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# CHINA DAILY

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## Change of guard



Thailand's former prime minister Srettha Thavisin exchanges a fist bump with new Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra on Sunday after the latter received a royal letter of endorsement for the post at the Pheu Thai party headquarters in Bangkok, Thailand. SAKCHAI LALIT / AP

## ANIME SHOPPING INJECTS LIFE, COLOR INTO MALLS

Cosplay, cartoon and games enthusiasts search for prized *gu zi* items

By CHEN NAN  
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Stepping into the second underground floor of Beijing's Wangfujing Xiyue Shopping Center is like entering a teenager's surreal, subterranean wonderland.

Young people are dressed in lovingly crafted outfits — some with cat ears or animal tails — while others wear cosplay costumes mimicking their favorite anime characters. Even on a scorching summer's day when the air hangs heavy, the vibe is electric.

## In-depth

Shops are stocked with anime-themed trinkets and toys, and at the center of the mall, a bustling market sells collections of tin badges, cards, acrylic figurines and other memorabilia.

Eager shoppers search for their favorite merchandise, and they often celebrate with a squeal of delight when they find a coveted or limited-edition item.

These beautifully designed anime-themed products, known colloquially as *gu zi* (a homophone of the English word "goods"), are licensed by the producers of anime and games. Some are sold in blind boxes, with prices ranging from 12 (\$1.67) to hundreds of yuan.

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## Chinese swimmers shine at Paris 2024 Olympic Games despite harassment

The Paris 2024 Olympic Games saw all Chinese athletes keep their promise to respect and honor anti-doping regulations and ensure their medals were won fairly and cleanly, as was publicly pledged before the Games by Gao Zhidan, president of the Chinese Olympic Committee.

However, the Chinese swimmers were subjected to severe harassment from the outset by their competitors in the United States. The New York Times chose an opportune moment to publish an article accusing the World Anti-Doping Agency of siding with Chinese swimmers by allowing some of them who had tested positive for a banned substance to compete at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021. WADA responded by stating that an independent investigation had confirmed that the banned sub-

### WORLD WATCH

By Tony Kwok

stance came from contaminated food. Yet, the US Anti-Doping Agency publicly criticized WADA for siding with China.

Worse, the US passed the Rodchenkov Act in 2020 allowing the Federal Bureau of Investigation to investigate WADA and any athletes anywhere in the world in competition with US athletes for any alleged doping cases, which is a clear breach of international law on extraterritorial enforcement.

Anyhow each Chinese swimmer had to undergo testing 21 times on average since the beginning of the year, compared with the average of five times for US swimmers. Some Chinese swimmers

were subjected to as many as seven doping tests in a single day in the Olympic Village. They were often woken up at 5 am to queue for the test, severely disrupting their daily rest.

Despite all the intimidation, the Chinese swimmers clinched the two most prestigious gold medals in swimming, together with three silvers and seven bronzes. The 19-year-old Pan Zhanle's record-breaking victory in the men's 100m freestyle in 46.4 seconds made him the fastest recorded swimmer in history. China's gold medal in the men's 4x100m medley relay made them the fastest all-around swimming team in the world, breaking the US' run of 10 successive gold medals in this event, dating back to the Los Angeles 1984 Games.

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## Race for AI talent heats up amid demand

By CHENG SI  
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Chinese employers are in a tight race and offering fat salaries as they scramble for talent with artificial intelligence knowledge or learning background, hoping to gain the advantage for future business expansion.

The recruitment portal Liepin recently released a report showing that the numbers of job openings and job seekers surged in the sector of AI-generated content, or AIGC, in the first quarter of the year. Specifically, AIGC-related job openings soared 321.7 percent year-on-year during the quarter, and the number of job seekers rose nearly 947 percent.

With the hiring race heating up, the recruiting salary offered by employers also shot upward. Liepin said in the report that the average annual salary for AIGC-related jobs was about 408,700 yuan (\$57,045), with most of the jobs offering above 500,000 yuan per year.

Larger cities and those with internet titans — including Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen in Guangdong province and Hangzhou in Zhejiang province, where big tech companies such as Alibaba, Tencent and ByteDance are located — offer most AI-related job opportunities.

ByteDance, for example, launched a recruitment campaign in late May to attract graduates with doctoral degrees, after it ramped up efforts to compete in the AI universe. The campaign, named Top Seed, is aimed at grads with PhDs who are interested in machine learning, AI, large language models and audio and video generation, and the company says it offers high salaries, although it didn't disclose exact figures.

In a reflection of the tight global race to attract AI talent, Tesla CEO Elon Musk said in April on the social platform X that his company was increasing salaries and compensation for staff members on Tesla's AI engineering team, after OpenAI, an AI research organization in the United States, attempted to lure away employees on his team.

Pang Shi, director of the Chinese Academy of Personnel Science's department of employment and entrepreneurship, said: "The increasing AI-related job openings and the market's demand for talent of this kind are a result of technology advancement and industrial development. The market's demand for AI talent will keep growing in the next few years, allowing for companies' continuous investment and the government's support policies in the sector.

"AI's extensive use in diversified sectors such as healthcare, finance and transportation will also drive employers' hiring for a workforce of this kind," Pang said.

Zhang Yuejia, president of Zhaopin, another recruitment portal, said that around 2020, the need for AI talent began to emerge, and the need surged after ChatGPT, a chatbot and virtual assistant developed by OpenAI, hit the market in 2022.

"For example, job openings on our platform concerning large language model development skyrocketed 605 percent in the first half of the year, compared with that in 2023," he said. "Also, job openings on natural language processing — one of the core vacancies in AI — surged 126 percent year-on-year in the first quarter, and the average monthly salary offered for the job was up 12 percent year-on-year," Zhang added.

However, AI-related jobs have higher standards for people's educational background and work experience, with versatile and highly skilled candidates preferred by employers. In addition, cutting-edge AI technology has brought about new job opportunities as well as challenges.

Global consultancy McKinsey & Co projected last year that China's need for AI-related workers would

## XI'S VISION | REFORM AND OPENING-UP

# Private sector getting more policy support

Participation in significant projects showcases bigger role of nonpublic economy, experts say

By FAN FEIFEI and CHENG YU

The Hangzhou-Taizhou High-Speed Railway in Zhejiang province, China's first high-speed railway controlled by private capital, has proved to be a milestone in the Chinese government's efforts to attract private funding to key infrastructure construction and local transportation development.

The railway, which began operating in January 2022, has a designed speed of 350 kilometers per hour and connects a number of well-known scenic spots. It has handled more than 20 million passenger trips so far.

It is among the country's first rail projects funded by a public-private partnership, with 51 percent of the railway's shares held by a consortium of eight private enterprises.

The safe and smooth operation of the 266.9-km rail line is a vivid example of how China has been pushing ahead with the market-oriented reform of its high-speed railway investment and financing system. The project also demonstrates how private enterprises have the ability to invest and participate in major national projects, according to experts and entrepreneurs.

They noted that the country's latest measures for comprehensively deepening reform will create a favorable environment for the nonpublic sector, and said that bolstering the growth of the private economy will significantly shore up market confidence, stabilize expectations and revive the momentum of economic recovery amid challenges and external uncertainties.

The measures will further motivate private enterprises to beef up their innovation capabilities and achieve breakthroughs in crucial technologies, the experts and entrepreneurs said, adding that this will promote industrial upgrades and high-quality economic development. They also called for efforts to increase financial support for private enterprises and optimize policies on tax and fee reductions.

The comments came after the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, which concluded last month, adopted a resolution on further deepening reform comprehensively to advance Chinese modernization.

The country will continue to implement principles and policies that help foster a favorable environment and create more opportunities for the development of the nonpublic sector, while formulating a law to promote the private economy, according to the resolution.

China's top leadership has placed great emphasis on bolstering the growth of the private sector. During last year's two sessions, the annual meetings of China's top legislative and political advisory bodies, President Xi Jinping called for proper guidance for the healthy and high-quality development of the private sector.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, stressed that the CPC Central Committee always unswervingly consolidates and develops the public sector and encourages, supports and guides the development of the nonpublic sector. He also said the CPC Central Committee always unswervingly consolidates and develops the public sector and encourages, supports and guides the development of the nonpublic sector.

Zhou Maohua, an analyst at China Everbright Bank, said, "The private sector has become an important force for promoting Chinese modernization, and plays an increasingly vital role in stabilizing economic growth, creating job opportunities and bolstering technological innovation."

The country has sent a clear signal that it is dedicated to boosting the high-quality development of the private economy through rolling out targeted measures to deal with the difficulties and issues faced by private enterprises, he said.

See *Measures*, page 3



A contestant debugs a quadruped bionic robot at the 26th China Robotics and Artificial Intelligence Competition in Hefei, Anhui province, on Sunday. ZHANG MIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

grow by 2030 from 1 million to 6 million. However, local and overseas universities, as well as existing top-tier talent, could only provide one-third of the necessary talent, leaving a shortage of about 4 million.

"A worker or job seeker is required not only to have broader knowledge and a good understanding of the AI industry and innovation for commercial transition, but also strong abilities in team working, coordinating and problem solving, and advanced ideas of AI's influence on ethics, laws and social development to ensure that the technology is used

legally and responsibly," Zhang said. He added that employers' increasing efforts to develop AI-related jobs and attract talent are a result of technology advancement and companies' need for transformation.

"A workforce proficient in AI technology is becoming the key resource in business competition, as the trailblazing technology has great potential in improving productivity, optimizing work procedures and innovating new products and services, which will be a strong booster for the enterprises to expand their business landscape," he said.

## PAGE TWO



## Anime: Exploring allures, profits of collectibles

16-year-old Qi Li takes a selfie at the *gu zi* store, Ciyuan Xiagu, at Beijing's Wangfujing Xiyue Shopping Center. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

### From page 1

However, to enthusiasts these *gu zi* are more than just collectibles. Acquiring them is a lifestyle that allows them to express their identity, taste, and also make emotional connections. The act of buying these items is fondly referred to as "eating *gu*".

Even amid this riot of color and finery, 16-year-old Qi Li stands out. The cosplayer, who wears makeup, wigs and costumes, draws her inspiration from the character Kenma Kozume in the popular Japanese anime and manga series *Haikyuu!!* which revolves around a volleyball team.

As she walks around Ciyuan Xiagu, one of the most popular *gu zi* outlets in the mall, other shoppers stop her and ask to take selfies.

"I often come here because the *gu zi* are updated frequently," said Qi Li, as she explains the emotional joy the items bring her, especially when she returns to her cozy room adorned with her tiny treasures after school.

"I often change my costumes and sometimes I make them by myself," she said. "It takes me about 40 minutes to do the makeup. When I finish and stand in front of the mirror, I feel like I'm bringing the character alive."

Qi Li said she loves going to *gu zi* shops dressed as her favorite characters, and feels proud and confident when people ask to take selfies with her.

She is a big fan of ACG (Anime, Comic, and Games), and said that her mother supports her hobby and often drives her to digital entertainment and gaming expos such as ChinaJoy, one of the biggest ones in the country, "as long as I finish my homework".

### Retail phenomenon

The rapid sales growth of these specialized goods is an indication of the purchasing power of the tech-savvy younger generation. Since May, topics like "Gu zi shops reviving old malls" have been trending online, bringing the sales phenomenon to the attention of the public.

"This year, in particular, *gu zi* shops are becoming increasingly prevalent in shopping malls around the country, from first-tier cities to second, even third-tier cities," said Beijing native, Xue, the co-founder and co-owner of Ciyuan Xiagu, who asked only his family name be used.

"Locations such as Beijing's Wangfujing Xiyue Shopping Center, Shanghai's Bailian ZX Creative Plaza, and Wuhan's Trend Box X118 have undergone transformations, dedicating entire floors or even entire buildings to these stores and cultural spaces," said the 45-year-old, adding his shop had experienced a surge in sales since May.

Xue, who studied and lived in Japan and

previously worked for a Chinese toy company, is a veteran of the anime world.

"To enter this industry, first, you have to genuinely like it. Second, you need to understand its nuances. If you don't know anything about anime and how it works, how can you find good suppliers?" he asked.

For many anime enthusiasts, collecting merchandise is an integral part of their fandom experience, he said.

"Building an impressive anime merchandise collection not only allows fans to express their love for their favorite characters and series, but also provides a sense of connection to the characters and stories they hold dear," Xue said.

He launched Ciyuan Xiagu in December 2023 with three friends who share the same passion. "The mall is one of the first in Beijing highlighting shops pivoting to fit the demands of a digital age. It has become one of the most popular destinations for *gu zi* lovers," he said.

