches of his predecessor, Rishi Sunak, but also



distanced the United Kingdom from the United States. And it is not hard to see why.

On July 5, medical journal The Lancet reported that, as of June 19, 37,396 people had been killed in the Gaza Strip since Israel's full-scale invasion began on Oct 27. It also pointed out that the true death toll could reach over 186,000 people, almost 8 percent of Gaza's prewar population of 2.3 million.

This was because the official figure did not include the thousands of people buried under rubble and the indirect deaths due to the destruction of health facilities, food distribution centers and other public infrastructure.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, a relief agency, also reported that thousands of Palestinians were trapped in eastern Khan Younis "amid intense casualties", and that rescue teams were "unable to reach them due to the denial of access by the Israeli military".

It came, therefore, as no surprise that, on May 20, Karim Khan KC,

the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, filed an application for warrants of arrest against Israeli leaders for alleged war crimes in Gaza, but also against Hamas leaders for their alleged offenses in Israel on Oct 7.

Khan said that he had "reasonable grounds" to believe that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, bore "criminal responsibility" for "war crimes and crimes against humanity". Their actions allegedly included willful killings, willfully causing great suffering or serious injury, intentionally directing attacks against a civilian popula-

tion, using starvation as a method of warfare, and "other inhumane acts".

Apart from Netanyahu and Gallant, Khan also sought arrest warrants for three Hamas leaders, Yahya Sinwar, Mohammed Deif and Ismail Haniyeh (Deif and Haniyeh have since been assassinated by Israel). This arose out of their alleged involvement in the killings of at least 1,200 Israelis on Oct 7 and the seizure of hostages.

Once Khan announced his applications, the US reacted with fury. The last thing it wanted to see was its proxies being held accountable in a court of law. Not surprisingly, the Sunak government tamely played along.

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PAGE TWO



Left: A staff member recharges a Wuling Airev at the service station of the 43rd Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit in Jakarta, Indonesia, on Sept 6. XU QIN / XINHUA **Middle:** A Wuling Airev is seen on a street in Jakarta on Sept 29. XU QIN / XINHUA **Right:** An employee works on an assembly line of Wuling Motors Indonesia in Bekasi, Indonesia, on Feb 24. XU QIN / XINHUA

EVs: Electrifying Indonesia's auto landscape

From page 1

The joint venture's plant in Indonesia, the first of its kind outside China, started production in 2017. It has invested a total of \$1 billion to build the manufacturing base, which includes a factory with an annual production capacity of 120,000 units and a parts and components park.

While Japanese cars are a familiar sight on the busy roads of Indonesia's capital Jakarta, Jefri Setiawan is seeing more Chinese vehicles as he drives to work every morning.

The 40-year-old mid-level manager is the proud owner of Wuling BinguoEV. He bought the car three months ago after visiting a motor show at the Jakarta International Expo.

He decided to buy the model as it is more affordable than higher-priced brands such as Chery, Neta and BYD — the latest Chinese EVs to enter the Indonesian market — and similar vehicles from Japan, South Korea, the United States and the United Kingdom.

Wuling and other Chinese brands also attracted a lot of interest at the Gaikindo Indonesia International Auto Show, which ran from July 18 to 28 in Jakarta. The event — the largest auto show in Indonesia and one of the biggest in Southeast Asia — was organized by the Association of Indonesian Automotive Industries.

Growing appeal

Since 2017, over 150,000 vehicles from Wuling have been sold in Indonesia, said Wang Weisen, deputy general manager of SGMW Motor Indonesia, or Wuling Motors.

The Wuling BinguoEV is the second EV model Wuling introduced in Indonesia, following the Airev, which was launched in 2022.

In 2023, Airev and BinguoEV sold more than 10,000 units, making them the two best-selling new EVs in Indonesia and securing the company the top spot in the market, with a 50 percent share. In May, Wuling's latest model, the CloudEV, which has a more spacious cabin, was launched to meet the different needs of drivers.

"Between January and June 2024, Wuling accounted for 68.4 percent of the new energy vehicle market in Indonesia," Wang said.

Rubby Lie, branch head of Prima Wahana Auto Mobil, Wuling's largest authorized dealership in Indonesia, attributed the popularity of Chinese cars to rising awareness about the need to reduce carbon emissions to combat climate change.

A 2023 survey by consulting firm PwC estimated that Indonesia's EV market will exceed \$20 billion by 2030 due to consumer awareness of eco-friendly vehicles and government incentives.

"Electric cars will continue to enter Indonesia. Using them is now becoming a trend in Indonesia," Lie told China Daily. He said the presence of China's BYD and other renowned brands in Indonesia is attracting more local buyers.

In May, Indonesian Transportation Minister Budi Karya Sumadi said the number of EVs in Indonesia had reached 33,225 units. The figure was nearly four times the 7,923 EV vehicles sold between January and November 2022, according to the industries association.

Lie said favorable government policies, such as extending fiscal incentives and easing the deadline for manufacturers to fulfill a 40 percent quota of local components for EVs, had encouraged more automakers to build plants in the country.

"Since last year, an increasing number of Chinese EV brands have entered the Indonesian market, which not only provides local consumers with more options, but also supports the development of Indonesia's EV industry," said Garinzafira Shabrina, analysis supervisor of SGMW Motor Indonesia.

Shabrina, who joined Wuling in 2018, said she was a bit nervous at first, as she did not know much about the working style of Chinese companies.

"Now I feel very proud about working at Wuling," said Shabrina, noting the company has more than 130,000 Indonesian customers, and a sales service network of 150 partners.

Investment incentives

Arnold, who only shared his given name, has worked at a sales center of a Chinese EV brand in Indonesia for almost a year. Before joining the company, he worked for South Korean carmaker Hyundai.



A visitor experiences a Changan DEEPAL S7 during the 45th Bangkok International Motor Show in Bangkok, Thailand, on March 27. WANG TENG / XINHUA



A worker on the production line of the SAIC Motor-CP manufacturing plant in Chonburi, Thailand, on Sept 7. WANG TENG / XINHUA

"I joined the Chinese EV company because I saw more people in Indonesia are buying EVs and the government has provided incentives," said Arnold, adding this will create better work opportunities for him.

The Indonesian government has encouraged stakeholders to accelerate the development of the ecosystem for EVs to boost their investments.

In June, Indonesia's Ministry of Industry reached an agreement with four Chinese EV companies — Wuling, Neta, Chery, and Sokon — to make the Southeast Asian country an export production hub of environmentally friendly vehicles, according to Indonesian national news agency Antara.

The country has a local production target of about 600,000 electric vehicles by 2030.

Due to its abundant nickel reserves — a key material for making EV batteries — Indonesia is also keen to establish itself as a battery manufacturing hub.

Fahmy Radhi, an economist and car industry observer from Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, said it would take time for Chinese brands to dominate the Indonesian market, and overtake sales of Japanese and Korean cars.

"Chinese cars are newcomers. But, they have good prospects here," Radhi told China Daily.

He said China's rapid technological innovation has enabled it to manufacture high-quality products, removing the stigma that Chinese-made goods are lower quality.

"I wish to see Chinese EVs in my campus' parking lots and on Yogyakarta's roads one day," Radhi said.

Localization push

Wang, Wuling's deputy general manager, said the company is also working to localize its supply chain. More than 40 percent of the components for its three EV models are produced locally.

The company is working with Indonesia's national electricity utility, Perusahaan Listrik Negara, and other partners to build 1,000 public alternating current charging stations across Indonesia. A total of 100 direct current charging stations are also expected to be completed this year in Indonesia's major cities and along highways.

Indonesia and 14 other Asian countries including India, Thailand and Japan, along with many former British colonial countries such as Australia and New Zealand, have right-hand drive vehicles that travel on the left side of the road.

"In the future, we will turn Indonesia into a global right-hand drive vehicle base for Wuling and continue to launch competitive products to cover the major right-hand drive markets in Southeast Asia and around the world," said Wang.

In 2023, Wuling manufactured and exported over 1,500 new energy vehicles from Indonesia.

Besides Indonesia, Chinese EV companies have been actively expanding to Southeast Asian markets to increase their local presence.

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With Chinese help, Thailand aims to become production hub

By YANG WANLI in Bangkok
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To achieve the Thai government's goal of building the country into the electric vehicle hub of Southeast Asia, the kingdom is welcoming Chinese EV manufacturers and their innovative technologies to integrate with local industrial chains.

Thailand has set a target of making 30 percent of its car production EVs by 2030.

"We welcome Chinese companies with new quality productive forces to set up their factories and even regional headquarters in Thailand. In return, Thailand will release more incentive measures to support their development," said Thailand's minister of industry, Pimphattra Wichaikul.

Speaking at a recent forum, Pimphattra noted the important role the EV industry will play in the country achieving its sustainable development goals. "This will not only benefit us, but also future generations," she said.

As countries are becoming more aware of the impact of climate change, EVs have become more important for them to achieve their green development goals.

In February, Thai Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin unveiled his "Thailand Vision" at Government House, which laid out ambitious plans for making the country a hub for tourism, medical services, food, aviation, logistics, electric vehicles, the digital economy, and finance.

Srettha said his government aimed to turn Thailand into a future mobility hub with a goal of drawing over 1 trillion baht (\$28.67 billion) in foreign investment. "Thailand used to be called the Detroit of Asia. Now, the auto industry is transforming into the EV industry so Thailand will become a hub of future mobility," Srettha said.

The government also outlined three major measures — developing skilled workers, increasing EV usage, and supporting research and development — to build Thailand into the biggest EV production hub in Southeast Asia.

Last year, about 76,000 EVs were sold in Thailand, with about 80 percent of

them Chinese models, according to Thai authorities.

Many Chinese automakers, including MG, Great Wall Motor, NETA, Changan and GAC Aion, have chosen the kingdom as their primary production base in the region.

According to The Board of Investment of Thailand, most Chinese EV makers have agreed to the government's request to use auto parts made by Thai companies. Great Wall Motor, for instance, wants to source 80 to 90 percent of its EV components from local materials.

Chongqing-based Changan Automobile, which has committed to investing up to 10 billion baht in Thailand, will start with a local content proportion of 60 percent, increasing it to 90 percent in the future, the Bangkok Post reported.

"Chinese EV enterprises are bringing production lines to Thailand, which not only enhances local employment, but also meets the requirement of our own target of transforming some eastern provinces into a new corridor of innovation and economic growth," said Kanate Wangpaichitr, assistant secretary general of the Eastern Economic Corridor, an economic promotion zone.

The EEC lies at the heart of Thailand's 20-year strategy to achieve high-income status by 2036 through a range of top-down initiatives.

"Collaboration between Thailand and China on high-quality EV production is a reflection of China's modernization and its benefits to the Global South," said Wirun Phichaiwongphakdee, director of the Thailand-China Research Center of the Belt and Road Initiative.

He said China's high-quality development and high-level opening-up provide great opportunities for Southeast Asian countries to accelerate industrial upgrades and reforms through joint efforts with China.

"For example, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and EEC — two areas that enjoy close proximity — can make their respective advantages complementary to each other. Such collaboration will bring win-win results to both sides and benefit its people," he added.

TOP NEWS

Sand therapy turns Xinjiang's deserts into a tourist magnet

By MAO WEIHUA in Urumqi and CHEN MEILING

The healing powers of the sun and the sand have turned the vast swathes of deserts in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region into hot travel destinations, catering to the well-being of those who believe in natural remedies and also reinvigorating the local tourism industry.

Many visitors to the region are flocking to Turpan — a city located about 180 kilometers southeast of the regional capital Urumqi — where a health center offers comprehensive packages that include accommodations and therapies involving sand and Chinese medicinal herbs.

Sand therapy is a traditional treatment among Uygur people. Xinjiang has a long history of using the therapeutic properties of hot sand, combined with other treatments, to promote blood circulation, treat rheumatic diseases and improve sleep quality, often achieving remarkable results.

At the Sand Therapy Health Center, located in the Kumtag Desert scenic zone of Turpan's Shanshan county, guests are offered the unique experience of burying the affected parts of their body in the sand under the scorching sun, with temperatures of the sand surface reaching up to 50 C.

The staff from Shanshan County Hospital of Uygur Medicine, which built the health center, smear olive oil on the affected parts of a guest's body, test the sand temperature, dig a suitable hole and help the guest start the treatment. Beach umbrellas are provided for sun protection.

A combination of sunlight, dry heat, pressure and magnetic force is often used to alleviate pain from conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis and cervical spondylosis.

Zhou Jianli, a resident of Xinjiang's Aksu prefecture who had suffered a waist injury, visited the health center. "Sand therapy is more useful than hot compress, and also feels very comfortable," Zhou said.

Xie Zongheng and his wife, who drove from Foshan, Guangdong province, opted for a seven-day sand therapy package at the center.

"Guangdong is relatively humid. We came here to beat the dampness," Xie said. "At first, it (the sand) was hot, but after several minutes, the temperature became comfortable. My whole body felt relaxed," he said after the treatment.

Reyima Arken, a doctor at the center, said that outdoor therapy services begin after 5:30 pm, as a mandatory measure to protect guests against heat strokes. In the morning and at night, the therapy is done indoors, using heated sand mixed with traditional Chinese medicinal herbs or salts.

During the session, each of which lasts about 15 to 30 minutes, the center's staff take care of other needs such as offering guests drinking water or helping them wipe away sweat, she added.

About 55,000 people experienced the treatment in Shanshan county from June to July, resulting in a tourism revenue of around 8 million yuan, according to local authorities.

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Panda expecting twins in Berlin

Cubs will be the first in five years to be born in the city

By CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels
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The Berlin Zoo has announced that its 11-year-old female giant panda Meng Meng is pregnant again with twins and, if everything goes well, could give birth by the end of the month.

The announcement was made on Monday after zoo authorities conducted an ultrasound examination over the weekend that showed the developing fetuses. Giant panda experts from China had arrived in Berlin on Sunday to assist with preparations for the ultrasound.

Meng Meng was artificially inseminated in March. According to the zoo, female giant pandas are only fertile for approximately 72 hours each year.

"One heartbeat could initially be made out on the ultrasound equipment, and shortly thereafter a second as well," the zoo announcement said, adding that the fetuses are now 2.5 centimeters long, but will grow significantly by the end of the month.

Gestation generally takes three to six months, but the zoo said that dormancy — a period of up to several months in giant pandas during which an egg remains suspended in the mother's uterus and does not continue to develop — was the reason for the delay in confirming Meng Meng's pregnancy.

Zoo veterinarian Franziska Sutter told media that the pregnancy was still at a risky phase.

"Amid all the enthusiasm, we have to realize that this is a very early stage of the pregnancy and that a so-called resorption, or death, of the embryo is still possible at this stage," she said.

If everything goes smoothly, the cubs will be the first in five years to be born at the Berlin Zoo after Meng Meng gave birth to twin cubs, Pit and Paule, in August 2019. They were the first giant pandas born in Germany and became stars at the zoo.

Both Pit and Paule, whose Chinese names are Meng Xiang and Meng Yuan, returned to China in December to join the breeding program under an agreement with the Chinese government.



Female panda Meng Meng, who is pregnant with twins, sits in her enclosure at Zoo Berlin in Germany on Tuesday. The zoo will welcome panda cubs after five years. PHOTOS BY SEBASTIAN GOLLNOW / DPA / AP

Their parents, Meng Meng and Jiao Qing, arrived at the Berlin Zoo in 2017.

In early July, Ouwehands Dierenpark, a zoo in the Netherlands, announced that its giant panda Wu Wen gave birth to a cub. A second cub that was born about an hour later died shortly after birth.

The surviving cub is the second born at the Dutch zoo after Fan Xing was born in 2020. Fan Xing, a female, returned to China in September last year to join the breeding program.

In Spain, the Madrid Zoo Aquarium formally introduced a new pair of giant pandas, Jin Xi and Zhu Yu, in May in a ceremony attended by Queen Sofia, who has been a giant panda advocate since the 1970s.

The arrival came after panda couple Bing Xing and Hua Zui Ba, accompanied by their three Madrid-born cubs Chulina, You You and Jiu Jiu, returned to China on Feb 29.

In Austria, the Schonbrunn Zoo in Vienna is expecting the arrival of a pair of giant pandas from China under a 10-year cooperation agreement on giant panda conservation that was signed in June.

The giant pandas Yuan Yuan and Yang Yang, who are now in Vienna,



A fetus is marked on the screen of an ultrasound machine in the panda enclosure of the Berlin zoo on Tuesday. Female panda Meng Meng is expecting twins.

will return to China after the expiration of an agreement this year.

The two sides have applauded their successful cooperation in giant panda breeding, scientific research, technical exchanges, personnel training and public education.

Yang Yang, a female, and Long Hui, a male, have had four litters in Vienna totaling five cubs through natural mating, which is a European record.

On Aug 8, giant panda twins Bao Di and Bao Mei in Belgium's Pairi Daiza zoo celebrated their fifth birthday in a ceremony attended by new Chinese Ambassador to Belgium Fei Shengchao.

The twins and their elder brother Tian Bao, born in 2016, will leave for China this autumn to join the breeding program.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Transition: Significant progress attributed to forward-looking policies

From page 1

The giant wind turbine is seen as a microcosm of China's success in positioning itself as a renewable energy leader around the globe in just four decades.

Data from the National Energy Administration shows that China have attracted a large amount of the world's 510 gigawatts of newly installed renewable energy capacity in 2023. The country also holds a dominant position in the production of photovoltaic components, wind turbines and batteries.

China's installed capacity of renewable energy hit 1.32 billion kW by the end of June 2023, exceeding that for coal-fired power, the administration said.

Ma Jun, director of the Beijing-

based Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs, said that China managed to make such significant progress thanks to a series of forward-looking policies for renewable energy development, guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization.

"These forward-looking policies have attracted a large amount of investment into the renewable energy sector, and then triggered intense market competition and also rapid innovation," Ma said.

For example, China introduced the subsidized price for renewable energy, or feed-in tariff, in 2006. The feed-in tariff — a surcharge on electricity bills — guaranteed solar and wind companies above-market prices for their energy.

After six adjustments to the sub-

sidies for wind power and eight for solar photovoltaic power, the on-grid power tariffs of these two types of renewable energy have now equalled those of coal-fired power.

Even greener future

With more new mechanisms being implemented as reforms for promoting ecological civilization continue, the country is going to embrace an even greener future, experts said.

Wang Jinan, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering, has highlighted the potential role of a recently implemented, area-specific environmental management mechanism in securing more low-carbon development.

In March, the general offices of the Communist Party of China Cen-

tral Committee and the State Council jointly released guidelines on a more area-specific approach to environmental management.

By 2025, the system for area-specific environmental management should be essentially established, and the system will be full-fledged and functioning efficiently by 2035, according to the guidelines.

Wang, who is also former president of the Chinese Academy of Environmental Planning, pointed to the country's previous functional zoning strategy as one that established an overarching pattern for development and protection in different regions.

Targeting much smaller areas, the area-specific environmental management mechanism is expected to provide better support for the coun-

try's green and low-carbon transition, he said.

Under the mechanism, more than 40,000 grids for ecological and environmental management have been set up across the country. Each of the grids has a tailored, specific blacklist for project introduction, he said.

Ma, the Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs director, said that with these grids and their blacklists, China has put into practice what is merely at the conceptual level in many other countries.

More reforms concerning green transition are on the way, as demonstrated by the resolution adopted by the third plenary session of the 20th CPC Central Committee in July.

The resolution highlighted the importance of focusing on building a beautiful China and promoting

harmonious coexistence between mankind and nature as a key aspect of the overall goal of further deepening reform, said Sun Jinlong, Party chief of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment.

China's economic and social development has entered a stage of high-quality development that features an even more green and low-carbon trend, but balancing high-quality development and high-level protection remains a daunting task, he said.

"Deepening ecological civilization reform and resolutely eliminating institutional mechanisms that hinder high-level protection and high-quality development will facilitate the green and low-carbon transition of development models," Sun said, adding that this "will cultivate green productivity with high-level protection and support high-quality development".

Xinhua contributed to this story.

Middle East: New British govt adopts responsible stance over Gaza

From page 1

The UK's coffers have benefited from the conflict, and it has exported arms worth over 576 million pounds (\$736 million) to Israel since 2008. This helps to explain why Sunak sought to undermine the ICC, although he stopped short of joining the US in maligning Khan, a British barrister.

