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# CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 MONDAY, AUGUST 12, 2024

XI'S VISION | CULTURAL PROSPERITY

## Museums bask in spotlight of cultural interest

Eager visitors snap up tickets as exhibitions across country bring ancient artifacts to life

By DENG ZHANGYU  
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As the summer vacation goes on, museums have burst into the spotlight, with throngs of visitors eager to immerse themselves in rich traditional culture.

At Beijing's Grand Canal Museum, visitors have formed long lines on weekends, eagerly waiting to view Sanxingdui artifacts from the prehistoric Shu civilization, which thrived more than 3,000 years ago in present-day Sichuan province. The museum reported that the daily peak number of visitors in July exceeded 33,000.

In Shanghai, museum enthusiasts are finding it nearly impossible to get tickets for the Shanghai Museum's exhibition on ancient Egypt. According to the museum's booking system, all tickets for August have sold out.

The popularity of museums reflects a significant rise in people's passion for culture. It came as a result of President Xi Jinping's consistent promotion of traditional Chinese culture and his call for museums to bring cultural relics to life, as well as his emphasis on mutual learning between civilizations.

A resolution adopted last month by the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China highlighted the prosperous development of Chinese culture. It also promoted the inheritance of fine traditional Chinese culture and called for refining the supply of cultural services and products.

"We will promote cultural prosperity, enrich the intellectual and cultural lives of our people, and enhance China's cultural soft power and the appeal of Chinese culture," it added.

Xi has also emphasized on many occasions that China's fine traditional culture is the "root and soul" of the Chinese nation, and he has called, during visits to museums and cultural sites across the nation in the past few years, for a better utilization of cultural relics and for making them "alive".

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012, Xi has visited more than 100 historical and cultural sites and issued many instructions concerning cultural relics and archaeology. The sites of his visits have included the Mogao Grottoes in Gansu province, the Yungang Grottoes in Shanxi province, the Yinxu Museum in Henan province and the Chinese

Archaeological Museum in Beijing. Liu Shuguang, head of the Chinese Museums Association, said that the support from the nation's top leader has injected vitality and momentum into the development of museums.

"Museums are making efforts to offer attractive and interesting services to answer our leader's call. Their appealing services have thus won crowds of visitors," said Liu.

A decade ago, Liu could not have imagined the surge in museum popularity. Back then, the majority of visitors were elderly, but now, young people and parents with children make up the bulk of the crowd.

To bring relics to life is to attract more people to museums. Many institutions have transitioned from their role as only collectors and protectors of artworks and antiques to also becoming cultural service providers, added Liu. From concerts and digital immersive experiences to children's plays, museums and cultural institutions are conceiving innovative ways to entertain as well as educate the public.

Henan Museum in Zhengzhou, the capital of Central China's Henan province, provides concerts for museum visitors that feature musicians playing ancient pieces of music with traditional instruments that are replicas of antiques collected by the museum — some of which were used more than 2,000 years ago. The clothing styles of the musicians are in line with the dynasties during which their specific instruments were originally played.

Ma Xiaolin, director of Henan Museum, said that the idea for the concerts came about from the antique musical instruments in the museum's collection. He said that to display them in an exhibition is not as interesting as playing them and bringing them to life.

During the Spring Festival in February, the museum welcomed about 100,000 visitors, and concert tickets were hard to obtain.

The Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang, Gansu province, home to some of China's finest Buddhist art, set up a virtual reality center in September last year to offer an immersive experience. Wearing headsets, visitors can explore a digital cave — a replica of a cave seldom opened to the public for preservation purposes — and admire murals up close in high definition, and they can immerse themselves in the stories depicted in the artwork.

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Rhythmic gymnasts celebrate on Saturday after making history by winning China's first Olympic group all-around gold medal at the Paris Olympic Games in France.  
HANNAH MCKAY / REUTERS

## Team China's gold haul ends Paris campaign on high note

By SUN XIAOCHEN in Paris  
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A new swimming world record, a first singles tennis gold and a string of historic moments to remember — the Chinese delegation ended its Paris Olympic campaign on a high note with resounding success both on and off the field.

As the Olympic flame went out after an extraordinary show of human strength and endurance for two weeks, Team China's outstanding performance, highlighted by a record haul of 40 gold medals, the adorable nature of young athletes and their friendly exchanges with their foreign peers, was enshrined in the history of the Games in the French capital.

Bolstered by the whopping contribution of 27 gold medals from its six traditionally strong sports — diving, table tennis, badminton, gymnastics, shooting and weightlifting — the Chinese delegation finished with 40 gold medals and a total haul of 91 in Paris, surpassing its previous record made at the London Games to achieve its best outcome in gold medal tally at any overseas edition of the Summer Olympics.

At Beijing 2008, it won 48 gold medals and a total of 100.

On Sunday, the United States edged past China to finish on top of the Paris Olympics chart with a total medal haul of 126, including 40 golds.



Team China celebrates winning the gold in the men's 4x100m swimming medley relay final on Aug 4 in Paris. BRYNN ANDERSON / AP



Deng Yawen, 18, wins gold in the women's freestyle BMX event at the Paris Olympics on July 31, a first for China. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY



Zheng Qinwen wins the Olympics women's tennis singles gold on August 3 in Paris. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

The first-ever clean sweep of all eight gold medals up for grabs in the Olympic diving discipline by China's "dream team" and the world-conquering Chinese table tennis squad's complete collection of all five titles have only cemented the nation's stranglehold on these sports.

More encouraging, a series of major breakthroughs — such as China's first tennis singles Olympic gold, won by women's ace Zheng Qinwen, swimming prodigy Pan Zhanle's world record-breaking win in the men's 100m freestyle and teen cyclist Deng Yawen's trailblazing golden finish in BMX freestyle park — have all heralded China's strong foray into Western-dominated sports with much balanced athletic prowess.

Zhou Jinqiang, vice-president of the Chinese delegation, said on Sunday at a news conference in Paris that the overall performance at the Games could be summed up with one word — "breakthrough".

"We reached new heights in terms of the total number of gold medals won (at an overseas edition) and the number of events that we first won medals in. We also proved that our athletic strength has been significantly expanded to more sports," said Zhou.

Zhou added that the Chinese delegation has successfully completed its mission and realized its goals.

## AIR TRAVEL EMERGES FROM TURBULENCE OF PANDEMIC

Summer peak season reaffirms surge in industry's recovery

By ZHU WENQIAN  
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Fueled by a boom in Chinese travelers visiting Japan this summer, extra direct flights have been launched between the two countries — including to niche destinations — with more flights expected to be added to sat-



isfy the growing demand, industry players said.

The rush to visit Japan has been fueled by Chinese students taking their summer vacations, and the

favorable exchange rate with the Japanese yen, making hotels, meals and attractions more affordable.

The resurgence of Japan as a travel destination for Chinese travelers also follows the easing of COVID-19 restrictions.

In the first half of this year, a record 17.78 million international travelers visited Japan. During the

same period in 2019, before the pandemic, the number was 16.63 million, according to the Japan National Tourism Organization.

The main sources of international visitors were South Korea, China and the United States, the organization said.

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## Call for sanity



Protesters hold placards and banners denouncing racism as they march through the streets of London, the United Kingdom, on Saturday. The demonstrators against the far right was a counterprotest after anti-immigrant riots and violence erupted last week around the country. LOREDANA SANGIULIANO / NEWS.COM See more, page 3

## For UK, an opportunity to reset relations



On July 4, the British public voted overwhelmingly to reject the Conservative government of Rishi Sunak and deliver the Labour Party's Keir Starmer to office, thus bringing Labour to power for the first time since 2010. After years of political instability, controversy and chaos that have beset the United Kingdom, as well as economic stagnation and decline, it is hoped that the new government will offer a spell of stability, sensibility and pragmatism in its policies both at home and abroad. With Starmer commanding a massive majority, he is sure to forge his own vision for the country.

It is hoped that the UK will be able to earnestly and productively reengage with one of its key economic partners — China. The previ-

ous government is guilty of destroying the bilateral relationship with Beijing due to its mismanagement of Britain's foreign policy as a whole.

It pursued a highly ideological path with Brexit, paid excessive subservience to the United States, and deliberately whipped up anti-China sentiment domestically to distract attention from its failures. Then there was opposition from certain parliamentary members' groups which were subject to the influence of foreign organizations.

The new government, therefore,

offers an opportunity for Britain to reset its relations with the world on more sensible terms. Although we should not expect geopolitical realities to change, and while Starmer is by no means a radical, having purged the "anti-war Left" from his party while in opposition, what we can realistically expect is a foreign policy based more on pragmatism, national interests and sensibility, as opposed to one premised on ideology, identity and short-termism.

For example, the previous Conservative government was obsessed with pursuing a bilateral trade agreement with the US on the sole premise of Anglophone exceptionalism, as opposed to actual benefits.

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# PAGE TWO



**Left:** A passenger from Fuzhou, Fujian province poses for a photo with greeters at the Kota Kinabalu International Airport, in the Malaysian state of Sabah, on June 27, when Xiamen Airlines resumed its Fuzhou-Kota Kinabalu route.

CHENG YIHENG / XINHUA

**Right:** Passengers go through border inspection at the Taoyuan International Airport in Shenyang, Liaoning province, on April 24. China Southern Airlines opened a new passenger air route linking Shenyang with Frankfurt, making it the first direct regular route from Northeastern China to Germany opened by a domestic airline. XINHUA



## Flights: Chinese airlines spread their wings

From page 1

The strong outbound travel demand has prompted more Chinese airlines to launch new direct flights and increase the frequencies of current flights to Japanese cities, including smaller ones.

Shanghai-based private budget carrier, Spring Airlines, operates direct flights connecting Shanghai, and Takamatsu and Saga in Japan. The flight capacity on the two routes has exceeded 90 percent recently, with most of the passengers Chinese leisure travelers, the airline said.

The carrier recently increased its number of daily round-trip flights from Shanghai to Osaka to five, up from two last year, after adding extra flights to Japan ahead of the peak season.

"Before the summer, we launched new flights connecting Shanghai with Fukuoka and Okinawa," said Mao Yi, head of communications at Spring Airlines.

"Still, the China-Japan routes of international flights have not fully recovered from the pandemic. We will do our best to resume more international flights soon, and provide passengers with more choices," Mao said.

Shanghai-based China Eastern Airlines operates direct flights connecting Shanghai Pudong International Airport with smaller Japanese cities such as Shizuoka, Okayama and Komatsu, in addition to direct flights to major Japanese cities.

Juneyao Airlines, another Shanghai-based Chinese private carrier, operates direct flights connecting Shanghai to Sapporo and Hokkaido.

"The main travel demand for smaller Japanese cities comes from leisure travelers," said Lin Zhijie, a civil aviation industry analyst and writer for Carnoc, a major civil aviation website.

"Niche Japanese cities boast rich tourism resources and different features, and those smaller Japanese cities are equipped with airports, making it more convenient to launch direct flights. The total number of available flights connecting China and Japan still can't meet the travel demand between the two countries," Lin said, adding this includes business as well as leisure travel demand.

Currently, the main bottleneck is the ground support capability in Japan. There are hopes within the industry that more flights will be launched in the near future to further meet the expanding demand.

### More fuel needed

A growing number of flights to Japan have even led to a shortage of

aviation fuel in the country. Tokyo's Narita International Airport said in late June that six carriers in Asia hoped to add new flights or increase flight frequencies to the airport. However, due to a shortage of aviation fuel, the airport had to postpone the plans.

Some smaller airports such as Tokachi Obihiro Airport in Hokkaido, and Hiroshima Airport, have also experienced shortages of aviation fuel. Some flights operated by Asian carriers had to import their own fuel for round trips, Japanese media reported.

Qingdao in East China's Shandong province, has also seen the number of inbound and outbound passengers at Qingdao Jiaodong International Airport continue to rise this summer.

On July 25, Qingdao Airlines launched passenger flights connecting Qingdao and Osaka three times a week. And, on Aug 1, Shandong Airlines added another seven weekly round-trip flights connecting Qingdao and Osaka, taking the total number of direct flights connecting the two cities to 24 a week, covering different times of the day.

Qingdao also plans to launch more international flights to meet growing international travel demand, local airport representatives said.

In addition, a direct flight operated by China Eastern Airlines connecting Hefei, Anhui province, and Osaka, was launched on July 28. The route is expected to provide convenient services for passengers from Anhui and surrounding areas to travel to Japan, promoting economic, cultural, and tourism exchanges between the two regions, the carrier said.

### Taking flight

China's air travel market has witnessed a strong recovery after the pandemic. In the first half of this year, China transported 350 million passengers by air domestically, growing 24 percent year-on-year. The figure was 9 percent above the pre-pandemic level in 2019, according to the Civil Aviation Administration of China.

The growth indicates that the country's air travel market has completely emerged from the shadow of the pandemic, and the sector is steadily returning to its natural growth level, the CAAC said.

Meanwhile, the number of international and regional air passengers in the first half of this year rebounded to 79 percent of the 2019 level. Travel demand between China and Europe, Japan, South Korea and Singapore, in particular, has been strong, the CAAC said.

"This summer, popular international passenger routes continue to concentrate on traditional tourism



Passengers boarding the Air China flight from Jeju to Beijing take photos in the check-in area at Jeju International Airport in South Korea on March 31, when the resumption ceremony of the Air China Beijing-Jeju route was held.

SUN YIRAN / XINHUA



Passengers check in at Fuzhou Changle International Airport on Jan 31, when the first direct international flight route between Fuzhou and Incheon Airport in Seoul, South Korea, was officially opened.

WANG DONGMING / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

markets such as Japan, South Korea, and Southeast Asian countries," said Xu Qing, a CAAC official.

"Driven by major events such as the Paris Olympic Games, there has been a significant increase in the number of flights from China to France. Besides, airlines have added more flights to countries such as Denmark, Hungary and Greece," Xu said.

The CAAC said it will support Chinese and foreign airlines increase their capacity on international passenger routes, further boost the number of flights based on market conditions, and better meet the travel demand of passengers.

With multiple countries introducing favorable visa policies for Chinese travelers, along with China's visa-free policy for some foreign

countries, China has seen a significant growth in the number of inbound and outbound passengers.

In the first six months of this year, 14.64 million foreign travelers visited China through various ports across the country, with the number surging 152.7 percent year-on-year, according to the National Immigration Administration.

Among those, 8.54 million foreigners visited the country through visa-free entry, accounting for 52 percent of total entries. The administration projected that foreign travelers' enthusiasm for visiting China will keep growing in the second half of the year.

The air travel market in China has entered its summer peak season, and domestic airports are expected to handle 1.08 million takeoffs and landings, with the average number of daily flights 17,361, an increase of 13.87 percent compared with the 2019 pre-pandemic level, according to statistics compiled by Civil Aviation Data Analysis.

Chinese travelers have also shown greater interest in traveling abroad. In the first half of this year, China-Singapore round-trip flights accounted for 3.7 million passengers at Singapore's Changi Airport, or about 11 percent of the total passenger volume. The numbers exceeded, or approached, the pre-pandemic level seen in 2019 for five consecutive months, the airport said.

The numbers of passengers from Shanghai, Xiamen, Fujian province, and Kunming, Yunnan province, have been growing the fastest. The 30-day visa-free entry between China and Singapore, as well as the increase in flight capacities, has driven the passenger volumes between the two countries, the airport said.

The International Air Transport Association recently released global data for June. Total demand, measured in revenue passenger kilometers, was up 9.1 percent compared with June 2023. Total capacity, measured in available seat kilometers, was up 8.5 percent year-on-year, and the passenger load factor was 85 percent in June.

"Demand grew across all regions as the peak northern summer travel season began in June. And with overall capacity growth lagging demand, we saw a very strong average load factor of 85 percent achieved in both domestic and international operations," said Willie Walsh, IATA's director general.

"Operating with such high load factors is both good and challenging. It makes it even more important for all the stakeholders to operate with equal levels of efficiency to minimize delays and get

travelers to their destinations on schedule," Walsh said.

### Impact of conflict

In addition to strong growth, a number of foreign carriers recently canceled their international flights that connect overseas cities with Chinese mainland cities and Hong Kong, as they had to reroute flights to bypass the airspace of Russia, leading to increased flying time and higher fuel costs, the carriers said.

British carrier Virgin Atlantic announced in July that it would suspend its flights that connect Shanghai Pudong International Airport and London Heathrow Airport after operating the route for 25 years. The last round-trip flights will operate on Oct 25 and Oct 26.

As one of the foreign carriers that entered the China market the earliest, Virgin resumed Shanghai-London flights in May 2023 after a hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The decision to suspend the Shanghai-London route follows the suspension of Virgin's London-Hong Kong route in October 2022 after almost 30 years of operation.

Meanwhile, British Airways said it would temporarily cut the flight frequency of the London-Hong Kong route from two daily flights to one from Oct 27, as the inability to overfly Russia has led to surging operational cost.

British Airways resumed flights connecting London and Shanghai and Beijing last summer after the pandemic. The carrier currently runs daily flights between London and Shanghai, and four times a week to Beijing. The carrier will suspend its Beijing Daxing-London flight from Oct 26.

Currently, eight domestic carriers and two foreign carriers, British Airways and Virgin Atlantic, operate 18 China-UK routes. The Chinese carriers are Air China, China Eastern Airlines, China Southern Airlines, Hainan Airlines, Shenzhen Airlines, Tianjin Airlines, Capital Airlines and Juneyao Airlines, according to Flight Master, a travel services platform in China.

The landscape of competition on the China-Europe air route has undergone significant changes after the pandemic, and the competitive advantage of Chinese carriers has become more prominent.

In the first half of this year, domestic airlines operated 72.2 percent of China-Europe flights, and foreign airlines operated 27.8 percent. Before the pandemic, there was not much difference in the share of such flights, when Chinese carriers made up 52.7 percent, and foreign airlines accounted for 47.3 percent, Flight Master found.

## TOP NEWS

## Trapped in mud



Volunteers search for victims after a landslide on Saturday in Lusanja village outside Kampala, Uganda. The landslide at the vast garbage dump was triggered by heavy rainfall over the past few weeks. Eighteen bodies have been recovered so far and more casualties are expected. ABUBAKER LUBOWA / REUTERS

## Gold rush delivers a perfect finish for nation at Paris Games

After dominating performances in multiple disciplines, Olympic run ends with 40 golds

By LI YINGXUE  
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As Chinese athletes delivered a series of stunning performances at the Paris Olympics this past weekend, resulting in a record haul of medals, three key words and phrases — dominance, breakthroughs and a perfect finish — dominated conversations across social media platforms.

On Sunday evening at South Paris Arena, Li Wenwen won the women's +81kg weightlifting event, securing the fifth gold for the Chinese weightlifting team at this Olympics. Her victory earned China its 40th gold at the Paris Games, nicely capping the delegation's medal quest.

Saturday evening saw the perfect finish for China's table tennis and diving "dream team", as they won all 13 titles up for grabs in the two disciplines.

The table tennis competition wrapped up with China defeating Japan 3-0 in the women's team final, securing its fifth consecutive Olympic championship in the event and also winning China its fifth table tennis title at this edition of the Games. "We're thrilled to have won today's gold medal. With only three years of preparation since the Tokyo Games, we've made significant progress," said Sun Yingsha, who claimed two gold medals and one silver in Paris.

In the men's 10m platform diving final, defending champion Cao Yuan clinched gold, helping China

achieve its clean sweep of all eight diving titles at the Games. This marked Cao's fourth Olympic appearance, earning him a career total of four gold medals, one silver and one bronze from London 2012 to Paris 2024.

Since the Chinese diving team debuted at the Los Angeles Games in 1984, it has consistently won gold medals, but achieved a clean sweep for the first time.

Also on Saturday, twins Wang Liuyi and Wang Qianyi clinched gold in the duet free routine of artistic swimming with a total score of 566.4783, marking China's first Olympic victory in a discipline that demands grace, poise, incredible lung power and flawless acrobatic skills. Earlier, the sisters also contributed to China's gold medal

in the artistic swimming team acrobatic routine.