While facing competition from online sales, Xue said Ciyuan Xiagu opened its second shop in Chongwenmen in downtown Beijing. A third shop will be launched this October in Xidan, another major commercial area in the capital.

Different from traditional figurines and action figures, *gu zi* primarily appeals to high school and university students, said Xue's friend Liu, another co-founder and co-owner of Ciyuan Xiagu, who also wanted to only use his family name.

### Little treasures

"Drawing" cards are a *gu zi* item popular with young enthusiasts. They cost as little as 5 yuan (\$0.70) and come in "blind" packs containing five to 10 different character cards. Liu said their affordability and the uncertainty of not knowing what is inside the pack until it is opened and cards are drawn, make them attractive to younger children.

"I once saw a very cute, little boy coming to our shop. He gave me 5 yuan for a pack

of cards, containing his favorite characters from My Little Pony (anime)," said Liu.

Children often gather in the mall to show and exchange their cards. "They skip a cup of milk tea and use the money to buy cards. It's a new way of communicating among young children," he said.

Pins and cards are also used to decorate "ita" bags, which are usually covered with badges and dolls to showcase a favorite anime character.

However, some of the rare cards can sell for thousands of yuan per pack, leading to parents and teachers being concerned about youngsters becoming obsessed with them.

"Banning them may not be the best solution as anime-themed cards often serve as popular conversation topics among children," Liu Bo, a researcher at Zhenhai District Education and Science Institute in Ningbo, Zhejiang province, told China Education Daily.

"It is important for parents and educators to offer proper guidance, empathize with the children, and explain the commercial logic involved," Liu said, adding the industry needs to be regulated.

Rita, 19, from Yichun city, Jiangxi province, was introduced to *gu zi* by her high school classmates, when they took her to shop in a stationery store. She was hooked, and bought cards and stickers with her favorite anime characters on them.

After she came to Beijing in September to study Portuguese at China Communication University, Rita learned more about *gu zi* culture thanks to her new classmates.

Her preference is for sports anime featuring strong characters and "hotblooded plots".

"When I go to *gu zi* shops and buy *gu zi*, it feels like meeting my friends from the 2D world in the 3D world," she said, adding she loves buying small items such as key chains and badges, and putting them on her bags.

Before traveling she locates the *gu zi* shops in the cities that she and her friends want to visit. "Other destinations, such as restaurants and tour sites, are all planned based on the locations of *gu zi* shops," she said.

### Not just for kids

Yu Yu, 20, loves idol anime, which involves stories about the main character training, rehearsing, competing, and improving themselves to succeed. The genre combines well-animated choreography and memorable songs. The first idol anime she read was *Aikatsu!* when she was about 10 years old.

She travels to Japan to visit *gu zi* shops, an experience she describes as being like "a mouse falling into a jar full of grains".

"I stay in the shops all day long, searching for *gu zi* of my favorite characters," said Yu Yu, who spends about 2,000 to 3,000 yuan per month on buying *gu zi*.

Yu Yu's mother, who was born in 1981, shares her daughter's passion for anime.

"When she (my mother) was a child, she also loved reading comic books, just like me. So, I am very lucky that she supports my hobby and shares what I love," she added.

Song Shuang, owner of a *gu zi* shop in Beijing's Huaxi Live mall in Wukesong, said having a tangible item gives enthusiasts a reason to communicate with people who share the same interest. Young people who grew up with the internet and anime culture, not only have spiritual support but also a way to socialize, said Song, whose shop has a space where customers can sit down, chat and play games.

Song, 37, is a Beijing native, and grew up reading comic books and watching cartoons. She said the number of *gu zi* enthusiasts is not only vast, but the pastime spans a wide range of ages, including herself. However, she isn't worried about being seen as immature.

"For adults my age, we didn't have as many *gu zi* products as today's young peo-

ple. But we do have our own favorite anime characters," she said. "Now, we are financially independent and able to buy the things we like."

In August 2023, Song opened her first shop, Ciyuan Jihua, in Beijing's Drum Tower area, an old neighborhood renowned for its *hutongs* and courtyards.

She also helps organize events for anime fans. In March, about 500 people gathered in her shop to celebrate the birthday of their favorite character, Wu Xie from *The Grave Robbers' Chronicles*, a popular Chinese anime based on a well-known novel.

"For individual operators, running a *gu zi* shop is more akin to managing a community centered around shared interests," she said. "Shop owners must have a deep passion for anime culture to navigate the complexities of sourcing, distribution, and community engagement effectively."

### Profitable hobby

When he was still in high school, the parents of 24-year-old Wang Gefei used to worry that their son's obsession with ACG would affect his behavior.

Despite their concern, Wang graduated from Dalian University of Foreign Languages in 2023 with a major in Japanese. "My hobby inspired me to choose the major and my parents, who are both civil servants, felt relieved," he said.

However, his recent decision to open his own *gu zi* shop again worried his parents.

Early this year, he launched his first shop, Jiju Chaowan or Super Toy, in his hometown of Dalian in Liaoning province. He now owns three shops in Dalian, which has reassured his parents he can develop a career based on his hobby.

Wang believes the rise in the popularity of anime-themed stores is linked to the widespread dissemination of anime culture. Students from middle schools to universities are the main consumer group, and they have contributed significantly to the trend through their increased purchasing power and diverse cultural demands.

The widespread use of social media and online platforms has also made it easier to promote and sell anime-themed merchandise, Wang said. Teenagers use social media to stay informed about the latest anime-themed products and events, participate in discussions, and share their interests.

The huge demand, diverse product categories, and robust supply, have given rise to price competition as well as a large market for secondhand *gu zi*, he added. Some enthusiasts can earn a stable income by reselling secondhand merchandise.

"For the young people, these things are their spiritual nourishment. They're cultivating financial acumen through this hobby, which I find quite positive," Wang said.



Young *gu zi* buyers select products at Ciyuan Xiagu in Beijing. PHOTOS BY ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

## TOP NEWS

## China, Fiji agree to deepen ties

Li calls for enhancing high-level exchanges between the nations

By CAO DESHENG

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China and Fiji signed multiple agreements on Sunday on bilateral cooperation in fields including trade and infrastructure construction as part of a wide-ranging partnership between China and Pacific island countries.

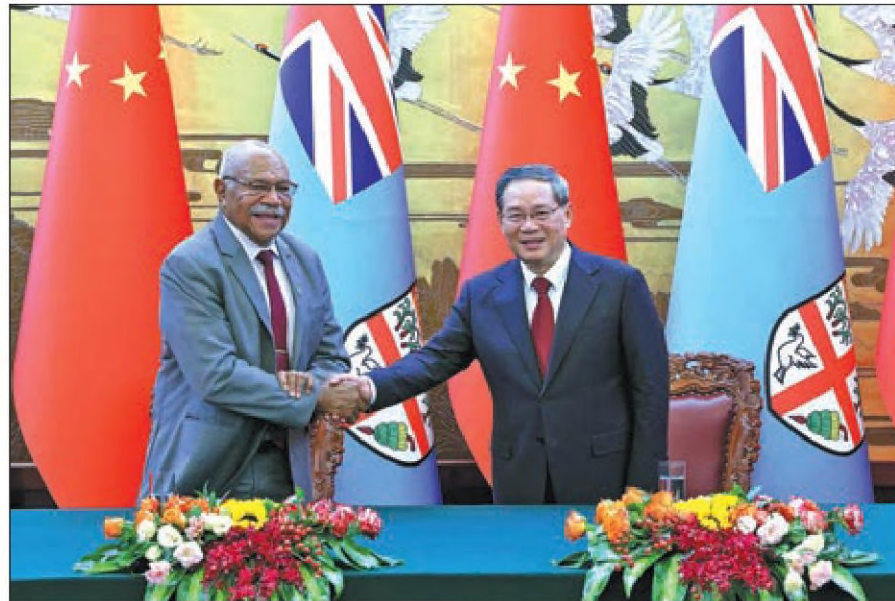
Premier Li Qiang and visiting Fijian Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka witnessed the signing of the documents following their talks at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. Rabuka is on a 10-day official visit to China that started on Aug 12.

Highlighting that Fiji was the first Pacific island nation to establish diplomatic relations with China, Li told Rabuka that China has always regarded Fiji as one of its most important partners in the South Pacific region.

He said that China consistently supports the Fijian people in choosing their own development path, and is willing to take next year's 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two countries as an opportunity to strengthen bilateral relations and continue being true friends who trust and support each other.

Li called for enhancing high-level exchanges and interactions at various levels between China and Fiji to promote the healthy and stable development of their comprehensive strategic partnership.

The premier underlined the need for both countries to further leverage their advantages in economic complementarity to deepen partnership in infrastructure, agriculture, fisheries, light industry, education, tourism, poverty reduc-



Premier Li Qiang shakes hands with Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji Sitiveni Rabuka on Sunday at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. Rabuka is on an official visit to China from August 12 to 21.

WANG JING / XINHUA

tion and other areas within the framework of high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, in order to promote shared development.

China is willing to import more high-quality products from Fiji and support Chinese enterprises in investing and establishing businesses in the Pacific island country, Li said.

Noting that both China and Fiji are members of the Global South, Li expressed China's willingness to enhance communication and coordination with Fiji and other Pacific island countries, actively implement initiatives proposed by President Xi Jinping, including the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the

Global Civilization Initiative, and jointly advocate an equal and orderly multipolar world as well as inclusive and universally beneficial economic globalization.

Rabuka expressed his admiration for China's achievements and growing influence under the leadership of Xi, emphasizing that Fiji always regards China as its reliable partner.

He said that Fiji firmly adheres to the one-China principle and supports China-proposed initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative.

Fiji is ready to deepen cooperation with China in areas such as trade and infrastructure construction, and promote cooperation between Pacific island countries

and China, he added.

In July last year, Xi, while expounding on China's policy toward Pacific island countries during a meeting with Manasseh Sogavare, prime minister of the Solomon Islands, made it clear that China fully respects the sovereignty and independence of Pacific island countries, fully respects their will, fully respects their cultural traditions, and fully respects their unity and self-reliance.

Rabuka met with Xi for the first time in November in San Francisco in the United States on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting. He is set to meet with Xi again during his stay in Beijing.

## Doping: Global trust in fair competition to be rebuilt

From page 1

As expected, the outstanding performance of the Chinese swimmers provoked jealousy and unfair accusations from Western rivals. An Australian swimming commentator and coach said Pan's record-breaking victory in the Olympic 100m freestyle was "not humanly possible", implying, without any evidence, that Pan had doped. He should have known that Pan had been tested 29 times since last year and had passed all the tests. It is a typical reaction of sour grapes that proliferated during the Olympics.

In a post-match interview, Pan said the US swimmers ignored his friendly greeting at the pool and during training, and they purposely splashed water directly on his coach. He said he felt that they were looking down on him, but he was pleased to have had the last laugh.

Meanwhile, a widely circulated report on social media revealed a blatant loophole in doping regulations. WADA apparently has an internal rule that provides exemptions for athletes suffering from injuries or illness. If, with a doctor's certificate, the medication needed for the treatment of injuries or illness contains stimulants, it can be reported to WADA. If approved, the athlete can legally use such drugs. To "protect the pri-

vacuity of athletes", these exemptions are not made public.

This has opened the door for athletes to legally dope themselves under doctor's orders. It was revealed in the report that in 2016, the Russian hacker "Magic Bear" accessed the WADA database and found that in 2015 alone, with the assistance of USADA, 653 American athletes applied for immunity, of which 402 were granted, an approval rate of over 60 percent. Swimming, cycling, athletics, triathlon and skiing received the most medical exemption applications. Fewer than 10 Chinese athletes were granted immunity. In the interest of fair competition, WADA should publish its immunity list and subject it to public scrutiny.

Then came the reports revealing that the US sprinting star Erriyon Knighton tested positive for the performance enhancer trenbolone, a banned steroid, during an out-of-competition test on March 26. But the USADA decided, without notice or referral to WADA as should have been standard procedure, that Knighton would not be ruled ineligible, claiming that the athlete's positive result for trenbolone was caused by eating contaminated meat, and allowed him to eventually represent the US at the Paris Olympics, where he qualified for the men's 200m final.

On Aug 6, the China Anti-Doping Agency issued a statement, quoting the Knighton case and accusing USADA of embracing double standards when dealing with doping cases of athletes from the US and Chinese swimmers. CHINADA called for intensified testing of US track and field athletes and efforts to rebuild global trust in fair competition. The doubt over Knighton's case lingers even after the conclusion of the Paris 2024 Games.