However, the US was not able to formally challenge Khan's applications because it is not a party to the Rome Statute (which created the ICC). It had to rely on Sunak.

Accordingly, Sunak indicated that the UK would challenge the ICC's jurisdiction to prosecute the two Israeli leaders. This, as his lawyers should have explained, would have led nowhere, as Palestine became a state party to the Rome Statute in 2015. Although Israel is not a party, the ICC can still hold it

accountable because of the Rome Statute's provision that enables it to assume jurisdiction if a non-member state commits crimes on the territory of a member state.

However, with the UK's change of government, a more responsible stance has emerged. Starmer's government has indicated it will not be pursuing Sunak's objections to the ICC's jurisdiction. This is hopefully an indication that, with his legal background, Starmer appreciates that the legal order must be respected and that the UK can have no truck with squalid politicking.

Israel's spokesperson said it was "deeply disappointed by this fundamentally wrong decision". The legal officer for the International Centre of Justice for Palestinians, Zaki Sarraf, saw things differently. He said, "Respecting the jurisdiction and independence of the ICC is the least the Labour government can do to

demonstrate a genuine commitment to justice and accountability."

Although Sunak's government suspended aid for UNRWA, the UN's relief and human development agency in Palestine, Starmer has now renewed it.

As Starmer appreciates, his responsibilities do not end there, and his government must also respect the rulings of the International Court of Justice.

On July 19, the ICJ, following a referral by the UN General Assembly in 2022, ordered Israel to end its "unlawful" occupation of Palestinian territories "as rapidly as possible", and to make full reparations for its "internationally wrongful acts".

The ICJ also advised that other states are under an obligation not to recognize the occupation as lawful nor to aid or assist it.

US President Joe Biden has cynically purported to show his concern

for civilians by saying he would only be supplying Israel with 500-pound (226.7-kg) bombs to drop on Gaza,

and that the supply of 2,000-pound bombs would be paused. By authorizing a review into Israel's compliance with international humanitarian law, Starmer has shown he appreciates that whatever the weight of the bombs being dropped, the situation is intolerable, and Israel can no longer enjoy carte blanche.

The UK is now expected to honor the ICJ's ruling and suspend at least some of its arms exports to Israel in the near future.

Everybody who believes that the UK should pursue an independent (and honest) foreign policy will be gratified that Starmer is prepared to place clear blue water between the UK and the US over Gaza. As a former prosecutor and human rights lawyer, it appears he is not prepared to allow Israel to carry on

killing Palestinians with impunity.

Although the US has encouraged Israel's excesses every step of the way, its allies are gradually realizing that enough is enough. Although its complicity is horrendous, this is only one facet of Washington's global strategy. In Ukraine, it is also deliberately prolonging the conflict, hoping to destabilize Russia and seeking, through its proxies, to provoke a conflict with China in the Far East.

As Starmer has recognized the bankruptcy of US policy in the Middle East, this is hopefully just the start. He must also wise up to the enormity of its destructive policies elsewhere. Although his predecessors blindly followed the US, Washington has done London few favors in recent years. It even failed to give the UK a post-Brexit free trade deal despite the much-vaunted "special relationship".

Therefore, Starmer must have the courage to pursue a foreign pol-

icy that is not only enlightened but also advances the British national interest and respects the international rule of law.

Although Starmer never supported Brexit, he must now ensure the UK can take advantage of its opportunities. However, to do so, the UK must show it is capable of walking tall on the world stage, is beholden to nobody, and is no longer blinded by ideological hang-ups. At the same time, it should develop good relations with the countries that can help it to make the most of its hard-won independence from the European Union, even if they are not traditional allies.

If Starmer can achieve these objectives, he will have succeeded where his predecessors, Boris Johnson, Liz Truss and Rishi Sunak, failed, and people of goodwill will wish him well.

The author is a senior counsel and law professor, and was previously the director of public prosecutions of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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



Rescued whale released back into the sea

In the nation's first instance, a short-finned pilot whale was released into its natural habitat, thanks to the dedicated efforts of more than 200 people who joined hands to save the stranded creature.

The whale has spent 145 days in an oceanic park before it was released into the ocean where it belongs.

It all began on Jan 3, when the whale was spotted stranded on the sandy shores of Haitang Bay in Sanya, Hainan province, sustaining unclear injuries. Marine police, conservationists and volunteers rushed to the scene, and managed to send the whale to the Sanya Haichang Animal Conservation Center.

They named it Haitang, after the Haitang Bay where it was found. Haitang, meaning the plant begonia, also coincides with the popular animated movie *Big Fish and Begonia*.

Initially, Haitang faced the risk of flipping over and drowning, due to lung infection. Some 100 volunteers took shifts to hold the whale all day long so that it wouldn't suddenly flip over.

As it gradually recovered, the conservation center moved it to an outdoor pool for a larger space later that month. Months later, its body length and chest circumference both increased by some 10 centimeters, by consuming some 12 kilograms of squid and 2 kg of herring every day.

In early May, experts believed that Haitang was ready to return to Mother Nature. On May 25, the *Liyang 258* science research ship took it to a designated area. In the early morning of the following day, Haitang was released back into the ocean.

In a follow-up monitoring some 40 days later, using trackers and beacons placed on Haitang before its release, scientists found that it had dived to some 300 to 500 meters below the surface — the favored depth for it to feed.

Despite being unable to see it once again, scientists believed that it had found its group and living in the area healthily.

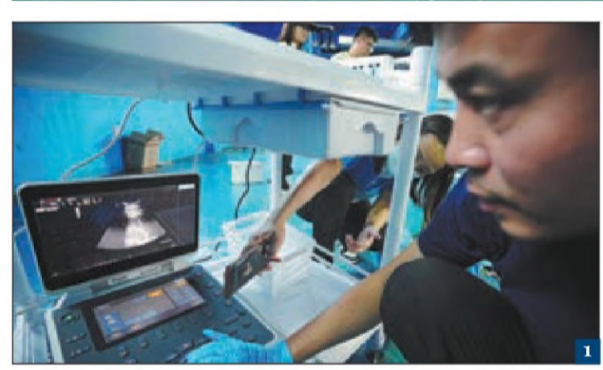
Short-finned pilot whales are nationally second-class protected wild animals in China.

CHINA DAILY

Top: Volunteers and conservationists help a short-finned pilot whale stranded in Haitang Bay in Sanya, Hainan province, on Jan 3.

Right: An animal keeper plays with Haitang the pilot whale in Sanya Haichang Animal Conservation Center on Jan 21.

PHOTOS BY WANG CHENGLONG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Picture 1: Using an ultrasound machine, conservationists check if there are any internal injuries or diseases in Haitang's body at the conservation center in January. **Picture 2:** Volunteers keep Haitang balanced and afloat as it was very fragile. **Picture 3:** Food is prepared for Haitang. **Picture 4:** Haitang jumps out of its outdoor pool to see if food has been brought there in May. **Picture 5:** A position tracker is placed onto Haitang before its release. **Picture 6:** Haitang is released back to the ocean on May 26. **Picture 7:** Researchers look for pilot whale groups during a follow-up monitoring, as dolphins swim under their boat on July 6. PHOTOS BY WANG CHENGLONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

WORLD

Thai court dismisses PM Srettha

Case centers around appointment of an official in violation of ethics rules

By YANG WANLI in Bangkok
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Thailand's Constitutional Court on Wednesday removed Prime Minister Srettha Thavasin from his position after less than a year in office for breaching ethics rules by appointing a lawyer who had served a jail term to his cabinet.

The case against Srettha centers around the appointment of Pichit Chuenban as a minister of the Prime Minister's Office. In 2008, Pichit was sentenced to six months' imprisonment on charges of attempting to bribe a court official.

Although Pichit resigned from the cabinet in May, a decision seen as a bid to spare Srettha from legal trouble, the court pressed ahead with the case initiated by a complaint from a group of 40 senators.

The Constitutional Court judges began their deliberations at 9:30 am on Wednesday. The nine-judge bench voted 5-4 to dismiss Srettha from office. Srettha did not attend the hearing due to prior work commitments but sent his secretary-general Prommin Lertsuridej.

The cabinet must also resign but will stay on in a caretaker capacity with Deputy Prime Minister and Commerce Minister Phumtham Wechayachai taking over as caretaker prime minister, according to Wissanu Krea-ngam, the PM's adviser and a legal expert.

The parliament will convene on Friday for a special meeting to choose a new prime minister, the legislature announced on its website, following the court's decision.

According to parliamentary rules, a candidate nominated for prime minister must win support of more than half of the lower house, which currently has 493 members.

There are several potential candidates, including Pheu Thai party



Srettha Thavasin

leader Paetongtarn Shinawatra, Interior Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, Energy Minister Pirapan Salirathavibhaga and Prawit Wongsuwan, an influential former army chief who was involved in the last two coups.

Local media reported that Srettha visited a Buddhist temple on Wednesday morning, where his mother's cremation ceremony was held last week. He told reporters he had slept well and would carry on with his normal schedule for the day, saying he was not unduly worried about the court case.

Srettha said after the ruling that he respected the court verdict. "I performed duties to the best of my ability and adhered to ethical principles throughout my nearly one-year tenure in office."

As Pheu Thai's prime ministerial candidate, Srettha had received majority approval in parliament on Aug 22 last year.

In the past two decades, Thailand has witnessed several prime ministers being ousted by legal decisions and coups.

Some political experts believe that it is likely Pheu Thai would still have the clout to lead the next administration.

"The coalition remains united," said Olarn Thinbangtieo, deputy dean of Burapha University's Faculty of Political Science and Law. In an interview with Reuters, he said there may be some impact on confidence, but that would be in the short term.

Xinhua and agencies contributed to this story.

Victory parade



Taliban security personnel ride in a convoy to celebrate the third anniversary of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, in Kabul on Wednesday. Taliban authorities kicked off the anniversary celebrations of their rule over Afghanistan on Wednesday at the former US air base at Bagram. WAKIL KOHSAR / AFP

China funding aids Africa development

By OTIATO OPALI in Nairobi, Kenya
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Financial assistance from China has played a crucial role in infrastructure development in Africa since the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, or FOCAC, was established, paving the way for economic prosperity, observers said, adding that Sino-African cooperation will help address emerging challenges facing the continent such as climate change.

Lucas Engel, a data analyst for the Global China Initiative at the Boston University Global Development Policy Center in the United States, said while the volume of lending from China to Africa has decreased in the last few years, it has overall added to the vast amount of cumulative Chinese financing for development projects in Africa over the years.

Speaking at an online seminar ahead of the FOCAC summit scheduled in Beijing in September, Engel said that since the establishment of FOCAC, the Export-Import Bank of China and the China Development Bank have made great loan commit-

ments to Africa, with the majority directed toward vital infrastructure projects in energy, transport, and information and communications technology sectors.

He said over the years, areas such as infrastructure, agriculture, energy transition, trade and economic integration are becoming prominent areas of engagement. He also believes that the upcoming FOCAC meeting will further reveal the extent of shifts in China's contributions to Africa's development.

Major platform

Following the establishment of FOCAC, a major cooperation platform between China and Africa, in 2000, China's economic relations with the African continent have grown and developed significantly.

Over the last two decades, China has become Africa's largest bilateral trading partner. Experts also said China has emerged as a main financial contributor to Africa, providing African countries with a new source of infrastructure, mining and energy financing.

One of the key projects financed by China is the iconic Mombasa-

Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway, which links the two biggest cities in Kenya. The railway is expected to boost the country's annual economic growth by at least 1.5 percent, according to Kenyan experts.

Dianah Ngui Muchai, a research manager at Kenyan-based NGO African Economic Research Consortium, said China has become a significant partner for many African countries, with a focus on sectors such as infrastructure development, natural resources, and manufacturing, which contribute to the development of many African countries.

Looking forward, Muchai said more bilateral cooperation is expected under FOCAC that caters to the pressing needs of African countries, such as renewable energy, as Africa seeks to meet its rising energy demands and move toward sustainable energy sources.

"Given Africa's current economic challenges and energy opportunities, the next phase of China-Africa economic relations should see China playing a bigger role in contributing to African countries' low-carbon development goals," she added.

Italy sees sharp drop in illegal migration

By JONATHAN POWELL in London
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Italy has witnessed a dramatic decline in seaborne illegal migration so far this year, with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, or UNHCR, reporting a significant decrease in asylum-seeker arrivals compared to last year.

New UNHCR figures revealed this week show a 62 percent drop in potential refugee arrivals to Italy this year, with about 35,700 people reaching the country as of Sunday, compared to more than 94,000 during the same period last year.

Italy had previously seen a consistent rise in arrivals since 2020, with numbers climbing from more than 67,000 in 2021 to more than 105,000 in 2022, peaking at nearly 158,000 last year — the highest yearly total since 2016.

The trend toward decline has been attributed to deterrent policies implemented by Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's government, according to Italian newspaper *Il Giornale*.

Meloni, who was elected Italian prime minister two years ago, campaigned on a promise to curb the influx of migrants into the country.

Last year, the southern Italian island of Lampedusa was the hardest hit of all landing sites, with about 120 boats carrying between 6,000 and 7,000 migrants arriving on the island on a single day in September.

Top destination

But even with this year's decrease, Italy continues to be the primary destination for migrants, with Spain receiving more than 30,000 arrivals and Greece more than 28,000, placing them second and third respectively, UNHCR data show.

Tackling the migrant crisis is a politically divisive issue for the European Union's 27 member states ever since more than a million people reached European shores in 2015.

The New Pact on Migration and Asylum, set to take effect in 2026, outlines EU-wide rules for handling unauthorized entries, including screening and deportation procedures.

However, this reform does not offer an immediate solution to the ongoing crisis that has deeply divided EU nations over migrant responsibility and burden-sharing obligations.

While the bloc attempts to address the issue, critics argue that measures taken, such as the EU's deal with Tunisia that includes assistance to better police the border and prevent migrants without papers from reaching Europe, have negatively impacted tens of thousands of migrants trapped in Tunisia, Sky News reported.

On Sunday, the United Kingdom saw a record-breaking influx of more than 700 migrants crossing the Channel seaway to Britain in small vessels, marking the highest single-day arrival since Prime Minister Keir Starmer assumed office with a pledge to combat human trafficking.

TikTok content creators push back at overconsumption trend

WASHINGTON — Exhausted from a rising cost of living in the United States and nonstop ads, some young adults on TikTok are pushing back.

"When every moment of your life feels like you're being sold something and the price of said item keeps going up, people will burn out on spending money," Kara Perez, an influencer and financial educator, told AFP.

Social media has long had room only for picture-perfect homes, lavish closets and an abundance of beauty products. But a new trend is sweeping the other way — urging repurposing, more frugal lifestyles and prioritizing quality over quantity.

Known as "underconsumption core", it spotlights living sustainably and using what you have, a reversal of the excess and wealth

that dominates ad-heavy Instagram and TikTok.

"When you get 300 videos on TikTok about people who have 30 Stanley cups, you want to have as many as you can afford. People want to fit in," said Perez, who repurposes jars as cups.

A video with more than 100,000 views from TikTok user "loveofearthco" critiqued the tendency toward overconsumption often amplified and encouraged on social media: "I spent money I didn't have on things I didn't need."

Another account, "nevadahave-naars", shared what "normal" consumption looks like: used furniture, a modest closet, decor upcycled from glass bottles, meal prep and a downsized skin care collection.

Despite financial hardships felt, particularly by Generation Z and millennials, the US still sees record

corporate profits and high prices on shelves.

In a way, "that feels almost 'gaslighty' to consumers" amid a period of economic and geopolitical uncertainty, culture and consumer marketing analyst Larrio Makoni told AFP.

She argued that Buy Now, Pay Later plans commonly adopted by many young adults' budgets exacerbate consumption and represent a distortion in access to wealth.

But years of inflation have forced many to the conclusion that they cannot keep up with the spending habits of those on their social media feeds.

A Google Trends analysis shows US searches for "underconsumption" hit a high point this summer, surfacing alongside queries about "overproduction" and the "Great Depression".

Many young adults have developed a "compulsive behavior to spend down to their last pound on a

fashion item," said UK-based influencer Andrea Cheong, who recently shared an "underconsumption core" style video of her mending old clothes.

It is an addiction tied to a pressure "to articulate who we are through possessions", Cheong noted.

In contrast, "underconsumption core" breaks from traditional core trends promoted by influencers, who often sell an ever-changing purchasing blueprint embodying the latest trend and aesthetic, according to Cheong. She and Makoni agreed that the shift also reflects increased calls for authenticity from content creators.

More than half of Gen Z adults — aged 18 to 27 — polled in a 2024 survey by Bank of America stated the high cost of living as a top barrier to their financial success, adding that many do not make enough

money to live the life they want.

"The social media trend of 'underconsumption' is another way for Gen Z to make the most of their money and be environmentally friendly at the same time," said Ashley Ross, head of consumer client experience and governance at Bank of America.

Low consumption bricks-and-mortar initiatives cast a wider net of profiles and generations.

Anjali Zielinski, 42, joined a "Mending 101" workshop in Georgetown DC in the hopes of acquiring new skills. She brought her daughter, Mina, 7, along with her.

In addition to providing an outlet to her daughter's creativity, she hopes the craft will teach her the "value of our possessions and the work that goes into them".

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Idyllic village becomes bridge for Sino-Dutch exchanges



People travel on a boat at Canal Cruise in the Giethoorn village of Overijssel, the Netherlands, in April 2023. SELMAN AKSUNGER VIA GETTY IMAGES

THE HAGUE — Giethoorn, a picturesque village in the northwest of the Netherlands, is often described as a living postcard. With its wooden bridges connecting charming thatched roof houses, restaurants, hotels and campsites, the village radiates serene beauty.

Once a destination primarily for European tourists, Giethoorn has recently seen a surge in popularity among visitors from China.

"I've lost count of how many times I've visited Giethoorn," Zhu Xi, a Chinese agricultural scholar currently working in the Netherlands, said. Zhu first visited the village years ago while studying in the Netherlands and was immediately captivated by its tranquil, idyllic scenery. The village's charm con-

tinues to draw her back time and again.

In recent years, Chinese tourists have become a key demographic for the Netherlands, notable for their large numbers and significant spending power.

According to the Netherlands Board of Tourism and Conventions, or NBTC, Chinese tourists are among the highest spenders of all international visitors to the country. Their interests extend beyond sightseeing and shopping. Many are increasingly drawn to sustainable tourism practices, including energy conservation, waste reduction and the use of clean energy, reflecting a growing commitment to eco-friendly travel.

Last year, China emerged as one

of the fastest-growing source markets for Dutch tourism. The NBTC reported that Dutch hotels hosted 177,000 visitors from China last year, more than double the figure from 2022. The agency predicts that with the increase in flights between China and the Netherlands, the number of Chinese tourists will continue to rise this year.

Dutch tourism promoter Gabriëlla Esselbrugge has observed a shift in how Chinese tourists experience the village. More young travelers are opting for extended stays, immersing themselves in the local lifestyle and embracing the village's slow pace of life. To meet this growing interest, Giethoorn now offers workshops on traditional Dutch agriculture and modern sustainable farming practices.

"We showcase Dutch expertise in water management," Esselbrugge said, explaining that these work-

shops give tourists a deeper understanding of the region's cultural and agricultural heritage, blending tradition with innovation.

Having traveled extensively in China, Esselbrugge has been struck by the parallels between Dutch and Chinese approaches to environmental protection and sustainable development. "I've noticed many similarities between our approaches, and there's a lot we can learn from each other," she said.

"These bridges connect our thatched roof homes to the main roads, bringing people together," Esselbrugge said, reflecting on Giethoorn's many bridges. "They symbolize how we reach out to the world to learn, and how the world, in turn, comes to understand us. It's a powerful metaphor for the connections we all need."

XINHUA

WORLD

Megaquake alert leaves Japanese distressed

TOKYO — Japan, one of the most earthquake-prone countries on Earth, issued its first-ever “megaquake advisory” last week after a powerful quake struck off the southeastern coast of the southern main island of Kyushu.

The magnitude-7.1 quake caused no deaths or severe damage, but the advisory has led to widespread confusion and a lingering sense of worry — in a country well accustomed to regular quakes — about when the next big one will hit.

Hoteliers said the alert has prompted thousands of hotel cancellations in areas flagged as high-risk, dealing businesses a heavy blow in what would have been one of the busiest seasons.