The boxing events ended on Saturday, with China winning three gold medals and two silver medals in the 13 weight divisions.

In the women's 75kg boxing final at Roland Garros, Li Qian of China secured gold. She had won bronze in this weight class at Rio 2016 and silver at Tokyo 2020.

In men's weightlifting, Liu Huanhua won gold in the 102kg category in his Olympic debut, marking China's first gold in the men's heavyweight division.

In rhythmic gymnastics on Saturday, the Chinese team secured gold in the group all-around final with a total score of 69.80, giving China its first Olympic gold medal in the sport.

## Anti-immigrant riots in UK first big challenge for Labour government

By SHAO XINYING  
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Barely a month after taking office, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer is facing his first major challenge with violent protests raging in several cities across the country. Anti-immigration sentiments, fanned by the rise of the far right in the United Kingdom and compounded by the cost of living crisis, can be blamed for the current state of affairs, experts said.

After a month-long honeymoon during which he made his international debut at the NATO summit in Washington and attended the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics, Starmer now has the grim task in hand of quelling social unrest at home.

Violence broke out in a number of places after rumors circulated online that a Muslim immigrant was behind the July 29 stabbing in Southport, northwest England, which left three young girls dead.

Protesters took to the streets and stormed mosques and hotels housing asylum-seekers in major cities, including London, Liverpool, Plymouth and Belfast.

"The rioting is politically driven," Danny Ewart, a Portsmouth resident, told China Daily. "I am frustrated by the direction this country is headed, but we need to come together and work on our differences. We also need to manage the immigration numbers as it's not sustainable."

Starmer has condemned the riots, calling it "far-right thuggery". British monarch King Charles has called for unity and understanding after the riots, a Buckingham Palace spokesman said in a statement on Friday.

"It is the first major challenge facing Starmer," Xu Ruike, associate professor of British politics and foreign policy at Beijing Foreign Studies University, told China Daily. "Although it is a rare event, it reflects the underlying issues in UK society, in particular the rise of the far right," Xu said.

"Rioting is entirely down to inept Conservative and Labour governments," Billy Bessey, who took part in anti-immigration demonstrations in Portsmouth last weekend, told China Daily.

The rioting is wrong but the blood is on the hands of politicians, he added. "Anti-immigration sentiment is just the trigger," Huang Fei, associate professor at the School of International Studies and research fellow at the School of Global and Area Studies of Renmin University of China, told China Daily.

Huang said the financial burden of households worsened after the Russia-Ukraine conflict, sending inflation to more than 10 percent

2022. Extra checks and tariffs after Brexit and the uncertainty of the talks on free trade thereafter have added to livelihood woes.

The lackluster performance of the British economy in recent years also added to public dissatisfaction with the government. The GDP grew by 0.1 percent year-on-year in 2023, according to the Office for National Statistics. The government declared at the end of July the country was "broke and broken".

Net migration was unusually high in 2023, at 685,000, driven by an increase in non-European Union citizens coming to the UK, according to the Migration Observatory.

"The large number of migrants is putting great pressure on the society, leading to reduced social welfare for the general public, especially the ones in the lower income segment," Huang said.

An increasing number of people are growing angry with the large number of illegal migrants coming to the country and anti-immigrant sentiment was a major factor in the Brexit referendum vote, Huang added.

"Reform UK is the only way we will ever get to control our borders," Bessey said.

At the election last month, the Reform UK party led by Brexit campaigner Nigel Farage won 14 percent

of the votes, but only gained five seats.

"It is underrepresented in parliament as the UK's first-past-the-post voting system favors the bigger parties," Xu of Beijing Foreign Studies University said.

The riots come amid a broader right-wing populist surge in European countries. During the European Parliament election in June, far-right parties made major gains. In France, President Emmanuel Macron dissolved the lower house of parliament in a bid to block the far-right National Rally party from coming to power.

"It reflects the political polarization, further complicating the political landscape, combined with a crisis of trust in government," Huang of Renmin University of China said.

Police have blamed peddling of false information online, amplified by social media, for the violence.

"The misinformation that was widely circulated plays up to the insecurity felt by the public, fostering a willingness among individuals to instinctively believe the social media posts," Xu said.

The Online Safety Act, designed to regulate social media companies, was passed in October but is not expected to be enforced until next year.

Cabinet Office minister Nick Thomas Symonds said on Friday the government would revisit the law's framework.

"We need to be mindful of what information we share. Otherwise, it sets a very dangerous precedent," Ewart said.

Nick Ivo contributed to this story.

## Exchanges: Govt gives firm support

From page 1

When Xi visited the Mogao Grottoes in 2019, he stressed that "the protection of world cultural heritage should be placed above tourism as our top priority".

The virtual reality center is a good way to serve the dual purpose of preservation and enhancing visitors' experience, said Lei Zhengguang, a member of the promotional team at the Dunhuang Academy. As the peak season hits its stride, the daily visitor cap has been expanded to 18,000, but demand remains insatiable.

"For those who can't get in, the digital immersive experience is a captivating alternative," said Lei. The Liaoning Provincial Museum in Shenyang, the capital of Northeast China's Liaoning province, attracts children and teenagers by staging innovative shows to help them better understand what they are taught at school. Last year, it hosted shows that narrated the stories of renowned ancient poets, drawing from the institution's extensive collection of artifacts from the poets' eras.

The museum has also started a new project to get young visitors more involved. Children are invited to act out roles, recite poems and experience what daily life was like for the poets.

Dong Baohou, the institution's deputy director, said: "It's a great time for museums. People are more interested in culture than ever. To meet this demand, we need to work hard and come up with innovative ways to improve our services."

In a letter replying to experts at the National Museum of China in 2022, President Xi urged the museum workers to make contributions to the development of China's museums and to the building of China

into a country with a strong socialist culture. He promoted exchanges and mutual learning between civilizations, and called for better preserving, passing on and showcasing the fine accomplishments of Chinese civilization.

Cultural exchanges were also emphasized in Xi's report to the 20th National Congress of the CPC in 2022. "We will deepen exchanges and mutual learning with other civilizations and better present Chinese culture to the world," he said.

In the past two years, museums have taken steps to boost cultural exchanges between different civilizations.

In mid-April, Beijing's Palace Museum, also known as the Forbidden City, and the Palace of Versailles in France held a show in Beijing featuring exchanges between China and France in the 17th and 18th centuries. The widely anticipated exhibition featured around 200 cultural artifacts and drew many visitors.

Also in April, an exhibition showcasing the art and culture of two mysterious states in Central China's Hubei province 2,000 years ago was presented to a US audience at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, the biggest archaeological show from China since 2020.

Jeremy Zhang, lead curator of the Asian Art Museum show, said that he could feel the strong support from the Chinese government for cultural exchanges. Thanks to that support, Zhang's museum will have further chances in the future to work more deeply with key Chinese museums, including the Palace Museum.

On July 17, the Shanghai Museum opened its largest-ever themed exhibition featuring 788 artifacts from various periods of Egypt's history, which it said is Asia's largest showcase of ancient Egyptian civilization.

Liu, head of the Chinese Museums Association, said that it's a good era for museums' development, with firm support of the nation's top leader. He said he believed that the country, following Xi's encouragement, will build cultural confidence and strength.

## Champion cowboy



Saras Ramsay competes in the steer wrestling event during the Mount Isa Mines Rodeo on Saturday in Mount Isa, Queensland, Australia. The event is Australia's largest rodeo and the biggest in the Southern hemisphere. It took place from Thursday to Sunday at the Buchanan Park Events Complex. DAN PELED / GETTY IMAGES

## Change: Britain expected to rebalance its foreign policies

From page 1

Even as a protectionist, Washington showed no interest in such a deal, and Downing Street happily sacrificed its other interests on a whim, especially those concerning China. Its routine weaponization of anti-China sentiment for short-term political gain also made it impossible to engage with Beijing even as Sunak professed that he wished to do so in certain areas, becoming a victim of internal party conflict.

As a result, what we are likely to see from a Labour government is not a drastic change in policy, but certainly a rebalancing that will make it possible for London to have an amicable relationship with Beijing again and to compartmentalize disagreements and areas of cooperation. Already, Starmer's government is pursuing a "reset" with the European Union that has been described as an "end to the Brexit era"; in other words, an end to the theatrical nationalism and imperial-era nostalgia of the Conservatives and a return of cooperation-focused policies. When the time is right, we are likely to see this happen with China too.

While the previous government was subjected to backbench rebellions frequently led by highly ideological anti-China members of Parliament, Starmer's large-scale majority and emphasis on party

discipline will mean his agenda will not be disrupted, and therefore, backbench MPs cannot impose "costs" on the government for engaging with Beijing. For example, owing to factional conflict within the Conservative Party, individuals such as Iain Duncan Smith and Liz Truss held disproportionate influence over the government's positions on China and threatened rebellion constantly, which is what produced such jarring inconsistencies.

However, Beijing should nonetheless be aware that US-funded groups and organizations, as well as the Taiwan region, will continue to press for influence among the new batch of MPs, as well as a hostile mainstream media, and thus the so-called "golden era" will not return. This, however, is preferable to the Cold War-style conflict that was actively sought by some in the previous administration. Ultimately, the UK continues to have significant interests in a cooperative, open and mature relationship with China, one which can be made to work despite ideological and geopolitical differences. As Britain enters a new era, it is time for a mature "reset" based on national interests.

The author is a British political and international-relations analyst. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

# CHINA

## Community gives insight into lives of working class

For decades, Shanghai neighborhood serves as window for foreign guests in learning about China

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai  
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When construction began on Caoyang New Village in Shanghai's Putuo district back in 1951, few would have envisaged the community would become so emblematic of China's vision for improving the living conditions of its industrial workers.

The leafy surroundings of Caoyang, with its three-story, red-roofed buildings interspersed by French plane trees, was the first residential compound built entirely for industrial workers after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

Opening on International Workers' Day in 1952, the complex provided 1,004 homes for industrial workers and their families complete with running water, electricity and sanitation facilities — which were relatively rare at that time.

In contrast, many industrial workers at that time lived in cramped and unsanitary conditions.

The name Caoyang was inspired by the Chinese for "rising sun", and an aspiration that things will only get better for the community and China's workers in general.

Over the years, the name has proved true and more so, with the community not only becoming a symbol of China's desire to improve the lives of its people but also a beacon of understanding between China and the wider world.

"As a paradigm for showing the living conditions of workers in New China, Caoyang Yi Cun (Caoyang No 1 village) began receiving foreign dignitaries and friends in 1953, showing them the development of our country, including the improvement of the lives of residents, especially the working class," said Zhang Lei, deputy director of the administration of Caoyang Xincun subdistrict.

"Over the decades, nearly 400,000 visitors from more than 150 countries and regions have visited the Caoyang neighborhood of a little more than 2 square kilometers, including some who went to residents' homes to have a real personal experience of the happy life of an ordinary citizen in Caoyang," she said.

With Caoyang Yi Cun as the center of Caoyang New Village, eight other neighborhoods named Caoyang No 2 to No 9 villages were built in the following years.

On July 13, more than 40 international students in summer school programs at Shanghai International Studies University became one of the latest groups to experience life as a Caoyang resident for a day.

The activity first came into being in the early 1980s as the country adopted its reform and opening-up policy and the number of overseas tourists grew.

The students experienced shuttlecock kicking and hopscotch, games that children and adults in the local alleys play. They also visited the local museums and shops to get a taste of what life was like in the community in the past as well as today.

"Those residential buildings built more than seven decades ago still look graceful and awesome today. After visiting the neighborhood, it helped me better understand why the country has been developing rapidly. The people are diligent and the government is forward-looking," said Niyayesh Mehralipour, a 22-year-old university student from Iran who had been in Shanghai for only a week.

"I visited the 632-meter-tall Shanghai Tower, the world's second-tallest skyscraper, with one of the fastest lifts on the planet days ago. That allowed me to see how modern the city is. While the visit to Caoyang today is like witnessing a condensed history

of the development of Chinese workers' residences, which is also very interesting to me," she said.

At a community activity center, the students experienced making Chinese dumplings, or *jiaozi*, after watching a demonstration by local residents. Ramon Parellada Martin, from Valencia Spain, forgot that the dumpling he'd made needed to be cooked first before eating it. Cries rang out as he put the raw dumpling into his mouth.

Parellada, 19, on his first trip to China, expressed his appreciation for having the opportunity to walk around a residential compound with such historical significance.

"I enjoy the natural beauty in this apartment complex with greenery and a curved waterway. It's a combination of both international and Chinese aesthetics," said Parellada, who attends university in Madrid.

"Shanghai is such an international city. Before I embarked on the trip, I wasn't sure how life was going to be for me when watching documentaries and videos about the city on YouTube. But I've already gotten used to it," he said.

Zhang, from Caoyang Xincun subdistrict, said even back in the early years expat visitors showed the same enthusiasm as they do today.

"It (the community) is a window to demonstrate the achievements of socialist construction, and how the real life of workers in Shanghai was getting on," she said.

The residents of Caoyang New Village have always been passionate and welcoming to foreign guests and eager to share their lives with them.

Zhang said that "living as a Caoyang resident for a day" has been listed as one of 14 special activities by China's national tourism administration, which later became part of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Those invited to the model community can experience different activities according to their backgrounds, Zhang said, adding that have the opportunity to spend half a day to a day with a local family, learn how to make local food, speak some phrases in the Shanghai dialect and write Chinese calligraphy.

In early July, a group of 20 schoolteachers from Shanghai's sister cities in 15 countries took part in a tour. They went to a local primary school to communicate with teachers and interact with the students.

"If visitors are interested in art, they will have the opportunity to watch performances by local amateurs. If they are interested in traditional Chinese culture, they can make Chinese knots as souvenirs and try on Peking Opera costumes at the community activity center," Zhang said.

Zhou Kangle, a resident in Caoyang for decades, started receiving visitors to his home in 2002. He and his wife like to treat their foreign friends to delicious local homemade food.

He also likes showing them his collectibles such as a Yao Ming jersey from when he played on the Houston Rockets basketball team in the NBA, wooden wind chimes from Canada and dolls from Japan.

"Once my granddaughter and I received an elderly couple from the United States. Several years later, when my granddaughter went to the US for further studies, they drove three hours to pick her up at the airport and invited her to stay at their home for several days," he said.



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Locals greet foreign guests in Caoyang New Village in Shanghai in the last century. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Guests from the Dominican Republic are welcomed at Caoyang New Village in the 1980s. ZHENG XIANZHANG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Picture 1: Visitors from San Marino dine with local residents at Caoyang New Village in Shanghai in September 2016. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Pictures 2-4: International students in summer school programs at Shanghai International Studies University visit Caoyang New Village last month. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY



Picture 5: Baixi Park in Caoyang New Village attracts tourists and residents. Transformed from a market built on an old railway branch line, the park now provides venues for exercise and entertainment with unique designs in using vertical space. WANG GANG / FOR CHINA DAILY



## Residential compound ahead of its time for convenience

By ZHOU WENTING

Over the past decade, Shanghai and many other cities in China have been committed to creating 15-minute living circles, enabling residents to access basic public services such as elderly care, education and sports facilities, within a 15-minute walk from home.

Constructed more than 70 years ago, Caoyang New Village, which was the country's first residential compound built especially for industrial workers after the founding of New China, is a prototype of the 15-minute living circle concept, according to urban planners.

Located around the 167 buildings in the community that was established in 1952, there are public facilities, including a food market, a bank and a post office.

There is also a public bath house, a grocery store and a canteen set close by to bus stops.

The residential buildings had two floors at the beginning, but were later turned into three-story ones during renovations.

"Residents living at the edge of the community can reach the center within seven or eight minutes by walking. A primary school and a kindergarten are also centrally located," said Zhang Lei, deputy

director of the administration of Caoyang Xincun subdistrict, adding that a community healthcare center and a cinema are also nearby.

"The scientific and rational layout of public facilities within the community provided a certain reference for the comprehensive construction of residential compounds across the country in the following decades," said Zhang.

"Due to its spacious and comfortable environment, good ventilation and lighting in the apartments, and the graceful appearance and practicality of the buildings, the entire design and plan of Caoyang

has become a valuable lesson for university students in architecture majors in the city," she said.

The buildings, which had another story added in the 1970s, were built in synergy with the road network and a waterway to create a scenic and harmonious communal living area.

The residents treasure the waterway that encircles the neighborhood as it is an uncommon feature for a downtown area.

"Water adds a sense of romance and calmness. Residents here, young and old, enjoy spending time along the waterway," said Wang Yuzhen, a 54-year-old resident, who

added that a refurbishment three years ago added a footpath along the river.

Zhang said residents in the three apartments on each floor of the buildings in Caoyang New Village used to share a bathroom and a kitchen. In 2011, the decades-old buildings were renovated, and independent bathrooms were added for each household.

In 2021, renovations went further. Residents now have their own kitchens within their apartments, and sports facilities were also added in alleyways.

"Throughout the decades, many of the descendants of the first batch of residents — model workers from different factories — are still living here. It shows that it's quite cozy and convenient to live in Caoyang," said Zhang.

## WORLD

# Brazil recovers bodies of 62 victims from plane crash site

Experts begin to examine aircraft's black boxes for cause of disaster

VINHEDO, Brazil — Brazilian authorities on Saturday finished recovering the bodies of the 62 people who died when their plane tumbled from the sky, as experts began examining the doomed aircraft's black boxes to determine the cause of the disaster.

Videos showed the ATR 72-500 plane in a sickening downward spin on Friday before it crashed into a residential area in the town of Vinhedo, some 80 kilometers northwest of Brazil's financial capital Sao Paulo.

The plane, operated by airline Voepass, fell almost vertically, landed on its belly and exploded in flames, striking with such force that it was nearly "flattened," said Sao Paulo fire lieutenant Olivia Perroni Cazo.

"A total of 62 bodies (34 male and 28 female) were recovered and taken to the morgue in Sao Paulo for identification and delivery to their families," the regional government said on Saturday evening.

Two have already been identified through fingerprints, with Vinhedo Mayor Dario Pacheco saying they were the pilot and co-pilot.

The twin-engine turboprop, built by aviation firm ATR, was flying from Cascavel in southern Parana state to Sao Paulo's Guarulhos International Airport.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi sent on Sunday a message of condolence to Brazilian Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira over the plane crash.

On behalf of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Wang mourned those killed and offered sincere sympathy to the bereaved families.

Experts from Brazil's Aeronautical Accidents Investigation and Prevention Center have begun analyzing two black boxes recovered from the wreckage, containing cabin conversations and in-flight data, said the center's chief, Marcelo Moreno.



Debris lies at the site of a plane crash in the Sao Paulo state, Brazil, on Saturday. The authorities are trying to find out the exact cause of the crash, which left all the 62 people on board dead.

ALLISON SALES / DPA

It plans to publish a preliminary report "within an estimated 30 days," the Brazilian Air Force said.

According to the FlightRadar24 website, the plane flew for about an hour at 5,180 meters, until 1:21 pm when it began losing altitude at a catastrophic rate.

Radar contact was lost at 1:22 pm, the air force reported. It said the plane's crew "at no time declared an emergency or were under adverse weather conditions."

## 'No technical problems'

ATR, a joint subsidiary of European giant Airbus and Italy's Leonardo, said its experts will assist in the investigation.

The plane, in use since 2010, was in compliance with current standards, the National Civil Aviation Agency said, adding the four crew members were all fully certified.

Voepass' Operations Director

Marcel Moura said the plane had undergone routine maintenance the night before the accident and that "no technical problems" were found.

But experts suggested icing of the plane's wings may have been behind the accident.

Moura said the plane was a type that flies at an altitude "where there is a greater sensitivity to icing," but that conditions on Friday were "within acceptable parameters for a flight". The fiery crash transformed the plane's fuselage into a mass of twisted metal. Despite the devastation, there were no casualties on the ground.

President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has declared three days of national mourning for what was one of the worst aviation accidents in the country's history.

"It was horrible ... such a sad tragedy," said a trembling Lourdes da Silva Astolfo, 67, whose home is only meters from the crash site.