WADA on Aug 7 issued a stern rebuke to USADA following revelations by Reuters that exposed a scheme to allow US athletes who had committed doping violations to compete without sanctions for years, which is a blatant violation of the World Anti-Doping Code and USADA's own regulations. WADA highlighted the severity of the allegations, which suggested that USADA permitted doped athletes to compete, including in Olympic events, greatly undermining the fairness and integrity of competitions in which clean athletes unknowingly competed against those who had been allowed to cheat. WADA criticized USADA's apparent double standards in enforcing anti-doping rules and called into question whether USADA's board of directors or the US Congress was aware of these practices.

The International Olympic Com-

mittee has warned the US to stop interfering with WADA. Otherwise, the IOC may withdraw the US' right to host the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics and the Salt Lake City 2034 Winter Olympics. Indeed, all athletes attending the next Olympics should be warned that they can be subject to FBI investigation and prosecution for suspected doping, and this may trigger a massive boycott if the US Congress fails to repeal this draconian law.

The controversies have shown how international politics and the US' faultfinding with China have affected sports, and how the US and the Western world have discriminated against China. However, their efforts have been in vain. The Chinese swimmers shone through at the Olympics and proved they are a force to be reckoned with, ending the long-standing dominance of the West in swimming. The most heart-warming scene was the Chinese crowd singing their national anthem loudly during the gold medal ceremonies, demonstrating their national unity and patriotism to the world.

The author is an honorary fellow of HKU Space and Hong Kong Metropolitan University and an honorary adviser of the China Hong Kong Squash Association. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## S. African scholar's book hails Xi's role in FOCAC growth

By NDUMISO MLILO

in Johannesburg, South Africa  
For China Daily

A new book that outlines the success of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation and Chinese President Xi Jinping's contribution to its growth, has been launched in South Africa ahead of the forum's summit next month.

The book, titled *Xi Jinping and the Flourishing Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in the New Era*, has been co-authored by Paul Tembe, a senior researcher and lecturer at the University of South Africa, and was launched on Friday in Pretoria, South Africa.

Speaking at the book launch, Tembe said President Xi has made significant contributions toward FOCAC's success with his astute leadership. He added that China has made major contributions toward development of infrastructure in Africa, improved people-to-people relations and given scholarships to African students to study in China.

"We are looking at FOCAC in history, present and the future. FOCAC has grown to be a template for the developing world, particularly in the Global South," said Tembe.

He added that FOCAC adopts a multipronged approach to implement global initiatives. "Africans are not summoned to Beijing every three years, there is consultation and consensus, it's a partnership of equals," he said, adding that Chinese proposals such as the Belt and Road Initiative can foster synergy with Africa's blueprint Agenda 2063.

"The African Union and China have witnessed elevated instances of dynamic agency and successful cooperation and partnership of equals. Under the joint leadership and promotion by President Xi and African leaders, China-Africa relations have entered a new era of building an even closer China-Africa community with a shared future which has become a model for building a community with a shared future for mankind," an excerpt from the book read.

Jeffrey Mathethe Sehume, the co-author, said they decided to write about Xi because of his "exemplary" leadership in the pursuit of peace, climate justice and multilateralism. Sehume, who is with South Africa's Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, said that FOCAC has become a

benchmark for countries even in the Global North.

"Xi supports the centrality of green globalization and removing trade barriers. He urges people to protect nature. He emphasizes family values. In South Africa, we resonate with his thinking because of gender-based violence and broken families."

In the book, Tembe wrote that Xi's approach to China-Africa diplomacy is underpinned by several factors. These include no interference in African countries' pursuit of development paths that fit their national conditions, no interference in their internal affairs, no imposition of will on African nations and no attachment of political strings to assistance to Africa, which have been widely applauded by African countries.

Speaking at the book launch, Wu Peng, China's ambassador to South Africa, said that FOCAC has become a model for international cooperation. He stressed that China's cooperation with Africa is underpinned by mutual respect, joint consultation and treating each other as equals. He said the upcoming FOCAC summit in Beijing will discuss the future of Africa and China and expressed confidence it will live up to its expectations.

South Africa's African National Congress national executive member Lindwe Zulu congratulated Tembe on his book. She said Tembe is sharing his experience having lived and studied in China. Zulu, a former minister of social development and small business development, said Xi is committed to a win-win situation.

Arthur Mutambara, professor at the Institute for the Future of Knowledge at the University of Johannesburg, said Africans want a win-win partnership with China. He said African countries want to use friendship with China to attain prosperity and inclusive economic growth and add value to the continent's products.

Mutambara, who is also the former deputy prime minister of Zimbabwe, said: "We want to build a capable and ethical state just like your government, driving transformation with no corruption. We want to work with China or Europe to add value to our natural resources to achieve inclusive growth."

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

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## Measures: Execs say support boosts their confidence

From page 1

Hong Yong, an associate research fellow at the e-commerce research institute of the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said the country's push to draft a law on promoting the private economy reflects its firm determination to support the private economy, with a specific focus on strengthening protection of private companies' property rights, as well as the rights and interests of entrepreneurs, via legal means.

The recent move signals a significant step toward creating a more transparent, stable and predictable business environment, he said, adding that "the legislative efforts will not only remove systemic barriers and address the pressing concerns of

private enterprises, but also invigorate the dynamism of market entities and bolster the development of new quality productive forces."

Gao Zicheng, chairman of the All-China Lawyers Association, said that in order to reduce the burden on private enterprises, more detailed measures may include implementing tax policies that benefit small and micro private enterprises, like deferred, reduced or exempted corporate income taxes and value-added taxes for eligible enterprises.

## Intrinsic element

The private economy has become an intrinsic element of China's economic system and a significant force in sustainable and healthy economic development. Private companies contribute more than 60 percent of gross

domestic product, 70 percent of technological innovation and 80 percent of urban employment, according to official data.

In July last year, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council, China's Cabinet, issued a top-level guideline detailing 31 measures, such as facilitating private enterprises' access to funding, reducing market entry barriers and promoting fair competition, to promote the development of the private sector.

The third plenary session's resolution said that efforts will be made to remove barriers to market access, improve the long-term mechanism for private enterprises to participate in major national projects, support capable private companies in leading significant national technological and innovation projects, and provide pri-

vate enterprises with greater access to major national scientific research infrastructure.

"These reform measures will provide more opportunities for the private sector's participation in key national projects, further stimulate the vitality of private investment and consolidate the economic recovery trend," said Pan Helin, a member of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology's Expert Committee for Information and Communication Economy.

Recent years have seen an increasing number of private companies playing a role in major infrastructure projects in transportation, water conservancy and railways. Previously, these areas, which used to be dominated by State-owned enterprises, were seldom open to private enterprises.

Thanks to recent efforts to pro-

mote the private sector's participation in major projects, Chongqing One-Tale Electric Co has received special support from the National Development and Reform Commission to establish a sensor technology service platform, said Tian Yongchao, head of research and development at the company, a private-sector provider of electrical equipment.

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

Li Dongsheng, founder and chairman of consumer electronics maker TCL Technology Group Corp, said, "The authorities' supportive attitude toward the private sector has greatly boosted the confidence of private enterprises and stimulated the entrepreneurial spirit and innovation vitality of entrepreneurs."

TCL will stick to an innovation-driven development strategy and

strive for breakthroughs in key technologies and bolster the transformation and upgrading of the high-tech manufacturing industry, he added.

Zhou Hongyi, founder of Chinese cybersecurity company 360 Security Group, said the key plenary meeting has sent a clear message of further efforts to comprehensively deepen reform. He added that this has inspired and encouraged him, and said his company will focus on digital security and artificial intelligence and bolster digital and intelligent upgrades in traditional industries.

Nan Cunhui, chairman of Chint Group, a leading industrial electrical equipment and new energy company, said the latest commitment to developing the nonpublic sector has put private enterprises at ease, because they see that such support has been and will be consistent.

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## CHINA



Students from Northeast Normal University are trained in ski patrol and rescue at the school's teaching base in Jilin city, Jilin province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## New jobs emerge in ski industry as demand grows

Ministry includes ski patrol rescuer among 19 new occupations

By LIU MINGTAI in Changchun and ZHOU HUIYING

Dong Rubing began to look forward to the possibility of being a ski patrol rescuer after graduation when the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security announced it as one among 19 new occupations recently. A ski patrol rescuer is defined as personnel who conduct safety inspections of skiers and facilities at ski resorts and provide assistance to the injured before medical treatment.

With the continuous expansion of ice and snow sports in China, new professions related to it are emerging in order to ensure the safety and enjoyment of skiing for the public.

Dong, 20, got an admission to the Department of Ice and Snow Sports of the School of Physical Education at Northeast Normal University in Changchun, Jilin province, in 2022.

In June last year, the school launched the course on ski patrol theory and practice, which covers theoretical and practical aspects such as skiing skills, snowfield culture, outdoor first aid, injury assessment, patrol systems, rescue methods and medical knowledge,



Students practice rescuing an "injured" skier on the slope.

aiming to cultivate ski patrol professionals with systematic theoretical knowledge and standardized practical skills.

"In February, my classmates and I took part in the practical course at the university's teaching base, a ski resort in Jilin city," said Dong. "Our university invited a group of international experts in the field of ski patrol for on-site guidance, aiming to train versatile and multifaceted ice and snow professionals in line with international standards."

During the course, they patrolled the ski slopes first and then encountered an "injured" person on the slope, she said. They would assess the injury, such as an arm injury, and proceed to bandage the arm or

secure it in case of a fracture.

Then they would communicate with other patrol members for assistance and transfer the injured person to the nearby hospital promptly, if the injured person had some symptoms such as breathing difficulties, she said. "It provides more practical experience, especially for students of ice and snow sports, enabling us to use the knowledge gained during the course," she said.

### New regulations

On Feb 1, Jilin officially implemented the Management Regulations for Ski Resort Patrol and Rescue Personnel, which is the first local standard in the field of ski resort patrol and rescue in the country.

The new regulations also filled the gap in the field of ski resort patrol and rescue in China, according to the Jilin Provincial Sports Bureau.

According to the regulations, ski resorts with a total ski slope area of less than 50,000 square meters must have at least two ski patrol rescuers on duty at all times.

As early as 2013, skiing was recognized by the country as a high-risk sport. With the continuous expansion of ice and snow sports in China, the demand for professional ski patrol rescuers is increasing day by day. According to data from the General Administration of Sport of China, there were a total of 2,847 ice and snow sports venues nationwide last year.

During the 2023-2024 ice and

snow season, the number of participants in various ice and snow sports such as ice skating, skiing, curling and ice hockey reached 57.35 million, with a total of 109.53 million participation.

The number of participants in skiing reached 35.42 million, with 54.82 million participation.

"During the research for ski profession applications, we found that there is currently a gap of around 20,000 ski patrol and rescue personnel in China," said Liu Junyi, director of the Jilin Provincial Ice and Snow Sports Key Laboratory. "I believe that with the gradual improvement of safety regulations, standardization and systematization in our country's ski resorts, the ski patrol rescuers will become increasingly scarce and essential for ski resorts."

Furthermore, the occupation will be expanded and diversified in the future, he said.

"For example, in the summer, they may be involved in snowfield construction and summer activities at ski resorts such as summer outdoor activities and grass skiing," he said.

"The occupation can also promote the enhancement of ski safety in our country and provide support and security for the overall ice and snow economy, ensuring the economic stability and development of ski resorts."

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## Villagers rely on AI to revitalize economy

By ZHANG LI and SHI RUIPENG in Nanning

Huang Jinqing, Party secretary of Leshui village in South China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region is pioneering digital transformation as the way forward for rural development.

The 40-year-old took a bold step by teaching villagers how to use artificial intelligence software to create short videos, promoting the local tea, star anise and other specialty products, which quickly gained popularity on the internet.

Located in the mountainous area in Wuzhou city, the village has a population of 1,168, with only 10 percent of young laborers staying at home.

"Our villagers' livelihoods are mainly tied to the cultivation of Liupao tea, star anise and vegetables. Despite the backdrop of lush green mountains and clear waters, we often face the challenge of agricultural produce remaining unsold during harvest seasons," Huang said.

In 2022, he opened a personal account on the popular social media platform Douyin to centralize the purchase of star anise and vegetables from villagers for online sales, alleviating the pressure of surplus. "I realized that doing livestreaming requires a professional team. It would be too difficult for villagers to do livestreaming themselves," he said.

After some trial and error, Huang found that using short videos for product promotion was more convenient. What was needed was to shoot a video, add a link, and wait for customers to make purchases.

Given that a majority of the villagers are elderly, he faces the formidable task of teaching them how to produce short videos and engage in marketing activities via livestreaming.

At the end of last year, Huang's cousin, who works outside, recommended an AI software that could easily generate videos.