The advisory does not mean a colossal tremor is imminent, but that the risk of such an event has now been elevated, if still low, authorities said.

Subject to the warning is the so-called Nankai Trough, an 800-kilometer undersea zone that runs from Shizuoka, west of Tokyo, to the southern tip of Kyushu. The last Nankai Trough quake off Shikoku in 1946 recorded a preliminary magnitude of 8.0 and killed more than 1,300 people.

In western Kochi, among the regions projected to be hit hardest, at least 9,400 people have canceled their hotel bookings since the alert was issued, according to a local hotel union.

The cancellations covering the period Aug 9 to 18 amount to a loss of about 140 million yen (\$960,000) in revenue, union representative Susumu Nishitani told Agence France-Presse.

The warning coincided with Japan's Obon holiday week, a time for festivals and fireworks across the country.

“Normally all hotels and inns in our city would be fully booked at this time of the year,” Nishitani said.

The megaquake advisory is set to be lifted on Thursday if no abnormalities in seismic activity are detected, local media reported.

Nuclear water leakage

On March 11, 2011, Japan was struck by a magnitude-9.0 earthquake and an ensuing tsunami.

As a result, the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant suffered core meltdowns that released radiation, resulting in a level 7 nuclear accident.

The plant has been generating massive amounts of water tainted with radioactive substances from cooling down nuclear fuel in reactor buildings. Despite opposition at home and abroad, the ocean discharge of the nuclear-contaminated water began a year ago, and the eighth round started last week.

The plant's operator, Tokyo Electric Power Company, said on Tuesday that about 25 metric tons of radioactive water have leaked within the crippled plant.

The leaked water was meant to be contained in a tank receiving overflow from the spent nuclear fuel pool, the company said.

Accumulating on the first basement level of the reactor building, the leaked water led to a rise in the level of contaminated water already present in the area, it said, confirming that the contaminated water had not escaped outside the reactor building.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Back on track



A man sells bottled water to commuters at the Kamalapur Railway Station in Bangladesh's capital Dhaka on Tuesday, as passenger railway services resumed days after violent protests that led to the resignation of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina. LUIS TATO / AFP

Kishida to step down amid public distrust

Decision ends 3-year term marred by LDP scandals, paves way for new PM

By JIANG XUEQING in Tokyo
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Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who is also the president of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, announced on Wednesday he does not intend to run in the party's leadership election next month.

As public distrust of the LDP is rising because of a political fundraising scandal involving the party's factions, Kishida, 67, decided that he could no longer ignore the growing calls within the party for a change in leadership. He said he would step down at the end of his three-year term as LDP president next month.

At a news conference, Kishida said it is important to demonstrate to the public that the LDP will change, indicating that his decision would serve as a clear signal of the party's intent to reform itself.

His term as LDP president lasts until Sept 30, and the party's rules stipulate that the leadership election to choose his successor will take place between Sept 20 and Sept 29.

With the House of Representatives' term set to expire by Oct 30 next year, the LDP election will also serve as a way to select the “face of the party” for the next general election. The Yomiuri Shimbun reported.

The reason for Kishida's decision to step down is simply because of a

lack of public support, said Ukeru Magosaki, co-representative of the Association for Inheriting and Propagating the Murayama Statement, a civic group dedicated to upholding the 1995 statement that admits Japan's wartime mistakes.

Public support for Kishida's cabinet was 19.4 percent this month — below 20 percent for the ninth straight month, though the figure rebounded slightly from last month. The latest cabinet approval rating was 53.6 percent, according to an opinion poll published by Jiji Press last week.

“The starting point for the loss of support was the political funding scandal involving factions within the LDP,” said Magosaki, who is also a former senior official with Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

“There was no prospect of the approval rating improving, and if things continue as they are, there is even a possibility that the LDP could lose in the House of Representatives election.”

Kazuyuki Hamada, an international political economist and former member of the House of Councillors, attributed Kishida's decision to step down to his lack of leadership.

“As symbolized by the issues of politics and money, the LDP's response of covering up problems has led to public disappointment.

With the Kishida administration's approval rating falling below 20 percent, there is little chance of winning the upcoming House of Councillors and House of Representatives elections under the current conditions. The administration could not withstand the calls for resignation from both inside and outside the party,” Hamada said.

Kumiko Haba, a professor of international politics at Aoyama Gakuin University in Tokyo, said, “Like (United States President) Joe Biden passing the baton to (Vice-President) Kamala Harris... Kishida may have thought that stepping down himself could present a new image of the LDP.”

Leadership race

Kishida's announcement is likely to intensify the LDP leadership race, experts said.

Among current party executives and cabinet ministers who support Kishida, LDP Secretary-General Toshimitsu Motegi, Minister for Digital Transformation Taro Kono and Minister in charge of Economic Security Sanae Takaichi have expressed interest in running for the post, as has Shigeru Ishiba, a former LDP secretary-general.

Other potential candidates include former minister for internal affairs and communications Seiko Noda, former environment minister Shinjiro Koizumi, former minister in charge of economic security Takayuki Kobayashi and Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa, experts said.

“The possibility of generational change and the emergence of a female party leader or prime minister is now a real consideration,” Hamada said. “The issue will be whether the candidates can address public dissatisfaction and mistrust with innovative and creative policies that offer hope for the future.”

The LDP seems to be not fully prepared for Kishida's decision, Haba said, so there may be some initial turmoil within the party. However, if his decision leads to a smooth transition in leadership and policy changes, Kishida might have thought that it could help quell public criticism of the LDP and lay the groundwork for the party's continued governance, Haba said.



A staff member distributes an extra edition of Japan's largest newspaper, The Yomiuri Shimbun, in Sapporo, Hokkaido, on Wednesday. THE YOMIURI SHIMBUN VIA AP

Russia says it repelled Ukrainian advances

MOSCOW — Russia said on Wednesday it had repelled attempts by Ukrainian forces to push deeper into the western Kursk region in five areas, after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said his forces were advancing.

“The attempts by enemy mobile units using armored equipment to break through deeper into Russian territory have been repelled,” the Russian Defense Ministry said in a statement.

Thousands of Ukrainian troops rammaged through the Russian border in the early hours of Aug 6 into Kursk in what President Vladimir Putin said was a major provocation that was aimed at gaining a stronger hand in possible future cease-fire talks.

Russia's air defenses destroyed 117 drones and four tactical missiles launched overnight by Ukraine targeting several regions including Kursk, the Defense Ministry said on Wednesday.

The missiles and 37 drones were destroyed over Kursk, the ministry said on the Telegram messaging app, while 37 drones were destroyed over the Voronezh region, among others. The ministry did not give a total of air weapons that Ukraine launched.

Unconfirmed reports said some of the Ukrainian drones struck Russian air bases. Russia's National Guard said it was beefing up security at the Kursk nuclear power plant that is just 35 kilometers from the fighting.

Russian commanders said the front in Kursk had stabilized, though Zelensky said his forces were continuing to advance there and ordered his generals to develop the next “key steps” in the operation.

‘Poking the bear’

Russian lawmaker Maria Butina said on Wednesday that the West was involved in the Ukrainian incursion into sovereign Russian territory and was thus “poking the bear” in a dangerous escalation.

The United States and other Western backers of Ukraine have denied that they were informed beforehand of the dramatic attack on Kursk.

“Of course they are involved,” Butina told Reuters when asked if the West was involved. “When I studied in the United States, the main rule was: ‘Don't poke the bear.’ What the West is doing today? They are poking the bear.”

Butina said the attack on Russia was an act of “international terrorism” as civilian infrastructure had been attacked.

“They try to make a PR act on blood, using military force and terrorism and that is not the way to negotiate,” Butina said.

“Our response should be in the military field, which means today to force the Ukrainian forces out and to put responsibility on those who are really responsible for forcing and escalating this conflict — this is the West.”

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

EVs are a tough sell in the US despite discounts

By BELINDA ROBINSON
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Americans haven't yet revved up the enthusiasm for electric vehicles despite plenty of dealerships nationwide offering steep discounts. Meanwhile, in China, EV sales are soaring.

The drop in demand for electric vehicles (EVs) in the United States comes after international automakers bet big and invested billions of dollars over the past few years on EV fleets.

In 2023, EV sales grew nearly 50 percent, according to data from Motor Intelligence. In the first six months of this year, growth increased by just 6.8 percent as consumer interest waned.

Richard, who declined to give his surname, is a buyer for Major World, a large auto dealership in Long Island City, Queens, New York, which sells new and used cars, electric vehicles, trucks and SUVs.

He told China Daily: “We have four EV products. We have some [Chevrolet] Chevy Bolts, Blazers and Equinoxes. We have a Tesla, but we don't carry a lot of them. We bought a lot of EVs that go toward the taxi and limousine people, but most people don't come in looking for [EVs]; they prefer other non-EV cars.”

EVs at the dealership range in price from \$14,000 to \$17,000 for a small Chevrolet Bolt model to \$19,000 to \$22,000 for larger 2022 and 2023 models. Newer EV models range in sticker price from \$40,000 to \$50,000.

Richard believes consumers will respond to lower-priced EVs when the autos have a longer battery life.

“If you don't have that battery that will give you the distance, customers will be slow to buy. When they start giving you 500 miles in a full charge, I think that's when they'll be accepted because, you know, you can travel from here [New York] to Washington DC.”

Consumer interest in buying EVs and hybrids is vastly different in China, where sales sped past internal-combustion-engine cars for the first time last month.

Around 51 percent of all vehicle sales in July consisted of EVs and hybrids, according to data from the China Passenger Car Association (CPCA).

At least 878,000 EVs and hybrids were sold in July, an increase of 37 percent over the same time last year. Conventional car sales fell by 26 percent to 840,000, the CPCA said.

China exported 376,000 cars worldwide in July, up 20 percent on 2023, according to the CPCA.

In May, US President Joe Biden's administration imposed 100 percent

tariffs on EVs and batteries made in China. The tariffs essentially cut off the imports of Chinese cars.

While the White House has advocated for clean energy, there also is a political consideration of importing cheaper vehicles that could affect the American automobile industry.

In the US, besides the cost of EVs, battery concerns and the tariffs, which went into effect on Aug 1, there is a lack of charging stations.

There were approximately 61,000 such stations in the US as of February, according to the Pew Research Center.

California has 43,780 charging stations, the highest number of individual public charging ports, for the 1.2 million electric vehicles registered by the state's residents.

Nationwide, rural areas have even fewer charging stations. The 2022 Inflation Reduction Act gave tax credits to incentivize the installation of EV-charging stations outside urban areas.

In contrast to the US, China has invested heavily in EV infrastructure. It had nearly 1.8 million EV charging stations as of 2022, the International Energy Agency (IEA) reported.

The falling demand for battery-powered cars and trucks has left American car dealers with too much stock as they get ready to roll out the new 2025 models this fall.

In June, dealerships had on average 125 days of supply of EVs, according to figures from Cox Automotive; they usually have around 60 days. The dealers also are selling many EVs at a loss and offering finance deals.

The Chevrolet Blazer and Volkswagen ID.4 SUVs saw the biggest drop in list price, data from CarGurus shows. Automakers also have announced plans to scale back production and repurpose some EV factories to manufacture gasoline-powered cars.

It is in stark contrast to a couple of years ago when automakers Ford, Nissan, Hyundai, Chevrolet, Subaru and Kia were shifting toward bigger EV fleets.

Back then, Josh Tavel, executive chief engineer of Chevrolet's Silverado EV, told China Daily at the 2022 New York Auto Show: “The reasons why [EVs] are going to be successful in my opinion is that they are a better customer solution.”

Last month, General Motors said it would make 50,000 fewer electric battery-powered cars this year than it had previously forecast. It will now produce around 200,000 to 250,000 instead.

Tesla, the leading maker of electric cars, saw its global sales fall 6.6 percent in the first half of 2024.

Agenies contributed to this story.

Briefly

KIRIBATI
Voters head to polls for parliamentary election

Voters in Kiribati went to the polls on Wednesday for the first round of parliamentary elections in the Pacific Island country. A total of 114 candidates are vying for 44 parliamentary seats, with a second round of voting scheduled for Aug 19. In the first round, a candidate is elected if they receive more than 50 percent of the votes cast. If all seats are not filled, a second round of voting will be held. The new parliament will then nominate up to four presidential candidates among its members. The

national presidential election is expected to take place in September or October.

EUROPE
Germany seeks suspect in Nord Stream probe

German prosecutors have issued an arrest warrant for a Ukrainian man over the 2022 sabotage of the Nord Stream gas pipelines, German media reported on Wednesday. A European Arrest Warrant was requested in June for the man, whose last known address is in Poland, according to the ARD broadcaster and newspapers Die Zeit and the Sueddeutsche

Zeitung. Poland's national public prosecutor's office confirmed on Wednesday that such a warrant had been received, adding the suspect was not arrested in Poland because he left its territory for Ukraine in early July. German investigators believe the Ukrainian was one of the divers who planted explosive devices on the Nord Stream pipelines, the reports said.

UNITED KINGDOM
More than 1,000 held following unrest: Police

British authorities have arrested more than 1,000 people following

days of social unrest involving violence, arson and looting, a policing body said on Tuesday. The unrest, which followed the killings of three young girls in the northern English town of Southport, began after the July 29 attack was wrongly blamed on an Islamist migrant based on online misinformation. There have been fewer instances of unrest since last week after efforts to identify those involved were ramped up. The National Police Chiefs' Council said in its latest update that 1,024 had been arrested and 575 charged across the United Kingdom.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

ACROSS ASIA

Editor's note:

In this weekly feature China Daily gives voice to Asia and its people. The stories presented come mainly from the Asia News Network (ANN), of which China Daily is among its 20 leading titles.



Commuters walk on the streets of Seoul on Oct 10. Strict hierarchical norms at the workplace can pose challenges for staff relations. YONHAP

BETWEEN THE LINES

South Korea's social norms and pressures amplify the challenge of refusing

After a second date, Lee Taehyung, 26, wanted to ask the woman out again.

He sent her an online message saying, "Do you have time this weekend?" and the reply he received was: "I don't think I can make time. I have plans for this weekend."

"The message made me wonder. Is she politely saying, 'No, I don't want to go on another date with you,' or does this mean that I can ask her again next week?" Lee said.

Lee asked his friends and found out that if the woman was actually interested in another date, she would suggest other times she could meet him. Simply saying she is busy usually means no, they concluded.

Hesitating to say no directly, as Lee's date did, out of fear of offending someone, is a common human reaction.

But South Korea's social norms, expectations and pressures often amplify the challenge, making indirect refusals the preferred course of action unless a direct response is absolutely unavoidable.

When declining a request, especially from a close friend they care about, South Koreans usually make sure they are declining only if there is no other choice and try to reschedule.

This is why softening phrases like "I don't think" are almost always used when declining a request.

This phrase adds uncertainty to a negative response, allowing South Koreans to decline politely without closing the door entirely. For example, they might say, "I don't think I can attend" instead of "I can't go", which sounds blunt to South Koreans as if they are trying to maintain social relations.

In different social settings in South Korea, there are various ways to say no.

In the workplace, where top-down hierarchies between bosses and subordinates are common, many choose to use white lies.

A 2019 survey by local job search website Incruit found that 82.3 percent of 282 South Korean employees admitted to telling white lies at work, primarily to avoid hurting the feelings of those who ask questions, particularly superiors.

Park Soo-jin, 34, a marketing company employee, illustrated this phenomenon. "I enjoy eating breakfast alone at the hotel when I travel for leisure. But when my boss asked about breakfast on a business trip to China, I said, 'I don't eat breakfast,'" Park said.

She felt that simply saying she wanted to eat alone seemed inappropriate as it could hurt the feelings of her boss. The difficulty of saying no also stems from group social pressure. Ahn, a 30-year-old advertising employee, frequently cancels plans with his girlfriend due to impromptu team dinners at work.



People wear masks to protest against school violence and network violence in Seoul on Sept 12. Senior students in South Korea can hold considerable authority, leading their juniors to frequently acquiesce to their demands and endure bullying. YONHAP

“When I offer something to someone, I am accustomed to asking three times. It's because some Koreans believe it's polite to decline twice before accepting the third offer.”

Kim Sang-hyun, a South Korean resident

"My girlfriend gets upset, but it's hard to decline when nobody else (on the team) is doing it," Ahn said. "I once had to lie to my boss that I was sick so that I could skip a team dinner and go to see her."

Many people say that saying no is also hard in South Korea's dating scene.

Lee Ji-an, a 25-year-old who went on a blind date in March, struggled to decline a second date despite a lack of romantic connection.

"It was difficult to bluntly say no because I worried that it might affect my relationship with the friend who set us up," Lee said.

She tried replying late to messages and saying she was busy a few times, but the guy did not seem to get the point.

Unsured of how to refuse politely, she sought advice from friends and discovered that it was a common experience.

Some of her friends even offered her a prewritten template for such situations.

"I could just fill in the name and send it to the guy," Lee said.

Her struggle is also commonly shared online, where other dating-related forums suggest sending templates like: "I had a great time today.

You seem like a great guy, but I don't think we're going to work out. I hope you find someone wonderful."

Navigating networks

In South Korea, the entrenched cultural emphasis on hierarchy significantly affects interpersonal dynamics in schools, workplaces and families.

In educational settings, senior students and teachers hold considerable authority, leading juniors to frequently acquiesce to their demands and endure bullying rather than challenge them.

Similarly, in the workplace, strict hierarchical norms make it difficult for junior employees to refuse or criticize senior staff, fostering an environment where bullying can persist unchecked.

Family dynamics are also influenced by these hierarchical values, with younger family members often feeling compelled to comply with elder relatives' wishes, even at personal cost.

These hierarchical structures create a culture where asserting oneself or saying no is often seen as disrespectful, thus perpetuating power imbalances and allowing bullying to thrive.

One linguist views that in South Korea, saying no is especially difficult not only due to social pressure but also because of hierarchies created by the honorific system of the South Korean language.

Professor Lee Chan-kyu of Chung-Ang University's department of Korean language and literature said that the hierarchical communication patterns of the Korean language complicate the expression of negative opinions, especially in professional settings.

Effective communication is typically two-way, Lee explained. However, in many South Korean workplaces, top-down approaches prevail, with those in superior positions speaking informally, and with

only subordinates using honorifics when speaking back.

"Interestingly, I found that employees — both those in superior and subordinate positions — who use honorifics with each other report greater satisfaction and less stress when communicating within the company," Lee said.

Expressing one's honest opinion is also something many South Koreans feel uncomfortable about.

"It is slowly changing. But for instance, to children, Koreans are more focused on saying, 'You're a good kid because you do what your parents tell you to do', compared to in other countries," Kim Hoh, CEO of THE LAB h, a business communication consulting firm, said.

"We are not used to asking kids' opinions or preferences."

He added that this kind of hierarchical organizational culture has meant South Koreans are not accustomed to refusing something directly.

As if navigating the nuances of saying no in South Korea isn't complex enough, there are special exceptions where saying no is not only seen as acceptable but in fact expected.

Such situations occur for instance when South Koreans are presented with someone else's kind offer.

For instance, when visiting an acquaintance's home and the host invites you to join their family meal, it is customary initially to decline before eventually accepting.

Similarly, during certain family gatherings, when older relatives give younger ones cash gifts, it is expected for the recipient initially to refuse, as a way of demonstrating humility and gratitude.

"When I offer something to someone, I am accustomed to asking three times," said Kim Sang-hyun, 40. "It's because some Koreans believe it's polite to decline twice before accepting the third offer."

THE KOREA HERALD

Poachers target rare species through online bird-watching groups

An alarming trend has emerged in Malaysia's fight against the illegal wildlife trade, involving poachers of endangered bird species "spying" on the social media accounts of the bird-watching community in search of their prey, according to conservationists.

Disguising themselves as bird-watching enthusiasts and wildlife photographers, the poachers infiltrate communities, forums and chat groups, befriending genuine hobbyists to gather information on bird locations.

Poachers have increasingly used these tactics to find certain bird species in Malaysia as demand soars, with prices ranging from 500 ringgit (\$111) to 200,000 ringgit per bird.

Wildlife conservationist and photographer Peter Ong told The Star that poachers scour social media accounts for photos uploaded by bird-watching enthusiasts, aiming to obtain the location where the birds were spotted before setting out to source for the animals.