She told AFP she had first felt a "rumbling, almost like a tremor," when she suddenly saw the plane almost directly overhead. Seconds later came the stunning impact and the horrified screams from neighbors as a thick cloud of acrid smoke billowed outward.

The normally peaceful, wooded enclave where the plane came down saw a steady stream on Saturday of police cars, ambulances and fire trucks.

Voepass said all the victims were traveling on Brazilian identity documents. One woman was a dual citizen with Portugal, and there was also a family of three Venezuelans.

At least eight physicians were aboard, Parana state Governor Ratinho Junior said. Four professors at Unioeste university in western Parana were also confirmed dead.

AGENCIES — XINHUA

# New York event unites cultures through music

By MINGMEI LI in New York  
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United by musical instruments and shared melodies, over 700 young musicians from around the world participated in the World Orchestra Week in New York from Aug 1 to 7.

Over seven consecutive days in Carnegie Hall, youth orchestras took turns performing on stage, collaborating with top conductors and soloists.

Five youth orchestras from Africa, Asia, Europe and South America collaborated with US orchestras in New York City. Participants included the National Children's Symphony of Venezuela, Beijing Youth Orchestra and the National Youth Orchestra of the USA, or NYO-USA.

"Everyone is here for one thing, music. Hearing each other's pieces and stuff will definitely bring us closer," Jeremiah La Fayette, an 18-year-old from Tampa, Florida, who plays the viola in the NYO-USA, told China Daily.

"Since this is the place where I live, and people are coming from across the world, I'd like to help as much as possible to make them feel comfortable and make them new friends over here."

Sydney Richardson, 17, from East Texas, told China Daily that even though there are some language barriers with friends from other countries, they still can read different lines of other orchestra's pieces and play music together.

"Music is the language of the world, and it's the only thing that no matter where you're from, you will understand the notes and staff, the rhythm and everything," she said.

Richardson said she received a bookmark with a little panda on it from her new Chinese friends.

Liu Fenghe, an 18-year-old cello player from Beijing, told China Daily that it was fun to discuss music with US musicians.

"Music and culture are closely linked. On the pentatonic scale, Chinese music places more emphasis on melody, while Western music, with its triadic harmonies, focuses more on the interplay between different parts. This is why we can observe both the similarities and differences in music brought about by culture," he said.

The Beijing Youth Orchestra made its debut performance in the United States on Aug 4 at Carnegie Hall. The orchestra, established on June 23, is made up of 130 young musicians from schools such as the Central Conservatory of Music. They performed selections of

masterpieces from both Chinese and Western music, such as Bao Yuankai's *Chinese Sights and Sounds*, Zhao Jiping's *Pipa Concerto No 2* and Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No 5 in E minor*.

"For me, it was quite a challenge," Jin Zhicheng, a horn player of the Beijing Youth Orchestra, told China Daily. "Our orchestra was just established, and it was my first time performing such large pieces. Seeing the reaction from the New York audience gave me a great sense of accomplishment."

## Traditional instrument

"I think the audience here is incredibly enthusiastic. I felt especially proud when I introduced the traditional Chinese instrument, the *pipa*, before the performance," Wang Fucan, 17, principal cellist of the Beijing Youth Orchestra, told China Daily.

He explained to the audience the sounds of the *pipa* and its connection to the Silk Road.

"On the first day the orchestra was established, I told the students that we must showcase our passion for music, art and life," Lyu Jia, conductor of the Beijing Youth Orchestra, told China Daily.

"Through music, they gained a profound spiritual experience and felt the charm of both Chinese and Western cultures, confidently performing on a world-renowned stage. I believe this experience will be life-changing and incredibly beneficial for them."

Sarah Johnson, chief education officer at Carnegie Hall, told China Daily that it was not only about music, but also cultural exchanges.

"In music, you don't need words. You don't need language. Music as a bridge builder, a safe collaborative space for people to share experiences, and now it's time for the younger generation," she said.

Clive Gillinson, executive and artistic director of Carnegie Hall, told China Daily that it has been a dream for quite a long time to create a national youth orchestra week at Carnegie Hall.

Zhang Yao, vice-president of the China National Centre for the Performing Arts, or NCPA, told China Daily that when the Philadelphia Orchestra made its groundbreaking tour 51 years ago, its performances significantly contributed to US-China relations.

"Symphony music can contribute to the friendship between China and the US," he said. "We especially hope that more foreign friends and young people will come to the NCPA to perform, watch performances and learn about Chinese culture."



The Beijing Youth Orchestra made its debut performance in the US on Aug 4 at Carnegie Hall in New York during the World Orchestra Week. CHRIS LEE / FOR CHINA DAILY

# Russia halts Ukraine's advance into its territory

MOSCOW — Russia's army said on Sunday it had halted Ukraine's advance into its western Kursk region in several places, hitting troops and equipment in areas up to 30 kilometers from the border.

The defense ministry said Russian troops had "foiled attempts by enemy mobile groups with armored vehicles to break through deep into Russian territory", including near the villages of Tolpino and Obschky Kolodez, 25 km and 30 km from the Russia-Ukraine border.

Kyiv launched a surprise border incursion on Tuesday, shocking Russia, which has sent in additional reserves, tanks, drones, artillery and aviation to try to quash the offensive.

A senior Ukrainian official told AFP that "thousands" of its troops had been deployed to the operation.

On Saturday, Russia said it had evacuated tens of thousands of people from its border region and

warned that the fighting in Kursk region was endangering a nuclear power plant.

Local officials detailed the scale of civilian evacuations from towns and villages close to the combat zone.

"More than 76,000 people have been temporarily relocated to safe places," the TASS news agency quoted an official from the regional Emergency Situations Ministry as saying at a press briefing on Saturday.

Emergency aid has been ferried into the border area and extra trains to the capital Moscow have been deployed to help people fleeing the fighting.

Thirteen people were injured in the Ukrainian attack, with two in critical condition, Acting Governor of Kursk region Alexei Smirnov said on his Telegram channel on Sunday.

Smirnov said the incident occurred when a missile intercepted by Russian defense systems fell into a

residential building, triggering a fire.

Initial reports indicated the building's structural integrity remains intact. Fifteen people have been rescued.

In his video address on Saturday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he had discussed the operation with top commander Oleksandr Syrsky, vowing to "restore justice" and to "push the war onto the aggressor's territory".

## 'Counterterror operations'

Russia's national anti-terrorism committee said late Friday it was starting "counterterror operations in the Belgorod, Bryansk and Kursk regions" to protect citizens.

The Belgorod and Bryansk regions bordering Ukraine have also been hit hard by shelling and aerial attacks since the conflict began in February 2022.

Meanwhile, a 4-year-old boy and

his father were killed and three others injured in the Kyiv region early on Sunday in a Russian missile and drone strike, Zelenskyy said.

The Kyiv Regional Military Administration said in a statement that two private houses were destroyed and six others damaged in the Kyiv region by falling debris of the projectiles. Still, there were no direct hits to residential and critical infrastructure.

Russian forces fired 57 Shahed combat drones and four ballistic missiles at Ukraine during the attack, said the Ukrainian Air Force. The Ukrainian air defense destroyed 53 drones over 11 regions.

According to Ukrainian authorities, the Russian army launched more than 30 missiles and over 800 guided aerial bombs at Ukraine last week.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

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CHINA DAILY (ISSN 0748-6154) is  
published daily except weekends by  
China Daily USA, 1500 Broadway,  
Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036.

Periodical postage paid at New York,  
NY and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to  
CHINA DAILY USA, 1500 Broadway,  
Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036.

Vol. 38 — No. 1395

# ASEAN eyes nuclear energy, but airs safety concerns

By PRIME SARMIENTO  
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Members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations are keen to explore nuclear energy to meet climate commitments and promote energy security, but they still need to overcome concerns over safety and funding, a regional forum heard recently.

"The energy needs of our regions are growing, and finding reliable, sustainable solutions is more crucial than ever. Nuclear energy, with its potential to provide consistent and low-carbon power, is a topic that we can't afford to overlook," Beni Suryadi, deputy executive director of ASEAN Center for Energy, told a forum it organized in Jakarta on Friday.

The ASEAN Energy Booklet Volume 2: Nuclear Energy Development in ASEAN, was launched during the forum, featuring regional nuclear energy development, nuclear power's role in ASEAN's energy transition and advancements in nuclear technologies.

Marcel Nicky Arianto, associate research analyst on power at ASEAN Center for Energy, said that while ASEAN countries aim to reach carbon neutrality by generating renewable energy such as solar and wind, they are not stable sources of power owing to their intermittency. But he said nuclear energy will not only cut carbon emissions but is also a stable and flexible energy source.

As of 2022, more than 66 percent of the power generated in the ASEAN region was from coal and

gas, while renewables accounted for about 33 percent.

Arianto said the first step in deploying nuclear power in the region is for the governments to have "a strong political will" to use nuclear power as a means to secure energy supply and transition to a cleaner source of fuel; to create policies and laws on nuclear development; and to build the nuclear power plants.

## Significant progress

The ASEAN booklet has highlighted several countries that have made significant progress in their plan to use nuclear energy in the future. Indonesia, for example, has regulatory and research agencies on nuclear power and is planning to develop its first nuclear reactor by 2035. Vietnam is likewise conducting research and plans to have a

small-scale nuclear reactor after 2030, while Thailand is eyeing building a power plant by 2036.

But Arianto said ASEAN is facing many challenges in building nuclear power plants, the most crucial of which is ASEAN's geographic location as some countries are located in the Pacific Ring of Fire, and concerns over nuclear waste management. The Fukushima nuclear accident and the Chernobyl disaster are also weighing on plans to develop a nuclear energy policy.

Brianna Lazerwitz, energy economist at the International Atomic Energy Agency, said that while nuclear projects share similarities with other large scale, capital-intensive infrastructure projects, they also "present unique considerations, and that translates to unique risks for investors".

# PARIS 2024



**Left:** Ma Long is flanked by Wang Chuqin (left) and Fan Zhendong after winning the Paris 2024 Olympics men's table tennis team gold medal on Friday. **Right:** Ma Long (left) and Wang Chuqin react after winning their doubles match against Anton Kallberg and Kristian Karlsson of Sweden on Friday. REUTERS



## THE LONG GOODBYE

Curtain finally falls on stellar career, as legend steps off the Olympic stage

Ma Long, with his teammate Wang Chuqin, plays against Sweden's Anton Kallberg and Kristian Karlsson in the doubles match during the men's gold medal team final at the Paris 2024 Olympics, on Friday. AP

By LI YINGXUE  
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Revered as the "Hexagon Warrior" by Japanese media, Ma Long has long been celebrated for his near-perfect mastery of six key attributes: power, speed, technique, serve, defense and experience. On Friday, he clinched his sixth Olympic gold medal, a triumph that perfectly encapsulates his dominance in each of these areas, and seals his legendary status with a flawless final act on the Olympic stage. Over the course of four Olympic Games, from London to Paris, Ma's journey has been one of transformation — evolving from sharp young paddler to an unshakable cornerstone of his team. At 35, he stands as a powerful symbol of how unwavering passion can defy the passage of time. "My goal now is simply to keep playing the game I love. My only focus is to give everything I've got, without worrying about the finish line," Ma often says. That finish line came, late last week, at the Paris Olympics, when Ma, alongside teammates Fan Zhendong and Wang Chuqin, triumphed over Sweden, clinching a fifth consecutive Olympic team title. As the flag bearer for the Chinese

delegation at the opening ceremony, Ma also made history by becoming the most decorated Chinese Olympian. Following his victory, Ma shared on Weibo: "From London to Paris, it's been a long and challenging journey. It was tough, but perfect. Thank you to everyone who stood by my side and supported me." The official Olympics website declared: "Ma Long is, without a doubt, the greatest table tennis player in history." In the final, after securing victory, Ma marked the moment with a spontaneous 360-degree arm swing — a celebratory gesture that captured his last Olympic performance. "That spin was instinctive; after the shot, I just naturally turned around," he explained. Ma noted the electric atmosphere in the arena and how much he savored the moment. "The support from the Chinese fans in the crowd was incredible. I believe this kind of energy helps both teams elevate their performance, and it definitely had a positive effect." **Global favorite** On Friday night, following the Chinese women's table tennis team's semifinal victory, each player

received a pin from Japanese former table tennis star, now a TV reporter, Kasumi Ishikawa. Ishikawa also presented an additional pin to Chen Meng, asking her to deliver it to her favorite player, Ma. After the Chinese women's team secured the title on Saturday, Ma made a surprise appearance in the mixed zone, where he and Ishikawa exchanged pins. Ishikawa, a devoted fan of Ma, had previously expressed in interviews her admiration for him, highlighting her frequent viewership of his matches and her respect for his combination of strength and gentleness. Universally acknowledged as the table tennis GOAT (greatest of all time), Ma's impressive presence and humble demeanor have garnered widespread admiration and respect from players around the world. When Ma was initially left off the Chinese team's singles roster for the Paris Olympics in May, German table tennis star Dimitrij Ovtcharov posted a heartfelt message on Weibo, tagging Ma, expressing his sadness at the decision: "Life always has its regrets! I'm sorry to hear you won't be competing in singles at the Paris Olympics. You are a great rival! Here's to our youth and effort! Sending my best wishes! I still look

forward to facing you in Paris!" In the Olympic Village, Ma has become a popular figure, with athletes frequently seeking photos with him and sharing them on social media. His autograph is among the most coveted. In the mixed zone during the Games, Ma has been a magnet for reporters from around the globe. Some use translation apps, while others enlist volunteers for assistance. American journalists inquired about how Ma would introduce himself to an American audience, French reporters asked for his impression of the home team and Swedish reporters were curious about his views on China's rival for the gold. **A fitting farewell** At the press conference following his gold medal victory, Ma confirmed that Paris will be his final Olympics, though he has not yet decided whether he will retire. "This gold medal is a perfect way to conclude my Olympic career, but you might still see me on the international stage in the future," he said. "I am extremely proud, fortunate, and honored." Reflecting on his journey since the Tokyo Olympics, Ma admitted he never expected to compete on the

Paris stage. "Over these three years, I've experienced significant growth both mentally and technically. The journey has been vastly different, but I'm delighted to have had the chance to participate in the Olympics once more." He also offered sincere best wishes to his younger teammates, with whom he won gold in Paris. He expressed hope that Fan will represent China at the Los Angeles Olympics in four years. Regarding Wang, who won the mixed doubles, but was eliminated in singles, Ma noted, "joy is only part of the story. There's still an opportunity to achieve a super 'Grand Slam'. No one has yet won titles in team, doubles, and mixed doubles events, and you're still young." Ma hopes to inspire more young people to embrace table tennis, much like German paddler Timo Boll has, but as for a future in coaching, he remains undecided. During the Olympics men's team competition, Ma, seated beside coach Wang Hao, frequently offered strategic advice to his teammates during timeouts. After a match against the Indian team, an opposing player even mistakenly assumed Ma was the coach and attempted to shake his hand. Perhaps subconsciously, Ma already

carries the aura of one. "Table tennis has been a part of my life for over 30 years, and I have a profound emotional connection to it," Ma said. "The sport has introduced me to the world, earned me respect and honor, and provided countless unforgettable moments. That's why I can't help but love it." Ma's farewell to the table tennis stage began to take shape with the onset of the Paris Olympic cycle. After securing the men's team gold at the Hangzhou Asian Games last year, he remarked: "I had hoped to return for the next Asian Games, but this should be my last. Winning the championship is a perfect conclusion." In February, Ma and his teammates triumphed at the ITTF World Team Championships in Busan, South Korea. Following their victory, he acknowledged that it was his ninth and final World Team Championships in a similar manner. "This has been a memorable journey," he stated. "I'm grateful for the trust within the team and among my teammates. Ending my final World Championships match with a victory is a perfect ending." Paris may not be Ma's final act in the sport he loves, but is a fitting and flawless end to his remarkable Olympic playing career.

## From humble beginnings, Pakistan's unlikely champion strikes gold

LAHORE, Pakistan — Arshad Nadeem's home village erupted into rapturous celebrations after he clinched Pakistan's first Olympic medal in athletics, winning gold in the men's javelin and knocking defending champion Neeraj Chopra of archrival India into second place. Nadeem's triumph on Thursday in Paris is all the more impressive for a man born and raised in a mud brick house in an impoverished corner of rural Pakistan, who was forced as a youth to train in local wheat fields with homemade javelins. The news of his victory, which reached Pakistan late at night, thrilled his compatriots, drawing congratulatory messages from the nation's leaders and prompting jubilant dancing and fireworks in his normally sleepy home village of Mian Channu. "We have not been able to sleep since last night, because relatives, the media, friends, fans and state functionaries are constantly visit-

ing us to congratulate the family," his oldest brother, Shahid Nadeem, said on Friday. "People from surrounding villages came to watch the tournament here," he said. "We had arranged a big screen. They expressed their joy by chanting, dancing and with fireworks." Pakistan mostly channels its limited funding for sports into team games such as cricket and hockey. Nadeem, who compared his Olympic clash with Chopra to the two nations' legendary rivalry in cricket, has previously said it is challenging being a non-cricket athlete in Pakistan, where resources and facilities for his sport are scarce. But, now, his record-breaking 92.97-meter javelin throw in Paris has earned Pakistan its first Olympic medal since the 1992 Barcelona Games, and its first gold medal since the 1984 Los Angeles Games. "This gold medal is a gift from me to the entire nation on the occa-



Gold medalist Arshad Nadeem of Pakistan celebrates on the podium during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games on Friday. AFP

Pakistani region of Khanewal, where he first began to dream of Olympic greatness. His district barely had reliable water and electricity supplies, let alone proper sports facilities for him to train. "Initially, we improvised homemade javelins by using long eucalyptus branches with iron tips on their ends. The fields in our village served as our training ground," his brother Shahid said. "We developed our own weight training apparatus by using iron rods, canisters of oil and concrete." The situation improved when Nadeem joined the local power utility Wapda, which had its own sports facilities. Even so, Nadeem had still been training with substandard javelins just months before the Paris Olympics, until, his mother Razia Parveen explained, a last-minute appeal saw the Pakistani government step in to help.

"The government sponsored javelins and other facilities for him. He brought back three new international standard javelins from South Africa," she said. "I am very happy for Arshad and Pakistan. I offered prayers to thank God immediately after his victory," she said from their home, which houses a makeshift gym built by Nadeem and his brothers, featuring homemade weight training gear. And she praised India's silver medal winner. "I also congratulate Chopra," she said. "I congratulate his mother and his family. Victory and defeat are just by fate." Shahid Nadeem said that all four brothers are sportsmen. "My two younger brothers and me abandoned our passion and started jobs to support the family," he added. However, Nadeem's decision to stick with his passion seems set to

change the family's fortunes. Maryam Nawaz Sharif, chief minister of Nadeem's native Punjab province, announced a cash prize of 100 million Pakistani rupees (\$359,195) as a reward for what she said was his "hard work." Nadeem arrived to a water canon salute and chants from thousands of supporters as he brought Pakistan's first Olympic medal home early on Sunday. Nadeem was met by his family, including his father who placed a garland around his neck to the sound of thousands chanting: "Long live Arshad Nadeem! Long live Pakistan!", as he touched down in the eastern city of Lahore. President Asif Ali Zardari announced on Saturday that Arshad Nadeem would be awarded Pakistan's second-highest civilian award, the Hilal-i-Imtiaz, for his achievement.

AGENCIES

# PARIS 2024

By SUN XIAOCHEN in Paris  
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Motivated by the untapped potential and admirable work ethic of their Chinese disciples, a legion of foreign coaches have overcome challenges, both on and off the field, to help Team China shine brightly in Paris.

Despite dealing with cultural differences and a language barrier, as well as the fierce on-field competition, Team China's foreign coaches and their assistants have hit on a medal-winning formula with the country's hard-working Olympians, leading them to a series of historic "firsts", huge ranking leaps and long-awaited revivals at the Paris Games.