What's more, the company providing the software now offers free services to villagers, with the aim of exploring the role of AI in rural revitalization.

By entering keywords, such as Leshui village, Liupao tea and product promotion, the software quickly generated a script.

With the assistance of the software, recording, editing and adding subtitles were seamless, and in less than 5 minutes, a complete video was produced.

"Empowered with AI, one person is now a whole team," Huang said.

Starting from June of this year, Huang first trained six of his fellow villagers.

Li Pinyu is a 47-year-old chicken farmer in the village, with a

"I never thought it (making short videos) would be this simple. It used to take me forever, but now it only takes a few minutes."

Li Junfu, resident at Leshui village in Wuzhou, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region

yearly poultry scale of over 50,000. Now, Li also has over 100 followers on her online account.

"With the AI software, I found that making short videos isn't as difficult as I thought. Although my content isn't very polished, online users still leave encouraging comments," she said.

As a professional in chicken and bee farming, villager Li Junfu is occupied with various things.

Huang spent a few days motivating him, even squeezing in time to teach him. "I never thought it (making short videos) would be this simple. It used to take me forever, but now it only takes a few minutes," Li Junfu said. Now, he has become an expert in using AI software to create short videos.

Li Junfu said that the content on his social media account has started to diversify, and he is gaining more followers. "I'm still in the stage of accumulating followers. In the future, I aim to expand the market for fresh chicken through online channels," he said.

There is also an ecological tea plantation in the village. Chen Biao, manager of the plantation with an area of 73.3 hectares, said that with the integration of AI technologies into the community, villagers have actively produced many videos showcasing the tea plantation, steadily enhancing its reputation.

"It has been transformed into a tourist attraction," Chen said.

The expansion of the plantation has also provided employment for more than 160 villagers.

The tea garden is planning to use AI technology to design a trademark for the village's Liupao tea and establish a short video production training base to further enhance the reputation of the tea industry.

Huang said that the current video production efforts serve as valuable groundwork for next year's sales. "We hope to attract more young people to return to the village and start their own businesses," he said.

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## Fungi-picking tour brings many to Yunnan

KUNMING — Around 7:30 am, Su Mingxue, a fresh-faced tour guide, assembles a group of adventurers for a unique one-day expedition. Their destination is not a typical tourist hot spot but a tranquil hill on the outskirts of Kunming, Southwest China's Yunnan province.

Su and her group assume the roles of "mushroom hunters", reveling in the delight of foraging for wild fungi. This type of one-day foraging tour has become a burgeoning trend in Yunnan's summer tourism sector this year. Many visitors make a special journey to Yunnan to take part in these tours, as the province's abundant rainfall and moderate temperatures usher in a prime season for wild fungi each summer.

Known as China's "kingdom of plants", Yunnan boasts unparalleled biodiversity due to its unique natural conditions. It is home to approximately 900 varieties of edible wild mushrooms, representing over 90 percent of the country's total. These fungi are cherished seasonal delicacies for the locals across Yunnan.

Since last year, Yunnan's wild mushrooms have gone viral on social media, both in China and internationally. Enthusiastic foodies and netizens endearingly refer to them as "magic mushrooms", recognizing their exquisite taste but also cautioning that improper cooking

can lead to hallucinations.

Su and her husband have been operating a wild-mushroom business in Kunming for several years. During the season, their business flourishes as wild fungi emerge from the earth.

Earlier this year, numerous customers expressed a desire to personally experience wild-mushroom foraging rather than merely purchasing them. Su arranged a tour for them, sharing pictures and videos on social media platforms, and these unexpectedly drew the attention of many netizens. The success of this first venture inspired her to develop the "fungi-picking tour" as an addition to her business offerings.

After a scenic hour-long drive, Su led her group of nine to a village on the periphery of Kunming, where villager Li Xue was eagerly awaiting the arrival of the mushroom-picking group. The area around the village features several hills, considered ideal for mushroom foraging.

"On sunny days after a period of heavy rain, a variety of fungi flourish in the hills," Li explained, distributing raincoats and gloves to the group and sharing tips on foraging in the forest, including information on the growth of wild fungi, hiking skills, techniques for discovering wild fungi and methods for signaling by shouting.

The mushroom-themed tours are typically led by an organizer and a seasoned local to ensure an enjoyable and safe experience. They often last for half a day or a full day, and offer participants a range of activities such as foraging for fungi, taking photographs and indulging in a fungi feast.

These exciting and novel tours have become increasingly popular among younger demographics. Guo Shuxi, hailing from North China's Shanxi province, made her second trip to Yunnan this year specifically for mushroom foraging.

Guo describes the experience as "an adventure into nature", noting that "the immersive experience combines hiking with enjoyment". During her day trip, Guo collected various wild fungi, including one called "lurid bolete", which gave her a profound sense of achievement.

Su said that the tour fees, often determined by the number of participants and the location, range from 100 yuan (\$13.99) to 300 yuan per tourist. In July alone, she hosted over 800 tourists, generating an income of around 200,000 yuan.

"Safety is paramount," Su said, adding that she has chosen several villages where she has been purchasing wild fungi for years to ensure familiarity with the local weather and terrain. In addition to providing outdoor activity equip-

ment and pre-trip training, she also secures insurance for all participants.

Su also allocates a portion of her income to the local villagers to mitigate any impact on their fungi industry.

In Wang Kaiyu's hometown of Chuxiong Yi autonomous prefecture, one of Yunnan's key wild-fungi producing areas, these tours are seen as a golden opportunity.

Wang, 25, recently returned to his hometown after graduation and began posting videos about the cultivation and processing of wild fungi on social media, leveraging his expertise in filming and editing to create engaging science videos and enticing more fungi enthusiasts to visit his hometown.

"The fungi season lasts from June to September, offering new opportunities for summer tourism," Wang said, noting that the mushroom-themed tours not only help enrich local tourism activities but also contribute to the growth of the local hotel and catering industries.

"I really look forward to guiding more tourists in experiencing the joy of mushroom picking in the coming months," Wang said, adding that Yunnan residents cherish these wild fungi as gifts from nature and reflections of a healthy ecology. As such, he is also committed to promoting ecological protection for sustainable development alongside his tourists.



A boy takes an interest in mushrooms picked by a fungi-picking tour group on the outskirts of Kunming, Yunnan province, on Aug 4. WANG JUNGYI / XINHUA

XINHUA

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



# Dedicated family provides safety net for protected dolphins

Years of efforts ensure local porpoise population sheltered from human activities

By YAN DONGJIE and SHI RUIPENG  
in Qinzhou, Guangxi

Protecting Chinese white dolphins has always been a family affair for Pan Yue. For almost two decades, Pan, her husband, and her father have taken nearly 5 million photographs documenting and studying the population of rare Chinese white dolphins in Sanniang Bay, Qinzhou, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region.

Named for their overall white or light pink coloration in adulthood, Chinese white dolphins have an estimated population of no more than 5,000 individuals in the wild, distributed in the nearshore waters of Fujian and Guangdong provinces and Guangxi in South China. The first-class nationally protected wild animal is sometimes referred to as the "giant panda of the sea".

"White dolphins haven't received enough attention worldwide, nor have they been deeply researched. Many Westerners are still unaware of the existence of this species," said Pan, who, after graduating from Peking University in Beijing, moved to Qinzhou with her father in 2005 to research and protect the dolphins.

"Our understanding of the white dolphins is based on years of observation," she said. Along the shores of Sanniang Bay live villagers who have relied on fishing for generations. Twenty years ago, villagers told Pan Yue's father, Pan Wenshi, about the presence of a white dolphin in the area.

Pan Wenshi, a renowned biologist and professor at Peking University's School of Life Sciences, has been dedicated to the conservation of precious wildlife such as giant pandas and white-headed langurs since the 1980s.

Guided by the villagers, Pan Wenshi observed the white dolphins in Sanniang Bay. It was this that led him and his family to move to the area permanently in 2005 to begin efforts to protect the white dolphins. "That year, my father saw a severely injured young dolphin that must have previously been entangled with fishing nets and whose body was injured and scarred. When he later discovered the dolphin had survived the ordeal, he named it Qinqin, with the first character of the name representing the city Qinzhou," Pan Yue said.

The survival rate for young dolphins is less than

50 percent, she said, with most dying due to factors such as congenital developmental issues and natural disasters.

Typically, out of 10 newborn dolphins, only three or four survive.

What is truly inspiring is that Qinqin, despite her severe injuries, not only survived but also gave birth to three calves over the next 20 years. When Pan Yue and her husband Zhao Yi go out to sea, Qinqin and her family members often frolic around their boat.

As they learn more about white dolphins, the villagers of Sanniang Bay have grown fonder of their long-standing neighbors.

Over the past 20 years, the Qinzhou government has designated white dolphins as a representative species for ecological protection, advocating a policy of the safe "coexistence of white dolphins with industry". This approach ensures the protection of the dolphins' living space amid urban development.

On the western side of Sanniang Bay, Qinzhou built Sandun Road which stretches into the sea for over 10 kilometers, showcasing the city's determination to protect the white dolphins. The barrier allows the dolphins to have a safer, cleaner and undisturbed habitat.

"If you stand at the end of Sandun Road and look westward, you'll see a large industrial area and port, with automated container operations, pipelines and more. For those who love this city, it's very astonishing to see the changes in Qinzhou Port over the past decade, and the economic development is encouraging," Zhao said.

"Looking eastward, however, you'll see a very quiet sea area. Beneath the calm surface, various forms of marine life, including Chinese white dolphins, inhabit the waters. This area represents Qinzhou's commitment to protecting the ecosystem and the freedom of survival for the local marine life.

"The true separation of industrial pollution and ecological protection is not just a road but a mindset. The ecological bottom line represented by Sandun Road has preserved a clean environment for the white dolphins and other local marine life," Zhao said.

"The world is exploring how economic development and environmental protection can achieve a win-win situation because the two inherently conflict. The balance must be found in between," he said, adding that industrial development can

bring rapid profits but also quickly impact the environment, whereas ecological protection requires a long-term commitment to see results.

"The population of white dolphins in Sanniang Bay has increased from fewer than 100 in 2005 to over 300, with an adequate number of female dolphins of reproductive age. Every year, three to eight dolphin calves are born and survive, forming a healthy natural population capable of breeding for generations," Pan Yue said.

Due to human activities dividing the habitats of white dolphins into small segments, the populations couldn't continue gene exchanges between groups, affecting the breeding of future generations.

"For example, in Hong Kong and Zhuhai, Guangdong, where economic development occurred earlier, urban construction impacted the surrounding white dolphin populations, putting them at risk of extinction," Zhao explained.

"The white dolphin population in Sanniang Bay is likely the only healthy one. As long as there is a certain level of gene exchange with populations in Guangdong, in a few decades, the number could increase to 500, the peak capacity this area can support," he said.

"Every life form has taken millions of years to evolve. While many things can be re-created if lost, once a species disappears from the planet, it can never be re-created."

The couple believes that only by protecting a species can the research conducted on it be meaningful. They refer to their approach to observing and protecting the white dolphins as "conservation biology".

Today, the house where the Pan family resides has been designated as the Life Education and Chinese White Dolphin Research Conservation Center of Qinzhou Beibu Gulf. Upon entering, a wall-sized map of Sanniang Bay clearly marks the activity area of the Chinese white dolphins. During summer and winter vacations, Pan Yue's family arranges for students from across the country to visit Sanniang Bay for educational tours to learn about the white dolphins and cultivate positive attitudes toward protecting wildlife.

The village government has also organized sea excursions for visitors, not only increasing local incomes, but also raising awareness about this special neighbor.

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## Ranger's patrols keep forest safe for future generations

By WU YONG in Shenyang  
and HOU LIQIANG

The Horqin Sandy Land, located mostly in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, is the second-largest sandy land in China, covering an area of 43,000 square kilometers. In a windy stretch on its outskirts, Wangpingfang village in Kangping, Liaoning province, was once scarred by a desolate expanse of shifting sand dunes. The area, however, has today become a verdant green landscape with pine trees that stretch for almost 700 hectares.

The transformation demonstrates the perseverance of the village's 600 residents over six decades, including Li Hai, a retired soldier and farmer.

Li, 75, recalled how his home was once beset by sand dunes, and how the arid climate and fierce winds meant that farming was extremely problematic.

The situation was sometimes so bad that "seeds sown in the spring didn't even get a chance to sprout before being blown away by strong winds", he said. Quite often, people would wake up in the morning only to find that their beds, blankets and floors were all covered by a layer of sand and dust. A local saying goes: "Only a single gust of wind blows through the village every year, and it lasts from spring to winter."