"This is why we should never disclose the location where photos of these birds were taken," he said.

"Just stating the territory vaguely is sufficient — not specific locations. Doing so serves no purpose," said Ong, who has been into wildlife photography since 2018.

Ong, the author of *Wang Kelian: The Forgotten Valley*, a book on biodiversity and cultural heritage, said he had come across poachers and traces of their presence when he was researching his book.

He found animal traps, discarded food packets and other hazardous items.

Ong said he avoided confronting the poachers who are "armed and dangerous" but reported their presence to the authorities.

Southeast Asian Region of BirdLife International Asia Council Vice-chairman Henry Goh said the convenience of the internet has also allowed poachers to source for the birds they seek from the wild.

He said social media platform operators should help conserve wildlife by censoring or deleting postings that could lead to poaching.

Goh said that in order to raise public awareness, education on the value of birds in the ecosystem should begin in primary school.

"This way, when they are aware, they can be the eyes and ears of the authorities and feed them information on poaching activities," he said.

"While it is not easy to monitor these activities as they are often committed in forests and parks, there should be greater monitoring and scrutiny at checkpoints in the country where these protected animals are smuggled out."

"There should also be harsher penalties and stricter laws," said

the avid birder, who is also a former president of the Malaysian Nature Society.

A spokesman of the Department of Wildlife and National Parks Peninsular Malaysia said the authorities are aware of the poachers' tactics and have been vigilant at certain sites around the country.

"They target social media users and groups, befriending them to collect information on bird locations from their posts," the spokesman said.

"Armed with this information, poachers set traps to capture the birds, often focusing on nesting sites. They prefer to find nesting birds and collect their young, catching juveniles just as they are about to fledge."

According to the spokesman, bird enthusiasts and photographers have reported to the department that poachers are setting traps near nests, securing nets with nails to keep the birds from fleeing without injuring them.

The spokesman warned the bird-watching community not to post the locations of birds or their nests online.

"This information can be accessed by poachers, leading to the capture and potential endangerment of these species."

To prevent the exploitation of Malaysia's avian wildlife, the spokesman urged bird-watching enthusiasts and photographers to be vigilant and cautious when sharing sensitive information.

Police and Wildlife and National Parks departments personnel recently conducted a joint operation that resulted in the

arrest of six men aged between 20 and 50 during multiple raids, leading to the seizure of 64 hanging and rumped parrots. The suspects sold the birds, estimated to be worth 200,000 ringgit, to collectors through social media platforms.

In April, the authorities seized 43 protected bird species bound for overseas in a special operation at the KL International Airport.

The estimated value of the birds, which included the Ara hybrid, yellow-headed parrot, military macaw, scarlet macaw, blue and yellow macaw, Major Mitchell's cockatoo and golden parakeet, was 800,000 ringgit.

In May, a 28-year-old man in Nibong Tebal, Penang, was nabbed after he was found in possession of 25 protected birds, namely a green-cheeked conure, a masked lovebird, a sun conure, a faced lovebird, a Fischer's lovebird and a ringed parakeet.

The spokesman said those caught possessing or poaching protected birds could be investigated under the law, which carries a maximum punishment of 700,000 ringgit, a jail term of no longer than 10 years, or both.

THE STAR

Looking good



Women in Nepal put on traditional attire to take part in an event marking the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples in Kathmandu on Aug 9. NIRANJAN SHRESTHA / AP

BUSINESS

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Zheng sparks golden age of tennis products

Sportswear, fashion, rackets, shoes, training ... brands, services see boom

By WANG ZHUOQIONG
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Paris 2024 women's tennis singles gold winner Zheng Qinwen of China has fueled a nationwide trend in tennis sportswear and related fashion.

As the "tenniscore" trend takes hold, sportswear and fashion brands have ramped up their focus on tennis apparel.

Global activewear leader Lululemon has launched its 2024 Tennis Club collection, featuring retro-colored tennis dresses, skirts, shorts and tanks. The tennis series has become one of Lululemon's important product lines, the company said.

The brand first ventured into tennis gear in April 2022.

Wilson, a tennis-focused sportswear brand, introduced the Marta dress — a white tennis dress priced 1,690 yuan (\$236) — during Wimbledon in July. The dress quickly sold out in the Chinese market.

During this year's 618 shopping festival around June 18, Taobao saw a 256 percent year-on-year increase in online searches for tennis skirts, with transaction volumes up by 158 percent year-on-year. Searches for Lululemon's tennis skirts alone surged by 95 percent year-on-year.

Data from Meituan indicated that since July, tennis-related online searches have jumped by over 60 percent, while tennis-related orders have skyrocketed by 172 percent.

Zheng's Olympic victory further fueled this trend, with online searches for tennis dresses on Taobao increasing by 240 percent within a week.

The surge in popularity of racket sports has coincided with a proliferation of tennis events across China. The China Open in Beijing, the Rolex Shanghai Masters, and the recent ATP Tour in Chengdu, Sichuan province, and Zhuhai, Guangdong province, alongside digital broadcasts of grand slams, have all

contributed to this tennis boom.

Wen Liyuan, who runs a leading tennis training camp in Beijing, noted a significant rise in interest among children and their parents. "Many kids are inspired by Zheng's win and are eager to learn tennis. Those who had previously quit are now looking to resume their training," Wen said.

She also said that livestreamed tennis events have garnered numerous reviews and comments from enthusiastic fans, while some commercial real estate projects are beginning to explore tennis-related developments.

Ren Jing, a sports influencer in Beijing, recently returned to the court, attributing her renewed interest to the growing popularity of tennis. "Wearing tennis apparel enhances my performance, especially in terms of agility and mobility," Ren said.

"Tennis-focused brands such as Wilson, Lacoste and Nike have continually updated their apparel and shoes to improve the on-court experience."

Ye Fei, a manager at a tennis store near the National Tennis Center in Beijing, has also observed a surge in foot traffic and sales. "In the past, customers would buy a single racket. Now, entire families are coming in, each member purchasing his or her own racket," Ye said.

He also noted that children who previously practiced other sports are now keen on switching to tennis after watching Zheng's matches.

Off the court, "tenniscore" has risen to prominence in the fashion world, with luxury brands eager to tap into the market. Mia Kong, a fashion influencer based in Shanghai, attributed the trend's success to its resonance with the lifestyle of middle-income families. "Tenniscore is here to stay."

The pleated skirt easily blends into daily wear and fits the vintage aesthetic that has dominated fashion in recent years," Kong said.



Containers are loaded onto ships at Hua'an Port in East China's Jiangsu province. ZHAO QIRUI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Maersk makes bold moves into inland shipping

By CANG WEI in Nanjing and PENG CHAO

Maersk will provide Chinese clients with integrated logistics solutions that are more efficient, secure and environmentally friendly to empower Chinese companies to expand their global business, an executive of Maersk Line Greater China said.

Chen Xin, general manager for Maersk Line Greater China's multimodal transport products, made the remarks last week at the launch ceremony for its CCA (connecting carrier agreement) service at Hua'an Port in East China's Jiangsu province.

It marks the first time that Maersk, the world's largest container shipping company, has opened such a service on China's inland waterways.

Chen said the service, in response

to the logistics needs of local customers, was rolled out on the basis of a strategic cooperation agreement signed by Maersk Line, Shanghai International Port (Group) Co Ltd and Hua'an Port in the first half.

"This year marks the 100th anniversary of Maersk serving China's trade. The launch of this service is an important step for Maersk to open a new chapter in developing river-sea intermodal transport channels in China," Chen said.

Liu Changman, general manager for the production business of Shanghai International Port (Group) Co Ltd, said the newly launched service has laid a solid foundation for Hua'an Port to carry out more international shipping business in the future.

It enables foreign trade enterprises in and around Hua'an to use

Maersk Line's containers for Customs clearance and shipment at Hua'an Port, and then transport their goods to ports around the world via Maersk Line's global shipping network, Liu said.

"By seamlessly connecting the inland waterway shipping branch lines with international shipping mainlines, this service can not only reduce the time and procedures required for cargo transshipments, but also fully leverage the advantages of low energy consumption, minimal pollution and the large capacity of river-sea intermodal transport," he said.

Zhuang Dejun, general manager of Hua'an Traffic Holding Co Ltd, said the partnership between Hua'an Port and Maersk Line is of great significance for the city to build itself into a national inland waterway ship-

ping center, develop a modern water transportation system and create a top-level business environment.

"Through extensive and in-depth cooperation with world-renowned ports and shipping companies, Hua'an Port has leapfrogged development in recent years," Zhuang said.

He said the container throughput of Hua'an Port in the first seven months reached 312,500 TEUs, of which 60,800 were foreign trade containers.

"Compared with the same period last year, these two figures increased 10.04 percent and 105.06 percent, respectively," Zhuang added.

Guo Jun contributed to this story.

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Invista enters 'new era of nylon 6,6'

By WANG YING in Shanghai
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Invista, a US-based producer of chemical intermediates, polymers and fibers, said it has entered a "new era of nylon" by completing an expansion of its polymer site in Shanghai on Aug 8, which will double its annual capacity of nylon 6,6 polymer to 400,000 metric tons.

This will provide additional stable local supply and faster market response to harness the growth potential of downstream applications, Invista's senior executives said.

The project is a critical part of maximizing the value of the company's integrated nylon 6,6 value chain to meet growing demand for high-quality products, said Kyle Redinger, Invista's vice-president of upstream nylon business in Asia-Pacific.

"China has been really the focus of our investment strategies over the past decade... And we continue to expect China to be the largest nylon consumption region in the world within the next couple of years. So we continue to invest... both our investments and what we're doing with our partners, to be able to support that. This is an extremely important piece of our global business," said Redinger.

He further said the polymer capacity can satisfy market

demand for further development.

Pang Guanglian, vice-secretary-general of the China Petroleum and Chemical Industry Federation, said, "To double Invista's nylon 6,6 production capacity in Shanghai is not only a strong response to current market demand but also an effort to precisely grasp future development trends."

"We are proud that we have a fully integrated value chain in Shanghai. Here, we have a world-scale hexamethylene diamine (HMD) plant, an adiponitrile (ADN) plant, a nylon 6,6 polymer site and an Asia innovation center, making us a company owning one of the largest integrated facilities for intermediates and polymers worldwide," said Gary Knight, chairman of Invista Nylon Chemicals (China).

Invista's nylon 6,6 polymer boasts comprehensive performance benefits, including resistance to heat, hydrolysis and abrasion. It can replace metal for the production of high-strength, corrosion-resistant and low-density parts.

The material can be also used to make consumer products, including functional apparel and outdoor equipment.

"As for its characteristics like being resistant to abrasion and high temperatures, there are also huge application opportunities in new energy vehicles," said Yang Guang, Invista's senior director of

upstream nylon in Asia-Pacific.

Redinger said: "Over the last 10 years, the global nylon 6,6 industry has intermittently faced product shortages, leading to a lack of confidence among end users. However, the key message from our investments and support for partners in China is that such fears should now be dispelled."

"Nylon 6,6 should be chosen for its performance characteristics without supply concerns. We have ensured sufficient supply to meet market demand alongside our partners and will continue to support as needed. This is what we call the new era of nylon 6,6, and we believe that everything we and our partners have done over the past more than 10 years has been in anticipation of a new era that holds great opportunities."

Situated in Shanghai Chemical Industry Park in Shanghai's Jinshan district, the expanded polymer site is fully integrated with Invista's existing facilities, connecting upstream ADN and HMD facilities and empowering research and development through its Asia innovation center.

The site deploys a technology that simplifies the production process, with enhanced safety and environmental performance. It is also more energy-efficient than alternative technologies, the company said.

Briefly

PRC conducts reverse repos

China's central bank conducted 369.2 billion yuan (\$51.7 billion) of seven-day reverse repos at an interest rate of 1.7 percent on Wednesday. The move aims to keep liquidity reasonable and ample in the banking system, the People's Bank of China said. A reverse repo is a process in which the PBOC purchases securities from commercial banks through bidding, with an agreement to sell them back in the future.

Renminbi strengthens against greenback

The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, strengthened 64 pips to 7.1415 against the US dollar on Wednesday, said the China Foreign Exchange Trade System. In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day. The central parity rate of the yuan against the greenback is based on a weighted average of prices offered by market makers before the opening of the interbank market each business day.

XINHUA · CHINA DAILY

Rapid progress



Builders from China Railway No 4 Engineering Group Co Ltd work in Gansu province on Tuesday on the exit for the Gol Tunnel on the Gansu-Qinghai section of the Sichuan-Qinghai Railway which links the capitals of Sichuan and Qinghai provinces. The railway is expected to be completed within six years. XING JIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Longevity vegetable boosts economic prospects of county

By TAN YINGZI and DENG RUI in Chongqing

Situated high in the mountains of Southwest China's Chongqing, Shizhu Tujia autonomous county boasts one of the largest production bases in the world for water shield, a vegetable favored by both Chinese and Japanese for its health properties.

Over the past weekend, a delegation from Japan's Shizuoka prefecture visited the county to know about the growth patterns of the vegetable and China's rural development.

Water shield, or *chuncai* in Chinese, is an aquatic, perennial herb with floating leaves that grows in

ponds, lakes and slow-moving streams. It normally has deep green oval leaves of approximately 6 to 10 centimeters, arranged alternately. They are covered with a gelatinous material and characterized by a unique slimy texture.

It is high in fiber and known to help in lowering fever and in strengthening weak stomachs. It is often cooked in soup or salads.

"The water shield in Shizhu, with its excellent texture, quality and freshness, provides me with a completely new dining experience compared to what I have in my own country," Kenichi Kato, leader of the Shizuoka delegation, said during his visit.

Japan is known for the highest life expectancy in the world, a fact closely tied to the dietary habits of its population. In addition to consuming large amounts of deep-sea fish, the Japanese also eat various "longevity vegetables", such as water shield.

Kato said members of his delegation were eager to gain insights into the production of water shield, as its output in Japan is low. The vegetable is a premium food in the country and is only served in fine dining restaurants.

China has a long history of cultivating water shield in a few select regions, including Chongqing and Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Hubei provinces.

Chongqing's Shizhu began large-scale water shield cultivation in 11 townships in 1992. It has now emerged as a leading hub for water shield production in the world with a fully developed industry chain — enabling this delicacy to be widely available in households at home and abroad.

With a planting area of about 933 hectares and an annual production of about 14,000 metric tons, the local water shield industry's comprehensive output value reached 300 million yuan (\$41.78 million) in 2023, and is expected to reach 350 million yuan this year, according to the local commission of commerce.

The niche vegetable is sold in big

Chinese cities and exported to Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Malaysia, with an annual export volume exceeding 10,000 tons.

Shizhu has been established as a State-level demonstration zone for the quality and safety of exported food and agricultural products, as well as an organic water shield certification demonstration zone.

Eight local water shield brands have obtained organic food certification, and five products have been selected for the national list of distinctive agricultural products.

The China (Shizhu) Water Shield Agricultural Park and Balong Water Shield Workshop are located in

Balong village, in Lengshui township of Shizhu.

According to Chen Yun, the village chief of Balong, Japan was among the earliest countries to import this vegetable from the area as far back as 20 years ago.

"It is a perennial plant that requires strict environmental conditions, including clean water sources, fertile soil and no pesticides or pollution," Chen said.

Lengshui's Balong, situated in the northeastern part of the county at an altitude exceeding 1,000 meters, has an average temperature of 20 C with clean water sources, and is therefore an ideal location for cultivating water shield.

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BUSINESS

CEEC inks mega Saudi solar project

Chinese engineering giant sees bright prospects for Middle East PV orders

By LIU YUKUN
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China Energy Engineering Corp Ltd announced on Tuesday it had inked a \$972 million deal for a major photovoltaic project in Saudi Arabia, marking a significant step as the Middle East nation becomes a key investment destination for Chinese solar power equipment manufacturers, spurred by its commitment to green energy initiatives.

The project — the Saudi Arabia PIF Phase IV Haden 2GW Photovoltaic Project — was signed by a consortium of three subsidiaries of China Energy and a project company established by Saudi Arabia's ACWA Power, the Public Investment Fund, and Saudi Aramco Power Co.

China Energy said the project is expected to commence commercial operations by early 2027. Upon completion, it is projected to generate approximately 156 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity in 25 years, reducing carbon dioxide emissions by nearly 147 million metric tons, thereby contributing to Saudi Arabia's goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2060.

Saudi Arabia also vowed to increase the share of renewable energy to 50 percent by 2030, and attract 20 gigawatts of renewable energy projects annually starting in 2024 to reach 130 GW by 2030.

The immense market potential is turning Saudi Arabia into a hot spot for PV investment. The China Photovoltaic Industry Association said that in the first half, the total export value of China's PV products reached \$18.67 billion, with

“... many countries are actively promoting energy transitions, buoying high PV demand.”

Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University

modules accounting for about 87 percent. The Saudi Arabian market, in particular, saw significant growth, becoming China's fifth-largest export market for modules in the first half, up from outside the top 10 in the same period last year.

It's not just Saudi Arabia. Other Middle East countries are also setting ambitious energy transition goals, increasing investment in new energy sources and reducing their reliance on traditional fossil fuels.

InfoLink Consulting said solar demand in the Middle East is expected to increase from 20.5-23.6 GW in 2023 to 29-35 GW in 2027, with significant demand growth expected in Türkiye, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

Major solar product manufacturers such as Jinko Solar, GCL Technology and Trina Solar have announced investment plans in the Middle East, spanning polysilicon, battery modules, auxiliary materials and more. Experts said that a complete photovoltaic industry chain is taking shape in the Middle East,

with Chinese companies having a major presence.

“The Middle East region has abundant sunlight resources and low solar power generation costs. The economic and population growth in the Middle East has driven up electricity demand. Combined with the climate impact of fossil fuels and decreasing costs of photovoltaic projects, many countries are actively promoting energy transitions, buoying high PV demand,” said Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University.

At the same time, record-low module prices are squeezing profit margins across the solar supply chain in the domestic market, while trade barriers are increasingly intensifying in major markets like Europe and the United States. This is another reason why Chinese companies are expanding into emerging markets like the Middle East, he said.

A report by Sinolink Securities said that to promote PV installations, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Turkey and other regions have successively launched renewable energy projects' tendering plans, which are expected to drive continued growth in PV installations.

The Middle East Solar Industry Association said that between 2011 and 2023, a total of 35 GW of PV tenders were issued in the Middle East, of which 10 GW are already operational.

Since the beginning of the year, Saudi Arabia has tendered 6.7 GW of solar and wind renewable energy projects and plans to increase tenders before the year ends to meet its annual goal of tendering 20 GW, which business insiders said will open greater room for PV installations and more opportunities for Chinese manufacturers.

Smart tech boost



A plantation employee (left) introduces an automated irrigation system to technicians from Yongjia County Power Supply Co of State Grid at a greenhouse supported by smart technologies in Zhejiang province. The 6,000 sq m base only needs four growers for daily operations. ZHOU YONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Shunde's AC sales sizzle in summer heat

By ZHENG CAIXIONG
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A siren blared, signaling the departure on Tuesday of *Dafeng 3028*, a barge loaded with over 4,000 air conditioners, from a dock at Beijiao Port in Shunde district of Foshan, Guangdong province.

The air conditioners, bound for Nansha Port located at the mouth of the Pearl River, will be transferred upon arrival to international oceangoing freighters and transported to countries and regions in the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia, making the summer cool for local consumers, according to a statement released by Guangzhou Customs on Wednesday.

Dafeng 3028 is one of many shuttle ships that now operate between Shunde district, a major electrical appliances production base in Guangdong, and Nansha Port, a logistics and transportation hub in Guangzhou, the Guangdong provincial capital known as the southern gateway of the country, according to the statement.

Most of the barges carry air conditioners, refrigerators and related cooling appliances.

Summer is usually the peak sales period for electrical appliances, and the heat waves seen in many parts of the world this year have further boosted sales and exports of cooling appliances, including air conditioners and refrigerators, it said.

Statistics from Guangzhou Customs show that exports of air conditioners, refrigerators and electric fans from companies under its supervision stood at 19.83 billion yuan (\$2.75 billion) in the first seven months, a year-on-year increase of about 5.6 percent.

Located in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, Shunde district, home to myriad electrical appliances manufacturers, is known as the “capital of home appliances”, and has developed large-scale and well-equipped home appliance industry clusters after years of effort.