Guided by 42 foreign coaches and staff members from 17 countries and regions, the biggest international crew a Chinese Olympic delegation has ever hired, Team China has expanded its athletic prowess beyond its traditionally strong events to earn success in a wider range of once Western-dominated sports, as well as emerging disciplines.

The East-West collaboration almost delivered, arguably, what would have been the biggest team sport upset of the Games on Friday, when the Chinese women's field hockey team pushed the world No 1 Netherlands to its limit in a narrow final defeat.

Entering the knockout stage underrated and overlooked, the Chinese squad stunned two traditional powers — first, Australia in the quarters and then world No 3 Belgium in the semis — on its way to meeting the defending champion in a rematch of the Beijing 2008 final, where it also met the Dutch side in the Olympic gold-medal decider.

And China came so close — within just eight minutes of knocking the mighty Oranje off its golden throne — before the Dutch neutralized Team China's early goal with a 52nd-minute penalty corner. It retained its Olympic title in the subsequent shootout, which ended 3-1 in favor of the Dutch.

As the mastermind behind the David-vs-Goliath heroics, Team China's Aussie coach Alyson Annan, a two-time Olympic champion as a player with the Hockeyroos (1996, 2000), attributed the Chinese program's rejuvenation to the country's sporting culture and her "magical" bond with her players.

"I think that China is a force in sports, (it has) an amazing sporting culture. I think that these athletes are incredible. They're devoted, they worked hard, just giving them a bit of confidence makes them great," said Annan, who steered the Netherlands to victory at Tokyo 2020, before switching sides to take over the Chinese squad in 2022.

"I didn't come in and change the culture. That wasn't my job. I came in and became part of the culture. Learning the language is one of the things, and then you become one. That part of it was exceptionally special."

After leading the Oranje to the gold in Tokyo, Annan, a strong character both on and off the field, surprisingly resigned the following year over a dispute with the Dutch association about team culture.

Yet, it seems, at least for now, that the Chinese culture and the players' commitment suit Annan's approach just fine, as highlighted by the significant rise of Team China's world ranking from No 14 when Annan took over in 2022, to sixth prior to the Paris Games.

"Coach Annan brought us advanced tactics, instilled self-confidence in each of us and has become good friends with all of the players. She's a big part of the reason for our improvement over the past two years," said team captain Ou Zixia.

Savoring the huge sense of accomplishment of leading China this far, Annan said she's open to a contract extension with the Chinese association for a longer run.



**Left:** British skateboarding veteran Danny Wainwright and his young protege Zheng Haohao. **Right:** Race walker Yang Jiayu and her Italian coach, Patrizio Antonio Parcesepe. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY AND XINHUA

"This must be up near the top," said Annan, comparing the silver finish with Team China to her other career accolades.

"Because it's not just here, it's being away from my family and friends, it's traveling. It's what we have to give up to be here, so there's more to it. And this really makes it special," said the 51-year-old.

### A wheel legend

Among many of China's historic firsts in Paris, the one landed by teen cyclist Deng Yawen in women's BMX freestyle park has been hailed as a game-changer for the sport, with an Olympic title secured at the discipline's second Games surely to draw more support and attention in the "kingdom of bicycles".

Much of that success is owed to Venezuelan BMX legend Daniel Dhers, who has been coaching the Chinese national team for the past year.

Known as the "Godfather of BMX", Dhers, as an active athlete himself, has been riding together with his Chinese students and passing on his nearly two decades of experience in the sport to China's talented young riders.

With the national program mainly drafting hard-working athletes from other sports since its inception in 2018, Dhers said that he had a good start to his tenure after accepting the coaching role, adding that it didn't take long for his lessons on technique, trick selection and the sport's culture to trickle through.

"The team already had a lot of good stuff, they already had a good progression. The Chinese athletes' work ethic is second to none," said the 39-year-old Tokyo silver medalist and five-time X-Games champion.

"They just didn't have direction. There's a million tricks and different things, so, where do you focus your energy?"

Dhers conjured up the magic by riding with the Chinese girls, challenging them with new tricks, and learning from them as well.

"He really helped us avoid making a lot of mistakes in training."

"With his vast experience, he was instrumental in our technical breakthroughs," Deng said of Dhers' guidance.

### Artistic touch

As a crucial contributor to Team China's impressive medal haul in Paris, the surging Chinese artistic swimming squad announced its arrival as a new powerhouse in the sport of beauty and synchronization by claiming its first and second Olympic gold medals in Paris, taking full advantage of the absence of a Russian team that had won every gold in the discipline since Sydney 2000.

Standing beside head coach Zhang Xiaohuan, former Spanish national team mentor Anna Tarres was a driving force behind the Chinese team's outstanding improvement, particularly in its artistic expression, musical direction and routine variety.

Tarres' methods, which prioritize the relentless pursuit of perfection through repetition and hard work, were well received and embraced by Zhang's team, who gave credit to the Spanish expert's input.

"We have really made huge improvements in expressing more emotion, adding more variety and using the music better," Zhang said of the program since Tarres joined her as an assistant in 2021.

As the Chinese delegation returns home adorned with medals and glory, Tarres, Dhers and Annan, as well as numerous other foreign coaches, such as South Korea's Kwon Yong-hak, who led the Chinese women's archery squad to challenge his home country in the team final, and Italian race walking coach Patrizio Antonio Parcesepe, who helped Yang Jiayu finally bag her long overdue Olympic gold in the women's 20km, deserve equal applause with their Chinese counterparts.

## A WINNING ASSIST

Foreign coaches play a pivotal role in helping deliver a historic Games for China

"The team already had a lot of good stuff, they already had a good progression. The Chinese athletes' work ethic is second to none. They just didn't have direction. There's a million tricks and different things."

**Daniel Dhers, the "Godfather of BMX", who has been coaching the Chinese national team for the past year**

Deng Yawen celebrates a historic first BMX gold medal for China with her coach, Venezuelan BMX legend Daniel Dhers. XINHUA



**Left:** Alyson Annan (left) shouts instructions to her charges during China's 5-0 group win against Japan at the Paris 2024 Olympics. **Right:** Kwon Yong-hak encourages Team China's archers during their final against his native South Korea. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY AND XINHUA

## BUSINESS

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## Raring to navigate pivotal phase of reform

China's roadmap to emerge as innovation-driven country draws praise from experts

By MA SI  
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China's sharpened focus on advancing technological innovation and fostering new quality productive forces has come in for big praise from Chinese and foreign entrepreneurs as well as industry experts, encouraging them to double down on research and development for technological breakthroughs and to pursue new opportunities arising from the country's industrial upgrade.

The mounting enthusiasm came after the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, a crucial meeting that adopted a resolution on further deepening reforms comprehensively to advance Chinese modernization.

The resolution detailed a set of meticulously crafted reform plans, and called for improving existing institutions and mechanisms to foster new quality productive forces, in line with local conditions.

Zhang Li, director of the China Center for Information Industry Development, a Beijing-based think tank, highlighted the significance of institutional and mechanism innovation, describing it as a key characteristic to nurture new quality productive forces.

"The resolution signals a strengthening of institutional support for developing new quality productive forces, aimed at enhancing the innovative allocation of production factors and addressing various systemic bottlenecks. It is of utmost importance for China to navigate this pivotal phase of reform," Zhang said.

Frank Meng, chairman of Qualcomm China, said he is intrigued by the concept of new quality productive forces, as the phrase was highlighted in the meeting.

Meng said the wireless communication industry in which the United States chip company operates offers strong support for nurturing new quality productive forces, and Qualcomm has been expanding its local business, from its traditional offering of chips and solutions for smartphones to providing the same for personal computers, cars and more devices.

Underscoring Qualcomm's confidence in the long-term prospects of the Chinese economy, Meng said, "Qualcomm has consistently considered China as a pivotal business partner and valued customer, viewing it as more than just a market or a link in the supply chains."

Denis Depoux, global managing director of market consultancy Roland Berger, said that China has emerged as a strong player in the global landscape of R&D. For instance, the country has the world's largest number of patents applications, and its R&D spending exceeded 3.3 trillion yuan (\$454 billion) in 2023, second only to the US.

"But innovation needs more than



**Top:** Two visitors try out an AI-enabled education program at a high-tech company in Fuzhou, Fujian province. WEI PEIQIAN / XINHUA  
**Above left:** Visitors interact with a robot during an expo in Beijing. CHEN XIAOGEN / FOR CHINA DAILY **Above right:** A view of the booth of Loongson Technology during an expo in Beijing. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

just money. The resolution provides a clear roadmap for what China needs to do to become a truly innovation-driven country over the next five years," Depoux said.

For instance, the meeting highlighted efforts to improve the policy and governance systems for promoting the development of strategic industries such as next-generation information technology, artificial intelligence, aviation and aerospace, new energy, new materials, high-end equipment, biomedicine and quantum technology, and steer emerging industries toward sound and orderly development.

The high priority attached to industries like quantum technology has inspired him, said Hu Wei, a researcher at the University of Science and Technology of China and founder of Hanhai Quantum, a startup in Hefei, Anhui province.

"This is an epoch-making and landmark meeting. China, like a giant ship, is steadily advancing in a determined direction, bringing

opportunities, confidence and mutual benefit to the world. An open China provides a continuous flow of positive energy to the world," Hu said.

"For our quantum enterprise, this signifies that there will be more policy support in the future, which will help promote the research and application of quantum technology. As the comprehensive deepening of reforms progresses, the demand for technological innovation will increase.

"The immense potential of quantum technology in fields such as new material prediction, intelligent data analysis and computational science makes it an important direction for future technological development. This fills us with confidence and anticipation for the future of the industry."

Dong Yu, executive vice-president of the China Institute for Development Planning at Tsinghua University, said the meeting reflects the need for tailored institutional mech-

anisms to support the distinct characteristics of emerging, future and traditional industries.

"For instance, fostering emerging industries requires mechanisms that support technological and industrial innovation, while sustainable investment mechanisms are essential for nurturing future industries. For traditional industries, the focus is on using standards to support transformation and upgrading," Dong said.

The resolution also called for improving the systems for promoting full integration between the real economy and the digital economy, which has inspired many entrepreneurs.

Pan Yejiang, chairman of Chinese home appliances company Vatti, said, "New industrialization focuses on new concepts, technological innovation and high-quality development, aiming to achieve the integration of digital, intelligent and green aspects in manufacturing."

Pan said Vatti is all set to embrace

technological innovation and digital technology to enable intelligent manufacturing in the kitchen appliances industry.

Last year, Vatti invested 1.2 billion yuan in building an appliance, digital and intelligent industrial park in Zhongshan, Guangdong province. The new industrial park will be benchmarked against world-class factories, applying digital technologies to enable data-driven, efficient decision-making and flexible production capabilities, accelerating the company's transition to digitalization and intelligent manufacturing, Vatti said.

Upon completion by the end of this year, the industrial park will have an annual production capacity of 3 million kitchen appliances. This will result in an additional annual output value of 4 billion yuan and an additional annual tax revenue of 140 million yuan, creating thousands of new jobs, the company said.

The resolution's emphasis that education, science and technology,

and talent function as basic and strategic underpinnings for Chinese modernization is also echoed by many experts.

Wan Jinbo, a researcher at the Institutes of Science and Development at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said, "Integrating reforms across education, science and talent is essential for achieving cohesive and integrated development, which is critical for supporting China's modernization."

The comments came after China, for the first time, replaced the United States as the largest contributor to high-quality natural-science research by ranking No 1 in the share of papers published in top journals in 2022, according to the Nature Index, a report released by Springer Nature Group, an internationally renowned science and technology publishing house.

In 2023, a year after health science publications were added to the Nature Index, China was top overall, said Springer in its latest report.

But China still faces many challenges in nurturing talent, and efforts are needed to boost international scientific and technological cooperation, which is an inevitable trend, and fundamental research serves as an important channel for promoting such cooperation, experts said.

Dou Xiankang, head of the National Natural Science Foundation of China, said, "We must balance development and security, expand openness based on independent innovation, and actively integrate into the global innovation network."

Aware of the challenges and risks ahead, the resolution also called for improving the systems for enhancing the resilience and security of industry and supply chains. It said China will move faster to build industry and supply chains that are self-supporting and risk-controllable, and improve the institutions and mechanisms for bolstering key industrial chains like integrated circuits.

Hu Weiwei, chairman of Loongson Technology, one of the few Chinese chip companies that have developed its own processor architecture, rather than relying on licensed designs from foreign companies, highlighted the meeting's significance, especially as China enters a critical period for high-quality economic development.

"Loongson is at a crucial transition stage, shifting from technology catch-up to ecosystem building, from policy-driven development to venturing into open market competitions, and from a follower to an independent innovator. We will work hard to achieve high-quality development and help foster a self-supporting and risk-controllable information technology ecosystem in China," Hu said.

Deng Zhonghan, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, emphasized the importance of mastering core technologies for national long-term development. He called for the collective efforts of government, enterprises, research institutions and the broader scientific community to cultivate innovative talent, a critical focus for future work.

## Local conditions key to development of nation's new forces

REPORTER'S LOG  
By Ma Si

As a tech reporter, I am most impressed with one line in the resolution of the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and that is: "to foster new quality productive forces in line with local conditions".

The line reflects an acknowledgment of the complexities and diverse conditions across different regions in China and emphasizes the need to tailor these efforts to local conditions. A particularly illustrative case is the development of China's semiconductor industry, as I

have witnessed its ups and downs in the past decade, highlighting the necessity of this tailored approach.

The integrated circuit industry is a cornerstone of modern economies, serving as a strategic, foundational and leading sector. Recognizing its importance, China has implemented various policies to support and guide the healthy growth of its semiconductor industry. These policies have borne fruit, with the industry showing significant advancements in technology and an acceleration in the growth of domestic companies.

However, this rapid growth has not been without issues. Enthusiasm for investing in the semiconductor industry has soared, just as the National Development and Reform Commission said in October 2020 that a number of "three-no" companies — entities lacking experience,

technology and talent — had got involved in the chip industry.

Some local governments, eager to capitalize on the semiconductor boom, had overlooked the industry's inherent complexities, leading to hasty projects and wasteful investments, the NDRC said. This rush had resulted in several failures, with significant financial and resource losses.

A striking example is the Wuhan Hongxin Semiconductor Manufacturing project, which was slated to be a major player in the industry with an ambitious investment plan of 128 billion yuan (\$17.9 billion), according to China Economic Weekly. The media reported that by the end of 2019, 15.3 billion yuan had already been invested in the project, and an investment of 8.7 billion yuan was planned for 2020.

However, by April 2020, the

project was facing a significant funding gap, putting its future at risk. Despite the initial hype, the project stalled, exemplifying the pitfalls of excessive ambition and insufficient planning, China Economic Weekly reported. Similarly, other regions like Hebei province have experienced setbacks in their attempts to establish a foothold in the semiconductor industry.

These incidents underscore the broader lesson that developing new quality productive forces requires a nuanced approach. It is crucial to consider local conditions and avoid a one-size-fits-all strategy.

For regions with strong economic foundation, robust research capabilities and a favorable innovation environment, it is appropriate to accelerate efforts in developing new quality productive forces. Conversely, areas lacking these conditions should

proceed more cautiously, ensuring a steady and realistic pace that aligns with their actual capabilities.

Hong Qunlian, a researcher at the Academy of Macroeconomic Research under the NDRC, said, "We must adhere to reality and must not follow the crowd blindly. While nurturing new quality productive forces is a universal goal, China's diverse regional contexts require tailored approaches."

Development strategies should reflect each area's unique stage of growth, functional positioning, resource endowment and industrial base. A nuanced, region-specific approach helps prevent wasteful investments and unrealistic projects, he said.

Meanwhile, it takes time to cultivate new quality productive forces, and it is a gradual process that cannot be rushed. It is vital to respect the nat-

ural progression of technological innovation and industry development, ensuring that efforts are paced according to local capabilities.

Moreover, effective development requires both an active government and a dynamic market. The government can facilitate by setting policies, guiding investments and creating a supportive environment for innovation. Meanwhile, the market should drive technological and industrial innovation, allowing businesses to take the lead.

In conclusion, the experience of China's semiconductor industry vividly illustrates the necessity of adapting the development of new quality productive forces to local conditions. The lesson is clear: success in this endeavor requires a balanced, thoughtful approach that recognizes the unique circumstances of each region. Only by doing so can China avoid the pitfalls of hasty development and build a robust, innovative economy that stands the test of time.

# BUSINESS



Visitors check out Lenovo's artificial intelligence-driven services during an industrial expo in Shanghai in September 2023. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Lenovo transforms traditional industries through AI, data

High-tech boosts upgrades in energy, manufacturing, transport, retail sectors

By MA SI  
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Sany Heavy Industry has integrated data from over 100 different applications into a centralized system, generating more than 1.2 trillion data points in the past year alone.

This has led to a 30 percent increase in efficiency, a 50 percent lift in production capacity, a 60 percent reduction in labor utility and a 30 percent reduction in space usage, the Chinese heavy machinery maker said.

Of course, behind these achievements is a partnership between Sany and Chinese tech company Lenovo that is leveraging artificial intelligence to optimize industrial processes and resource management.

This is part of Lenovo's broader push to spearhead the integration of AI into traditional industries, significantly enhancing efficiency and productivity across sectors.

Through its AI technologies and comprehensive solutions, Lenovo aims to pave the way for a new era of smart transformation.

Liu Jun, executive vice-president of Lenovo Group and president of Lenovo China, said the company

remains committed to its strategic vision of "Smarter AI for All".

"We want to harness the potential of AI to accelerate the smart transformation and upgrade of public organizations, large, small and medium-sized enterprises and consumer clients," Liu said.

According to him, the company will collaborate with partners to advance China's push to nurture new quality productive forces and contribute to the high-quality development of the Chinese economy.

Jin Zhuanglong, minister of industry and information technology, said previously that China's traditional industries are vast and account for over 80 percent of the manufacturing sector. These include steel, nonferrous metals, petrochemicals, building materials, light industry, machinery, textiles and apparel, foods and traditional Chinese medicine.

These traditional sectors forming the foundation of the modern industrial system, are crucial for economic development and people's livelihoods, and are essential for maintaining China's status as the world's leading manufacturer, Jin said.

"Regardless of the present or the future, traditional industries should

not be simply labeled as 'low-end industries' and phased out. We must prioritize the transformation and upgrading of traditional industries, employing a set of 'comprehensive measures' to accelerate their development toward higher-end, smarter and greener directions, allowing traditional industries to 'blossom anew'," Jin added.

That is exactly what Lenovo aims to support.

At Qingdao Special Iron and Steel Co Ltd, for instance, Lenovo's self-developed Daystar AI Vision Inspection System has replaced workers who monitor production lines. This system automatically identifies and alerts operational issues on the production line, providing high-quality monitoring and early warning capabilities without being affected by fatigue or emotional factors.

Operating around the clock, the system ensures consistent and reliable supervision, highlighting the advantages of AI in maintaining quality control in manufacturing environments, Qingdao Special Iron and Steel said.

Lenovo is also leveraging technology to help the academic sector boost its efficiency.

At Nanjing University, Lenovo has established the second phase of the university's high-performance computing center. Over the past six years, the system has operated with

a stability rate above 99 percent and in the past three years, and the utilization rate of central processing units has exceeded 93 percent.

This demonstrates the company's capabilities in providing robust and efficient computing solutions for research and educational institutions, Lenovo said.

These examples are part of Lenovo's broader initiative to drive functional upgrades in traditional industries through AI and data technology.

Lenovo said it is poised to capitalize on the strategic opportunities presented by the AI revolution by leveraging its strong inputs in research and development and rich experience in smart manufacturing and smart services.

Kitty Fok, managing director of market research company International Data Corp China, said Chinese companies respond faster to AI deployments compared to their foreign counterparts.

AI technology is driving digital transformation across industries, including manufacturing, transportation, energy, healthcare and retail, Fok said.

IDC has forecast that China's spending on AI will likely hit \$38 billion in 2027, and account for about 9 percent of the global market, with a compound annual growth rate of about 25 percent from 2023 to 2027.