Li Hai (left) and his son Li Hongwei patrol a pine forest in Kangping, Liaoning province, this month. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

When the government initiated an afforestation program in 2011, Li, aside from participating in tree planting, took a role as a ranger.

"I wanted to improve the ecological conditions in my hometown and leave a better environment for future generations," he said.

Planting the resilient pine trees was relatively straightforward, but ensuring their survival in the extreme conditions proved to be a formidable challenge. Villagers had to diligently water the saplings every day for an extended period of time.

The sandy terrain in the village presented considerable obstacles for villagers when transporting water, Li said. It took them about 40 minutes to transport water to the afforested area using a tractor. Then, they had to carry the water with shoulder poles and walk 4 to 5 kilometers to reach the saplings.

"I usually got up at around 4 am, and often only stopped working at around 10 pm at that time," he said.

Thanks to the villagers' relentless efforts, almost 470 hectares of pine trees have been able to thrive despite the extremely dry conditions, expanding the size of the pine forest near the village to 7 square kilometers. Previously, about 230 hectares of the trees were planted in the area in the 1960s and 1970s.

After most saplings survived, Li translated his passion into a steadfast routine of patrolling the afforested area, a commitment he maintained daily from 2011 to 2022. Regardless of the weather, Li patrols the area twice a day, with each patrol lasting for about 4 hours.

"When patrolling, I always carry with me water, prepared food and pickled vegetables," he said. "When I get hungry, I take a bite of the food and then nibble on some pickled vegetables, washing it down with water."

His busiest time each year is always around Tomb Sweeping Day, which is a day for honoring the deceased by sweeping their tombs and burning paper offerings, as the burning results in fire risks.

The most challenging period for Li is winter, during which the temperature drops so significantly that the food he carries can become frozen solid. On such occasions, his son Li Hongwei delivers food to the afforested area for his father.

As his father's mobility reduces with age, Li Hongwei has gradually developed his own emotional connection to the forest. The junior Li became a ranger like his father in 2022.

"I want to safeguard the fruit of labor of my father's generation, and contribute to the further thriving of the forest," Li Hongwei said.

Even though Li Hongwei has assumed his father's responsibilities, the elder Li said he will persist in patrolling the forest. "I will keep patrolling as long as I can walk," Li Hai affirmed.

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Top: Researchers led by Pan Wenshi look for Chinese white dolphins in Sanniang Bay off the coast of Qinzhou, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. Above, from left: Researchers depart for a science research trip from Qinzhou. Pan Yue and her husband Zhao Yi. Pan Wenshi points to a dolphin in Sanniang Bay. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## WORLD

# Independence Day celebrated in Indonesia

Event in new capital highlights potential for balanced development amid delays

By LEONARDUS JEGHO in Jakarta and PRIME SARMIENTO in Hong Kong

Indonesian President Joko Widodo led the celebration of the country's 79th Independence Day in the planned new capital Nusantara on Saturday, a symbolic move that showcases balanced development.

Officially known as Ibu Kota Nusantara, the future capital is carved from the lush rainforest of East Kalimantan Province on Borneo Island, about 1,260 kilometers north of the current capital Jakarta.

While analysts said the relocation can help distribute development outside Java island and promote a green city, concerns remain about construction delays and funding gaps in establishing Nusantara.

The celebration featured a flag ceremony at the State Palace compound and was attended by 1,300 people, including first lady Iriana, president-elect Prabowo Subianto and foreign diplomats.

The State Palace is only one of the few infrastructures that have been built, with Nusantara expect-

ed to be fully developed by 2045. "Indonesia is a very large country; equality in all regions is needed," Widodo said after the ceremony, state news agency Antara reported. "Eastern, central and western regions must get the same cake."

Apart from the grand ceremony in Nusantara, celebrations were also held at Merdeka Palace in Jakarta, with various competitions and celebrations taking place in recent days.

Sawidji Widodoatmodjo, dean of the Faculty of Economics and Business at Tarumanagara University in Jakarta, said there is nothing wrong with relocating the capital — an idea first floated by president Sukarno in 1957. "But the problem (we) faced then ... is the same as now. It is funding," he said.

Rezha Bayu Oktavian Arief, co-founder and CEO of Obviously Sustainable, a social enterprise and advisory firm in Jakarta, lauded the government's commitment to the project but highlighted the "significant challenges" in attracting foreign investors.

"From what we have gathered, the primary obstacles revolve around policies and regulations, particularly



Participants struggle to reach the prizes in a greased-pole climbing competition during the 79th Independence Day celebrations at Ancol Beach in Jakarta, Indonesia, on Saturday. TATAN SYUFLANA / AP

concerning land management rights in (Nusantara), which continue to be a contentious issue," Arief said.

Relocating the capital is estimated to cost more than \$30 billion. On Aug 12, Widodo announced at his first cabinet meeting in Nusantara that 56.2 trillion rupiah (\$3.58 billion) has already been invested in the future capital.

## Jakarta's challenges

Apart from distributing wealth in other regions, Widodo said earlier that relocating the capital would also relieve Jakarta's huge environmental challenges. The city, home to 10 million people, suffers from regular flooding and is one of the fastest-sinking cities because of the

excessive extraction of groundwater.

The new capital is being envisioned as a smart city, featuring accessible public transport and social services, a diverse community, low-carbon energy sources and more than 75 percent green governmental zones.

Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi, secretary-general of United Cities and Local Governments Asia-Pacific in Jakarta, said the government's thrust on developing Nusantara as a smart city "will not only improve the quality of people's life through technology and innovation, but it will also push equal distribution of development across Indonesia".

Josua Pardede, chief economist at PermatBank in Jakarta, lauded the government for being selective of

investors because this will ensure that investments are aligned with its vision for Nusantara's development.

"The government will get high-quality investment and will not merely strive for the quantity," he said.

But he said it might be difficult for Prabowo's administration to realize the public-private partnership framework adopted by his predecessor. The framework needs to be developed into a more detailed program to make it easier for investors to calculate their return on investment, he added.

Leonardus Jegho is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

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## Uruguayan expert calls for enhanced partnership

By YANG RAN  
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Decades of agricultural cooperation between China and Uruguay have greatly benefited Uruguayan farmers, with a strong desire to further this partnership into technological innovation, a Uruguayan agricultural expert says.

Miguel Sierra, manager of innovation and communication at the National Agricultural Research Institute of Uruguay, recently concluded a 21-day visit to China. Reflecting on the trip, he stressed China's advanced status in scientific and technological innovation.

"In Uruguay, I work on agricultural cooperation projects with China, and my recent visit has reinforced my belief that China is at the first world level of scientific and technological innovation," he said.

"I visited various institutions showcasing cutting-edge research. Having visited many countries and being a member of numerous agricultural research networks in Latin America, I can confidently say that China's advancements are impressive."

Sierra stressed China's technological prowess, such as using digital technology to monitor animal health. "These technological applications can be incredibly practical for commercial use," he said.

While China already has high scientific capabilities, its current challenge is to integrate this capacity with the economy to generate greater economic returns, he said. "China has made strides here, with many institutions employing technological brokers to bridge the gap between research and the innovation sector."

Building connections between science and the economy is crucial, Sierra said, expressing hope that Uruguay can learn from China's practices.

## Top export market

Sierra said China and Uruguay have a long history of agricultural collaboration, starting with a 1993 agreement. Since 2013, China has become Uruguay's top export market, particularly for beef and soybeans.

"There are tens of thousands of farmers in Uruguay who depend on beef and soybean sales. When business opportunities in China arise, these farmers can earn more, bringing positive impacts to local society," he said.

From a commercial perspective, the bilateral collaboration is strong, but there is room for improvement in science, technology and innovation. "Successive Uruguayan governments over the last 15 years have prioritized the development of a long-term agricultural collaboration strategy with China," Sierra said.

"Uruguay has strong scientific capabilities in life sciences but needs to generate more value and connect science with innovation and the global market. In this process, China is an ideal partner. For China, Uruguay offers a test platform for its scientific and technological innovation and a gateway to Mercosur (the Southern Common Market)."

## Shenzhen, Los Angeles explore business links

By RENALI in Los Angeles  
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They are on opposite sides of the Pacific Ocean, but the dynamic economic hubs of Shenzhen and Los Angeles share many similarities.

"Both are vibrant global cities, have large ports, which are among the busiest in the world, and possess a strong atmosphere for innovation and entrepreneurship," Peng Jing, the Chinese commercial counselor in Los Angeles, told business leaders and officials from the two cities on Friday.

Peng spoke at the 2024 Shenzhen-Los Angeles Economic and Trade Exchange Meeting in the City of Industry in San Gabriel Valley, California, at which collaborative opportunities, mutual growth strategies and innovative partnerships for the two cities were explored.

She noted that despite a lackluster global economic recovery and geopolitical tensions, the international community continues to share a common desire for peace, cooperation and development.

"The impact of the pandemic on the global economy, supply chains and businesses has not yet been fully overcome. However, globalization persists, and stakeholders in the supply chain — including enterprises from Shenzhen, Los Angeles, and other regions — have made significant contributions to China-US trade cooperation," Peng said.

China and Los Angeles have maintained a robust economic and trade relationship for many years, Peng said.

In 2023, China remained Los Angeles' largest trading partner, with a trade volume exceeding \$147 billion, accounting for nearly 30 percent of the city's total international trade. Last year saw 246 Chinese enterprises invest in Los Angeles, creating more than 3,000 jobs and contributing an estimated \$370 million in payroll.

Los Angeles-based companies also have seen significant success in China. Amgen, a global biotechnology pioneer, now operates in more than 100 Chinese cities and has had seven innovative therapies approved in the country.

Similarly, the footwear company Skechers, founded in Manhattan Beach, California, has grown into a widely recognized brand with more than 3,500 stores across China.

"We hope that both sides can further strengthen communication and collaboration, leveraging their

respective advantages to deepen practical cooperation in areas such as green ports, clean energy, cross-border logistics, culture, education and tourism to make a greater contribution to local exchanges between the two regions," Peng said.

Liu Junlin, executive vice-president of the Shenzhen General Chamber of Commerce, highlighted Shenzhen's status as one of China's most innovative and economically significant cities.

In the first half of 2024, Shenzhen's regional GDP reached 1.73 trillion yuan (\$139.6 billion), marking a 5.9 percent increase over the same period in 2023 and placing the city at the top among China's first-tier cities.

Shenzhen now has 2.6 million households, and the number of domestic and foreign-listed companies there exceeds 560, ranking it among the leading large and medium-sized cities in the country, she said.

Back in 2010, Shenzhen and Los Angeles signed a memorandum of cooperation, establishing a friendly exchange-city relationship. Over the years, the two cities have had frequent official visits and close people-to-people exchanges, serving as vibrant examples of friendly interactions between China and the US.

"We both have unique charm and value, contributing to the diversity and richness of the world," Liu said. "I hope that our two cities will further strengthen communication, enhance cooperation in areas such as economy, trade, investment, culture, sports and tourism, and build even closer ties through these exchanges."

The Los Angeles business community has shown strong interest in Shenzhen and anticipates future collaboration.

Joanne McClaskey, executive director of the Industry Business Council, welcomed guests to the City of Industry, emphasizing its business-friendly environment and resources.

"Our city is home to over 3,000 businesses, employing more than 70,000 people. We hope to see more Chinese companies come here and thrive," she said.

Luis Portillo, president and CEO of the San Gabriel Valley Economic Partnership, noted the number of Chinese businesses in the region and the significance of the area's diversity in relation to its economic potential.

## Amid spike in robberies, NYPD adds patrols in iconic Central Park

By AI HEPING in New York  
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At one of the main entrances on the southern end of Central Park across from West 59th Street and Seventh Avenue in Manhattan, a police poster stapled to a pole reads:

"UP TO \$3,500 REWARD FOR INFORMATION REGARDING A ROBBERY." It shows photos of the alleged robbers around 10:25 pm inside the park near East 62nd Street.

The poster says the "perpetrators" robbed a man at knifepoint on Aug 1 there and later used his credit cards.

Early Sunday morning, some 30 feet from the poster was a long "Police Command" vehicle with blinking red lights. An officer knocked on its door to get in. All 14 police vans lined up in front, behind and next to the command post were empty.

"Too early for police and for the robbers," Mohammed, a pedicab driver who said he was from "somewhere in West Africa" and has worked for nine years in the park, told China Daily. "They will be back tonight, but they won't stay long. It's all for the public — especially tourists — to see."

In the two weeks since that Aug 1 robbery listed on the poster, police said there have been at least 10 other robberies inside or near the park's southern end. Central Park is the city's most visited tourist site, with an estimated 42 million visitors annually, according to the private, nonprofit Nature

Conservancy, which oversees maintenance of the park.