The export volume of “cool home appliances” in the Shunde area has significantly increased since April, with at least 700 containers shipped between Beijiao and Nansha ports daily.

Zhao Long, a senior executive of Midea Group, a major home appliances manufacturer in China, said the export order volume has been on the rise in recent months.

“We have continuously strengthened the research and development of new technologies, and combined the preferences of consumers in different countries and regions to launch different types of products and marketing methods, which have been well received by overseas consumers since the beginning of the year,” Zhao said.

To further serve the export needs of home appliance enterprises and meet the requirements of the industrial and supply chains, Foshan Customs — under the administration of Guangzhou Customs — has been reforming its Customs clearance modes and improving clearance efficiency since the beginning of the year, said the statement.

“That has ensured flexible allocation of imported bonded materials among local enterprises and effectively solved the problem of material supply shortages caused by increased orders for enterprises,” it said.

Blossoming grape harvests in Xizang drive rural vitalization

By PALDEN NYIMA
and DA QJONG in Lhasa

In the picturesque Sangri county of Lhokha at Xizang autonomous region, perched at an average altitude of 3,600 meters, a flourishing grape cultivation sector is not only rewriting the narrative of agricultural modernization, but also emerging as a pivotal catalyst for rural vitalization.

Since 2011, leveraging the unparalleled geographical and climatic conditions of the Yarlung Zangbo River valley, Sangri embarked on the establishment of a high-altitude grape base.

This initiative — a collaborative

effort between the county government, enterprises and support from researchers aiding Xizang — commenced with a grape trial harvest in the county's Tharma village.

By 2014, the county's grape project was operational, and today Sangri boasts a total grape cultivation area of 566 hectares. Projections for 2024 point to an expected grape yield of 3,400 metric tons and 1.13 million bottles of wine, with a total grape industry value of 229 million yuan (\$319,000).

Yang Cheng, a sales manager at Rongshun Pazu Manor Co Ltd, a company dedicated to grape planta-

tion and wine production, highlighted the advantages and challenges of grape cultivation in a plateau region.

“The abundance of sunlight, significant day-night temperature differentials, dry climate and heat-retaining soil favor grape growth. However, the high altitude and historical occurrences of adverse weather like sandstorms and hail present obstacles to the grape industry,” said Yang.

Established in 2017, Yang's company has integrated grape planting, fermentation, exhibitions and vineyard tourism. With a fruiting area of 267 hectares, they have har-

vested more than 1,000 tons of grapes and produced 667,000 bottles of wine.

Winemaker Li Xiaoping introduced the estate's array of wines, including dry white, dry red, semi-sweet, sweet and ice wine, all receiving accolades from international industry publications.

Beyond economic gains, the genesis of ultra-high-altitude grape planting bases has yielded social and ecological benefits. The grape wine industry has provided training to 625 households and nearly 2,000 individuals from 10 surrounding villages, offering 60 types of jobs and boosting local incomes. Furthermore, it

has spurred the development of agritainment, grape sightseeing and picking tourism.

Chodron, a 23-year-old college graduate from the county's Rong township, shared her transformative experience. Initially driven by curiosity, she discovered the intricacies and challenges of agricultural work, gaining a profound appreciation for the efforts and responsibilities of farmers.

Her aspirations now include fostering the local grape industry, expanding market reach, contributing to the economy and realizing her dream of becoming a vintner, all while showcasing the exquisite flavors of the highland

sun to broader audiences.

“From nurturing seedlings to daily tasks like fertilizing, watering, weeding, harvesting and subsequent processing, each step requires meticulous care, consuming significant time and energy,” said Chodron.

“I hope to develop the grape industry with local villagers in the future, promote the region's quality products to larger markets, contribute more to the local economy and eventually become a wine-maker.”

“My dream is to grow the best grapes in my hometown, produce the finest wine and allow more people to savor the taste of the highland sun.”

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BUSINESSFOCUS

Editor's Note: These interviews with CEOs of major foreign firms gauge their outlook for the Chinese economy, their operations in China and their business plans for 2024 and beyond, in the wake of the momentous resolution adopted at the third plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee in mid-July.

New quality productive forces to rejuvenate market



Nat Madarang
President of Goodyear Asia Pacific



Sally Loh
Executive Officer of Otis Worldwide Corp and President of Otis China



Willie Tan
CEO of Skechers China, South Korea and Southeast Asia



Eric Chung
CEO of Nippon Paint China

Q1 The third plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee in mid-July has rolled out the reform and opening-up roadmap for the Chinese economy in the coming years. What are your major takeaways from the plenum? What are the biggest opportunities you spot in China's new measures to deepen reform and further open up its economy? How do you plan to capitalize on these opportunities in your specific industry?

MADARANG: The third plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee emphasized China's commitment to deepening reforms and enhancing the business environment, which is expected to attract more foreign investment. Goodyear aims to leverage this favorable climate to expand its presence in the growing automotive sector, particularly in the luxury, sport utility vehicle and electric vehicle segments, consistent with China's modernization efforts. Additionally, our focus on innovation and sustainability corresponds with China's green initiatives and creates opportunities for closer collaboration with leading auto manufacturers. We are aiming to introduce the first 100 percent sustainable-material and maintenance-free tires by 2030.

LOH: The plenum promotes "high-quality" development and opening-up of China. The country is drawing up a blueprint for high-quality urban development accelerated by renewal, smart cities, digital transformation, green economy and sustainable development. Otis has been supporting them by innovation and technologies to connect and move people more efficiently and safely across infrastructure facilities, and residential and commercial buildings. China is advocating a large-scale equipment renewal and consumer goods trade-in. We are accelerating the deployment of elevator modernization solutions covering escalator upgrades and adding elevators to existing buildings, as well as integrating the internet of things technology to provide passengers with digital, intelligent, green and high-quality mobility experiences.

TAN: The tone-setting plenum highlighted a strong signal to the world of China's unwavering commitment to upholding the banner of reform and opening-up in the new era to help maintain economic stability. It further encourages innovation, stimulates market vitality and optimizes the business environment.

We believe that China's economy will become stronger and more resilient. The certainty of China's economy and the government's steadfast commitment provide a long-term stable environment for business development in China, offering opportunities for stable brand growth and investment expansion. China's focus on technological innovation and digital transformation will create opportunities for collaboration and investment in advanced technologies.

CHUNG: The plenum holds significant importance for advancing the process of Chinese modernization and promoting high-quality economic development in China. We have witnessed China's firm confidence in expanding opening-up, developing new quality productive forces, promoting green development and vitalizing rural areas.

The third plenary session sent a positive signal favoring foreign-funded enterprises, injecting confidence and motivation for us to continue deepening our presence in the Chinese market. Nippon Paint China has established factories in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, and Dengta, Liaoning province, this year. They are the first production bases set up by the company in China's northwest and northeast regions, respectively.

The meeting emphasized the critical role of new quality productive forces in development, encouraging industrial upgrading and economic growth through scientific and technological innovation, which provides Nippon Paint China with broad market opportunities and new business growth.

Q2 In your view, how will the reform and opening-up measures rolled out at the plenum help strengthen the Chinese economy and bolster its prospects of achieving modernization? Do you think China's new reform and opening-up blueprint will make fresh contributions to the global economy? If yes, how?

MADARANG: China's new reform blueprint, outlined at the recent plenum, aims to strengthen the economy and accelerate modernization by creating a more vibrant, innovative and competitive business environment. This development is expected to have a significant positive impact on the global economy, presenting exciting opportunities for companies like Goodyear. As the first foreign tire manufacturer on the Chinese mainland since 1994, Goodyear is well-positioned to help support the development of China's growing automotive sector, particularly in the luxury, SUV and EV segments. Goodyear's expansion in Kunshan, Jiangsu province, and the completion of Goodyear's largest facility with solar panel installation in our Dalian plant in Liaoning province, demonstrate our commitment to the Chinese market and align with the country's sustainability goals.

With China entering a new era of green and innovation-led growth, we believe that smart tire manufacturing and performance will experience significant growth. Goodyear sees tire intelligence as a source of future growth.

LOH: China's efforts to foster a first-rate business environment that is market-oriented, law-based and internationalized will further enhance the attractiveness of the Chinese market globally. We are confident of the continuing development of Otis in China, which is the world's largest elevator equipment market. We remain committed to supporting urbanization, smart cities, city renewal and sustainable development in China. The Otis global research and development center and Industry 4.0-oriented manufacturing facilities in China are our strong backbones to support the country's high-quality development.

TAN: We believe that China's new blueprint for reform and opening-up holds enormous potential to contribute to the global economy. Enhanced market access and deep integration into the global supply chain will facilitate greater international trade and investment flows. China is closely connected to the world as a crucial link in global industrial and supply chains, with Skechers producing 90 percent of its products in China. By prioritizing innovation and digital transformation, China aims to lead in advanced manufacturing, green technology and digital infrastructure. Initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative and other strengthened economic cooperation frameworks will promote global connectivity and inclusive growth, benefiting China and its global partners.

CHUNG: The plenum emphasized the commitment to opening up by implementing measures such as the removal of all market access restrictions in the manufacturing sector, optimizing the business environment for foreign-funded enterprises, and facilitating international economic and trade cooperation. These measures aim to create a fairer and more transparent institutional environment for foreign-funded enterprises in China. Benefiting from the implementation of these policies, we will increase our investment in scientific and technological innovation, accelerate the introduction of more innovation achievements into China, and enhance the coordinated utilization of global resources to meet the continuously growing market demand.

The China International Import Expo is an important platform for China to promote high-level opening-up. We will participate in the CIEE for the first time this year, showcasing our green innovation achievements to global partners, sharing the development opportunities of the Chinese market, and facilitating global trade flows.

Q3 How do you view China's new reform initiatives aimed at fostering new quality productive forces, such as those to encourage industrial upgrade and technological innovation? Do you see these as opportunities or challenges for foreign enterprises, and why?

MADARANG: China's new reform initiatives, focused on fostering new quality productive forces through industrial upgrades and technological innovation, present significant opportunities for foreign companies like Goodyear. We are in the process of developing solutions and products for fleets, autonomous vehicles, connected technologies, electric vehicles and sustainable practices to contribute to the creation of a new mobility ecosystem. Numerous opportunities have also arisen from the eagerness shown by Chinese automakers and technology companies to embrace new technologies that have boosted the utilization of new energy sources and electric vehicles. Moreover, the free trade agreements forged between China and other countries, along with surging demand from businesses for sustainable-material tires, are helping drive the momentum. Our goal is to incorporate data and sensor-enabled intelligence into all new products by 2027, enhancing safety and efficiency for drivers.

LOH: China's new reform initiatives aimed at fostering new quality productive forces will fuel high-quality development of the country. The continuing opening-up to foreign investment provides a favorable business environment. Otis remains committed to supporting China's urbanization and city renewal through innovation and world-class quality elevator and escalator solutions. The Otis R&D Center in Shanghai is the company's largest innovation hub certified with global innovation hub status by the Shanghai municipal government. Among many innovations, Otis' energy-efficient solutions connected elevators and our IoT-based digitization technologies are innovated in China and now serve across global markets.

TAN: China's reform initiatives aimed at nurturing new quality productive forces, including measures to promote industrial upgrading and technological innovation, present significant opportunities for foreign enterprises.

For foreign brands like Skechers, there are opportunities to collaborate with Chinese partners to jointly develop cutting-edge technologies, leverage China's vast market to promote innovative products and services, and establish joint ventures for mutual growth. Of course, challenges exist. Foreign brands must navigate regulatory environments to ensure compliance with local laws and regulations while competing with increasingly mature domestic competitors. Moreover, improving market access and the implementation and enforcement of intellectual property protection are ongoing areas for enhancement. Successfully leveraging these opportunities depends on relationships with Chinese partners, technological differentiation and a deep understanding of local market dynamics.

CHUNG: New quality productive forces represent high technology, efficiency and quality. China's cultivation and development of new quality productive forces will promote rapid development in the field of scientific and technological innovation, especially in areas such as new energy, new materials and intelligent manufacturing. This will further unleash market potential and provide a broad platform for the development of foreign-funded enterprises. We are optimistic about the prospects of new quality productive forces and will actively integrate into the process of cultivating and developing these forces.

Q4 While China is expanding opening-up, some are concerned that geopolitical tensions, rising protectionism and global supply chain adjustments may weaken China's attractiveness to foreign companies. What's your take? How important will China be for your global business in the coming decade? What more opening-up measures can China take to offset the impact of the complex external environment?

MADARANG: Goodyear remains committed to the Chinese market, viewing it crucial for its global business strategy. China's new reform initiatives, focused on expanding opening-up policies and fostering industrial upgrades and technological innovation, align well with Goodyear's strategic objectives. We see substantial opportunities in China's ongoing reform and opening-up initiatives and remain dedicated to deepening our presence and investment in China and the broader Asia-Pacific region. Benefiting from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, we also ship tires manufactured in China to Japan and a number of Southeast Asian countries.

LOH: As the world's largest elevator market, China provides tremendous opportunities for Otis to continue supporting customers and passengers with quality elevator solutions and services. The growth of the Belt and Road Initiative also provides opportunities for Otis to extend the partnership mileage. For example, China's nonfinancial outbound direct investment in countries and regions participating in the BRI surged 9.2 percent year-on-year to \$15.46 billion in the first half. In terms of infrastructure construction and improved transportation connectivity, Otis has been participating in the BRI and facilitated many projects in countries and regions involved in the initiative, including the Mecca Metro in Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi International Airport in the UAE and Egypt's Cairo Metro.

TAN: Geopolitical tensions, rising protectionism and global supply chain adjustments indeed pose challenges. These factors can potentially impact China's attractiveness to foreign companies by introducing uncertainties in trade policies, market access and operating environments. However, despite these challenges, China remains a crucial market for global brands. Its vast consumer base, strategic importance in global supply chains and ongoing commitment to reform and innovation create significant opportunities. With reforms and supportive policies, China is capable of reinforcing its position as a leading destination for foreign investment and business opportunities. The Chinese market is Skechers' largest market outside of the United States, making it crucially important for the brand.

CHUNG: Changes in the global market have had some impact on the Chinese market indeed, but with the continuous improvement of the business environment and the increasing market opportunities, Nippon Paint China firmly believes that the Chinese market remains an important development base for foreign-funded enterprises.

In 2023 fiscal year alone, the Chinese market contributed more than one-third of Nipsea Group's profits. China's vast consumer base and strong consumption potential play an irreplaceable role in the growth of Nipsea's overseas business. In the future, the core position of the Chinese market in Nipsea's global layout will remain unchanged.

Q5 The plenary session has stressed that reform tasks laid out at the meeting shall be completed by the time the People's Republic of China celebrates its 80th anniversary in 2029. How do you expect the new reform and opening-up measures to transform the Chinese economy in the coming five years? What strategies will your company adopt to align with the expected transformation? Looking ahead, in the second half of 2024, what are your expectations for the Chinese economy? How do you think your company will fare in this evolving landscape?

MADARANG: The plenum's reform measures are expected to significantly transform China's economy by 2029, with accelerated technological advancement, a more balanced economy driven by domestic consumption and an improved business environment. At Goodyear, our vision is to be recognized as the best mobility enabler in the luxury, SUV and EV segments across the Asia-Pacific region by 2028. To reach our goals, we will deepen our understanding of Chinese customers and consumers. Our two development centers in China will enable us to increase our responsiveness to local customer needs. Thanks to the great support from local governments where Goodyear operates, we are well-positioned to capitalize on the growth in the auto industry and our commitment to sustainability.

LOH: Otis looks forward to embracing new opportunities in the more open Chinese market. Recently, the government has launched policies to encourage and support the implementation of equipment renewal and urbanization across the country. There are imminent needs to accelerate the renewal of equipment in municipal infrastructure and add elevators to existing buildings. We are confident in Otis' growth in the Chinese market. With leading innovation, localized innovation, manufacturing and service capabilities, Otis is committed to contributing to China's modernization and high-quality development.

TAN: The new reform and opening-up measures outlined during the plenum are poised to significantly transform the Chinese economy over the next five years. By emphasizing technological innovation, market liberalization and sustainability, these measures aim to propel China toward higher-quality growth and greater resilience in the global economy. We anticipate more opportunities in sectors prioritized for reform, such as advanced manufacturing, digital economy and green technologies.

CHUNG: The Chinese market will be more open, innovative technologies will continue to emerge, regional development will be more balanced and the achievements of ecological conservation will be prominent. China's economy will be more vigorous and achieve high-quality development.

China's economy is at a critical juncture, transitioning from high-speed development to high-quality development. From the perspective of the consumer market, China's economic development is stable and improving, with market demand continuously evolving and rising. This provides more space for foreign-funded enterprises to explore innovation and business development. We remain optimistic about China's development, believing that investing in China is investing in the future.

COMMENT

Editorials

US prioritizing self interest at cost of any possibility of peace in Middle East

The latest US decision to approve the sale of \$20 billion worth of arms to Israel, announced by the State Department on Tuesday, shows the United States is continuing to fuel the conflict in the Middle East, which badly needs signals of de-escalation of the hostilities and efforts to build peace and stability.

The new arms sales will include scores of fighter jets and advanced air-to-air missiles, which, according to a State Department release, underscores the US' commitment to the security of Israel and shores up the US' national interests in assisting Israel to develop and maintain a strong and ready self-defense capability.

This is bunkum given Israel's aggression against the Palestinian people.

The US move is tantamount to pouring oil on the flames of Israel's furious assault on the Palestinian people in Gaza, and the spillover effect of that bellicosity is dragging more parties into the vortex of violence. The US' partiality and the staunch support it has given Israel, which have facilitated the latter turning Gaza into a living hell for millions of Palestinians, is callous to the extreme.

It is crystal clear that Washington is more interested in pursuing its own agenda in the Middle East via its proxy than it is in dousing the flames of animosities and working to promote peace and stability in the region. The betrayal of the right of people in the region to live in peace and their right to development at a time when the region had hopes of finally escaping the quagmire of long-festering enmities will only deepen the US' political and moral debt to the people in the Middle East.

As the staggering civilian death toll in Gaza continues to rise, the US administration under Joe Biden has been under growing and unprecedented opposition at home for the unconditional support it has given Israel. Under such circumstances, the delivery time for the weapons in the latest arms sales is expected to take several years.

But the sale exposes the US' obstinacy in continuing its favoritism and partiality for Israel no matter how many crimes the latter has committed in Gaza. Latest statistics from the Palestinian side show the Palestinian death toll in ongoing Israeli attacks on Gaza has risen to nearly 40,000.

The Israel-Hamas conflict has created an unprecedented humanitarian crisis in Gaza. But the US has maintained a one-sided stance in the conflict. Instead of joining the world community to push the belligerent parties to resolve their differences, it has been obdurate in providing weapons to its key ally, even while making a show of urging Tel Aviv to exercise restraint and acting as a broker for peace talks.

The US' irresponsible and immoral behavior has already sparked serious concerns and criticism among the international community. With the whole region grappling with the fear of a wider war and exacerbated tension after the killing of Hamas' political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Teheran last month, any misstep is likely to push the situation to breaking point.

On Tuesday, Iran rejected a call by the leaders of the United Kingdom, France and Germany urging it to refrain from any retaliatory attacks that would further escalate regional tensions, calling it an "excessive request". Yet these European leaders have not voiced the same urgency for the US to stop enabling Israel's acts of aggression. If the US-led West continues to persist with its partiality in the Middle East and keeps undercutting others' efforts to resolve the conflict, more people will be exposed to the perils of a wider war.

Gaza needs a truce rather than arms.

Like most members of the international community that wish to see an end to the conflict, China remains firm in calling for an immediate and unconditional cease-fire and an end to the collective punishment of the people in Gaza for the Oct 7 Hamas attacks. It is high time the US stopped fanning the flames in the Middle East and joined hands with those countries trying to broker a cease-fire in Gaza and working to bring lasting peace and stability to a region that has been convulsed by enmities for far too long.

Manila a silly kid with its reckless actions

As usual, after China responded to its intended infringement of the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the South China Sea on Aug 8, the Philippines cried aloud its innocence and tried to paint China in a bad light.

In a statement issued that day, Philippine armed forces chief General Romeo Brawner accused Chinese military aircraft of dropping flares in the path of a Philippine Air Force transport plane in the airspace over China's Huangyan Island, declaring it was a "dangerous maneuver". Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr doubled down on that on Sunday, calling the Chinese action "unjustified, illegal and reckless".