## China's gray economy unlocks potential amid more need for eldercare

BEIJING — With population aging becoming a common global challenge, there is burgeoning demand for innovative and comprehensive eldercare services, which unleashes growing potential for emerging industries.

With an increasingly graying population, China is expected to ride the trend and unlock rapid development of potential industries in the sector, drawing investment from foreign enterprises.

In 2023, people aged 60 and above in China amounted to 297 million, accounting for 21.1 percent of the total population. Experts have predicted that the number will surpass 400 million around 2035 and should reach 500 million by 2050.

Meanwhile, China's gray economy now stands at around 7 trillion yuan (\$977.8 billion), and is expected to reach around 30 trillion yuan by 2035.

Japan and the European Union have chosen to promote the gray economy when entering an advanced stage of aging, transforming the potential of an aging population structure into driving forces of domestic consumption by focusing on the needs and preferences of seniors.

The Netherlands is exploring digital applications in the field of home care; Japan is vigorously promoting nursing robots and assistant digital technologies; and Britain is developing fundamental research and business model innovation in the gray economy, said Hu Zuquan, a researcher at China's State Information Center.

The gray economy encompasses a wide range of industries, has a long industrial chain and exhibits diverse business forms.

Business leaders in relevant industries worldwide see opportunities in collaboration with Chinese companies and have made large investments in China.

Sindora Living, a Singapore-based firm focused on nursing homes and residential care facilities, opened a high-end eldercare institution in May in Nanjing, capital of Jiangsu

province in East China.

"We see a booming market for eldercare in China in the future, and we chose to invest in China," said Nathaniel Farouz, managing director of Sindora Living.

Yada Panasonic Community is another example of foreign collaboration in the industry. In 2023, the community, which aims to provide advanced eldercare services integrated into daily life, opened in Yixing, Jiangsu, along with a Wellness Smart Town infused with Panasonic technologies for aging care and healthy lifestyles.

"Panasonic brought more than 20 years of experience accumulated in Japan, where the aging problem is more severe, to China, and participated in the building plans, landscape construction and space designs of the community to create a safe and comfortable life for residents," said Tetsuro Homma, executive vice-president of Panasonic Holdings Corp.

Eldercare-related industries in China are currently mainly concentrated in basic services such as catering, nursing and healthcare, said Zhang Shixin, an official with the National Development and Reform Commission. The diversified and personalized needs of the senior community have not been effectively met, which contain huge development opportunities, Zhang said.

In 2023, the size of China's eldercare products market reached 5 trillion yuan. Meanwhile, there were more than 490,000 eldercare-related businesses in China at the end of 2023.

Jack Wu, managing partner of Acadia Advisory Group, said that as a massive market, China is a good place for British investors. "Take the eldercare market as an example. China has a rapidly aging population, while the UK has one of the leading eldercare industries in the world, and this will become a sector with huge investment potential between the two countries," said Wu.

XINHUA



A woman plays the piano in a room of a senior-care apartment in Qujing, Yunnan province, in July. HU CHAO / XINHUA



国际爱护动物基金会



### Cages, bows & arrows away, raptors free

Between heaven and earth, together with other sentient beings, I live.

—Zhuangzi's Qi Wu Lun (Essay on Seeing Things as Equal)






## BUSINESSINSIGHT

## Why new energy 'overcapacity' claims are false

EAGLE EYE

By Chen Yuyu

Some Western nations have been touting the so-called "overcapacity" problem of China in recent years, alleging that China's "excess capacity" in the new energy sector has disrupted and threatened the international market. Consequently, protectionist measures have been adopted against some Chinese products, such as electric vehicles.

The term overcapacity refers to a scenario in which production capacity of an industry exceeds market demand and expected levels, indicating a disequilibrium in the market's supply-demand relationship. However, it should be noted that demand is a highly volatile factor that is very susceptible to influence by macroeconomic fluctuations stemming from changes in investment and consumer behavior.

There have been numerous misconceptions surrounding the concept of overcapacity. In fact, overcapacity is often not the result of excessive supply but rather cyclically weak and insufficient demand. Consequently, insufficient demand usually necessitates macroeconomic adjustments — not just supply-side adjustments to reduce production capacity, but also demand-side policies aimed at expanding the market and aggregate demand.

For instance, market entities often anticipate demand for certain industries and products based on fundamental factors such as medium- to long-term income levels and consumer preferences. When these expectations of future market demand are considered, it becomes clear that industries in China like wind power, photovoltaics, EVs and infrastructure construction cannot be deemed as having overcapacity. The ample supply in these industries is merely a matter of potential demand not being fully realized. Given rising trends in consumer demand, stable capacity can quickly turn into supply shortages in a few years.

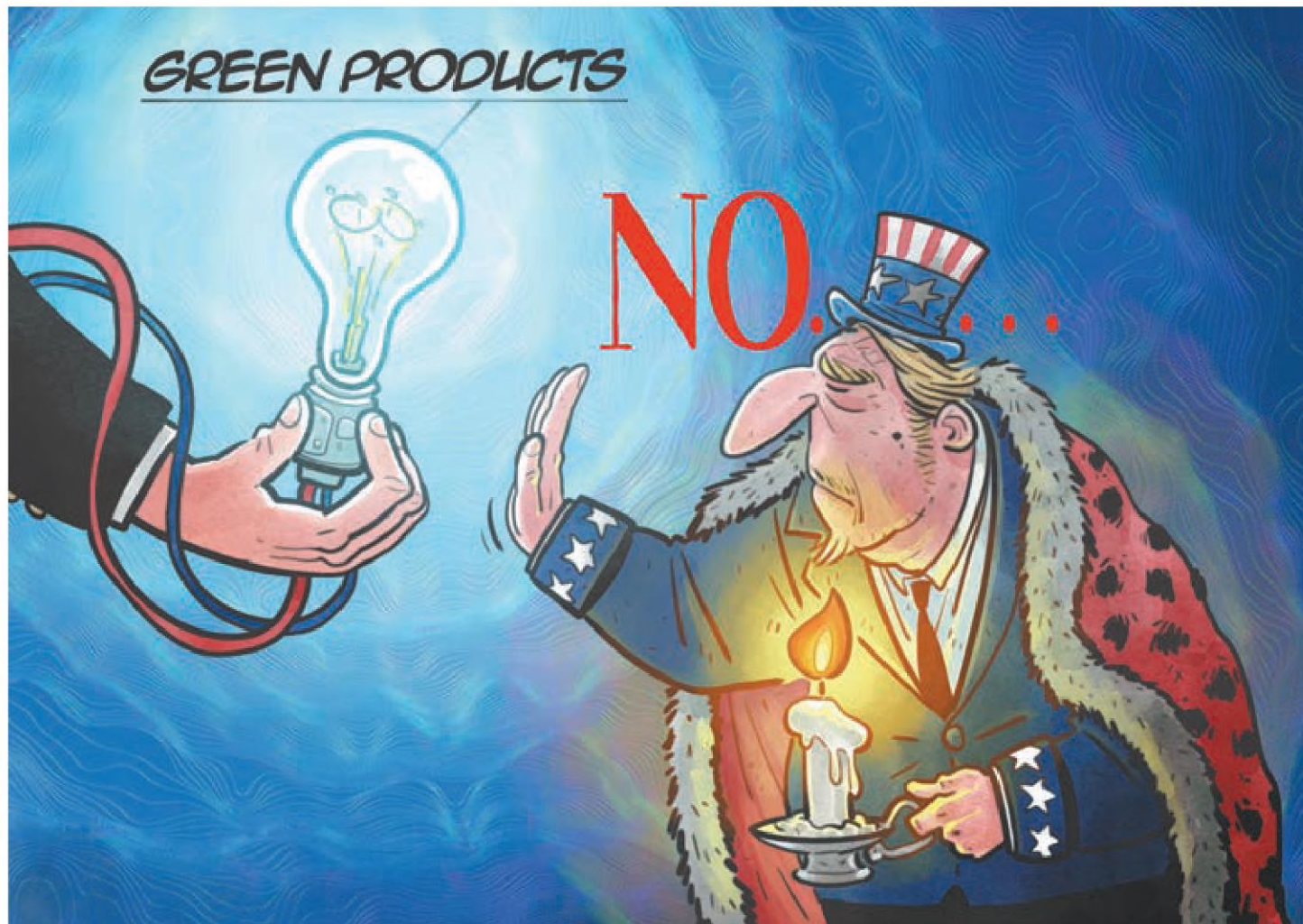
True overcapacity involves a long-term, structural surplus in certain products, where demand shrinks as income grows and living conditions improve. Some industries experience an absolute decrease in demand, such as outdated products or those without much market demand. In those cases, market competition will play a role in driving out inefficient suppliers and curbing overcapacity.

To determine whether a market truly has overcapacity, both short- and long-term demand must be considered. The income elasticity of demand metric — which measures the responsiveness of consumer demand for a product to changes in income — is suitable for this assessment.

For products with a YED greater than 1, demand increases by more than 10 percent for a hypothetical 10 percent increase in income, indicating that production capacity should be expanded.

Conversely, for products with a YED between 0 and 1, demand increases by less than 10 percent for the same income increase, suggesting a need to curtail capacity expansion if a supply-demand equilibrium is to be reached.

For products with a YED equal to or less



CAI MENG / CHINA DAILY

than 0, demand remains stable or decreases as income grows, requiring not only a halt in capacity expansion, but also a reduction of existing stock.

For example, in the 1990s, China experienced significant overproduction in the textile sector, with the YED for clothing products being less than 1, indicating that growth in demand for clothing lagged behind growth in income, leading to heightened market competition.

Similarly, over a decade ago, China faced overcapacity in the steel industry. The market was saturated with low-quality steel, resulting in a scenario of "low-quality steel products driving out high-quality ones", ultimately pushing some high-quality steel producers out of the market.

As the overproduction of low-quality steel was not only a short-term issue but also projected to persist over the next 10 to 20 years, structural adjustments within the industry were needed, necessitating regulatory intervention and policy guidance.

The occurrence of seeming supply-demand imbalances as a result of forward-looking inputs to promote the development of promising new technologies and industries should not be deemed as "overcapacity". In

the long term, market demand for products from those industries would increase. Potential market demand for many such products does exist, but it has not fully materialized due to immature support infrastructure.

Moreover, there is often a lag in market and consumer awareness, and acceptance of new technologies and products takes time.

For example, the rapid development of big data, cloud computing and artificial intelligence has led to the construction of intelligent computing centers and supercomputing centers. However, some large language model applications are not yet fully developed, and the supporting computing networks remain inadequate. This does not mean that the construction of computing centers constitutes overcapacity. As relevant downstream sectors develop collaboratively, expanded capacity is expected to be effectively utilized.

In terms of new technologies and industries, therefore, appropriately forward-looking inputs are necessary, and the resulting supply-demand imbalances are common and should not cause undue concern.

In fact, claims by some Western countries that certain Chinese industries have "overcapacity" actually have more to do with politics than the actual supply-demand balance

scenario in those industries. They have touted such claims mostly to protect their relevant domestic industries.

From an industrial perspective, those Western countries typically resort to two strategies to maintain their global dominance in some sectors — aggressively advancing their own development or hindering the progress of others. Despite the repeated use of technological blockades and economic sanctions, such measures have not been effective in curbing the export of Chinese renewable energy products.

China accounted for over half of the world's new photovoltaic installations last year and approximately 70 percent of the global market share for key components such as photovoltaic modules and wind turbines. Additionally, Chinese EVs represented more than two-thirds of global EV sales. Given the evident popularity and competitiveness of these Chinese products, trade-prohibitive measures based on "overcapacity" allegations not only disrupt international trade, but also harm consumers in countries implementing blockade measures by depriving them of access to high-quality, reasonably priced products and services.

Overall, the United States and Europe still

have stronger research and technical capabilities than China in many areas. Even in the new energy sector, China's technological advantages are not overwhelming. The US and Europe still lead in some cutting-edge high-tech fields. China's success in the industrialization of new energy technologies is closely linked to its demand-side support for players in those industries. By creating and encouraging demand for new energy products, China has successfully incentivized the rapid industrial application and upgrading of new energy technologies.

For example, in the early stages of EVs, China's industrial policy focused on creating and stimulating market demand, which has proved successful. Driven by market demand, Chinese EV companies have developed at a fast pace through continuous technological innovation, complete industry and supply chains, and vibrant market competition. Such success could not have been achieved by simply subsidizing the producers of EVs.

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

## Next-gen clean tech key to China's carbon neutrality goal

MAIN STREET

By Zhao Zhongxiu

The clean (new) energy industry contributed 11.4 trillion yuan (\$1.6 trillion) to China's economy last year, accounting for 9 percent of the country's GDP and contributing 40 percent to its GDP growth.

The clean energy industry has been one of the main drivers of China's economic growth, and the country has made significant progress in virtually all major areas of clean energy.

According to a report by the International Energy Agency, China's solar and wind energy sectors have seen unprecedented growth in recent years. In 2023, for example, China commissioned as much solar photovoltaics as the world did in 2022, while its wind power additions grew by 66 percent year-on-year. By the end of 2023, the share of renewable energy in China's total installed power generation capacity had exceeded 50 percent, surpassing thermal power generation capacity for the first time.

In 2022, more than half of all fully electric cars in the world ran on Chinese roads. In 2023, China's new energy passenger vehicle production and sales grew by 35.8 percent and 37.9 percent, respectively, reaching 9.6 million and 9.5 million units, both accounting for about 63.5 percent of the global market, and the supply-demand gap was only around 1 percent. Moreover, among the 9.5

million units sold, domestic sales and exports were 8.3 million and 1.2 million units, respectively, meaning that 87 percent of the final demand is from the domestic market, showing little sign of "overcapacity".

With the increasing popularity of NEVs, the value chains of relevant products, technologies and industries have flourished. Promising areas include the manufacturing of critical components for electrification, such as batteries, electric motor drives and electric controls; the development of advanced technologies in autonomous driving and associated generative artificial intelligence, as well as the manufacturing of related components; and the construction of charging facilities. Overall, such a shift in the automotive industry toward electrification will significantly facilitate the transformation and upgrading of China's manufacturing sector.

Last year, China accounted for around 70 percent of the global NEV batteries (predominantly lithium-ion batteries) market, with six Chinese companies listed among the top 10.

Chinese lithium-ion battery makers stand out not only in their manufacturing volume but also in their robust patent portfolios. As of May 2023, 20,798 patent applications had been filed for key technologies in solid-state (lithium-ion) batteries worldwide, of which 7,649, or 36.7 percent, were filed by China. Over the past five years, China's average annual growth rate in global patent applications in this area was 20.8 percent, ranking first in the world, with its technological lead particularly pronounced in crucial aspects such as charging speed and cycle life.

According to a report by the Brussels-based think tank Strategic Perspectives, Chi-

na covers 60 percent of the global zero-carbon technology manufacturing, while another report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, or UNCTAD, noted that China accounted for 56 percent of the world's patents in green frontier technologies (including but not limited to solar PV, wind energy, EV and battery, and green hydrogen) in the past 20 years.

Nuclear power is a critical energy source for achieving the strategic goals of "double carbon targets"; that is, to peak carbon emissions by 2030 and reach carbon neutrality by 2060.

Being one of the cleanest energy sources, nuclear energy does not generate greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, thus reducing dependence on fossil fuels, which in turn reduces carbon emissions and environmental pollution. It also provides a much more stable and reliable power supply than renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar power, as it is less susceptible to weather and environmental conditions.

In China's future power system, nuclear power can potentially be positioned as a dispatchable power source and one of the stable baseload power sources to support and supplement wind and solar power. It can complement and coexist with renewable energy sources to provide green, safe and efficient energy and power, especially considering that the proportion of nuclear power generation in China is only half the world average.

The paramount challenge facing the development of nuclear power is safety. Therefore, ensuring the safe operation of nuclear power facilities while enhancing public acceptance and confidence is imperative. From a strate-

gic point of view, nuclear power is also essential for ensuring national energy security.

If China is to achieve its strategic "dual-carbon goal", the role of some next-generation clean technologies, such as low-emission hydrogen and carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS) technologies, should be identified as key priorities in the country's carbon neutrality guidelines.

In the case of hydrogen energy, policymakers have listed it as a frontier area and one of China's six major future industries, integrating its development into the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) and the medium- and long-term plan for hydrogen energy industry (2021-35). Accordingly, substantial investments are being made in hydrogen infrastructure, including fuel cells and refueling stations. Meanwhile, substantial R&D funds have been allocated to advance low-emission hydrogen production and storage technologies, as well as the application of hydrogen energy in industry, transportation and energy storage, with multiple pilot projects showcasing its potential.

Likewise, CCUS has been identified as an indispensable part of the carbon-neutral technology portfolio, a critical tool and a bottom-line technological guarantor for achieving the temperature control targets of the Paris Agreement, given the impossibility of phasing out fossil fuels completely. Indeed, China has made significant progress in the development of CCUS technology in recent years, with several large-scale CCUS pilot projects having been put into operation.

In short, it should be ensured that China has secured sufficient investment in next-generation clean technologies and is confi-

dent that it will maintain its competitive edge in these emerging fields in the future.

Against the backdrop of a global energy transition and after many years of development, the clean (new) energy industry has become and will continue to be one of the main drivers of China's economic growth, supporting a large number of jobs, especially in high-end manufacturing and R&D, and facilitating the transformation and upgrading of China's manufacturing sector.

China's massive investment in clean energy also suggests that clean energy products will become China's most essential and competitive exports in the future, as foreshadowed by the recent surge in exports of the "new trio", namely, electric vehicles, lithium-ion batteries and solar photovoltaic cells.

On a global scale, thanks to the technological, manufacturing and engineering advances of Chinese companies over the last decade, the global average costs of wind/solar power generation and lithium-ion batteries have fallen dramatically, contributing immensely to the global transition to green and low-carbon energy.

As the global green and low-carbon market continues to expand, China will continue to provide high-quality new energy products to the rest of the world through exports and various forms of international cooperation in production capacity, which will facilitate the global green and low-carbon transition and the fight against climate change, export growth and jobs to other economies, and share with them the benefits of its progress.

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

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## 'White gloves' to hide US fingerprints on acts of subversion, infiltration and sabotage

Although the National Endowment for Democracy of the United States claims to be "a private, nonprofit foundation dedicated to the growth and strengthening of democratic institutions around the world", as a report released by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Friday indicates, it is anything but.

Receiving funding directly from, and reporting to the US Congress, promoting "democracy" is only a pretext for its efforts to subvert state power in other countries, meddle in other countries' internal affairs, incite division and confrontation, mislead public opinion, and conduct ideological infiltration. It acts as the US government's "white gloves" in carrying out subversion, infiltration and sabotage across the world.

To fulfill its mission, NED has developed four core institutions that are respectively responsible for supporting local political groups, promoting trade unions and labor movements, winning over private enterprises and building networks with local reporters and scholars.

Compared with the document, "Fact Sheet on the National Endowment for Democracy", the Foreign Ministry published two years back following the organization's barefaced interference in the situations in China's Hong Kong, Xinjiang, Xizang and Taiwan, the latest report, "The National Endowment for Democracy: What It Is and What It Does", outlines not only some of NED's recent subversive moves around the world, but also some criticism of its ugly role by the international community

including some figures in the US.

None of the hotspot issues in the world today, ranging from the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the Middle East crisis to the Iran and Korean Peninsula issues and the rising tensions in the Asia-Pacific, can be separated from NED's covert and overt activities. As a middleman between the US government and its local proxies in foreign countries, NED is trying to take advantage of advanced technology to seamlessly dock its initiatives with the US' geopolitical strategies.

As the Foreign Ministry said in the report, it is imperative all countries see NED's true colors, be vigilant and guard against its activities.

The world is moving toward multipolarity, and there needs to be greater democracy in international relations. Every country has the right to pursue a development path suited to its national realities and the needs of its people.

No country is in a position to lecture others on democracy and human rights, still less use them as an excuse to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. The international community should uphold humanity's common values of peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy and freedom, and its members should engage in exchanges and dialogue on the basis of mutual respect and equality, and work together to contribute to the progress of humanity.