"This is a migrant robbery pattern," Chief of Patrol John Chell told reporters on Aug 14, from where those police vehicles were parked Sunday.

"We believe these groups are responsible for most, if not all, of them," he said. Chell said they work in groups of eight and 12, as well as in pairs of two.

Where Chell spoke that day was a sea of blue as the NYPD showed how officers will be deployed to counter the spate of robberies — on foot, scooters, bicycles, horseback and in patrol cars.

Up to 100 additional police officers will be in the park at all hours for an indefinite period, according to officials, who said the increased police presence will be most noticeable from 7 pm to midnight.

About 135 officers currently work in the Central Park Precinct. The additional officers are being pulled from various police units.

"There's no secret being kept here," Chell said. "Crime is up in this park."

Police statistics show crime has spiked dramatically this year compared with the same period last year. At least 30 robberies have been reported in Central Park this year, compared with just 10 during the same period in 2023, the ABC News affiliate reported.

There also have been 10 felony assaults this year compared with seven last year, according to police data.

The area of the park where the recent spate of robberies has occurred

runs from Columbus Circle on the southwest to around The Plaza Hotel and Grand Army Plaza on the southeast side, areas teeming with tourists.

Most of the victims have been tourists, police said. No one has been hurt during the robberies.

Jen, who declined to give her last name, said she recently arrived from China for a short visit and had been warned about potential violence in the city before visiting but said, "I wanted to come anyway."

"It's daytime, the park is beautiful and safe now with all the runners and walkers. But I would never be here at night," she said.

She was with her friend Liu, who said he also was from China, has worked in the city for more than 10 years in technology, and lives in downtown Manhattan.

"News reports didn't say whether the robbery victims included Asians, but that doesn't matter, because there's already enough hate crime against Asians in the city," he said.

Starting at month's end, drones will be used to cover the park, officials said. They said the drones can respond to incidents in less than one minute and track suspects until police arrive.

"We're not going to tolerate crimes at one of the most iconic locations in the world," said Tarik Sheppard, deputy police commissioner of public information.

Agencies contributed to this story.

## Israeli airstrikes kill 19 in Gaza ahead of Blinken visit

CAIRO — Israeli strikes killed 19 people in Gaza on Sunday, including six children, Palestinian health authorities said, ahead of a visit to the region by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken to try to push forward cease-fire talks.

The children and their mother were killed in an Israeli airstrike on a house in the central town of Deir al-Balah, health officials said.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military, but they said the strike destroyed rocket launchers used to hit Israel from the southern city of Khan Younis, the scene of intense fighting in recent weeks, and killed 20 Palestinian fighters.

Diplomatic efforts to halt the cur-

rent conflict and secure a deal to return hostages held in Gaza have intensified in recent days. Talks mediated by Egypt, Qatar and the United States are set to continue this week in the Egyptian capital Cairo, following a two-day meeting in Doha last week.

Blinken is making his 10th trip to the region since the conflict began, days after the US put forward bridging proposals that the mediating countries believe would close gaps between the warring parties.

He is expected to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other senior officials.

Netanyahu's office said on Saturday there was "cautious optimism" a deal could be reached and US offi-



Relatives of hostages held by Hamas and their supporters call for their immediate release and protest against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government in Tel Aviv on Saturday. TSAFRIR ABAYOV / AP

cials have also been positive, while cautioning there was still work to be done.

However, Hamas said optimistic US comments were "deceptive" and

accused Netanyahu of making new conditions in an attempt to "blow up" the negotiation.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## SPORTS

## TABLE TENNIS



From left: Thanks to their stellar performances at the Paris Olympics, China's Sun Yingsha, Fan Zhendong and Chen Meng have seen their popularity and fan bases soar, which has led to problems online. AGENCIES

By LI YINGXUE  
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As the excitement of the Olympics fades with the close of summer, the celebration of China's Paris heroes seems to be heating up among sports fans across the country. Something that's become quite a hot topic.

While winning gold medals puts athletes in the spotlight, not all of that attention is welcomed. Some fans, treating them like celebrities, have become overly intrusive, prying into the athletes' private lives and attacking rival athletes online, some of whom are teammates.

While stellar performances are worth celebrating, athletes deserve peace off the field. Reasonable encouragement and constructive criticism are vital to their growth, but excessive fan worship only serves to hinder their progress and development. The consensus is that the sports world must take a firm stance and say no to "idol" culture.

The Chinese table tennis team, which dominated the Olympics by claiming every gold medal available, has, perhaps, been the most impacted by this toxic idolatry.

Beyond their success on the court, stars like Wang Chuqin, Fan Zhendong and Sun Yingsha have gained fervent fan followings, thanks to their athletic prowess, good looks, and appealing personalities. However, this intense attention has also led to increasing disruptions and public scrutiny.

On Saturday, the Chinese Table Tennis Association issued a statement expressing strong support for cybersecurity efforts to crack down on illegal activity within online fan communities, in cooperation with relevant authorities.

The association strongly condemned any unlawful behavior. It has also expressed concerns over the disruptive behavior of those online fan communities, which it says has seriously impacted the team's training and competitions. This chaos has negatively affected the lives of athletes, coaches and staff, both professionally and personally.

Since the start of the Olympics, Chinese table tennis players have been the subject of constant buzz and discussion on social media.

However, amid the praise, there has also been a wave of defamatory and hostile remarks, with some even crossing legal boundaries.

On the night of Aug 3, after the Olympics women's singles table tennis final between Team China compatriots Chen Meng and Sun, some people online posted defamatory remarks toward Chen. In the early hours of Aug 4, one user published

# Idol culture fans flames

Sporting bodies work to clamp down on toxic online behavior



Fans react in the stands during the 2024 Paris Olympics men's singles table tennis gold-medal match between Fan Zhendong of China and Truls Moregard of Sweden. The Chinese table tennis team has been heavily impacted by idol culture and toxic online fandom. REUTERS

slandorous posts targeting athletes and coaches, sparking widespread public outrage.

Beijing police quickly intervened, arresting a 29-year-old woman on Aug 6. She confessed to making the offensive posts and the case remains under investigation.

In a related announcement on Aug 15, the Ministry of Public Security outlined three other cases involving illegal behavior within sports fan circles, and emphasized that the internet is not beyond the reach of the law, urging users to refrain from spreading misinformation or engaging in personal attacks online.

In response to any online or public defamation, insults or malicious attacks against the team or its members, the Chinese Table Tennis Association pledged to pursue legal action against individuals and organizations involved.

In a statement, the Chinese table tennis team, known for its strong unity, expressed deep gratitude for the support it has received, but called for a collective effort to cre-

ate a cleaner, more positive online environment.

## More Attention

The Paris Olympics have catapulted athletes into the public eye like never before. Sun saw the number of her Weibo followers balloon by more than three million, while Wang gained over two million followers on Douyin within six days of the competition.

Fan, after his men's team victory, posted a reflective message on Weibo — "From Paris to Paris, 11 years of international competition, like the 11 points in a match, from beginning to end" — earning 1.18 million likes.

Yet, Olympic champions are pushing back against the feverish idol culture surrounding them. On Aug 12, swimmer Pan Zhanle, who won gold in the men's 100-meter freestyle and set a new world record, disbanded his sole online fan group, opting to distance himself from the frenzy.

In an interview with China's national broadcaster, CCTV, Pan commented on his sudden fame: "I

prefer to stay low-profile and quiet. Honestly, I wouldn't mind if my performance had been less exceptional, if it meant I could return to training in peace."

Pan also addressed the growing fan attention: "When I wasn't doing well, no one came to find me. Now that I'm succeeding, they're seeking me out — it's uncomfortable."

It's not just online, either. In the arena, at the gripping all-China women's singles table tennis final between Chen and Sun in Paris, what should have been a showcase of athletic excellence was marred by unruly spectator behavior.

Chen, in particular, faced jeers whenever she scored, a display that angered many who felt that fan support had taken an unsportsmanlike turn.

Despite the charged atmosphere, the competition ended on a note of grace, as the pair shared a lengthy embrace at the conclusion of their match. Chen later described the encounter as a "match without losers", and thanked the audience for

their support of both players.

Sun echoed those sentiments on Weibo: "Congratulations to sister Meng on defending her Olympic singles title. Your hard work and performance are something to aspire to."

"It was an honor to stand alongside you as we defended the honor of Chinese women's table tennis. I also urge everyone to approach wins and losses rationally, and to continue supporting our team," Sun wrote.

Fan, who won gold in both the men's singles and team events at the Olympics, has addressed toxic elements of the fanbase on social media multiple times. He has clarified his stance on interactions with fans, urging them to avoid excessive behavior.

Fan expressed strong opposition to the intrusion of obsessive fandom into sports, and emphasized his commitment to focusing on his game. He called on fans to respect his coaches and teammates and refrain from organized support activities. He also stated that he

does not accept gifts, preferring only handwritten letters.

"As for my personal schedule," Fan said, "I do not wish to be met at airports or followed for photos, nor will I sign autographs or take pictures in personal settings. I ask my fans to let me live as an ordinary person."

## Less Fandom

At the end of 2023, a survey conducted by the China Youth Daily Social Survey Center and Questionnaire Network, involving 1,332 respondents, found that 82.4 percent believe that the intrusion of idol culture into sports has worsened recently.

In response, the General Administration of Sport of China issued a statement on May 15, denouncing the encroachment of such distorted fan support into sports. The Chinese Olympic Committee has similarly called for respect for athletes' personal rights, and urged fans to engage in rational behavior, condemning the spread of idol culture into the sporting realm.

During the Paris Olympics, the International Olympic Committee implemented an AI-driven monitoring system to track thousands of accounts across major social media platforms in over 35 languages, aiming to shield athletes and officials from online abuse.

Youth culture scholar Ding Hui told The Paper that at the core of this behavior is the admiration of strength and success. In sports, an athlete's performance directly influences fan support, creating a dynamic similar to that of entertainment idols.

Ding noted that idol culture has been influential in China for nearly a decade. Fans not only celebrate their idols, but also justify their admiration, striving to enhance their idols' public image.

A significant aspect of this culture is fans actively removing negative comments about their idols on social media and engaging in online disputes with fans of other celebrities to shape their idol's image, according to Ding.

"The effort of fans to uphold their idol's 'public image' contributes to the spread of this culture," Ding said, adding that this focus on athletes, rather than the sports themselves, is characteristic of idol culture.

To address the intrusion of idol culture, Ding suggested that athletes should directly address and reject inappropriate fan behavior.

Athletes are distinct from media celebrities; they let their achievements on the field speak for themselves. For fans, the most meaningful interactions with athletes happen only at the competition venue.

## BASEBALL

# History will be the Judge, as another record gets crushed

By JAMES MCCARTHY  
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Baseball history was made in Chicago last week, as Aaron Judge, again, with one swing of his massive, nearly-one-meter-long Chandler bat, rewrote the possibilities of America's pastime.

Deep into the series decider with the Chicago White Sox on Wednesday, with a man already on second base, relief pitcher Chad Khul, understandably, decided to intentionally walk the New York Yankees' hottest bat of the week, Juan Soto.

Soto had already gone yard four times in 24 hours to single-handedly drag the Bronx Bombers back from a humiliating 12-2 defeat to the struggling Sox in the opener.

But, that walk meant Khul had to pitch to the Yankees captain, Judge.

Judge, who had been sitting on 299 homers since Aug 11, after tating a high fastball from Andrew

Chafin of the Texas Rangers into the stands of Yankee Stadium, had already struck out twice, doubled once and walked once. With men on, he came to the plate more in the hope of seeing a decent pitch, than in anticipation of one.

However, after dealing three balls — two low, one high and inside — Khul left a 151 km/h sinker hanging high just outside the right of the zone.

With a seemingly effortless swat, Judge dropped the gavel and sent the ball, like a missile, into deep left field and into the Chicago bullpen.

In doing so, he became the fastest player in MLB history to reach 300 home runs, hitting the milestone in just 955 games, beating the previous fastest, Ralph Kiner of the Pittsburgh Pirates, who brought up the triple century in 1952, by 132 games. Judge also did it in far fewer at-bats. It took Kiner 3,883 plate appearances, while Judge managed it in just 3,431.

He also got there 400 at-bats quicker than the legendary Babe Ruth, who hit his 300th homer in his 3,831st plate appearance.

Babe Ruth. Even if you know nothing about baseball, you know that name. Growing up in a predominantly rugby household in Wales, even I had a vague knowledge of who "The Babe" was, long before I developed a genuine love for the game, and mostly due to the glut of baseball-themed movies that arrived on British shores during the 1980s: *The Sandlot*, *Major League*, *Field of Dreams*, to name just a few. Babe was always there.