China would not have had to make its legal and necessary action in response had the Philippine military aircraft not been guilty of an unjustified, illegal and reckless intrusion into the airspace of Huangyan Island. That it did so twice, once on Aug 7 and once on Aug 8, shows it was a deliberate move by the Philippines aimed at provoking China.

The Philippines had the gall to do so because of the so-called joint patrols its military was conducting in the waters in collaboration with the United States, Australia and Canada. Since the US was in charge of the exercises, the brazen move of the Philippine air force must have received the go-ahead from the US, if not been done to its instruction.

The incident is therefore emblematic of Manila's increasingly brash and reckless moves under the tutelage of Washington. Unlike other Southeast Asian countries that are wise enough to stay clear of the US-orchestrated geopolitical games in the South China Sea, the Philippines under the Marcos government has had its head turned by the attentions of the US.

Despite its neighbors' dissuasion and the restraint shown by Beijing, the Marcos government seems to be like a kid in a schoolyard trying to see how far it can go before its taunts trigger an angry response and it can revel in the histrionics of portraying itself as the victim of a bully. Manila evidently has no qualms about triggering a regional crisis in the otherwise peaceful Asia-Pacific by being the US' eager proxy. Realizing that the country is being isolated by its neighbors, the Marcos government has tried to reach out to Vietnam and Malaysia to try and form its own anti-China clique. But none of these efforts has worked out, as the other regional countries are fully aware of the risks of its gamble. They will by no means sacrifice their ties with China in exchange for being a secondary US agent contracted through Manila.

It is a consensus among the countries in the region those parties that are not claimants in the territorial disputes in the South China Sea should not be allowed to interfere in regional affairs. China recently reached a temporary arrangement with the Philippines on the transportation of humanitarian supplies to Ren'ai Reef. That should have served to remind Manila that, as long as it upholds the regional consensus and stops doing the US' bidding to divide the region and provoke China, the territorial disputes between the two countries will not be allowed to define overall Sino-Philippine relations.

The ups and downs of the China-Philippines exchanges have repeatedly proved that good relations are not easy to build, but very easy to destroy. Beijing has repeatedly urged Manila not to let Washington send it careening on a dangerous course. China-Philippines relations are approaching a point of no return. Manila should be calm-headed and recognize that confrontation will only lead to calamity, while dialogue will allow peace and stability to prevail, which will be for the good of the Philippines and the region as a whole.

In calling black white, the Marcos government is simply choosing to turn a blind eye to the fact that the Huangyan Island is China's inherent territory and China has indisputable sovereignty over the island and its surrounding waters and airspace.

The Philippines, for the good of the region and common development, should heed Beijing's call to consider the future of China-Philippines relations, and meet China halfway to rebuild mutual trust, and push bilateral relations back on the right track.

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Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Cross Taiwan redline and risk ruining ties with the mainland

Leaders and politicians the world over know that Taiwan is a part of China and that both the Chinese mainland and the Taiwan island belong to one country, though there are exceptions such as former US House speaker Nancy Pelosi.

In a recent Australian Broadcasting Corporation program, Pelosi lashed out at former Australian prime minister Paul Keating for saying 'Taiwan is a part of China and Australia should not get deeply involved in the China-containment strategy of the United States on the Taiwan question. Earlier, in the same ABC program, Keating had said that the US says it wants to protect Taiwan, but the fact is that the island is China's territory. He also warned that once war breaks out in the Taiwan Strait, the US will not fight with all its strength and when it pulls out suddenly, Australia will have to bear all the consequences for its involvement on the issue.

Keating's remarks triggered Pelosi's dis-

satisfaction. She claimed such words were "stupid and ridiculous" and not in the security interests of the Asia-Pacific region. Keating struck back, saying Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in 2022 was "reckless and capricious" and threatened to trigger a military confrontation between the US and China. In fact, President Joe Biden and the Pentagon had to warn Pelosi about the military risks involved in her visit, he said.

Discerning people will know who is right and who is wrong when it comes to Pelosi's and Keating's views on Taiwan. All major international documents and resolutions recognize that there is only one China, which is legally represented by the government of the People's Republic of China, and Taiwan is a part of China. Such a position is also held by a vast majority of countries, including the US and Australia. By reneging on this basic principle, any overseas politician stands to strain ties

between his or her country and China.

When Pelosi stubbornly pressed ahead with her visit to Taiwan in 2022, she plunged relations between the world's two powers to a new low, while also endangering peace, security and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Taiwan question is relevant to China's core interests and it brooks no interference from any foreign country. No country can expect to continue to have good relations with China if it sabotages China's core interests.

The damage Pelosi's Taiwan visit has done to Sino-US relations is yet to be repaired and she should not continue to harm the ties with irresponsible, provocative and foolish statements. All politicians, including Pelosi, should come back to historical facts on the Taiwan question and do nothing to harm the interests of China and their countries.

— WU YIXUE, CHINA DAILY

Space for plenty of clearer mobile signals

A group of 18 communication satellites, the first batch of the planned Qianfan network, were lifted by a Long March 6A rocket from the Taiyuan Satellite Launch Center in Shanxi province and placed into their preset orbit on Aug 6.

As its name shows, Qianfan constellation is a satellite-based communication network that provides communication services to users directly from the satellite instead of the current mode of communicating via base stations. Compared with base stations whose signals often get hindered, the satellite-based network will send signals more effectively so its users need not worry about weak signals.

Moreover, communication companies

in many countries provide global services but when users travel far they have to depend on local service providers. With the satellite-based communication network, communication companies can provide services to their users in any corner of the world. That's why satellite-based communication networks have long been a hot research sector. As early as 1987, Motorola had developed its Iridium satellite constellation, planning to arrange 77 satellites around the globe for communication. It failed because of the unbearably high cost but the situation is totally different now, as new technologies have lowered costs enough to launch 18 satellites in one rocket.

The Qianfan constellation is reportedly

aiming at 108 satellites within the year and increasing the total number to over 10,000 by the end of 2030. As Low Earth Orbit positions and their corresponding electromagnetic wave frequency channels are limited, only those with better technologies can gain a foothold in these. Qianfan, Starlink and various other satellite-based communication plans might be competitive but they are not rivals to each other.

China can exert its potential in propelling the aerospace sector to flourish, as well as call for regulating the space resource usage so that different plans compete healthily, without becoming rivals. Space is big enough for different plans to coexist.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Failure of trade bullying becoming ever more apparent

Reportedly, the US Department of Defense has decided to remove Hesai Technology from the blacklist of enterprises it alleges have links with the Chinese military because the Pentagon believes that the world's leading manufacturer of laser sensors for electric vehicles does not meet the criteria for being blacklisted. This is an embarrassing flip-flop of the Joe Biden administration, which just added the company to the list in January this year claiming it had sufficient evidence to justify its decision.

In June, some US lawmakers also mooted the removal of DJI from the list under mounting pressure from US industry and market as the Chinese company has a large share of the drone market in

the United States with the performance to cost ratio of its products unmatched by other manufacturers.

The US Congress passed legislation in 2021 requiring the Pentagon to compile the list. The act aims to strengthen the scrutiny of Chinese companies operating in or selling their products and services to the US.

Notably, the Shanghai-based and Nasdaq-listed Hesai Technology sued the Pentagon in May, saying there was no evidence of its connection with the Chinese military and called the US' blacklisting move "arbitrary and capricious".

Although people familiar with the matter told the media that US government lawyers were concerned that the reasons for blacklisting the company would not withstand legal scrutiny based on the criteria listed in the 2021 legislation, it would still be extremely difficult

for Chinese companies to win a lawsuit against the US government on US soil.

The US has also tried to coerce other countries to participate in its trade restriction measures targeting China, particularly in the advanced semiconductor industry, irrespective of the impact this would have on the global industry and supply chains.

The only reason why the Biden administration seems still intent on sticking to its de facto trade bullying and economic coercion practices, after most allies and many US companies have actually started distancing or directly stepping away from them, is that, with the US presidential election around the corner, it simply cannot afford to admit the failure of its China-containment strategy, a hallmark policy of its diplomacy, even if the policy proved not only futile but also self-harming.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

COMMENT

Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva

50 years of the Brazil-China diplomatic relations

Celebrating the past and launching the foundations of the future

On Aug 15, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the diplomatic relations between the Federative Republic of Brazil and the People's Republic of China. Throughout these 50 years, we have built a strategic partnership that strengthened our peoples' commercial, cultural, scientific, and technological ties.

As president of Brazil, I am proud to have contributed to further developing this prolific cooperation. On my first visit to Beijing in 2004, we strengthened the Strategic Partnership by creating the High-Level Sino-Brazilian Commission on Consultation and Cooperation (COS-BAN), which is key for the coordination of our actions in several sectors and for deepening the integration of our governments and societies.

Since 2009, China has consolidated its position as our major commercial partner. In the last seven years, Brazil has been China's main external food provider, having contributed to its food security.

In 2023, bilateral trade reached a record of \$157 billion, with Brazil's unprecedented *superavit* of \$51 billion. Our exports totaled \$104 billion, exceeding the combined sum of our sales to the United States and the European Union.

Brazil was also the fourth major destination of Chinese investments abroad, representing 4.8 percent of the global total, according to the China-Brazil Business Council (CBCC). These investments are vital

for the development and modernization of our infrastructure and industry, and are in synergy with the new Growth Acceleration Program (Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento - PAC) and the New Industry Brazil program (Nova Indústria Brasil).

Our bilateral relations are not limited to the exportation of agricultural products. On the contrary, our relationship's strategic dimension precedes the success of our commercial exchanges. The Earth-Resources Satellite (CBERS) project, launched in 1988, is a milestone of South-South cooperation in high technology, strengthening space infrastructure, and boosting research, innovation, and co-development in critical sectors.

For these reasons, China was one of the first countries I visited at the beginning of my third term. On the occasion, I highlighted our desire for Brazil-China relations to transcend commercial exchanges.

In the same way that the CBERS was fundamental for our countries to dominate aerospace technologies 40 years ago, I trust that we will be able to seek new areas in the frontiers of knowledge to ground our cooperation for the next 50 years, such as artificial intelligence, semiconductors, and renewable energy sources.

We will seek to solidify the connections between our universities to increase the number of exchange students and researchers. We want more Chinese people to visit Brazil

as tourists and more Brazilians to visit China. We hope to work together in facing climate change and transitioning to clean energies, particularly from wind, solar, and biomass sources.

Beyond this dense bilateral agenda, China and Brazil are long-standing partners at the BRICS, the G20, the United Nations, and several other International forums. We work together to promote peace, security, and development. We support the global governance reform to make it more efficient, fair, and representative of the interests of the Global South.

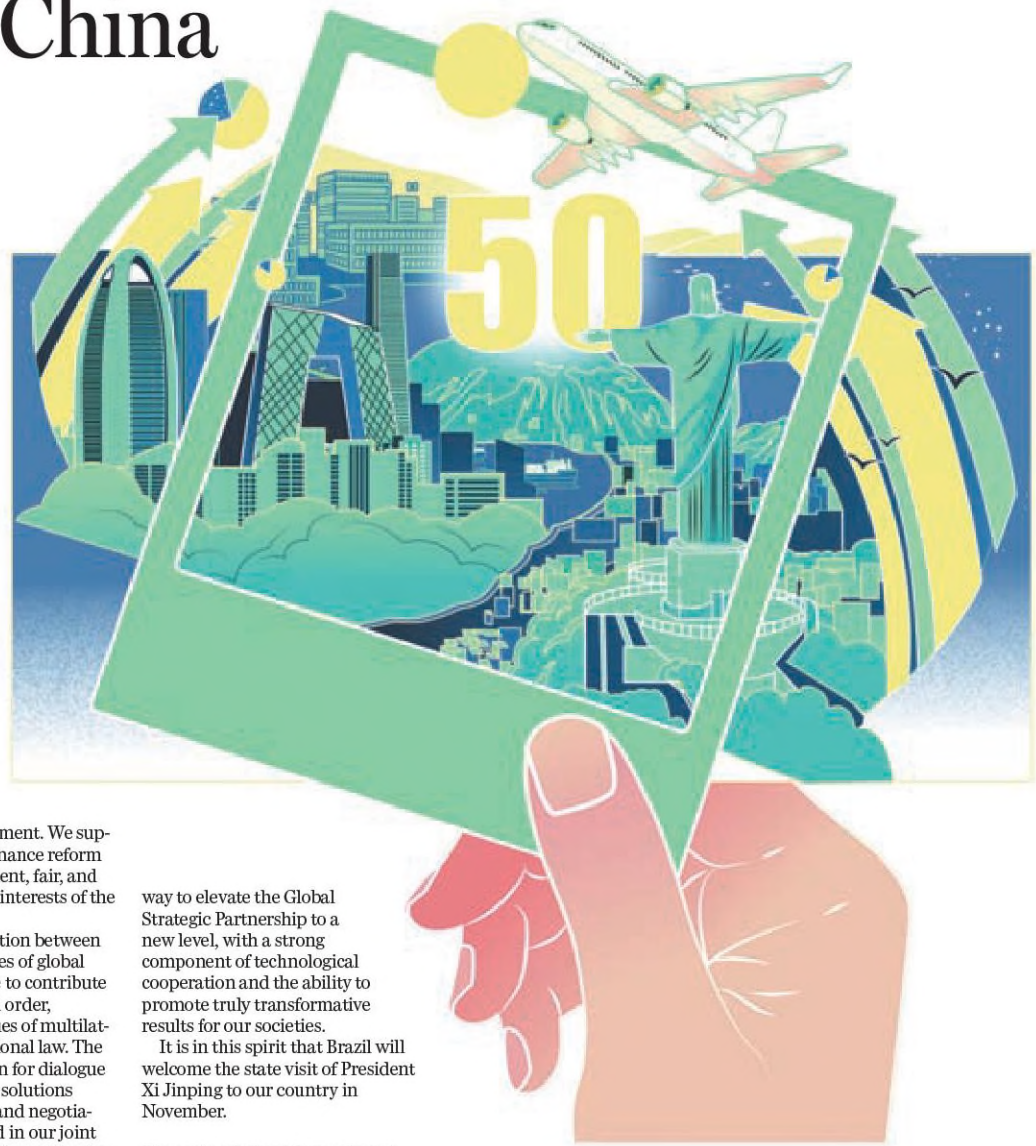
The close coordination between our countries on issues of global interest will continue to contribute to a multipolar world order, grounded on the values of multilateralism and international law. The common appreciation for dialogue allows us to promote solutions based on diplomacy and negotiation, as demonstrated in our joint proposal for the conflict in Ukraine.

Over these solid foundations, China and Brazil are paving the right

way to elevate the Global Strategic Partnership to a new level, with a strong component of technological cooperation and the ability to promote truly transformative results for our societies.

It is in this spirit that Brazil will welcome the state visit of President Xi Jinping to our country in November.

The author is President of Brazil. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

Fernando Fazzolari

Beijing a good and able partner for Latin America's development

China's pursuit of high-quality development has opened up new areas and created new drivers of economic growth, while helping improve global production and fostering an attractive atmosphere for both investors and consumers.

China is a major player in global trade and industry, and its presence and actions at the international level have assumed added importance by offering products at competitive prices for different industries. China has facilitated production in broader markets.

By developing new quality productive forces, China will contribute more to deepen cooperation among countries and help restructure the complex global industry and supply chains. Along with developing new quality productive forces, China has also intensified its research and development activities, which will promote the certification of products with new quality standards and increase patents worldwide.

The development of new quality productive forces will help contain the dominant, oligopolistic and monopolistic positions of some countries and multinational companies in trade and high-tech, which in turn will revitalize the international market.

The products and services that emerge from the development of new quality productive forces will benefit all countries. The development of the global economy has been restricted due to developing countries' dependence on developed nations for advanced technologies. The developed countries own the intellectual property rights of many advanced technologies and are reluctant to share them with developing nations, curbing the latter's development.

However, the development of new quality productive forces faces some challenges, because new quality productive forces are necessarily integrated into global productive matrices, because not all Chinese standards are in line with Western standards. Hence, it is necessary to make them compatible with international standards.



China is a good partner of Latin America, not least because it can help Latin American countries to equitably distribute the infinite wealth among the people.

Still, the development of new quality productive forces will propel the development of the Belt and Road Initiative.

This is the 10th year of the proposal to build a China-Latin America community with a shared future. Relations between Latin American countries and China have deepened much more in the past 10 years than in any period in history. There is a lot of interest on both sides to integrate and complement each other, both economically and culturally.

From chambers of commerce and investment platforms to Chinese language teaching centers and institutions promoting cultural exchanges, all sorts of institutions and centers have been opened over the past 10 years, helping further improve Sino-Latin American relations. This is very important because the cultures and traditions of China and Latin American countries are still vastly different.

The goal of Belt and Road projects in Latin America, despite being broad, is mutual benefit. For Latin America, the Belt and Road Initiative is a new phenomenon, although the trade and economic exchanges between the two sides are already substantial.

In Argentina, for example, some very successful ventures in the food industry have been established, even though there is

a need to integrate the country's extractive and industrial sectors with those of China.

Latin American countries oscillate between people-centric sovereign programs and neoliberal and colonial policies that ignore the needs of the community and, instead, serve the interests of the market. In many cases, some Latin American governments' decisions have ignored the interests of the people. For instance, many consider Argentine government's decision to not join the expanded BRICS as an irresponsible act, because instead of integrating the country's economy with major emerging market economies, the government chose to isolate it.

The main challenge for Latin American countries is to end their economic dependence on global speculative capital and concentrate on boosting their economies and developing technologies. To do so, they need reliable trading, industrial and technological partners.

Latin America should focus on building a better, fairer world free from poverty, a world where everyone has the opportunity to improve their lives, a world of common prosperity, a world where people are the masters of their destiny. Latin America is rich in resources, sitting on infinite wealth and yet it cannot provide a life of dignity for millions of people.

China is a good partner of Latin America, not least because it can help Latin American countries to equitably distribute the infinite wealth among the people. Until this fact is manifested in a stable, permanent manner and to the satisfaction of the people, it will be difficult for Latin America to overcome the obstacles.

Yet I am optimistic about the future, because I see colleagues from Chinese companies making sincere efforts to improve people's livelihoods and create an atmosphere in which the people can decide their own future.

The author is an economist from the University of Buenos Aires. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Li Quan

New institutions facilitate high-level opening-up

With this year marking the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and being a critical year for fulfilling the goals set out in the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25), Chinese policymakers are making greater efforts to foster a new development pattern, advance high-quality development and further deepen reform and opening-up.

China's plan for further opening-up in the new era is part of the country's comprehensive reforms, as outlined in the resolution of the 20th plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, which was held in July. The resolution said China will further deepen reform comprehensively to advance Chinese modernization, and promote high-level opening-up. It also said that leveraging the strengths of its enormous market, China will deepen cooperation with other countries, steadily expand institutional opening-up, further reform the foreign trade structure, improve planning for regional opening-up, and refine the mechanisms for high-quality cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative.

China aims to build a high-standard socialist market economy in which the market will play the decisive role in resource allocation and the government will act as supervisor, and intervene in the market only if needed. Also, it will strive to become self-reliant in science and technology, expeditiously develop a new development paradigm, and pursue high-quality development.

The global economy faces some serious challenges including that of weak recovery, and a complex and unpredictable geopolitical landscape. Consequently, international capital is increasingly seeking safety and hedging against risks. That's why China, in addition to advancing its own development, has pledged to accelerate its opening-up, creating more development opportunities for the rest of the world and better protecting the rights and interests of foreign investors. China will also further open up its commodities, services, capital and labor markets.

China's foreign trade faces pressure due to the restructuring of the global value chains, making the country's efforts to liberalize trade and facilitate investment increasingly important amid the growing trend of trade protectionism and "de-coupling" and "severing of industry and supply chains" in some economies.

As highlighted in the resolution, China will align its domestic economic and trade rules with international standards, including harmonizing regulations and standards in sectors such as property rights protection, industrial subsidies, environmental standards, labor protection, government procurement, e-commerce and financing.