Issuing the report represents the latest move by China to fulfill its global responsibility as a major country to uphold international fairness and justice.

## Manila should be wary of being a play piece

On Saturday, the Southern Theater Command of the People's Liberation Army said in an official release that it had warned off a Philippine aircraft, which had illegally entered the airspace over China's Huangyan Island in the South China Sea.

The latest incident happened on Thursday during a two-day joint military exercise held by the Philippines, the United States, Australia and Canada, which began the day before. The exercises were a clear demonstration of Manila's emboldening as a result of the encouragement given it for its provocations by countries from outside the region.

That four-nation military exercise, one among a slew of exercises the Philippines conducted with non-regional countries in 10 days near disputed waters in the South China Sea, underscores Manila's role as a troublemaker.

To respond to such blatant provocations, the PLA Southern Theater Command on Wednesday organized a joint combat patrol in the waters and airspace near Huangyan Island. With Manila repeatedly stoking tensions in the South China Sea, the PLA and relevant law enforcement Chinese authorities are fully justified in stepping up countermeasures and deterrence in the waters.

In the face of the frequent intrusions by Philippine vessels and aircraft into the waters and airspace around Chinese islands and islets, the PLA has developed a series of countermeasures to deploy maritime and aerial forces to identify, verify, track, monitor, warn and drive away the intruding aircraft and vessels.

The provocations by the Philippines with the collusion of outside countries only further consolidate China's resolve to resolutely defend its sovereignty and maritime interests. The shows of support the US and some of its allies are giving the Philippines does not daunt China and will not deter it from safeguarding its national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Long gone are the days when gunboat diplomacy could force China to swallow the bitter fruit of conceding territory. The PLA is on the path to becoming a modern, world-class defense force and it is fully capable of safeguarding Chinese territorial integrity, security and maritime rights and to timely respond to any provocative moves or threats.

Manila, on its part, as a willing pawn of outside forces that seek to gain strategic interest from meddling in the regional maritime disputes, should know depending on US support will only make itself vulnerable and more insecure, pushing it closer to the brink of being its proxy in a devastating war.

Many in the Philippines have already pointed out the risks of the country serving as a launchpad and springboard for a foreign country to take aggressive action against another country and even against a neighbor. Manila should change course and return to the right path of dialogue and consultation to resolve the maritime differences between the two countries. It should recognize that peace and stability in the South China Sea is also in its best interest.

## Chinese athletes did well, not just in competition

The curtain came down on the 2024 Paris Olympic Games early this morning Beijing time. Chinese athletes have grabbed more gold medals than they obtained in the previous Games in Tokyo.

What is even more impressive is the sportsmanship they displayed in the competition fields. Medals are valued by athletes and the countries they represent, but it is the demonstrations of the sporting spirit that capture people's hearts and remain in memories.

And while many athletes did not win a medal, they did not leave the Olympics empty-handed. The applause the audiences gave them when they tried their utmost for the best possible results was recognition that they gave it their all for their nation.

When Chinese table tennis player Fan Zhendong beat his Japanese counterpart Harimoto Tomokazu in the quarter-final of the men's singles competition, both players presented a wonderful match for the audience. Tomokazu, although eliminated, got credit for the perseverance he displayed. Chinese player Fan, when he lost the first two rounds, instead of losing heart, mustered his courage and played to the best of his skills and finally won the match. What the two players exhibited is the will to push themselves to new heights.

Fan is one of the many Chinese athletes, who pushed themselves to personal bests to get the bet-

ter of their rivals in matches. Many of them were born in the early 2000s. Chinese tennis player Zheng Qinwen was born in 2002, and she powered her way to the final, and won the gold medal, the first one of its kind for China and Asia as well.

Swimmer Pan Zhanle, 20 years old, shattered his own world record in the men's 100-meter freestyle final with a time of 46.40 seconds to win gold, becoming the first Asian swimmer to win the men's 100m freestyle Olympic gold medal since the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics.

Despite the fabrication of a dope scandal to stigmatize Chinese athletes by some from the United States, that flew in the face of the most intensive testing of Chinese athletes, the Chinese swimmers' excellent performance won the applause of the global audience, gaining credit for themselves and the country as well.

Not only did Chinese athletes compete to the best of their ability and skills, they also displayed the Olympic Spirit by exhibiting goodwill for their rivals before and after the matches. It was very moving when Chinese badminton player He Bingjiao held up a miniature badge of Spanish flag while receiving her Olympic silver medal on the podium. She would not have reached the final with that ease had her strong Spanish opponent in the semifinal not quit due to injury.

In sports without the distortion of politicization, friendship prevails.

Cai Meng



## Opinion Line

## Innovative consumption scenarios expand space for economic growth

Virtual fitting rooms that use augmented reality technology to help consumers see what they will look like in the clothes they plan to buy without needing to really wear them, have become popular with consumers.

That's just one scenario in which digital technology is changing people's consumption habits and methods, which in turn bring new growth points to the market. Echoing this new trend, the central government has released a series of documents on digital consumption with the aim of further enriching consumption scenarios and cultivating new growth points to boost demand.

Cultivating and expanding new digital consumption scenarios is not only a practical necessity for adapting to current digital development and consumption upgrading trends but also an important direc-

tion for promoting economic transformation and social development in the future. On the one hand, the number of online shopping users in China exceeds 900 million, leading to sustained growth in digital consumption demand. On the other hand, to adapt to the new business forms and models of digital consumption, enterprises are updating their management processes and production methods, pushing related industries and sectors higher up the value chain.

Globally, the rapid iteration of emerging technologies is empowering thousands of industries. To cultivate and expand new digital consumption scenarios, it is essential to fully utilize emerging technologies and integrate them thoroughly with the real economy so as to stimulate new vitality in economic growth.

It's inevitable that while injecting

new vitality into the economy, new digital consumption scenarios will also bring fresh challenges, not least in the form of data security risks and privacy violations. Therefore it is necessary to further refine policies, enhance digital governance capabilities, and take measures to ensure the safety of digital consumption.

Developing the digital economy and promoting the construction of a more diverse, efficient, and convenient digital consumption ecosystem are imperative to create new growth opportunities. Many regions are increasing investments and promoting the construction of new types of infrastructure, enhancing computational power supply, strengthening technological support, and other aspects to boost the consumption momentum created by the digital economy.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

## EU sets ball rolling on regulating AI

While many of its clauses are still to be updated in light of the changing situation, the European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act as the first comprehensive regulation on AI sets a precedent for efforts to put the flourishing technology under control.

By classifying AI models into four categories, namely those with unacceptable risk, high risk, limited risk and minimal risk, the EU AI Act has set standards for the AI models in the market and respective guidelines in principle for them to follow. The legislation offers food for thought for the other countries, regions or organizations of the world in drafting their own regulations. Especially, the act spends a

high percentage of its text on regulating General Purpose AI, which is generally believed to be a high-risk AI system or one that can form a high-risk one, a timely echo to the times with the popularity of ChatGPT and other Large Language Models.

The act will become a spur for the improvement of the technologies and encourage strengthened oversight over AI, which is still in its infancy. That will help to push the global AI sector toward stricter regulation to reduce the risks of the potentially harmful technology.

For Chinese AI companies, that means both challenges and opportunities. They will have to heed the

new act to ensure compliance in the EU market, but the stricter self-regulation will be an advantage in gaining public trust when they enter other markets of the world, as putting AI under control has already become a worldwide consensus and is a general trend that will apply sooner or later in all major regions of the world.

Domestic legislators can consider drafting a regulation or set of regulations for AI, too, so as to not only promote the orderly development of the domestic AI industry but also gain a bigger say in forming globally accepted AI regulatory standards in the future.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

## What They Say

## Perception of training needs to be refreshed

In its latest guiding document on promoting the high-quality development of service consumption, the State Council, China's Cabinet, has mentioned education and training consumption.

Which move has been seen by some market analysts as giving the green light to the revival of the extracurricular academic education and training industry. Actually, the document makes it clear that those equating the stimulation of education and training consumption with the lifting of the ban on extracurricular academic education and training are misinterpreting it.

Extracurricular academic training during the compulsory education stage is still banned. The education and training referred to in the document mainly concerns higher education, vocational education, and nonacademic training. Instead of lifting the ban on the

former, the State Council document aims at promoting the development of the latter type of education and training, which is not only a potential space for consumer spending but also indicates new directions for the development of the education and training industry, as some educational institutions that faced difficulties could also find opportunities in this new sector.

For a long time, education and training seem to have been narrowly equated with compulsory education stage academic training, mainly because that type of training has had the highest level of social participation, topicality, and market vitality. For a long time, this kind of training was considered mandatory by most parents, and the industry's vitality was prominent.

This may indicate that parents

and market entities in the training industry have adopted a wait-and-see attitude toward the enforcement of the ban. On the other hand, academic training remains an essential choice for some families, and some hidden forms of the kind of training continue to exist.

However, the education and training industry encompasses nonacademic training, vocational skills education, adult continuing education, etc, all of which have increasingly large development spaces and market demand.

Society's perception of the education and training industry needs to be refreshed. The fact is that, several years after the implementation of the ban on academic extracurricular after-school training in the compulsory education stage, society still exhibits a high level of sensitivity to possible policy changes.

— BEIJING NEWS

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## COMMENT



China and the World Roundtable | Paris 2024 Olympic Games

**Editor's note:** The 2024 Paris Summer Olympics not only provide an important opportunity for China to showcase the strength of sports but also have a significant impact on relevant industries and sectors, as the Games will benefit the spirit of unity and improve people's interest in sports. Three experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

Zheng Jiakun

## Fitness campaign building healthy community

Chinese athletes have achieved historic breakthroughs in many disciplines at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, demonstrating the benefits of a physically healthy population thanks to the policy of encouraging people to play sports or do regular physical exercise.

China held many activities to observe the 16th National Fitness Day on Aug 8, evoking an enthusiastic response from the people. The national fitness campaign and the Olympics have opened a new chapter in physical fitness. The authorities have vowed to improve the physical health of the Chinese people by building more parks or improving the existing ones and installing exercise equipment in them, in order to lay a solid foundation for building China into a strong sporting nation.

The national fitness campaign has helped improve the physical health of the Chinese people and encouraged an increasing number of people, especially youngsters, to take up sports. This in turn has improved people's everyday life and overall well-being, boosted the domestic demand for sports goods, generated employment and, most notably, produced some new sport stars.

In fact, the national fitness campaign has become a driver of economic growth. It has prompted a growing number of people, particularly youths, to participate in sports competitions, laying a strong foundation for increasing the consumption of sports goods.

By 2025, the total scale of China's sports industry will reach 5 trillion yuan (\$697 billion) and total consumer spending on sports will exceed 2.8 trillion yuan, according to the General Administration of Sport of China. The fitness campaign has made physical fitness a trend thanks to people's yearning for a better life. People's pursuit of physical fitness is no longer restricted to physical consumption of sports goods but also covers spending on taking part in sports competitions including marathons.

The national fitness campaign can help integrate consumption, products and services, while encouraging people to take part in sports events, which also promotes the development of other businesses, including the culture and tourism industries.

National fitness also plays an important role in enhancing the level of human capital. During the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period, a high-level national fitness public service system has developed, which can meet people's yearning for a better, healthier life.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY



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National fitness which translates into a healthy life for all has achieved remarkable results. Indeed, a diversified and inclusive model of national fitness can drive the development of related industries, improve economic growth in both urban and rural areas, and create more opportunities for people to improve their livelihoods.

However, the national fitness campaign faces three major challenges. First, there is an imbalance between supply and demand. Public services, the industrial system and sports activities, including competitions, are of higher quality and more diversified in developed regions and urban areas, while the amount and quality of resources are inadequate in less-developed and rural areas. The national fitness campaign has been slow in adapting to the transforming social

structure and can hardly meet the demand of the elderly people, children and trendy youths.

Second, sports and social life are yet to be fully integrated. Although people's participation and emphasis are an important basis for boosting consumption of fitness products, including sports goods, people's awareness about the importance of regular exercise and physical health is still relatively low, especially in rural areas. In general, rural residents lack scientific fitness knowledge and exercise routines for teenagers are seldom cultivated, which hinders the creation of a social environment conducive to regularly monitoring people's health, and impedes the sustainable growth of the sports industry.

And third, innovation is what gives the competitive edge to businesses in the sports industry, but the current fitness services and sports events do not pay enough attention to emerging demands for products and services and the environment. If the methods of planning and organizing sports activities are similar, they cannot meet the diverse needs of the sports, tourism and cultural industries. Also, there is

still a large digital divide and technical barriers in the development of smart fitness services, resulting in many facilities lying idle.

Hence, the national fitness campaign should also focus on integrating the national strategy for improving people's physical health in the new era with economic and social development. In particular, efforts should be made to implement a health-first policy, accelerate the construction of a higher-quality public service system, and improve the quality of sports events. More sports facilities and services should be introduced and maintained in less-developed areas to ensure that national fitness services are balanced and accessible to all.

The government also needs to optimize the mechanism to promote the sustainable development of the sports industry, introduce favorable policies and grant financial incentives to encourage private capital to play a bigger role in the development and operation of services. For this, the government and market need to jointly promote the national fitness campaign.

The high-quality development of fitness services is not possible without the support of the people. Hence, measures should be taken to increase public awareness about physical health and fitness, and create a supportive environment to increase participation in sports activities and boost the consumption of sports goods and services.

Also, sports activities reflecting regional culture should be held to provide a unique experience for participants and audiences. Such events can integrate sports and local culture, while expanding the influence and benefits of organizing sports activities.

The advancement of science and technology, and the transformation of the social structure have created new development opportunities for those engaged in the sports goods and services sector, as well as those participating in such events.

Therefore, the government should promote new quality productive forces in the sports industry, and intensify research and development to boost the sports and related sectors. It should also take measures to meet people's new demand and cater to the needs of a transformative market, while attaching equal importance to the elderly people and youths, and integrating the tourism and sports industries to form a new model of development.

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

Vasilis Trigkas

## 'Made in China' goes for gold in Paris

The Ancient Olympic Games were made in Greece, but it seems the just-concluded Paris 2024 Olympic Games were "made" in China. This is not only because China is one of the top two gold medal winners, but also because a significant portion of the equipment used in the Paris Olympics originated from China.

From table tennis balls and judo mats to Phryges doll mascots, silicon bracelets, LED displays and microchip-embedded footballs, China's contributions to the Games' equipment were extensive. While some of these products may seem basic and low-tech, items like table tennis balls require precise specifications that only China can achieve at a low per-unit cost.

The competitiveness of Chinese products attests to China's meteoric rise in intelligent manufacturing, also known as Industry 4.0. In 2011, at Hannover MESSE, German industrial leader Bosch argued that the future of industry lies in the widespread integration of information and communications technology in production. Chinese leaders immediately recognized the potential of this integration for China's labor-intensive and low value-added manufacturing.



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Chinese strategists minutely studied Germany's 2012 "High-Tech Strategy 2020" and invited key German partners to engage in the joint development of Industry 4.0 in China. Jiang Zemin — then Chinese President — had foreseen in a prophetic 1998 academic article the disruptive potential of ICT on industry, describing its effect as a "converter" for methods of development, and a "booster" for upgrading industries. China consequently mobilized and invested aggressively in information and communication infrastructure. Being a world champion in 5G, which is a core pillar of smart manufacturing, China has made significant strides to become a smart manufacturing powerhouse.

Even as overall foreign direct investment (FDI) declines, investment in China's advanced manufacturing continues to rise. The economic data for the first five months of this year show that FDI inflows into smart consumer equipment manufacturing and professional technical services increased by 332.9 percent and 103.1 percent year-on-year respectively. The advancements in intelligent manufacturing are reshaping the Chinese economy and transforming its trade relationships with countries around the world.

Domestically, smart automation enables China to optimize its labor force amid a shrinking working-age population. This demographic challenge, often seen as a negative impact, could become a boon if leveraged correctly. With the productivity gains from intelligent manufacturing, per capita income could rise rapidly. If the Chinese government successfully redistributes these capital gains and invests in an improved welfare system (from hospitals to schools to universities), the overall effect on the country could be decidedly positive.

On the international front, China's Industry 4.0 prowess presents both opportunities and risks. High-quality yet affordable goods from China benefit consumers globally, making them a societal asset. With inflationary pressures in the European Union and the United States driven by high energy costs and the monetary overexpansion of the COVID-19 years, China's competitively priced products can enhance consumer surplus and help alleviate the high cost of living crisis.

However, the surge in Chinese exports to the EU and the resulting ballooning trade deficits present a significant challenge for Western leaders who need to prioritize domestic job creation. The EU, which once was a global leader in industries such as automobiles and green energy hardware, now faces China's unmatched competitiveness in these sectors. There is limited political space for maneuver.

There is no panacea to the challenges China faces in its trade relations with the EU and the US. However, while the US views Chinese exports through a geopolitical lens, the EU remains a more objective evaluator of its trade relations with China. This is where the resolution of the recent third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, which emphasizes the need to raise the share of household disposable income in GDP, could offer an interesting path forward.

Boosting disposable income in China would increase domestic consumption, absorbing part of China's production while also increasing imports due to the propensity of imports to generally increase as disposable incomes rise. Such a shift from investment to consumption will not be immediate or meteoric, but, over time, it could lead to a more balanced trade relationship with the EU, easing the political pressure on EU leaders.

Moreover, China's expertise in smart manufacturing gives the country a powerful tool to invest and create joint-greenfield projects in the EU — an approach likely to be welcomed by Europeans. When Europe enjoyed a clear advantage over China in industrial productivity, China required European companies to invest locally. By emulating this strategy, with Chinese industrial giants investing in Europe, China could help neutralize anti-China protectionist sentiments and create well-paid local jobs.

Unlike the Olympic Games, where referees set and enforce the rules of competition, international affairs lack an overarching authority to impose order. The World Trade Organization, once the arbiter of global trade disputes, now stands crippled as major states obstruct its function. China's progress in smart manufacturing is indisputable. However, its commercial relationship with the EU and the rest of the world will require smart adaptation to the realities of an increasingly protectionist global trade environment.

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

Mike Bastin

## A branded house or a house of brands

The global expansion and market penetration of Chinese sportswear brands, thanks to their high-quality design and innovation, continues, with potentially global giants Anta and Li-Ning leading the way. Initially, established global sports brands such as Nike and Adidas did not feel the pinch of the expanding Chinese brands. But in 2022, Anta overtook Adidas to become the second-largest sportswear brand in China with a market share of 20.4 percent.

But Anta and Li-Ning are not the only Chinese sportswear brands expanding in the global markets. Chinese brands such as Xstep, 361 Degrees, Peak Sports, Zhongqiao Sports, Hongxing Erke, Feiyue and Camel are all poised to seize the opportunities to penetrate further into overseas markets. In fact, all these brands have impressive global penetration programs in place.

The global exposure and expansion of Chinese brands resulted in the Chinese sportswear and equipment industry's intensive involvement in the just-concluded Paris 2024 Olympics, with Anta and leading Chinese sports equipment producers Taishan Sports and Double Happiness leading the way.

But how can this increasing array of innovative Chinese sportswear companies continue to build their brands worldwide?

Their paths to development and expansion vary. Take Li-Ning for example. It was Li-Ning that in 2017



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first publicized the "national wave" (*guo chao*) trend, that is, infusing Chinese elements into sportswear and related products, to wide acclaim. Although the brand's path to global expansion differs from its domination in the domestic market, the continued infusion of traditional Chinese elements into its products will provide a good launch pad for its global rise.

Sportswear branding, initially, considerably overlaps with fashion branding which requires strong emotional appeal, and Li-Ning is well-positioned to continue to infuse traditional Chinese elements into its products, something which would resonate with consumers of fashion brands.

Of course, commitment to ensuring quality in all aspects of design, production and innovation also underpins Li-Ning's global success.

Anta, too, requires a move similar to Li-Ning's *guo chao*-focused approach to expand overseas. As a matter of fact, Anta's design for the clothing of Chinese athletes who took part in the Paris Olympics contained subtle aspects of traditional Chinese elements. The company's collaboration with globally renowned Chinese filmmaker Zhang Yimou was a smart move to promote

its brand internationally.