The thing about Ruth — and the rest of the Murderer's Row, like Lou Gehrig, Mark Koenig and Tony Lazzeri — is that they were ghosts. They were remnants of the long distant past; just jerky black-and-white film footage, or the signature on a movie MacGuffin baseball.

And, while every generation since

had its heroes — Willie Mays, Mickey Mantle, Joe DiMaggio, Barry Bonds, Derek Jeter — who have all done great things, it's The Babe's name that stands above them all.

Well, until now.

Judge is that same type of epoch-defining player. With that massive hunk of maple in his huge hands, he's knocking down every record imaginable, especially this season. He currently leads the entire MLB in home runs with 44, runs batted in with 111, and his 1.172 OPS (on base plus slugging) percentage eclipses everyone. In regard to that last stat, as of July 4, Judge was already mixing it with Ruth, Gehrig, Ted Williams and Bonds as only the fifth player to ever hit a 1,430+ OPS in a 50 game span, and he is the first right-hander ever to do so.

If it were not for Kansas City Royals shortstop, Bobby Witt Jr, having 56 more at-bats so far this season, Judge would probably be leading

the league's batting average, too.

He is a truly generational player, and, in decades to come, we're going to be so grateful that we were the ones who saw him rake, run and bomb ballparks for fun. People who were inside Guaranteed Rate Field on Friday will be talking about Judge's 300 hit to their kids and grandkids, the way their grandparents regaled them with tales of Ruth and Co.

The talk, now, is of how far he can go. At 32, he's a few years older than home run record holder Bonds was when he started his assault on the bleachers of America. Bonds' 762 will be quite a mountain to climb for the Yankees captain, but he could still strike for The Babe's 714, though. Judge's biggest hurdles are time and fitness — to reach Bonds, he'd need to be crushing 66 homers a season if he's to make it before his current Yankees contract expires.

However, he's not going to care too much about that right now, I'd



New York Yankees captain Aaron Judge celebrates hitting his 300th home run on Wednesday. REUTERS

imagine. More pressing is the need to ensure his bat, along with that of partner Soto, stays hot enough to power the Yankees past the Baltimore Orioles, their main division rival in the American League East, and into the postseason without having to endure a wildcard playoff.

The partnership between Judge and Soto has already been compared to that of Gehrig and DiMaggio in 1937, and the only real difference that I can see between the two duos is a pair of World Series rings.

## BUSINESS

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## Paris 2024 catapults Chinese tech to global fame

Classy broadcasts, cloud, AI, training tools ... all herald next wave of digital wizardry

By FAN FEIFEI  
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Paris 2024 will be remembered as much for sportspersons' medal-winning performances, memorable ceremonies, amazing venues and breathtaking logistics as for Chinese technology companies' contributions that, experts said, enhanced the quadrennial event like never before, impressing all stakeholders — participants, organizers, coaches, officials, spectators, TV and online audiences, media, advertisers and sponsors.

Chinese firms applied cloud computing and artificial intelligence innovatively in fields ranging from immersive live broadcast experiences to athletes' training, which improved the latter's performances, and can potentially transform future sporting events.

Experts further said the robust participation of Chinese companies in the prestigious sporting event demonstrates their growing technological prowess and independent innovation capabilities. This will help improve their international recognition and influence while boosting their global competitiveness.

More than two-thirds of live broadcast signals have been disseminated by Chinese tech heavyweight Alibaba Group's cloud broadcasting services during the Paris Games — a milestone in Olympic broadcast history.

The cloud computing platform has succeeded satellite broadcasting, which was launched during the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo for the first time, and has become the main method of remote distribution to broadcasters.

Alibaba Cloud, the cloud computing arm of Alibaba, which is a worldwide partner of the Paris Olympics, and Olympic Broadcasting Services have jointly launched OBS Cloud 3.0 to help media outlets get images and videos of the Games. OBS, a subsidiary of the International Olympic Committee or IOC, oversees the distribution of event coverage.

A record-breaking 11,000 hours of Olympics footage has been distributed to more than 200 countries and regions with the help of Alibaba Cloud's global cloud infrastructure, reaching billions of viewers worldwide.

The cloud-based technology is a game-changer for global media. Prior to this technological breakthrough, broadcasters had to rely on dedicated and more expensive international telecommunication optical circuits and spend a considerable amount of time to set up the equipment, in order to send live footage halfway across the globe back to their home countries.

In September 2018, Alibaba Cloud launched OBS Cloud in conjunction with OBS, and supported the broadcasts of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics.

The company also provided AI-enabled multicamera replay sys-



Top: Audience take snapshots of Eiffel Tower after a beach volleyball match at a stadium nearby during Paris 2024. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

Above left: Visitors gather at the booth of SenseTime during an expo in Shanghai last month. LONG WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Above right: The studio of OBS Cloud 3.0, jointly launched by Alibaba Cloud, a partner of the Paris 2024 Olympics, and Olympic Broadcasting Services, which provided media outlets with images and videos of the Games. XINHUA

tems at the Paris Games to elevate viewing experience. These systems have been deployed across 14 venues covering 21 sports and disciplines, such as badminton, track and field, basketball, beach volleyball and table tennis.

The systems provided frame-freeze slow-motion replays of athletes' performances, giving global viewers a more immersive experience by transforming live footage into precise 3D models, and allowing sports fans to access detailed information for deeper analysis of such performances.

Paris 2024 is the first Summer Olympics to see the extensive use of AI technology. The IOC has described AI as a game-changer, and launched the Olympic AI Agenda in April, setting out the envisioned impact that AI can deliver for sport.

Thomas Bach, the IOC president, highlighted the key areas where AI has been utilized at this year's Olympics. These include safeguarding against cyber abuse, creating video highlights in multiple formats and languages, and implementing a sophisticated data capture and energy management system to

enhance sustainability.

Chinese tech giant Baidu Inc offered an AI-powered auxiliary training system, which is based on its ChatGPT-like product and large language model Ernie Bot, for China's national diving team, helping the latter achieve good results.

"The AI system allows timely playback and scoring," said Quan Hongchan, who triumphed in the women's 10-meter platform diving event, adding the diving auxiliary training system can be used to refine a diver's movements during daily training, providing her with additional coaching support.

The diving training system can understand complex instructions from coaches, record athletes' diving posture and actions, and score their real-time movements, in order to provide precise quantitative assessment and scientific guidance for training and competition, said Wang Haifeng, chief technology officer of Baidu.

Baidu explained that the AI system starts collecting and recording information from the moment the athletes step on the diving board and stops recording after they enter

the water surface.

High-speed video can be fed back to the coaches' tablets in real time, and the system can analyze diving actions on the 3D space through 3D modeling technology, which supports 360-degree free rotation for viewing, making training more scientific and effective.

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

By participating in and providing technical support for the world's largest multisport event, Chinese tech companies have enhanced their brand awareness and influence in the international market, Wang said.

Their participation will let more overseas audiences learn about the country's rapid progress in cloud computing and AI technologies, as well as bolster the digital transformation and upgrading of interna-

tional sports events, he said.

Data from market consultancy Mordor Intelligence showed that revenue from AI application in sports industry worldwide will grow from \$5.93 billion in 2024 to \$20.94 billion in 2029, with a compound annual growth rate of 28.69 percent.

The consultancy said AI is used to analyze data and engage fans, while real-time insights generated through data analysis during match time help teams make changes to their strategies.

Shen Yang, a professor from Tsinghua University's School of Journalism and Communication, said AI technology can play an auxiliary role in athletes' daily training, psychological assessment and event simulation by offering more precise and intelligent services, thus further improving athletes' performances.

During the Olympics, Chinese AI company SenseTime worked with the Chinese national basketball team to offer AI-driven sports data analysis and advice on strategies. It developed an AI-powered basketball performance analysis platform in collaboration with the Shanghai Artificial Intelligence Laboratory

and Shanghai University of Sport.

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

Xu Li, chairman and CEO of SenseTime, said the combination of AI with sports is a potential direction for bolstering the application and development of LLMs in the future, adding the company can provide technological support in areas like athlete training, competition analysis and game broadcasting based on its vision large model system.

SenseTime's smart broadcasting technology has also been used to cover table tennis and archery events in Paris, creating an immersive viewing experience for audiences.

In cooperation with Shanghai Media Tech, a local media technology company, the company's Inno-Motion broadcasting solution leverages 3D motion capture capacities to achieve multi-person, large-area and multi-angle coverage of various sporting scenes, without the need for wearable devices.

The technology can capture real-time spatial motion data and accurately track and analyze fast-moving, small targets such as table tennis balls and arrows. Audiences can clearly view the rotation direction and landing point of table tennis balls and the intricate flight trajectory of arrows via augmented reality technology on their screens, SenseTime said.

Apart from Chinese companies, US technology firms, including Intel and Google, brought their AI-related technology to the Olympics. For instance, Intel collaborated with the IOC to develop AthleteGPT, a chatbot that handled athlete inquiries and delivered customized information services during athletes' stay at the Olympic Village.

Google's AI technology featured in a recent partnership with NBCUniversal, a broadcaster of the Games, through things like 3D maps of venues and by pulling up information about specific sports.

The innovative use of cutting-edge technologies marks a step toward enhancing the overall Olympic experience for viewers. The Paris Olympics serves as a platform for different countries to display their latest achievements in world-leading technologies and innovations, said industry insiders.

Hong Yong, an associate research fellow at the e-commerce research institute of the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said that Chinese companies' enthusiasm for Olympics also highlights their commitment and determination to expanding their presence in overseas markets and rising international competitiveness in the high-tech domain.

He further said the implementation of AI technology at Paris 2024 provided athletes with more scientific and personalized training methods, helping improve the level of competition and giving a strong boost to technological advancements of global sporting events.

## Why China's companies are building cloud

## REPORTER'S LOG

By Fan Feifei

Technology has been my beat for more than a decade now — part of my job as a business journalist is to keep a close eye on the latest trends and developments in China's ever-changing high-tech sector. I can tell you some Chinese enterprises have slowed the pace of their "going global" process. They have shifted their focus to the domestic market amid escalating geopolitical tensions and increasing trade restrictions.

However, as the generative artificial intelligence technology, which

exploded with the launch of US startup OpenAI's ChatGPT in late 2022, gathers momentum, an increasing number of Chinese enterprises have begun to recognize the importance of cloud computing technology, which plays a vital role in promoting the application of AI on a large scale.

I noticed a particular trend: Chinese cloud computing companies are not afraid of the anti-globalization wave. They are still scrambling to expand their footprint in cloud service markets worldwide. I think the reason lies in the explosive demand for computing power resources and data-crunching in the process of training and deploying AI-powered large language models or LLMs.

Currently, computing power is serving as a vital foundation for the development of the digital economy.

It is a new engine that can drive data toward realizing its full potential as a factor of production. Computing power also drives the digital transformation of the economy and society. The innovative integration of cloud computing with AI will lower the thresholds for enterprises to acquire and use AI technology.

In recent months, I had the privilege of interviewing many industry insiders in the digital economy domain. Some of them told me accelerating the construction of computing infrastructure like data centers overseas is of great significance. The move, they said, will offer companies from all over the world more cost-effective access to generative AI models, bolster their transformation and upgrading, and allow them to reap technological dividends.

For instance, Alibaba Cloud, the cloud computing unit of Chinese tech heavyweight Alibaba Group Holding Ltd, has announced plans to launch its first cloud region in Mexico and to establish additional data centers in Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and South Korea over the next three years. (In cloud parlance, a "region" is a collection of zones — and each zone has high-bandwidth, low-latency network connections to other zones in the same region.)

The new investment to build new cloud and AI infrastructure across key international markets aims to enhance the cloud and AI product suite for its worldwide customers while enhancing global partnerships and fostering AI talent development to nurture future digital expertise.

Huawei Cloud, the cloud computing arm of Huawei Technologies Co, said in May it had launched a cloud region in Egypt, making it the first company to establish a public cloud in the region. It also announced the opening of a cloud data center in Riyadh, capital of Saudi Arabia, last September, as part of its efforts to expand its online service offerings in the Middle East.

"The establishment of next-generation digital infrastructure like intelligent computing centers and data centers in overseas markets will improve efficiency in the use of computing resources and accelerate enterprises' digitalization push," said Xiang Ligang, director-general of the Information Consumption Alliance, a telecom industry association.

He said Chinese cloud computing enterprises should not only speed up the construction of cloud infrastructure abroad, but also enhance innovative capacities in key software applications, so as to better

serve global clients.