Entering a new era of green and innovation-driven development, the country has transitioned from a primarily vast consumer market and low-cost manufacturing hub to a critical regional export base, innovation center and a major link in the global supply chains. For example, the combined export volume of electric vehicles, lithium batteries and solar photovoltaic panels, known as the "new three items", last year was 1.06 trillion yuan (\$146.39 billion), up 29.9 percent year-on-year. And industrial robot exports soared by 86.4 percent year-on-year.

As the world shifts toward low-carbon development, the demand for environmentally friendly and sustainable products has surged, with the "new three items" becoming highly sought after in the global market. China is the leading producer, consumer and exporter of these items, because the Chinese government and companies have invested heavily in these sectors, especially in research and development.

The World Customs Organization has urged economies to join the "Authorized Economic Operator" program to boost the security of the global supply chains and facilitate the free movement of legitimate goods in the global markets. Customs officials from different countries and regions have vowed to work together to reduce the barriers of complicated customs procedures and make global trade more efficient.

By the end of June, China had signed AEO mutual recognition

agreements with 28 economies, including the European Union and South Africa. It will sign more such agreements with more economies, in order to bolster commercial exchanges both domestically and globally.

The rapid development of e-commerce has helped transform China's foreign trade. China now has the most online shoppers in the world, more than the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia put together.

However, countries around the world need to implement targeted policies to facilitate the green and digital transition of economies, better safeguard global trade, and ensure food and energy security. China remains committed to expanding high-standard opening-up and sharing development opportunities with the rest of the world.

The top Chinese leader has emphasized the importance of further deepening reform to build a modern socialist country in all respects and realize the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Stressing that the ultimate goal of promoting reforms and pursuing high-quality development is to meet people's need for a better life, the top leader said that reform measures must take into consideration the overall, fundamental and long-term interests of the people, including creating more new jobs, increasing people's incomes, improving the education, healthcare and housing sectors, and upgrading childcare and eldercare services.

Despite the global headwinds, China continues to attract huge amounts of foreign direct investment. According to the recently released 2024 Kearney FDI Confidence Index report, which reflects investors' expectations for FDI in the next three years, China's global ranking has risen from seventh to third. While China's efforts to expand opening-up and free trade have yielded positive results, the Belt and Road Initiative has three-quarters of the world's countries as partner economies, which has significantly boosted global trade and investment. Still, China will continue to spearhead efforts to boost global trade and investment, while pursuing high-quality development domestically.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

GERT GROBLER

Working together with one accord

China will host the next Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in Beijing in early September, with the theme "Joining Hands to Advance Modernization and Build a High-Level China-Africa Community with a Shared Future".

As the summit will take place at a time of growing China-Africa friendship, solidarity and cooperation, the two sides are engaged in wide-ranging communication and consultation in preparation for the summit to ensure practical, constructive and mutually beneficial outcomes.



At the upcoming FOCAC, Africa and China will further pursue the continued implementation of previously adopted FOCAC measures, leading to stepped up future cooperation in key areas such as economic and market integration, industrialization, green energy, agricultural modernization and talent cultivation. Joint efforts will also be made for the promotion of the commendable Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative.

It is generally agreed by analysts and experts that the establishment of the FOCAC in October 2000 in Beijing initiated a new vital, "game-changing" and strategic phase of Africa and China cooperation. The FOCAC has, in fact, become a vital and central platform for future friendship and cooperation between Africa and China. Due to the strong drive and practical approach inherent in the FOCAC process, infrastructure development, human resource development, governance exchanges and financial support have become key pillars underpinning Africa and China relations.

It is against this background of a strong, growing cooperation and extensive contact and exchanges between China and Africa, that the latter developed deep respect and admiration for China's development experience. Africa has witnessed the profound changes and progress China has made over the past 70 years, based on its people-first approach, hard work, innovation, reform and opening-up. Under the leadership of

Next month's FOCAC will show China and Africa scripting a new chapter of building a community with a shared future



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

the Communist Party of China, the country has embarked on a path of socialism with Chinese characteristics and achieved remarkable outcomes by creating a "moderately prosperous society", which is generally regarded as a miracle of development that is unmatched worldwide.

In fact, a large number of countries in the Global South are increasingly expressing confidence that China's modernization approach could contribute to enhanced governance, development opportunities and options for innovation and they can

learn from China's experience and apply it based on the situations in their own countries. In fact, this reflects an integral part of China's foreign policy, namely to deepen Global South cooperation, promote North-South dialogue, prioritize development, form synergy among development strategies of all parties, and foster new development drivers, so as to improve the FOCAC and promote the building of a global community of development.

Since its establishment, the FOCAC has effectively contributed to the transforma-

tion of the long-standing traditional friendship and solidarity between Africa and China into a multi-sectorial, concrete, measurable and mutually beneficial relationship which continues to flourish.

Another encouraging feature of the FOCAC process is the growing dialogue and consultation at both intergovernmental and nongovernmental levels involving a broad range of actors, culminating in building consensus on key objectives and issues of common concern, and enhancing people-to-people exchanges.

The progress of the FOCAC has not only withstood the test of time in an uncertain international landscape but also become an increasingly adopted model for international cooperation.

President Xi Jinping's speech at the FOCAC's opening ceremony in Dakar in 2021, during which he provided a strategic plan and overarching blueprint for future China-Africa cooperation, was widely acclaimed by African leaders and people at the time.

The FOCAC conference in Dakar also produced a dynamic and comprehensive economic cooperation plan that assisted the two sides in adapting to the changes in the global economy while emphasizing the compatibility of each other's development paths. The "China and Africa Vision 2035" plan contributed to enhanced China-Africa cooperation in the following sectors on an ongoing basis: health, poverty reduction, agriculture, trade and investment promotion, digital innovation, green development, capacity building, cultural and people-to-people exchanges, and peace and security. The progress made since and the road ahead may be among the key issues on FOCAC's agenda in Beijing.

The impressive range of measures announced by China were effectively aligned with the key and major objectives of Africa's strategy to accelerate growth, sustainable and inclusive development *inter alia* in the African Union's Agenda 2063, African Continental Free Trade Area and the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for

Sustainable Development context. In fact, mutual respect, treating each other as equals and joint consultation are important features of FOCAC.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa emphasized that for Africa to fully reap its benefits, the FOCAC must be strengthened and enhanced. South Africa is therefore looking forward to the state visit by its president on the margins of the FOCAC in Beijing next month, which would reciprocate the fourth state visit undertaken by President Xi on the margins of the 15th BRICS Summit in South Africa in 2023.

It should also be pointed out that the FOCAC 2024 will be held against the backdrop of a polarized global landscape due to the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza and other places, as well as numerous economic and security challenges. Given the growing geopolitical turbulence, transformation and uncertainty of the globalized world, there are many global challenges which have become increasingly integrated. The downside is that global responses to these challenges are unfortunately more and more fragmented than ever before.

It is against the backdrop of these concerns that President Xi stated recently that: "In the face of common challenges, no person or country can remain insulated. The only way out is to work together in harmony with one accord."

The outcome of the FOCAC next month, will undoubtedly illustrate that Africa and China will continue to increase the role, influence and cohesion of the FOCAC, as its platform for collective dialogue and a mechanism for practical cooperation, in its joint endeavors to advance its strategic partnership toward the next level and the defining of a new and exciting chapter in the building of a China-Africa community with a shared future.

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TANG XIAOYANG

New ways to excel imperative

Despite challenges, Africa-China industrial cooperation has made solid progress, but more innovation is needed

African countries have long ago reached the consensus that "industrialization holds the key to development", and they have been committed to developing indigenous industries over the past more than half a century. However, after trying various policies, the continent has failed to achieve sustainable industrial transformation and growth due to a low starting point and complex political and social conditions.



China-Africa industrial cooperation has a long history. Industrial alignment and industrialization have been given priority in the action plans issued at the previous Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. Driven by its fast industrial development, China is looking for new resources, labor force and markets overseas; Chinese enterprises also need new partners and growth opportunities, as the markets in Europe and the United States are saturated and there is fierce competition at home. China and Africa have a shared interest in industrial capacity cooperation, and have made some progress in infrastructure building and industrial investment alignment.

But China-Africa industrial cooperation faces many new challenges due to a growing number of negative factors in the global geopolitical and economic environments, and the two are exploring new paths to fuel their industrial cooperation.

Although the scale effect is indispensable for the advancement of industrialization, China-Africa cooperation should no longer focus only on the expansion of scale; rather, the priority is to find the most suitable way to align China's industrial expertise with Africa's development potential, thereby increasing production efficiency, driving economic and social transformation, and creating new quality productive forces.

Given Africa's current level of industrial-

ization, China and Africa can elevate their industrial cooperation to a higher level by transforming traditional industries or advancing technological and industrial innovation.

First, Chinese companies have been dedicated to extending the industry chains of resource-related products in Africa over recent years, creating more jobs and adding value for the continent. In many African countries, the economy is highly reliant on exports of natural resources, such as oil, mineral resources, rubber and cotton. This heavily resource-dependent economic structure is vulnerable to price fluctuations and sits at the lower end of the global industry chains.

To change this situation, Chinese enterprises have been working on building integrated mineral supply chains covering exploration, mining, extraction, processing and sales, as well as integrated agricultural supply chains that combine planting, harvesting, processing, storage, transportation and exports. Industrial parks that gather upstream and downstream enterprises have been established to solve the local problems of weak infrastructure and lack of supporting facilities.

A case in point is the Zambia-China Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone which has attracted more than 50 non-ferrous metal enterprises to settle there, forming a modern industrial park with sound infrastructure and a relatively complete industrial chain. The industrial park combines non-ferrous metal mining, dressing, and smelting industries, and features a series of projects producing non-ferrous metal derivatives and heavy industrial products, as well as cement and cables.

Second, Chinese investors pay attention to new trends in African markets and manufacture products that cater to local needs, thus better serving local development and creating sustainable impetus for industrialization.

Some economists believe that Africa can attract labor-intensive manufacturing



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

industries thanks to its low labor costs just like some Asian countries, and advance industrialization through export processing. But in practice, Africa lacks supporting facilities.

Instead, investors find they can gain a foothold in Africa by occupying the niche markets and catering to consumption needs neglected by the large multinationals

— for example, establishing local factories to produce living products such as construction materials and furniture, plastics and ceramics, food and medicines, and apparels, which will not only save transportation costs, but also allow manufacturers to adjust product lines timely to cater to the evolving consumer demands, thus gaining popularity in Africa.

At the same time, emerging industries such as green energy, biological materials and electronic information present new opportunities for China-Africa industrial cooperation. For instance, Jianguo Tianyi Industrial Group established the Avatar New Energy Materials Co Ltd in Nigeria in 2023, which has created more than 4,000 jobs for local people, turning Nigeria into a key player in the global lithium industry and helping the country move up the global industrial value chain. Chinese mobile phone manufacturers such as Transsion, Huawei and ZTE not only assemble and sell electronic products in Africa, but also lay a solid foundation for further cooperation between China and Africa in the digital economy.

Additionally, industrial development requires sophisticated and stable financial services. The high interest and exchange rates of the US dollar have greatly increased the costs of dollar-denominated loans and investments, threatening the sustainable financing services and economic development of African countries. The ever-growing presence of Chinese enterprises and projects in Africa, and the consequently-increased use of renminbi in the continent can help reduce the exchange rate of both sides, and mitigate the risks of exchange rate fluctuations. It also helps create a more diverse and stable global economic landscape.

In 2022, the number and amount of African countries' transactions using the Cross-Border Interbank Payment System, which specializes in renminbi cross-border payment, increased by 43 percent and 16 percent respectively. In October 2013, Egypt issued a 3.5 billion yuan (\$479 million) worth of panda bond with the help of the Bank of China. It was the first time that an African nation issued a panda bond, a type of bond that is issued in China's domestic capital market by foreign issuers and is denominated in the renminbi.

In a word, despite the challenges lying ahead, Africa-China industrial cooperation has made solid progress and greatly advanced Africa's industrialization drive through practical efforts and constant innovation. Looking forward, more innovation is needed to further upgrade China-Africa industrial cooperation.

The author is chair of the Department of International Relations at Tsinghua University. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CULTURAL HERITAGE



Wang Jianxin's team, from Northwest University, Xi'an, Shaanxi province, works with Uzbek colleagues at the Sazagan Site, a large-scale tomb in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, in 2015. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Sands of time reveal secrets

Long-term work by Northwest University's archaeologists in Central Asia helps trace stories of the ancient Silk Road, **Wang Ru** and **Wang Kaihao** report in Xi'an.

More than 2,000 years ago, on a mission of peace and to bolster exchanges, an envoy from the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) named Zhang Qian (164-114 BC) entered the heart of the Eurasian continent.

Embarking from the capital Chang'an — modern-day Xi'an in Shaanxi province — on his arduous and pioneering journey in 138 BC at the request of the then emperor, Zhang was in search of the Greater Yuezhi, a nomadic group that migrated from China to Central Asia during the Han Dynasty. His aim was to persuade the Greater Yuezhi to establish an alliance.

He finally reached the destination, and thanks to his diplomatic trek across Central Asia, the long, historic saga of the Silk Road began.

Centuries have passed since then, and sand and time have hidden much history. But for the past 15 years, Wang Jianxin, an archaeology professor at Northwest University in Xi'an, has been working on sites that may have played a part in long forgotten stories.

Working with Central Asian counterparts, he and his team have gradually put together some of the jigsaw pieces scattered along the Silk Road, producing a new perspective on studies of its routes, and revealing cultural exchanges from past to present.

"For a long time, the modern study of the ancient Silk Road seems to be led by Western countries," Wang says. "But since this network of ancient trade routes connected the East and the West, the voices of Asian scholars, especially from the routes' starting points in China, are at least of equal importance."

Central Asia was a core section on the ancient Silk Road. Since it is located in the middle of the Eurasian continent, it serves as an intermediary between Eastern and Western civilizations, and many different ethnic groups and cultures converge on the region, Wang says.

Following in Zhang's footsteps, Wang and his team started by looking for the Greater Yuezhi, to clarify its history. The group is only recorded in Chinese literature, and the whereabouts of any remains associated with it were unknown to archaeologists. In 2000, they began excavations in northwestern China, where they were able to identify the main Greater Yuezhi settlement on the eastern edge of the Tianshan Mountains. They continued their work in Central Asia, discovering the remains of a Central Asian kingdom that existed from the 1st century BC to the 5th century AD, and known in Chinese as Kangju, at the Sazagan Site in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. They also found a Greater Yuezhi site to its south at the Rabat Site in Boysun, Uzbekistan.

Wang's team has proposed new theories and methods for studying nomadic groups based on their experience, which focuses on seeking settlements. "Unlike the normal understanding that nomadic people generally didn't maintain stable settlements, we discovered that those living in the Eurasian grasslands did, so they could rest during the winter," Wang says.

"The region can be extremely cold for long periods of time in winter, so how could nomadic people contin-

ue to use pastures? As a result, we believe they sought warmth in settlements, to prevent their livestock from freezing. Such a great loss would affect them for life," he adds.

Historical clues

Guided by this theory, the team discovered a number of nomadic settlement sites in the Samarkand Basin in 2014, an area an archaeological team from Italy had studied for 15 years without finding them.

The process involves carrying out multiple surveys over wide areas, and based on the results, conducting small-scale, more precise excavations. Wang says that the surveys are vital to familiarizing them with the environment and distribution of remains, and to improve understanding of previous findings.

"With the understanding accumulated from surveys, we can find the blanks in previous studies, then contribute our efforts, fill in the blanks, and solve key problems. In this way, almost each excavation leads to a breakthrough," Wang says.

He says that when he and his team work with Central Asian scholars on archaeological surveys, they are often divided into two groups, one composed of local scholars, who visit villagers to find out if they have discovered any artifacts, and a group of Chinese scholars who survey the surrounding land, or part of it.

"This way, we give full play to each other's strengths and our cooperation often leads to important discoveries," Wang says.

During the 15 years working in Central Asia, the team has worked with all five of the region's countries. Now, its studies are extending to West, South and North Asia.

In 2023, Northwest University set up the Collaborative Research Centre for Archaeology of the Silk Roads to enhance archaeological work with countries along the Silk Road. It has also opened the China-Central Asia Belt and Road Joint Laboratory on Human and Environment Research in Uzbekistan to improve studies of cultural heritage and geology along the Silk Road.

According to Wang, cultural exchanges in Central Asia and the present-day Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region in China actually started much earlier than Zhang's time.

Important archaeological evidence for the process exists in the form of wheat and barley, which originated in West Asia, were brought to the Yellow River Basin about 4,000 years ago. During the same period, millet from China traveled to Central Asia, the Indus Valley, West Asia, North Africa and Europe, according to archaeological findings.

"This means that much before the creation of the Silk Road, communication and transport between the East and the West already existed. This is the period also believed to have been when early Chinese civilization originated," Wang says. "As a result, communication played a role in the formation and evolution of Chinese civilization."

"Studying Chinese civilization requires understanding civilizations in other parts of the world. This is the significance of engaging in cultural exchange and mutual learning between civilizations," he adds.



Top: Archaeologists from the university and Uzbekistan use the Luoyang Shovel to identify soil on a site in Uzbekistan in June. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Middle: Tang Yungpeng, from Wang's team, discusses a site with Bahodir Yusufov, a doctoral student from Uzbekistan on campus. PHOTOS BY ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

“Studying Chinese civilization requires understanding civilizations in other parts of the world.”

Wang Jianxin, archaeologist



A published inventory of major archaeological finds in Uzbekistan by the university.

Creating the bond

As the study of the Greater Yuezhi made important progress, Chinese archaeologists began to pay closer attention to the Fergana Valley in 2019 — the valley runs through parts of present-day Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. It has yielded evidence of Dayuan, the Chinese name of an important Hellenistic state in Central Asia that existed during the time of the Han Dynasty. Ancient documents say that Dayuan is the birthplace of Fergana horses, one of China's earliest imports from the state, which are famous for their speed, toughness and endurance.

That year, Wang invited scholars from the three countries to Xi'an for a seminar to discuss archaeological work in the Fergana Valley, which led to an agreement on future multilateral cooperation.

In September 2019, the first joint archaeological exploration and academic exchange activities regarding the valley were held in Kyrgyzstan, and a second round was held in Uzbekistan last year.

The sessions were essential because they not only helped resolve academic issues, but also promoted people-to-people connectivity.

During the second event, Abdulkhamidjon Anarbaev, an archaeologist from Uzbekistan met an old classmate, Bakyt Amanbaeva, an archaeologist from Kyrgyzstan, by accident.

"They were classmates as they pursued doctorates in the former Soviet Union in the 1970s," Wang says. "They hadn't met each other for three decades. They cried on each other's shoulders when they met again. It was deeply touching."

Wang says that the Chinese and foreign archaeologists pay attention to respecting each other, and to promoting mutual understanding while working in Central Asia. They highlight the protection of the sites once they have been excavated, and refill them when the excavation ends.

In 2019, while his teammates were excavating the Serkharakat Site in Uzbekistan, they discovered that a bulldozer from a nearby brickyard had accidentally dug up some buried artifacts.

Anxious about any further destruction of the then unknown site, Wang and his colleague Muttalib Hasanov, a researcher at the Institute of Archaeology, Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, stood in front of the bulldozer to force the driver to stop, and immediately contacted cultural heritage officials.

As a result of their efforts, the brickyard suspended work to make way for excavations, leading to the discovery of the Chinar-Tepa Site, an important site dating from the Kushan Empire (1st-4th century), which contained the remains of a small city and tombs that were excavated this year.

Tang Yungpeng, a member of Wang's team, also highlights their friendship with local residents when they work in Central Asia. He cites the example of Djasur Navbatov, a driver from Uzbekistan, who has worked with them every year since 2017.

"Since we often work in remote areas with inconvenient transportation, we always rent his car for months at a time. He often offers us help, like allowing us to deposit our goods and materials at his home, or providing us with tools. We have celebrated each other's birthdays, and he has learned some Chinese and even some archaeological techniques from us," Tang says.

He says that some issues are a matter of scholarly debate. For example, China has different research methods for stratigraphy (the study of layers and sediments) and typology, to Central Asian countries. At first, Central Asian colleagues had doubts about the use of the Luoyang Shovel (a curved spade Chinese archaeologists use to identify soil structure), but when field work proved the effectiveness of this method, they gradually accepted it.

Cultural exchanges

Northwest University has also trained young scholars from Central Asian countries, such as Bahodir Yusufov, a student from Uzbekistan currently pursuing his doctorate in archaeology at Northwest University, who is also a member of Wang's team.