As such, both Li-Ning and Anta will continue to infuse traditional Chinese elements into their products as they "go global".

But what about brand architecture? To what extent do Chinese sportswear companies rely on their corporate brand name, identity and image? Or do they follow an innovative new brand naming strategy where the corporate brand provides, increasingly subtle, support? The latter will be required to achieve long term success in global markets.

Both Anta and Li-Ning need to create sub-brand names that resonate globally. That would lead to a range of sub-branded items with the corporate name retaining a reassuring, confidence-boosting presence.

Since other Chinese sportswear brands are a bit behind Li-Ning and Anta in terms of global presence, they too should infuse their products with subtle traditional Chinese elements to enhance their brand identity.

It is the infusion *guo chao* into the products that can elevate a global sportswear brand to a luxury fashion brand. On the other hand, many luxury fashion brands are now focusing on the sportswear market in a bid to meet the rising demand for luxury goods with a sports theme.

Companies such as Double Happiness, Enlio and Taishan Sports meanwhile provided very high-quality sports equipment for the Paris Games which were used in a wide variety of sports, from wrestling, cycling, taekwondo and gymnastics to table tennis, and track and field.

Ingredient branding offers a suitable way forward, as it facilitates the shift from high-quality but largely anonymous provider of branded goods to a well-known manufacturer of branded products which prominently carry the company's name and logo.

Taishan, for example, is synonymous with "quality", "reliability" and "innovation" but its products fail to establish an emotional connect with consumers, which is essential for transforming a "product" into a "brand". So Taishan should also introduce subtle traditional Chinese elements into its products in keeping with its business branding protocol of erring slightly toward the rational rather than the emotional.

Chinese sports equipment and sportswear brands are making greater efforts to expand and/or consolidate their global presence, though their global branding journeys are very different. But they should focus more on the emotional aspects of a brand, create an increasing array of sub-brand names, and sports equipment-makers should retain control over their products by assigning them stronger corporate brand names. But for both, they have to infuse their products with subtle, perhaps more and more regional/local, traditional Chinese elements.

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## GLOBAL VIEWS

WARWICK POWELL

## No quick fix

China's patient approach to conflict resolution is to create the conditions necessary for a positive peace

Where goes US foreign policy, there goes conflict, death and destruction.

Between 1990 and 2019, the United States initiated, on average, 3.7 military interventions a year, according to data compiled by US scholars Monica Duffy Toft and Sida Kushi. In its various wars since 2001, from West Asia through to

Afghanistan, over 4.5 million people have been killed and over 38 million displaced, according to the Costs of War project at Brown University. In the



past few years, the US has been a supplier of munitions and assorted military and financial assistance to protagonists in two of the most significant conflicts flaring at present: Ukraine and Palestine.

This is a track-record of conflict creation and exacerbation.

In Ukraine, the US was an active agent of destabilization that laid the groundwork for the emergence and progressive escalation of conflict. The US fueled regime change in 2014 and armed and trained the Ukrainian army ever since. In Palestine, the US has long been a supporter of Israel and its unlawful and ever-expanding occupation. In both theaters, the US disposition has been to seed and sustain conflict rather than facilitate de-escalation and ultimately find a way to a lasting peace.

Even when it speaks of de-escalation, it only does so by wielding a gun. As the conflict in Gaza runs the risk of escalating into a wider regional war, the US' principal response is to provide Israel with confirmation of unconditional support and to send in the US navy.

This approach is premised on a narrow framework in which peace



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

is little more than the absence of militarized conflict — a "negative peace" — that is achieved when one belligerent is preponderant over the others. In this frame, so-called balance of power dictates deterrence from which negative peace is established. This is a limited, flawed and potentially counterproductive approach.

Deterrence doctrine at best delays the moment of conflict inflection, without ever addressing the root causes of the conflicts themselves. It demonstrably doesn't deliver guarantees as the case of the Houthis and Hamas demonstrate. In both instances, these groups are clearly outgunned by their adversaries (respectively,

the US-led Prosperity Guardian naval intervention in the Red Sea and the Israeli defence force) but that didn't dissuade them from taking military action.

Deterrence doctrine runs the risk of catalyzing an escalating arms race that makes the situation more dangerous and the risks of conflict breaking out even greater. In this

case, strategies undertaken in the name of deterrence are counterproductive. At best, deterrence through muscling up buys time; but in the interregnum things can actually get much worse unless root causes are identified and addressed.

By way of contrast, Chinese diplomacy seeks to fashion conditions necessary for the creation of a positive peace. Positive peace consists of an environment in which relationships are restored and where the social systems serve the needs of populations. A positive peace delivers institutions and practices that enable a constructive resolution of conflict, rather than merely the deterrence of violence.

We have seen this approach unfold in both these principal arenas of violent conflict. In the case of Ukraine, Chinese diplomats advanced a position as early as February 2023 outlining the necessary conditions for a movement toward a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Western commentators mistook the position statement as a "plan" to be implemented. Rather, the position statement laid out the preconditions necessary for progress toward a temporary then a permanent settlement.

Such conditions necessarily aim to foster a space in which relationships can be restored. Importantly, this kind of approach seeks not to impose a predetermined "solution" but to facilitate disputants to co-create solutions to which they both subscribe. Shuttle diplomacy has since garnered positive reaction from over 100 nations in relation to a proposed pathway to resolving the Ukraine crisis.

China's role in facilitating the rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran in 2023 reflects this ethos of peacemaking. And we can also see how this approach played a role in resolving the dispute

between 14 Palestinian factions. Through patient dialogue, a co-created resolution was achieved via consensus among the disputants. Insofar as a long-term solution to the conflicts in Palestine, and West Asia more broadly, resolving these inter-factional disputes is a necessary precondition.

The collective West fails dismally as a peacemaker. By insisting on enjoining disputes and framing disputants in Manichean "good versus evil" terms, the Western ethos cannot resolve conflicts by means other than zero-sum outcomes. Compromising with so-called evil is, definitionally, indefensible. A willingness to leap to the defense of one side against the other; to condemn one side or another, may play well to domestic audiences and others in the collective West still giddy on post-Cold War moral euphoria. However, it leads not to conflict resolution but prolonged hostilities.

Multipolar peace is difficult precisely because it requires a willingness to mediate among a diversity of perspectives and interests. Imposing solutions is unsustainable, as deterrence against rocking the boat creates the condition for the crumbling of such solutions.

The approach that China and others in the developing global majority have adopted aims to find pathways to positive peace — from the ground up. This is by necessity a consensus process, which takes time and patience. And this is the style of work of the real peacemakers.

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CHANG-YAU HOON AND KAILI ZHAO

## Gateway to opportunities

China perceives the East ASEAN Growth Area as an important partner for its broader regional development agenda

In recent decades, China has sought to strengthen its relationships with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations region through investments, trade and free trade agreements. An emerging area of focus for China is the Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines —

East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA), established in 1994 to promote socioeconomic development in the less developed eastern corridors of these nations.

The BIMP-EAGA encompasses the entirety of Brunei Darussalam, as well as the Indonesian provinces of Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Maluku and Papua; Malaysia's



Chang-Yau Hoon



Kaili Zhao

states of Sabah and Sarawak, along with the federal territory of Labuan; and the Philippine islands of Mindanao and Palawan. The subregion emphasizes five strategic pillars: connectivity, food production, tourism, environmental sustainability, and sociocultural and educational initiatives.

For China, the BIMP-EAGA presents a valuable opportunity for strategic partnerships that align with its regional development objectives, particularly through the Belt and Road Initiative. The subregion has started to gain economic traction, capitalizing on its abundant natural resources and rich biodiversity to promote renewable energy and drive overall growth — goals that resonate with China's focus on infrastructure and connectivity.

**China's active engagement in fostering cooperation with the BIMP-EAGA is crucial for achieving the shared goals of economic growth, enhanced connectivity, and regional development.**

China's commitment to revitalizing the BIMP-EAGA dates back to the ninth ASEAN Summit in 2003. In 2009, China formalized its role as a "strategic development partner" by signing a Framework of Cooperation with the BIMP-EAGA. Although concrete outcomes have been limited since then, China has shown its dedication through various initiatives, including trade exhibitions, economic seminars and technical visits.

China's interest in the BIMP-EAGA was further emphasized by the Chinese government in late 2020, highlighting the subregion as a focal point for China-ASEAN cooperation. This recognition is reinforced by the BIMP-EAGA's inclusion as a critical area in China-ASEAN relations, as outlined in the 2019 joint statement on Synergizing the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 and the BRI.

China perceives the BIMP-EAGA as a strategic partner in its broader regional development agenda, particularly in light of the geopolitical disruptions and challenges posed by the global pandemic that have

disproportionately affected less-developed regions. In 2021, to further assert its global commitment, the Chinese leader proposed the Global Development Initiative at the UN General Assembly, prioritizing economic development for the underdeveloped Global South.

Over the past decade, China has become an increasingly important economic partner for Brunei, which serves as a central player in the BIMP-EAGA. His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah has welcomed China's involvement in the subregion, recognizing the potential of the BRI to enhance regional connectivity and improve the economic landscape through the BIMP-EAGA.

Brunei, as the sovereign government within the BIMP-EAGA, plays a vital role in driving the subregion's objectives forward. The country's Vision 2035 highlights its dedication to economic diversification and presents a unique opportunity to connect BIMP-EAGA with China via the Brunei-Guangxi Economic Corridor (BGECE). Initiated in 2014, the BGECE is a significant BRI project that focuses on logistics, aquaculture, and halal food production, showcasing how China and Brunei can collaborate to integrate the BIMP-EAGA into global supply chains.

A notable achievement of the BGECE is the establishment of the Muara Port Company, a joint venture between Brunei's Darussalam Assets and China's Beibu Gulf Holding Company. This company operates Muara Port, the largest harbor in Brunei, which handles 90 percent of the country's import and export trade, excluding oil and gas. With plans to enhance its capacity, Muara Port aims to become a key global hub, optimizing Brunei's logistics network and

facilitating regional trade.

In July 2023, Brunei launched a new container shipping route that connects Muara Port with China's Beibu Gulf Port in Guangxi. This development represents a crucial step in enhancing trade, connectivity, and market opportunities between Brunei, China, Malaysia and the broader BIMP-EAGA region. This shipping route is expected to facilitate the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor, creating a direct link between ASEAN and China's western provinces.

With the new Indonesian capital set to be built on Borneo Island, BIMP-EAGA is poised to play an

increasingly significant role in the coming decades amid a rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape. China, endowed with vast financial, technical and human resources, is competing with Australia, Japan, and South Korea to enhance cooperation with the subregion, aiming to develop a more equitable economy that can elevate the quality of the global value chain.

China's active engagement in fostering cooperation with the BIMP-EAGA is crucial for achieving the shared goals of economic growth, enhanced connectivity, and regional development. As China strengthens its involvement in the subregion, strategic initiatives and

collaborative efforts, including those from Brunei, can serve as essential pathways toward a future characterized by shared prosperity and sustainable development.

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WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

## LIFE

Phoenix Publishing & Media Group plans to host a China-Italy international poetry festival in Rome at the end of 2025, based on a mutual translation project of contemporary poems from the two countries, Yuan Nan, vice-president of Phoenix Publishing & Media Inc, says.

"Of all the literary forms, poetry is the one most suitable for dissemination, and has a strong impact on people from different cultures," Yuan says, adding that the PPMG and its Italian partner Delufa Press are both leading contemporary publishers of poetry.

In May, the PPMG and the Jiangsu Writers' Association organized a visit to Hungary and France, with writer and poet Han Dong as one of those representing Jiangsu province.

At the Eotvos Lorand University, Hungary's oldest and largest university, Han and other writers, scholars and translators from China and Hungary, read *Mother's House*, a poem from his latest book *Qiji* (Miracles), a collection of his mourning poems and poems about animals and to relatives and friends.

"The poems are written for all those people or beings who cannot talk to me anymore. Although they cannot talk to me, thinking of them makes me feel at home," he says. "These are universal themes, and also my reality."

At the Universite Paris Cite, he read excerpts from *Fellow Feelings: Selected Stories of Han Dong*, which has been translated into French, with students and Sinologists from France and Britain. Some 30 teachers and students from a number of universities participated in the event.

"It was a holiday, but I was surprised to see that they all came, students and translators that I have known for many years," Han recalls.

"The fundamental motivation for my writing is the search for readers with whom I might connect, even if there is only one, even if they are in a foreign country with a cultural background completely different from mine," Han says.

With more than 10,000 employees, the PPMG is a leading company involved in publishing, printing, book distribution, and retail. In 2023, its primary publishing division, the PPMI, reported operating revenues of 13.6 billion yuan (\$1.89 billion) and a net profit of 2.95 billion yuan, maintaining its position as the top listed publishing company in China.

For 16 consecutive years, the group has been recognized as one of the top 30 national cultural enterprises. Additionally, it has ranked in the top 10 of the Global 50 Publishing Companies for the past three years.

These overseas Chinese literary events are just some examples of the efforts the PPMG has made to improve international cultural communication and explore overseas markets.

"In recent years, we have vigorously implemented an internationalization strategy that focuses closely on our core publishing business," Zhang Chaoyang, president of the PPMG, said at a keynote speech at the Beijing International Book Fair in June.

"By integrating high-quality internal resources and improving our overseas presence, we have promoted international dissemination and publishing cooperation through key initiatives, such as copyright trade, cooperative publishing, and global content sourcing."

The efforts have yielded results. The group has established strong, long-term cooperative relationships with publishing institutions in more than 60 countries and regions

Some of the books available for readers at a Phoenix Library branch in the China Cultural Center in Paris.



# Rome poetry festival to mark chapter of success

Project underscores efforts to promote interest in Chinese literature among readers overseas, **Yang Yang** reports.

worldwide, he says.

Since May 2017, it has been setting up branches of the Phoenix Library in 18 cities around the world, including Birmingham in the United Kingdom, San Diego in the United States, The Hague in the Netherlands, and Paris in France.

The first was opened at the Eotvos Lorand University in Budapest, Hungary, in 2017, where the group has provided more than 800 copies of 400 titles targeted at researchers of the Belt and Road Initiative, as well as teachers and students of Chinese language and literature. In the last three years, the library has also expanded its collection to include children's books and picture books about Chinese culture for young readers.

In May 2024, the latest Phoenix Library opened at the China Cultural Center in Paris.

"The main purpose of the project is to provide overseas readers with convenient access to reading, promote the international readership of Chinese books, and create a reading space," Yuan says.

"By displaying physical books and organizing activities, such as reading salons and cultural lectures, the libraries seek to bridge the gap between Chinese cultural products and overseas readers, creating an interactive space for making friends through books."

At a Phoenix Library, readers can borrow books about humanities, social sciences, literature, art, popular science, lifestyle, as well as academic studies. In addition, the publishing and media group regularly organizes author meet-and-greets and reading sessions.

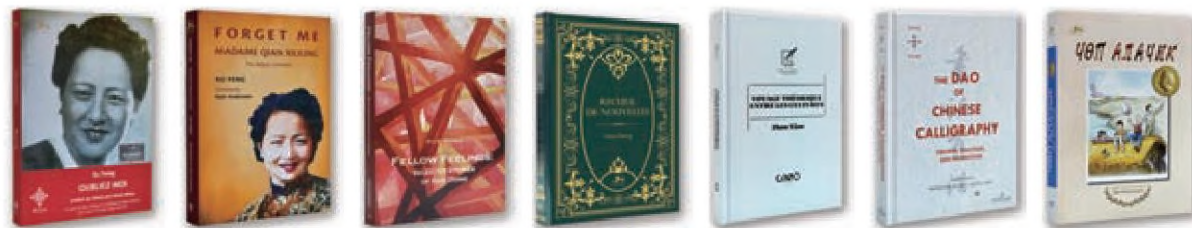


Top: Writer and poet Han Dong (left) reads a poem with a student at Eotvos Lorand University in Budapest, Hungary, in May.

Above: Chinese and French writers attend a literary salon at the China Cultural Center in Paris in May.

Bottom, from left: Covers for the translations of books by authors from Jiangsu province: the French and English versions of *Forget Me* by Xu Feng; the English and French versions of *Fellow Feelings: Selected Stories of Han Dong*; *Voyage Theorique Entre les Cultures* by Zhou Xian; *The Dao of Chinese Calligraphy* by Sun Xiaoyun and the Kirghiz version of *The Straw House* by Cao Wenxuan.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Poetry is the one most suitable for dissemination, and has a strong impact on people from different cultures."

Yuan Nan, vice-president of Phoenix Publishing & Media Inc

The translations include *Another Life for Women and Three Lamps* by Su Tong, *Nanjing: The Story of a Chinese City* by Ye Zhaoyan, *The Straw House* by Cao Wenxuan, *The Dao of Calligraphy* by Sun Xiaoyun. They have sold more than 6,000 copies.

"By 2025, we will finish publishing another eight novels and academic books, including the Thai and Indonesian translations of *Massage* by Bi Feiyu, the English and Spanish translations of the poetry collection *Ding Fengbo* (Taming the Storm) by Hu Xian, and English translations of *Outline of China's Path to Modernization* by Hong Yinxing. We will promote these books in overseas markets in cooperation with our partners," she says.

To guarantee the quality of the translations, the group has been building an expert pool of translators that now includes 120 translators from Britain, the US, France, Spain, Japan, South Korea and Sweden, many of whom are Sinologists and past winners of the Special Book Award of China, the country's top publication prize honoring foreign translators, writers and publishers.

Yuan says that even if the books are translated and published overseas, it does not mean that they truly reach overseas readers and exert an influence, which is something they are still exploring.

Apart from translations and the copyright trade, the group also has been experimenting with other cooperative forms on the international market, including cooperative publishing and global content sourcing.

Since 2020, it has been inviting global experts to write books about the history and culture of canals in different parts of the world.

"The aim is to provide a view of the economy, politics, society and population in different countries and make comparisons through the perspective of canals. We have simultaneously published both Chinese and English versions of seven books about canals in China, France, Belgium, Canadian, the US, Britain and the Netherlands," Yuan says.

In addition to this series, the group has also invited writers from different countries to produce children's books under the theme of beautiful childhoods.

Despite all its efforts and exploration, Yuan says a lot still remains to be done when it comes to creating a better team for international markets, especially training people to understand international markets, who have a good command of foreign languages, a knowledge of different cultures and copyright laws, good digital technology skills and cross-cultural communication abilities.

Contact the writer at yangyang@chinadaily.com.cn

## Xinjiang's multiethnic community fosters bonds of support, friendship

URUMQI — Ma Hongmei, of the Hui ethnic group, has been working in a multiethnic residential community in Northwest China for 15 years. Over the years, members of one Uygur family have grown from being complete strangers into those she considers closest to her.

When she first met Tuniyaz Dawut in 2009, his wife's polio meant she was physically challenged and unable to work. With two children to take care of, the Uygur couple relied solely on Tuniyaz's meager income.

The family became a great concern for Ma, and she helped them apply for a subsistence allowance and other aids to alleviate their financial difficulties.

In 2016, a paired assistance program was launched by the Guyuanxiang Community in Urumqi, the

capital city of the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. Ma volunteered to pair up with Tuniyaz's family, and has been offering them care and assistance ever since.

Both sons in the family have had a passion for music since they were young, Ma says, but their parents couldn't afford musical instruments. Ma reported their situation to the community, and its then Party secretary, Liu Bo, decided to give his electronic piano to the family, giving the all-important push to the boys' journey into the world of music.

The paired assistance program is among the various activities that have been initiated by Guyuanxiang since 2001, according to Zhang Yaowen, the community's incumbent Party secretary. Zhang says that the community has some 4,800 resi-

dents, over 95 percent of whom are members of ethnic groups such as the Uygur, Kazak and Hui.

With the support of the community, Tuniyaz has obtained two job certifications through training, which have expanded his opportunities and improved his family's standard of living. He has also helped other residents facing difficulties.