Yusufov started out as a history major, and was later introduced to the team by an undergraduate classmate.

He was impressed by the story of a man from his hometown, told to him by a researcher at the university. The man, known as Wirkak (or as Shi Jun in Chinese), was a Sogdian trader who traveled along the Silk Road to Chang'an during the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-581). When Wirkak died, he was buried in Chang'an. In 2003, his tomb was rediscovered and excavated, yielding discoveries of precious artifacts that suggested elements of cultural exchange.

"I have not only learned archaeology at the university, but also learned things related to my hometown," Yusufov says.

He took part in the archaeological surveys in the Surkhandarya Basin last year, and worked with Tang.

"At the beginning of our collaboration, we maintained a cautious attitude. However, after close, long-term fieldwork, friendship developed over time," Tang says. "This bond has actually grown in the field, and was not the result of a single meeting or discussion."

In the 1930s, pioneering archaeologists from Northwest University, such as Huang Wenbi, first began researching the Silk Road by excavating Zhang Qian's tomb in Shaanxi, and did some fundamental research in Xinjiang.

Almost a century later, operating on a wider international horizon, archaeologists have greater expectations.

"Our research on the Silk Road today is deeply rooted in generations of predecessors," says Sun Qingwei, a professor at the Northwest University, also an archaeologist. "There were many difficulties. But the bravery of scholars and continuous exploration have led to fruitful discoveries."

"Over the years, our university's archaeological team has been conducting archaeological work in Central Asia," Sun says. "They have truly lived and worked together with Central Asian scholars and people."

"This kind of integration and mutual exchange of knowledge has played a particularly effective role in advancing communication and mutual understanding between us archaeologists and countries along the Silk Road," he adds.

"Through archaeology, we can better tell the stories of the Silk Road, and contribute to building a community with a shared future for mankind."

Qin Feng in Xi'an contributed to this story.

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Online Watch the video by scanning the code.

LIFE



Li Chengzhi shows her work *Bamboo Pole Dance* at her studio in the Qijiang Farmers' Printmaking Institute in Chongqing's Qijiang district in March.
PHOTOS BY DENG RUI / CHINA DAILY

Qijiang farmers' journey into creative fields

Rural residents are adding to their income by giving visitors printmaking experience and souvenirs during the tourist season, **Tan Yingzi** and **Deng Rui** report in Chongqing.

Qijiang Farmers' Printmaking, an intangible cultural heritage of Chongqing, has been spiritually and financially enriching the lives of thousands of residents in the city's Qijiang district for decades. Now, through collaborative efforts among the art's inheritors, artists and the local government, it is empowering rural revitalization.

Qijiang Farmers' Printmaking originated from woodblock New Year prints and murals during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties and thrived in the 1980s. Since 1985, the local printmaking artworks have been exhibited in more than 40 countries and regions, including the United Kingdom, Canada, France and Germany. Over 60 foreign art groups and individuals have visited local art studios, according to a local official.

"Back in the 1980s, my folks would never have imagined a poor rural girl like me would later find a decent job and turn into an artist," says 59-year-old Li Chengzhi, a national first-grade artist and a representative inheritor of the cultural heritage.

Li was introduced to the art at 17, when folk paintings started to flourish across the country in the early 1980s. Li Yili, a passionate artist who was in charge of the Qijiang Cultural Center, wanted to enrich the cultural lives of local farmers. He mobilized local artists to establish over 20 rural cultural stations that offer free printmaking classes in some 10 Qijiang's townships such as Dongxi, Ganshui and Zuantang.

The teenage girl, who had never taken a painting class and had to do farm work all year round but could hardly make ends meet, showed keen interest in printmaking. Two years later, she became one of the first of over 300 locally trained farmer creators.

"I had only seen local people paintings on rocks before, while this emerging art form had suddenly made our lives more colorful and vibrant," says Li Chengzhi.

Art comes from life. Li Chengzhi's bright, colorful hues and unconstrained

style on themes like farming, children, joyful festival celebrations and local legends, soon became popular.

In 1992, a customer's order to make children's prints for an elementary school earned her the first reward of 25 yuan (\$3.45).

"At that time, to be able to earn this money was something a farmer wouldn't even dare to dream of."

Then Li Chengzhi got a job in the local farmers' printmaking institute the same year. She got married and relocated to town, actively contributing to the preservation and development of the intangible cultural heritage.

Her sheer passion for art has made her highly productive — creating more than 200 printmaking artworks and thousands of hand-drawn illustrations by far.

In 2010, Li Chengzhi was honored as one of China's Top 10 Folk Painters by the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles and the China Artists Association. Three of her works were selected in 2012, 2017 and 2020 for the *National Farmer Painting Exhibition* organized by the China Artists Association, and she obtained membership. In 2013, another of her work, *Five-Colored Slope*, won gold at the 5th Xiuzhou China Farmers' Painting Art Festival.

"Their creations manifest their yearning for a better life," says director of Qijiang Farmers' Printmaking Institute Liu Yue, adding that the works, which usually draw inspiration from daily life of local people and also wild imaginations, present a distinctive, exaggerated, romantic and pure artistic style.

Located at the southern gateway of the southwestern municipality, Qijiang has a rich cultural heritage and is a multi-ethnic-populated area of over 9,600 residents from 42 Chinese ethnic groups — nearly 6,000 of whom are from the Miao and Yi ethnic groups, according to local authorities.

Distinctive local folk arts including Qijiang Farmers' Printmaking — a municipal-level intangible cultural heritage, and Yongcheng Chuida (or Suona Art) — a national intangible cultural



A delegation of foreign visitors tours the Qijiang Farmers' Printmaking Institute in Chongqing in April.

heritage, have earned Qijiang the status of "Hometown of Modern Chinese Folk Paintings" in 1988 and "Hometown of Chinese Folk Culture and Art" from 2008 to 2014 bestowed by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

"Growing crops is hard work, and so is printmaking," says 45-year-old Liu Qinfo, a farmer in Dongxi township who used to work in the farm all year round and run a small bookstore in his local community. "But the latter one has offered me a brand-new livelihood with brain work."

Liu Qinfo says now he could normally earn several hundred yuan during each short peak tourist season such as the Spring Festival, May Day and National Day holidays through offering tourists printmaking experience and selling printmaking souvenirs.

Despite the fact that he just started to learn the art since 2017, the creative man makes Qijiang farmers' prints — like the twelve zodiac animals, flowers, birds, fish and insects — onto stones, and promotes tourist souvenirs.

Thanks to the efforts of inheritors,

artists and the local government, this traditional art is now shining with vigorous vitality.

According to Liu Yue, Qijiang Farmers' Printmaking has been included in this year's annual international cultural exchange program by the local government, and she and her team is scheduling an art exhibition in Tanzania between September and November.

A printmaking major who graduated from the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, innovative-minded Liu Yue started to promote the distinctive art since 2014 by utilizing her knowledge and market acumen.

For example, she suggested using richer materials and colors (including gray and fluorescent), to make the works — which can be used for home decorations, tourist souvenirs and high-end collection — look more modern and elegant, and more in line with the aesthetic preferences of the young people.

She noted in the past two years, their works' market acceptance is steadily increasing.

"The art's main force are folk artists born in the 1970s and 1980s."

In order to nurture future artists and promote high-quality prints, this year, Liu Yue's institute has recruited more than 40 key creators — mostly young people with basic painting skills such as teachers, enterprise employees and folk artists — for a 10-day elite creators' training session.

"A high-quality farmers' print sometimes takes three to five months to complete, through complex procedures of conceptualization, plate making, carving and printing," says Li Fangde, 59, another inheritor of the cultural heritage and the first farmer to open a Qijiang Farmers' Printmaking art studio as early as in 2003.

He calls for more young people to learn about the art form and join its inheritance base. He also hopes the traditional art could gain more market recognition at home and abroad so that local artists can keep going.

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University to offer marriage majors

China is recruiting its first college undergraduates majoring in marriage services in an effort to bridge the gap in talent supply for high quality wedding services.

Vocational University of Civil Affairs (formerly Beijing College of Social Administration), a new entity affiliated to the Ministry of Civil Affairs, will enroll 70 freshmen from across the country this year to study marriage service and management, with courses ranging from family ethics and wedding planning to the design of online matchmaking products.

The students will also have internship opportunities for periods of at least six months in institutions specializing in matchmaking, marriage registration, wedding planning and marriage counseling. Upon graduation, qualified students will receive bachelor's degrees in management.

Yu Xiaohui, dean of the marriage culture and media arts school at the university, says the course is a response to social needs, with China attaching greater importance to building happy families at a time when the country is still short of education options for those wanting to offer marriage-related professional counseling services.

In 2020, China issued a set of guidelines instructing civil affairs authorities to develop premarital counseling courses and improve mechanisms for family dispute mediation and divorce counseling. According to a resolution adopted last month at the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, the country will improve the systems for facilitating population development and providing related services.

The university, China's first to offer undergraduate studies in the civil affairs sector, was founded in June this year upon approval from the Ministry of Education. Developed from a vocational school, it plans to recruit around 500 students for five majors including marriage services, elderly care and funeral management.

Yu says the school's existing marriage-related program for junior college students focuses primarily on wedding services, mainly preparing the students for wedding planning and marketing as well as other technical posts such as photographers and makeup artists.

"The undergraduate education will hopefully boost the quality of full-cycle marriage services from matchmaking to marriage counseling and make up for the gap in market supply for such high-level talent," Yu adds.

Experts believe changes in social perceptions of marriage and wedding customs will open broad employment prospects for marriage major students, despite falling marriage rates.

Lin Xianping, a researcher with Hangzhou City University, says Chinese people are now more focused on the quality of marriage and family life than previous generations, creating a market need for upgraded wedding services.

Researchers suggest college graduates take on the roles of premarital and marriage counseling and gradually build up work experience and skills, in addition to working for civil affairs departments and community-level management offices. The university also promised to make recommendations for the students when they enter the job market.

The university is partnering with industry leaders to improve curriculum design and build training camps — with input from both the industrial and education sectors.

Wang Tao, president of Baihejiayuan, an internet date arranging company that is planning strategic cooperation with the university, voices hope that the move could improve the professional skills and work ethics of those employed in the love and marriage-related industry. The company is in urgent need of employees with professional backgrounds.

Besides education, experts also note the importance of enhancing legislation and supervision to curb fraud and raise public understanding of marriage and family dynamics.

XINHUA



Left: An artist displays her skills at the institute. Middle: Intricate patterns created by Li Chengzhi are exhibited at her studio. Right: Li Fangde works on prints at the institute.

LIFE

Capital anticipates musical feast

Returning for its 27th edition, this year's event is a celebration of sound and the city, **Chen Nan** reports.

October is the month for classical music fans in the capital, as the annual Beijing Music Festival provides a stellar lineup of musical acts from around the world and a rich array of cultural activities.

On Friday, the 27th edition of the festival was announced. Running from Oct 5 to 13, this year's event is more than a celebration of global musical traditions, it's also an invitation to explore the rich cultural tapestry of Beijing itself, says Zou Shuang, artistic director of the Beijing Music Festival.

Under the theme "Harmony in Beijing, Global Sounds", 10 concerts will be held at different locations around the city in a fusion of music and exploration that will allow both performers and the audience to delve deeply into the cultural heart of the city.

The festival opens with a concert by the China National Symphony Orchestra under the baton of composer-conductor Tan Dun on Oct 5 at the National Centre for the Performing Arts.

Marking the 60th anniversary of China-France diplomatic relations, it will feature soloists, including cellist Wang Jian, violinist Lu Wei and *suona* (traditional Chinese wind instrument) player Liu Wenwen, playing music from the two countries, such as *A Hundred Birds Paying Homage to the Phoenix*, one of the most famous pieces for the *suona*, *Bolero*, a one-movement orchestral piece by French composer Ravel and Tan's *Passacaglia: Secret of Wind and Birds*.

On Oct 6, under the baton of conductor Yu Long, founder of the Beijing Music Festival and chairman of the festival's artistic committee, the China Philharmonic Orchestra and the Lanzhou Concert Hall Choir will perform *Emigre* at the NCPA, an oratorio about Jewish refugees navigating their new lives in Shanghai during World War II. Commissioned by the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra and the New York Philharmonic, the oratorio is composed by award-winning musician Aaron Zigman, Pulitzer Prize-winning librettist Mark Campbell and songwriter Brock Walsh.

Premiering last year in Shanghai and later staged at New York's Lincoln Center in February, the oratorio will be performed by singers including tenor Arnold Livingston Geis, soprano Song Yuanming and bass-baritone Shen Yang.

Zou says that the festival continues to expand the commissioning of new work, including *Jiu Ge + Immortal Love* by Zhou Long and Richard Dubugnon, a contemporary composition exploring traditional Chinese culture through a modern lens, which will make its world premiere.

In 2013, the Beijing Music Festival commissioned Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Zhou to write a sym-



Clockwise from top left: Composer-conductor Tan Dun, pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet, conductor Yu Long and composer Zhou Long at the Beijing Music Festival in previous years. This year, the 27th edition of the festival has been announced to run from Oct 5 to 13.

PHOTOS BY JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

“We planned this year, not only in the hopes of giving Beijing audiences excellent performances, but also to explore new styles and formats to expand our fan base.”

Zou Shuang, artistic director of the Beijing Music Festival

phonic epic for solo vocalists and orchestra called *Nine Odes*, which was based on the *Jiu Ge (Nine Songs)*, composed by patriotic Chu state poet Qu Yuan during the Warring States Period (475-221 BC). According to Yu, with the new commission, Zhou continues his exploration of the *Jiu Ge* but unlike the 2013 commission, the new piece highlights traditional Chinese instruments and will be performed without lyrics.

“Without lyrics, audiences will be provided with a space of unlimited imagination, which will allow the

orchestra to create vivid musical characters while depicting aspects of traditional culture,” says Yu.

The Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra will premiere the new piece on Oct 8 at the Poly Theatre. Conducted by Huang Yi, it will feature soloists, including pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet, cellist Gautier Capuçon, and *erhu* (two-stringed fiddle) player Lu Yiwen.

“We planned this year with the hope of giving Beijing audiences excellent performances and to explore new styles and formats to expand our fan base, especially

among young people,” says Zou. “The festival will emphasize community involvement and outreach. We will invite musicians to participate in activities like public rehearsals, preshow talks and educational events, as well as give performances. We want to engage a broader audience.”

French pianist Helene Grimaud and the Camerata Salzburg — one of the world's leading chamber orchestras — will invite the audience to an open rehearsal before their concert at the Poly Theatre on Oct 7.

Trumpet player and composer

Wynton Marsalis will meet students at Tsinghua University on Oct 8 before giving two concerts with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra at the NCPA on Oct 9 and 10.

“It not only demonstrates the diversity of global musical traditions but also invites everyone to experience Beijing through the eyes of visiting artists, creating a truly immersive celebration of both music and places in Beijing,” she adds.

Beyond traditional concert halls, the festival will be held at different locations, connecting music to the cultural landscape.

For example, in 2015, American composer Andy Akiho was commissioned by the festival to write the *Ping-Pong Concerto* in which an orchestra, a violin soloist, a percussionist and two table tennis players worked together. A real table for the match was set up in front of the members of the China Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor Zhang Yi's podium.

This year, the composer will return with his contemporary percussion piece *Seven Pillars* to perform at the Forbidden City Concert Hall on Oct 11. Commissioned and performed by Grammy-nominated ensemble Sandbox Percussion, the 80-minute, 11-movement suite for percussion comprises seven quartets around four solos that reflect the personality of each performer.

“The concert will be staged at one of the most popular concert halls in the capital, which is located inside Zhongshan Park. We look forward to having Beijing audiences interact with the performers onstage during the show while enjoying trailblazing work that redefines how one listens to and experiences music,” says Zou.

One of the highlights of the program will be the semi-staged opera *Porgy and Bess*, a vibrant, lively and moving presentation of Gershwin's famous opera, which will close this year's festival on Oct 12 and 13.

“The backbone of the production is the chorus of the Cape Town Opera. The opera reflects the particular intensity and energy of South African singers,” says Zou, adding that the new version will highlight the singers, “bringing their extraordinary voices, hearts and souls to their performances.”

It will be staged at the Divine Music Administration inside the Temple of Heaven. Built in 1420, the Divine Music Administration is one of the five major structures at the imperial sacrificial altar and was the highest ritual music academy for imperial sacrificial music.

On Oct 10, a concert of African choral music will be put on by the Cape Town Opera Chorus under the baton of conductor and pianist Jose Dias.

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Zhuang ritual instrument gets a pop makeover

NANNING — In a scenic spot among the verdant karst hills of the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, a band consisting of five men and a woman, all dressed in ethnic costumes, are putting on a pop concert.

These amateur musicians belong to the Zhuang ethnic group and are playing not only modern-day guitars, a keyboard and a drum kit, but also a couple of two-stringed *tianqin*, zithers made from gourds and played like guitars.

The *tianqin*, or “heavenly zither”, was originally played by the Zhuang as a ritual instrument to accompany chants for good fortune. It is currently experiencing a revival, with musicians making efforts to woo young listeners. The band called Dingding is the latest example.

Its six members, aged 31 to 48, include three schoolteachers, a factory worker, a former media worker and a health worker. They live in Longzhou county in the city of Chongzuo in Guangxi, forming the band last year out of a common enthusiasm for music. They

rehearse twice a week and perform publicly at the scenic spot, as the local government is attempting to promote the traditional instrument by combining it with tourism.

The *tianqin* was included in the national-level intangible cultural heritage list in 2021. Great efforts to preserve and revive this artistic treasure have been made, including by local authorities who have integrated *tianqin* performances in primary and secondary school curricula, by art colleges to refine its artistic delivery, and by grassroots inheritors working to pass down authentic *tianqin* performances to the next generation.

Dingding is named after the Zhuang word for the *tianqin*. Apart from playing it alongside Western instruments, the band has also introduced *shan'ge*, or “mountain song”, a genre of folk song, into their repertoire.

Traditionally, aside from rituals, the Zhuang sing *shan'ge* ballads while playing the *tianqin*. Sung outdoors with improvised or scripted lyrics passed down by oral tradition, *shan'ge* is another aspect

of Zhuang cultural heritage and is part of Guangxi's appeal.

“As the *tianqin* is a relatively niche instrument, we decided to amplify the characteristics of *shan'ge* and infuse them with popular music elements to make the tradition more appealing to young folks,” says Lu Qingcong, lead singer of Dingding.

Lei Ya, one of the band's three songs, features a rap segment about the finger-guessing games at Zhuang feasts. Released in March on several social media platforms, the song has won acclaim from net users.

“Although I don't understand the Zhuang language, the song is absolutely fantastic to listen to,” wrote one subscriber on the popular social media platform Douyin.

In another song to celebrate the upcoming inclusion of Longzhou county in the country's bullet-train network, electronic music is integrated along with *tianqin* music.

This combination of a traditional instrument with pop music has drawn interest from curious viewers. “When we perform at the scenic spot, tourists inquire about the

playing techniques and even the cost of a *tianqin*,” says Lu.

Speaking of the difficulties they've encountered in blending the Zhuang language, the *tianqin* and pop music, Lu says the timbre, frequencies and tones of the instrument sometimes clash with the other instruments.

“We have to do some subtractions,” says Lu. “When the *tianqin* plays a dominant role in the segment, the bass and guitar should give way.”

Qin Yan, one of the two *tianqin* players in the band, adds to this. “In Longzhou county, people speak different Zhuang dialects with slight differences in pronunciation from town to town, which requires us to choose the most fitting pronunciations to rhyme better and sound more natural.”

The band's new song, which will be released soon, draws inspiration from childhood lullabies. “Our summer memories of cattail leaf fans, fireflies and starry nights, together with Zhuang ballads, will all be part of the new song,” says Qin.

“We think culture has ‘roots’, which means we cannot create



Above: The Dingding band records a music video at Jinlong Reservoir in Chongzuo, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, in March. XINHUA Left: Local artists perform with the *tianqin*. YU XIANGQUAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

things out of nothing,” says Ma Shaogang, the second *tianqin* player and the band's composer. “Looking forward, we will go on creating pop songs based on the *tianqin* and

other Zhuang ethnic cultural elements, because that is where we come from, our roots.”

XINHUA