One of his sons is studying at an art university, and the other has established his own music studio where he teaches the *tanbur*, a stringed instrument. Over the years, his sons have also participated in community volunteer services, repaying the favors they once received.

Today, mutual assistance between neighbors is a customary practice in the community that has become a platform for emotional exchange

and integration among different ethnic groups.

According to Zhang, the community has created 41 WeChat groups to establish an on-demand network, aiming to improve its services and management. "When residents voice their complaints, or express their difficulties or demands, the community staff members follow up promptly and provide a solution for each specific matter."

During the summer vacation, for example, when parents have to work through the day, the community has provided nursery services for children aged 3 to 5, and launched interest-oriented classes for children aged 6 to 15, with focus ranging from intangible cultural heritage to soccer.

The community has also created a

stage for its senior residents, enriching their lives in retirement, he says, adding that various art groups for seniors have been formed, including a choir, a modeling team, an instrumental ensemble and a dance troupe. And each year, the community organizes an average of over 70 cultural events in which all residents can participate.

Feng Yanxiang, 66, once a resident of the community, is now head of the Xingguang Choir, whose name translates into "starlight", with members ranging in age from 56 to 81. She established the choir after retiring from her job as a road passenger traffic announcer, hoping to help its retired members with their social lives and hobby development.

Over some 14 years, the choir has not only become a platform for sen-

ior residents to explore their talent, but also turned the members into a close-knit family.

Choir member Rizwangul Abduiriyim was diagnosed with gastric cancer in 2019. That year, Feng mobilized other members to provide assistance and encouraged her to continue participating in the choir's activities after her surgery.

Today, Rizwangul is recovering well. She prepares meals at her home during the Corban Festival, and she has invited Feng to spend this festival with her.

Currently, the community has about 740 volunteers and eight volunteer services teams in fields such as transportation, medical services and cultural exchange.

XINHUA

## LIFE

## Musical winds of change

National symphony orchestra set to embark on fresh chapter with its upcoming season under a new artistic adviser, **Chen Nan** reports.

The China National Symphony Orchestra will embark on an exciting new chapter with the launch of its 2024-25 season and the appointment of conductor Shui Lan as its new artistic adviser.

This significant development promises to elevate the orchestra's artistic endeavors and boost its cultural contribution both domestically and internationally, says Zhou Yu, Party secretary of the China National Symphony Orchestra.

"The appointment of Shui Lan as artistic adviser marks a pivotal moment for the orchestra. Known for his profound musical insight and dynamic conducting style, Shui will bring a wealth of experience to his new role over the following three years. His appointment signifies a strategic move toward enhancing the orchestra's artistic direction and expanding its repertoire to engage broader audiences," says Zhou.

In his new role, Shui will collaborate with the orchestra's musicians and administrative team on innovative programs, explore new musical territory, and uphold the highest standards of artistic integrity. His leadership promises to inspire creativity and excellence among orchestra members, fostering a vibrant environment for musical growth and exploration, Zhou adds.

Born in 1957 in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, Shui studied composition at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and later graduated from the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. He continued his graduate studies at Boston University, while simultaneously working closely with Leonard Bernstein at the Tanglewood Music Festival.

Before he joined the China National Symphony Orchestra as artistic adviser, he held the position of chief conductor at the Copenhagen Phil from 2007-15, and was also music director of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra from 1997 until January 2019.

"I have a long and deep relationship with the China National Symphony Orchestra and now I feel like coming home," says Shui, who began his conducting career with the orchestra in 1985. The China National Symphony Orchestra was established in 1956 and has a long history of performing classic Chinese music, especially patriotic pieces written during wartime, such as the *Yellow River Cantata* by Xian Xinghai.

"I still have vivid memories of working with the great musicians of the orchestra. It was a valuable experience working and learning with legendary conductors like Yan Liangkun (1923-2017), Li Delun (1917-2001) and Han Zhongjie (1920-2018). I took the bus to Han's home to study almost every week," Shui says.

On Jan 14, he conducted the China National Symphony Orchestra for a concert in Beijing, featuring baritone Liao Changyong. They per-



**Above and right:** A performance staged by conductor Shui Lan and the China National Symphony Orchestra at the Beijing Concert Hall in January, featuring Mahler's *Symphony No. 1*, marks the beginning of their collaboration.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

“His (Shui Lan's) appointment signifies a strategic move toward enhancing the orchestra's artistic direction and expanding its repertoire to engage broader audiences.”

**Zhou Yu**, Party secretary of the China National Symphony Orchestra



Shui at a news conference to announce his appointment in Beijing on July 27.



formed Mahler's *Symphony No. 1 in D Major* and *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (Songs of a Wayfarer), a song cycle by the composer for which he also wrote the lyrics.

The concert not only helped reconnect Shui and the orchestra after almost 40 years, but also gave the conductor a new perspective on the orchestra.

"I was surprised to see so many young musicians, who impressed me during the rehearsals with their youthfulness, energy and passion for music," he says. "When the orchestra invited me to be its artistic adviser, I agreed

immediately. I have many ideas about music, which can be fulfilled by working with them. I am very excited."

The new season under Shui is expected to herald a commitment to artistic innovation and cultural exchange. Audiences can anticipate a diverse repertoire of both classical masterpieces and contemporary work in reflection of the orchestra's dedication to preserving tradition while embracing modern influences.

Concerts will be held to commemorate Austrian composer Anton Bruckner's 200th birthday.

On Sept 1, Shui will lead the national orchestra for the opening of the new season at the Beijing Concert Hall with a performance of the composer's *Symphony No. 7 in E Major*. The legacy of Austrian-American composer Arnold Schoenberg will also be celebrated, with concerts dedicated to the composer, who is not as familiar to Chinese audiences.

"The China National Symphony Orchestra is one of the few orchestras in the country that has its own chorus. So we will put on shows making use of them. We are

planning a concert featuring Haydn's *Die Jahreszeiten* (The Seasons)," says Shui. It is slated to be performed on March 29 at the Beijing Concert Hall, and will feature American conductor David Hoose, soprano Xu Lei, tenor Liang Yufeng and bass Xu Yang.

In celebration of the 75th birthday of the founding of the People's Republic of China, a new symphony has been commissioned by 10 Chinese symphony orchestras titled *Rising Sun From the East*. Composed by Li Bochuan, it will be premiered by the China National Symphony Orchestra on Sept 13 at Beijing's National Centre for the Performing Arts, under the baton of Jing Huan.

Guest conductors are also a highlight of the new season. Marking the 60th anniversary of the establishment of China-France diplomatic relations, a concert will be staged in Beijing on Oct 5 under the baton of composer-conductor Tan Dun. The orchestra will play pieces including Tan's *Passacaglia: Secret of Wind and Birds*, and French composer Ravel's *Bolero*. Featuring *suona* (a traditional Chinese wind instrument) player Liu Wenwen, the concert will include the popular folk piece, *A Hundred Birds Worshipping the Phoenix*.

Spanish conductor Josep Pons will perform in a concert marking the 150th anniversary of Ravel's birth, on Jan 18. Audiences will be able to enjoy pieces including *Pavane pour une infante defunte* (Pavane for a Dead Princess) and *Rapsodie espagnole* (Spanish Rhapsody), the first piece Ravel composed specifically for an orchestra.

Chinese music has been a crucial part in the orchestra's repertoire, underscoring its role of preserving and promoting the country's musical heritage, says Shui.

A concert in celebration of composer Luo Zhongrong's 100th birthday will be held on Sept 13 at the NCPA, with Li Xincuo conducting pieces such as *Symphony No. 1 Huanxisha*, *Subtle Fragrance* and *Sichuan Suite*.

Under Shui's stewardship, the China National Symphony Orchestra aims to strengthen its presence on the global stage through international tours, and collaborations with renowned soloists and composers around the world.

Its chamber music ensemble will tour Brazil, Argentina, Dominica, Venezuela, and Costa Rica between Sept 7 and Oct 1, with concerts to mark the 50th anniversaries of the establishment of diplomatic relations with Brazil and Venezuela.

Between Oct 8 and 16, the orchestra will tour France, with concerts in Paris, Toulouse and Provence. Tan and Liu will take part in the tour, which will include performances with soloists, including French violist Lise Berthaud.

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## Ancient city site to get dedicated museum

TAIYUAN — A new museum is set to open at the 4,300-year-old Taosi relics site in North China. Over 300 items will be on display, shedding light on the life and culture of the area's ancient inhabitants.

Located in Linfen city, Shanxi province, the Taosi site is most likely the ruins of the capital city during the rule of Yao and Shun, two emperors who lived more than 4,100 years ago. The Yaodu district in Linfen is home to Yao's temple and mausoleum.

While it covers an area of 2.8 million square meters, only about 30,000 square meters of the site has been excavated since 1978.

The Taosi culture emerged in the middle reaches of the Yellow River following the rise of the Liangzhu Culture in the lower reaches of the Yangtze River. Both sites provide sig-

nificant evidence for the study of the early states and origins of China's over 5,000 years of civilization.

Archaeological findings indicate that the Taosi culture reached the early stages of both state and civilized society.

"The discovery of walled city ruins and important buildings at Taosi represents a significant breakthrough," says Wang Wei, chief expert in charge of the project tracing the origins of Chinese civilization. Before this project began, large tombs had frequently been found, but city sites and important buildings were rarer, limiting social studies of the period, Wang says.

The Taosi city ruin is known for its functional zoning, with clearly delineated areas for palaces, handicraft workshops, storage, tombs, and sacrificial rituals, resulting in a

comprehensive layout of a capital city.

"The main building is located centrally in the north, demonstrating the architectural concept of a hidden central axis," says Gao Jiangtao, a research fellow at the Institute of Archaeology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

The central axis concept was crucial to ancient Chinese urban planning. The UNESCO-listed Beijing Central Axis, initially established in the 13th century, runs for 7.8 kilometers from north to south through the old city of Beijing. It is the world's longest urban axis, and is dotted with distinctive elements of Chinese civilization.

At Taosi, archaeologists uncovered characters on items like flat kettles that predate oracle bone inscriptions, a form of ancient script

found on tortoise shells and animal bones.

"This discovery indicates that a small minority in Taosi used characters during that era," Wang says.

The Taosi site presents early evidence of an astronomical calendar in ancient China, with all 24 traditional Chinese solar terms in evidence at its observatory.

"The observatory underscores how the ancient Chinese employed advanced methods to guide agricultural development that embodied their understanding of the universe and reflected ancient pragmatism and innovation," says Gao.

Taosi society was distinguished by its cultural integration and innovation. Experts note that objects like painted pottery are embellished with designs resembling those of other regions, suggesting



An aerial view of the remains of a palace at Taosi site in Xiangfen county in Linfen city, Shanxi province. CAO YANG / XINHUA

the absorption of external cultural elements.

"Numerous archaeological findings establish Taosi as a political, economic, military, and religious

center over 4,000 years ago, and a prime example of a state capital," Gao says.

XINHUA

# IN DEPTH

Envoy: 'Care for US-China relations just as you care for pandas'

By MINGMEILI in San Diego  
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The city of San Diego is "Pan-Diego" again with a new pair of giant pandas having made their public debut recently.

Yun Chuan, a 5-year-old male, and Xin Bao, a 4-year-old female, were the first pandas to be sent to the United States in more than two decades, attracting thousands of visitors and much media attention.

California Governor Gavin Newsom proclaimed Thursday, Aug 8, as California Panda Day. Newsom was on hand Thursday as the San Diego Zoo opened Panda Ridge to welcome visitors to see the new bears.

People from across the US are flocking to the zoo to observe the black-and-white puffballs, with some making reservations weeks in advance for their first encounter, while others were put on standby lists.

Panda Ridge is adorned with lanterns and decorations rich in traditional Chinese elements, along with adorable panda cartoon designs. At noon Thursday, with the sun high in the sky, visitors in panda T-shirts were waiting in the shade of the dense bamboo forest for their first glimpse of Yun Chuan and Xin Bao.

"We are excited to see the pandas. We are looking forward to this all day," Taylor Ory, 29, of San Diego, told China Daily. "We are excited to have them back!"

Ory said that she waited around 30 minutes to get in and see Yun Chuan, who was lying on the wooden climbing frame, sunbathing.

"He was sleeping. He's very cute. We got to see a side profile of his face," Ory recalled. "Even though they are bears, they look so cute. They seem smaller than the other bears, and they just look like you want to snuggle up with them."

"We were actually one of the first ones to get in," said Victor Ponce, 51, who brought his son, David, 9, to the zoo to see his favorite animals.

"We decided to take him for this. We love the pandas. We had them here in San Diego before, and knowing that they're back, it's a privilege to come and see them again. They are really fun animals," Ponce said.

"It's like the generation continues," he said. Ponce said he also saw Yun Chuan, who is the son of the San-Diego-born panda Zhen Zhen.

Ponce said there is also a generational connection for his family because he and his wife had seen other pandas of Yun Chuan's family.

"[China] trusts us with their animals, and they can have a common ground," he said, adding that they are looking forward to going to China to see more pandas. "My son wanted to go to China."

Amanda Temple, 29, of Salt Lake City, Utah, said that she and her daughter got a bird's-eye view of the pandas from the bridge at the top of Panda Ridge.

Her young daughter, River, 4, wore two round pigtailed atop her head, resembling panda ears. She held a panda doll dressed in a pink dress, which perfectly matched her own outfit — a pink dress with a panda print.

"They look so cute and cuddly, and they are perfectly black and white," Temple said.

Her elder sister, Aspyne, 6, who is a big fan of *Kung Fu Panda*, waved a toy baby panda.

The two pandas had been in quarantine in Panda Ridge since their arrival in late June.

The renovated Panda Ridge is now an innovative space four times larger than the San Diego Zoo's previous panda habitat, with an enclosure inspired by "famous geological



Top: Chinese Ambassador to the United States Xie Feng speaks to visitors during the opening of Panda Ridge at the San Diego Zoo on Thursday in San Diego, California. LI ZHWEI / PEOPLE'S DAILY Above: Yun Chuan sits in the Panda Ridge enclosure at San Diego Zoo. MARIO ANZUONI / REUTERS Right: Xin Bao, the female panda, sits in its enclosure at the San Diego Zoo. DERRICK TUSKAN / AP

formations in China, emulating mountains, canyons, and cliffs" and the pandas' native habitats in Sichuan, Gansu and Shaanxi provinces, said a zoo press release.

The new home also have "new shade trees for climbing, a diverse array of plants, and rolling hillsides that allow Yun Chuan and Xin Bao to navigate and explore vertically."

"We want to offer species-specific behavior," said Marco Wendt, a wildlife ambassador for the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance.

The San Diego Zoo has grown 6 acres of bamboo forest at the zoo and safari park, not only for food but also for bamboo plant conservation, he said.

"The San Diego Zoo has offered about 20 different types of bamboo for the pandas. Right now, it looks like the pandas are really taking to it, which is great," she said. "Yun Chuan, he is what you call a laid back panda. He particularly likes to sleep in the morning. He'll sit up, explore a little bit, and then roll over and find a snack," said Wendt.

He introduced the pandas to the public and pointed to the sleepy panda on his back. "His priorities are sleeping and eating his bamboo, taking that midday nap, and going back to some bamboo (to) eat again," Wendt said. Very chill panda."

Xin Bao is quite different.

[Children] were taken to the zoo to see pandas by their parents. They become parents, and they are taking their kids with them to the zoo to see pandas."

Xie Feng, Chinese ambassador to the United States, who attended the San Diego Zoo's opening of Panda Ridge

The American experts are using our recipe and methods to whip up their own local panda bread. It seems like the pandas are really taking to it, which is great," she said.

"She is a very playful panda, super curious as well," said Wendt, adding that she is an "excellent climber. I can not wait for the public to come here to the San Diego Zoo and experience these vibrant personalities."

Xin Bao has a round face and big ears, while Yun Chuan has a long, slightly pointed nose tip.

The two pandas' names also have a special bond with the city of San Diego.

"Xin Bao" means a "precious treasure of prosperity and abundance," and the Chinese character of *xin* is made of three *jin*, which is the Chinese character for gold, a tribute to the Golden State, California.

"Yun" means "cloud" in Chinese, a name that comes from his maternal grandmother, Bai Yun, the previous superstar at the San Diego Zoo, who gave birth to six cubs during her 23 years there.

"It's reigniting this partnership with our partner, the China Wildlife Conservation Association, and that's tradition and collaboration," Wendt said. "It's really an electric time here at the San Diego Zoo!"

He said that China and the US teams have been working closely, not only sharing physiological information, breeding attributes and bamboo preferences but also information on panda genetic information, mating and breeding.

"That's so much more we can do, so we can't wait to help further our partnership and the support for these amazing animals," he said.

Experts from China will be with the two pandas for a full transition and ensure their growth and health along with the local team.

"China and the US have carried out extensive work on panda scientific research and conservation cooperation. It's been 30 years since

the collaboration began in 1994," Li Desheng, the deputy director of China Giant Panda Conservation and Research Center of National Forestry and Grassland Administration, told China Daily.

"Over the years, we have made significant progress in panda husbandry, disease prevention and control, and various field research aspects," said Li, who first visited the San Diego Zoo in 1999. "Especially in our efforts in managing pandas' health, our collaboration has improved the health conditions of pandas and continuously extended their average lifespan. This cooperation has also enhanced the understanding of pandas among the public in both countries."

"I believe that with a new round of panda cooperation, we can explore more areas of joint work. Regarding the construction of panda national parks, I think both China and the US have many common ideas — how to protect pandas and other wildlife, and how to develop national parks effectively — these are areas where we look forward to more cooperation in the future," he said.

"There's a long history of collaboration towards panda conservation, and so this is just the beginning of a new chapter," Megan Owen, the vice-president of Wildlife Conservation Science, told China Daily. "Everyone is ready to see the pandas. Giant pandas are such a great ambassador for conservation."

She said that her team has been working on conservation applications. Owen's own research has largely focused on the application of behavioral and sensory ecology and recovery strategies for large mammals, including giant pandas.

"We have a big focus on conservation technologies, and innovating new technologies that help us study giant pandas in their native habitat is a big part of what we hope to do," she said. "And then we have a big focus on wildlife health, and making sure we understand what it takes to keep giant pandas healthy."

The first panda cub born at the San Diego Zoo — Hua Mei — was conceived through artificial insemination. She was also the first panda cub born in the US to survive to adulthood and has gone on to produce 11 cubs of her own in China.

Over the past three decades, the cooperation between China and the San Diego Zoo has been fruitful, helping increase survival rates for panda cubs from around 10 percent to more than 90 percent.

In an interview with NBC7 San Diego that aired on Thursday, Chinese Ambassador to the United States Xie Feng noted that the pandas "reflect our two peoples' aspiration for friendship and exchanges, and also the world's longing for peace and cooperation."

"I encourage our American friends to care for China-US relations just as you care for pandas, cherish the friendship between our two peoples just as you cherish pandas, and protect world peace just as you protect pandas," Xie said.

"[Children] were taken to the zoo to see pandas by their parents. They become parents, and they are taking their kids with them to the zoo to see pandas," he told China Daily.

"This is about something much deeper, much richer, than just the two beautiful pandas we celebrate," Newsom said at the Panda Ridge opening ceremony on Thursday. "It's about celebrating our common humanity. It is about celebrating the things that bind us together."

Xie said China-US cooperation on panda conservation will not cease, the people-to-people exchanges and subnational cooperation will not stop, and once opened, the door of China-US friendship will not be shut again.

"We warmly welcome Californians and other American friends to go to China, and see firsthand how incredible the home country of pandas is," he said.



Left: Martin Guzman embraces his fiancée Jeana Luce while they wait in line for Panda Ridge, the new exhibit at the San Diego Zoo, on Thursday in California. DERRICK TUSKAN / AP Center: Artist Shepard Fairey (left) unveils his new artwork next to the Zoo President Paul Baribault at the opening ceremony for Panda Ridge. DERRICK TUSKAN / AP Right: Mia Bullock holds a panda doll as she waits to get into Panda Ridge. SANDY HUFFAKER / AFP