It is undeniable that Chinese enterprises' expanding presence in overseas cloud service markets might face some challenges and compliance risks in local markets.

The enterprises should learn more about relevant laws and regulations, comply with local evolving regulatory policies, speed up localization efforts, and make products and services that cater to local requirements, said Pan Helin, a member of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology's Expert Committee for Information and Communication Economy.

Cloud computing has become essentially indispensable, and organizations deploying generative AI services will look to the public cloud, given the scale of the infrastructure required, said Sid Nag, vice-president and an analyst at Gartner, adding the adoption of generative AI will also support the growth of industry cloud platforms.

## BUSINESS



A visitor checks out the booth of EHang Holdings Ltd during an intelligent industry expo in Tianjin in June. ZHAO ZISHUO / XINHUA

## EHang marks new strides in global air mobility services

Chinese tech firm steps up efforts for commercial use of eVTOL aircraft

By FAN FEIFEI  
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Chinese urban air mobility technology company EHang Holdings Ltd is stepping up efforts to commercially operate electric vertical takeoff and landing aircraft, or eVTOL, in aerial sightseeing, tourism as well as logistics in overseas markets and bolster the development of the local low-altitude economy.

The company's pilotless eVTOL EH216-S recently completed the first passenger-carrying demo flight in Abu Dhabi, marking the first of its kind in the United Arab Emirates and Middle East.

In close coordination with local partners and government departments in the UAE, EHang has been actively engaged in the design and establishment of eVTOL vertiports, in swift preparation for launching commercial routes of urban air mobility.

Hu Huazhi, founder, CEO and chairman of EHang, said, "After securing the approval for passenger-carrying demo flights and conducting the debut flight, we will actively foster collaboration and communication between the General Civil Aviation Authority of the UAE and the Civil Aviation

Administration of China to expedite the progress toward commercial flights of our pilotless aircraft in the UAE."

Hu said the company hopes to introduce safe and reliable pilotless eVTOL aircraft to the global market, thereby offering safe, autonomous and eco-friendly air mobility services to everyone.

Referred to as air taxis, eVTOLs don't require traditional airports or runways. Similar to helicopters, they take off vertically and transition into fixed-wing flight mode in the air, and offer a promising air traffic and sightseeing option while traversing congested big cities.

In December 2023, EHang became a member of the Smart and Autonomous Vehicle Industries Cluster in Abu Dhabi. Led by the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development and the Abu Dhabi Investment Office, SAVI Cluster is dedicated to establishing the city as a key hub for smart and autonomous vehicles.

The company has also established a strategic partnership with Wings Logistics Hub, a local smart mobility and logistics tech company, to facilitate local certification and operations of the EH216 series eVTOLs covering passenger trans-

portation, aerial logistics, and fire-fighting in the UAE.

Under this partnership, Wings Logistics Hub intends to purchase up to 100 units of EHang's EH216 series eVTOL aircraft, demonstrating a strong commitment to integrating advanced aerial transportation solutions into the region's infrastructure.

Its EH216-S pilotless eVTOL aircraft also completed its first autonomous air taxi flight in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, in June, highlighting the huge application potential of pilotless eVTOL aircraft for the region's transportation system.

Conducted in a low-risk area within protected airspace, the flight was critical in helping local authorities set the appropriate regulatory environment for deploying pilotless eVTOL aircraft, thereby enhancing mobility, reducing congestion and promoting sustainability, EHang said.

The EH216-S pilotless eVTOL aircraft has also successfully conducted flights across 12 cities in Japan, showcasing its versatility in various use cases, including aerial sightseeing, island transportation, aerial logistics, and emergency services.

Global market consultancy Roland Berger estimates there will be up to 3,000 air taxis in operation by 2025 worldwide, and this figure will increase exponentially to

100,000 by 2050. However, several technological, infrastructural and legal hurdles remain.

Yu Zhanfu, a partner at Roland Berger, said eVTOL aircraft need to go through full verification regarding safety and technological stability in sparsely populated areas or scenarios such as natural landscape tourist destinations in the early stages before they can truly enter the urban air mobility segment.

Compared with traditional helicopters, eVTOL aircraft are smaller, lighter and require less space for takeoffs and landings. They also have lower operating costs, which will give a big boost to their popularity, Yu said. However, they still face technical challenges and uncertainties in various weather and geological conditions.

EHang said in April that it had obtained a production certificate for its EH216-S passenger-carrying pilotless eVTOL aircraft in China. The certificate, issued by the Civil Aviation Administration of China, is the world's first production certificate granted in the global eVTOL industry. Previously, the EH216-S had obtained the type certificate and the airworthiness certificate from the CAAC.

A report from Morgan Stanley has forecast that the global urban air mobility market will be worth \$1 trillion by 2040 and \$9 trillion by 2050.

## Inland province eyes high-quality future

NANCHANG — Featuring intricately carved beams and vibrantly painted rafters, Tengwang Pavilion stands proudly on the east bank of the Ganjiang River, which winds through the city of Nanchang, capital of East China's Jiangxi Province. The current structure marks the 29th iteration of this pavilion, rebuilt numerous times over its 1,400-year history.

"It has been repeatedly rebuilt thanks to the praise it received from famous poets, and it is a symbol of national glory," said a local cultural and historical expert.

The pavilion was first built in AD 653 by Prince Teng, brother of a Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907) emperor, and showcased China's wealth and pride as one of the largest and wealthiest countries in the world at that time. It gained nationwide fame because of the ornate poem *Preface to Tengwang Pavilion* by Tang Dynasty bard Wang Bo.

Now, the 57-meter tall tower has been reinforced and is attracting domestic and foreign tourists to pay their respects to it as a testament to the historical and cultural glory of Jiangxi.

"Some 1,000 years ago, the world knew of a famous place in China, namely Jingdezhen, the center of porcelain production on the planet," said Jiang Jianxin, director emeritus of the ceramic archaeology institute of Jingdezhen in northern Jiangxi.

Standing on the Tengwang Pavilion, ancients could see fleets loaded with porcelain sailing downstream along the Ganjiang River, heading for coastal Guangdong province, from where the porcelain would be transported to the wider world. These precious porcelain products ultimately became the property of European royal families and Arab nobles.

Once one of the wealthiest regions in ancient China, the gross domestic product of Jiangxi ranked only 15th among 32 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions in the mainland in 2023.

To restore its glory, the province is currently striving to enhance reform and opening-up efforts for high-quality development. Notably, Jingdezhen has introduced a more market-oriented mechanism, as well as modern technologies and concepts, to its porcelain production. The city now attracts around 5,000 foreign porcelain enthusiasts to craft finished products in the city every year.

The measures taken by Jiangxi to support technological innovation have given the ceramics sector new optimism. At Lattice Power, an LED company in Nanchang, ceramics are used to package chips for LED products. The company's high-powered silicon substrate-based LED chips, used for display screens, made China the third country after Japan and the United States to secure intellectual property rights for blue LEDs.

The province has also rebuilt and

expanded its connections with the world. In 2020, it established Nanchang Xiangtang International Land Port, through which many products — not just porcelain — from Jiangxi and nearby provinces are transported via train to the world.

A huge square at the land port recently featured rows of Ford cars, which were manufactured by a joint venture located in Nanchang. Signs on the windows of these cars stated that they were of the required standard and would be sold to buyers in the Middle East.

Other products, including computer accessories, medical equipment, fruits, bags and clothing are transported by railway to Europe and then by ship to South America from Jiangxi. Meanwhile, durian from Thailand and beef from Argentina are imported via the land port.

Currently, the port offers 23 international freight train routes, connecting Nanchang with over 50 countries and regions.

New reform measures in Jiangxi are also improving government efficiency. An enterprise service platform has been established, which provides enterprises with easier access to business information, venture capital and legal assistance.

The time required to complete the procedures for launching a new company has been reduced to three to five days.

"The government shall provide services and help enterprises solve problems and ease worries," said Hu Hai, executive deputy chief of Nanchang's Xihu district government.

The changes in Jiangxi are mirroring China's efforts to achieve national rejuvenation. The 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee held its third plenary session last month, urging the whole country to work hard to build China into a great modern socialist country in all respects, and strive to advance the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on all fronts through Chinese modernization.

The landmark Xiaoping Trail in Nanchang was the only path available for late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping to walk from his residence to the factory where he worked as a laborer in the early 1970s. This was one of the lows of his political life, but at the factory he learned about the poverty of workers and was determined to make a positive change.

In 1978, when Deng started China's reform and opening-up drive, per-capita GDP in the country was less than \$200. The reform process started almost from scratch, but today China is the world's second-largest economy, with per-capita GDP exceeding \$12,000.

Wan Cuihua, who used to work in the same workshop with Deng, said: "On this trail, he had the initial ideas of reform. We are still following in his footsteps."

XINHUA



## BUSINESSINSIGHT

## Economy resilient, with vitality shown in sectors

EAGLE EYE

By Yang Yiyong

China's economy will hopefully continue to stabilize and improve as it still has much leeway for adjustments and remains resilient, if we consider indicators such as its potential economic growth rate.

The already-set all-round reform agenda is set to help the world's second-largest economy regain strong growth momentum and achieve its growth target for this year.

The term "potential economic growth rate" usually refers to the rate of economic growth that can be achieved by optimizing a combination of production factors under existing conditions. It represents the optimal growth level that a country or region can reach under conditions of optimal and full resource allocation.

According to estimates by various institutions and scholars, China's potential economic growth rate is currently between 5.5 percent and 6.5 percent. This range indicates that China's economic growth potential remains relatively large and is still at a mid-to-high level globally.

A report released by the BOC Research Institute, which is part of Bank of China, in January said that China's potential economic growth rate for 2021 and 2025 is calculated to stand at between 5 percent and 5.5 percent. It showed a cautious yet optimistic attitude toward China's potential economic growth in the coming years.

Some factors will have a bearing on a country's potential economic growth rate, including labor force scale, capital accumulation, technological progress and total factor productivity.

As the problem of aging intensifies and the population decreases, the scale of employment in China is expected to continue to shrink in the future, which will have a negative impact on its economic growth.

In recent years, the growth rate of China's fixed-asset investment has also slowed, and the contribution of capital formation to its GDP growth has correspondingly declined.

Although endogenous technological progress and improvements in total factor productivity are important ways to boost the potential economic growth rate, they require sustained innovation and R&D investment.

At present, China's economy still shows significant flexibility and strong resilience in the following aspects.

The nation's economy has been



CAI MENG / CHINA DAILY

continuously recovering and improving, especially after the effective control of the COVID-19 pandemic, with economic activities rapidly resuming. Many international and commercial institutions have raised their expectations for China's economic growth, believing that the nation remains the biggest engine of global economic growth.

Additionally, as the impact of the pandemic diminishes and residents' income levels rise, China's consumer market has quickly rebounded. The performance in July this year was impressive. The contribution of domestic demand to economic growth is continuously increasing, becoming an important driving force for economic growth.

Currently, private investment, an essential part of the market economy, has shown improvement for two consecutive months, indicating that business confidence is being restored. This will help further stimulate market vitality and promote sustained economic growth.

The proportion of the services sector in China's economy is steadily

increasing, and will become a significant driving force for economic growth. The expansion of the services sector helps reduce the unemployment rate, particularly among young people, and promotes high-quality economic development.

China's manufacturing industry is also gradually transforming and upgrading, moving from low-end manufacturing to high-end manufacturing. This will help enhance China's position in the global industrial chain and strengthen economic competitiveness.

In addition, China's fiscal deficit-to-GDP ratio and national debt-to-GDP ratio are relatively low, and monetary policy remains prudent.

This means that China still has ample space to implement more expansionary fiscal and monetary policies. It will help provide necessary economic stimulus when needed, maintaining stable economic growth.

As the national economy enters a new stage of development, macroeconomic policy allocation is becoming more precise. Allocating limited macro-control resources

accurately to key areas will help improve policy effectiveness and promote high-quality economic development.

Moreover, despite sluggish global economic recovery and uncertainties in the international trade environment, China's foreign trade has continued to maintain positive growth. This shows that China's economy has strong international competitiveness and adaptability.

The renminbi exchange rate has remained relatively stable in a complex and volatile international environment, which helps boost the confidence of both domestic and foreign investors in China's economy.

However, to fully attain China's potential economic growth rate, comprehensively deepening reforms is the key.

Such efforts will promote the market-oriented allocation of production factors such as land, labor, capital, technology and data. By establishing and improving public data sharing and data transaction rules, and implementing reforms in higher education disciplines and

specialties, the allocation of various factor resources has been optimized, and the productivity of unit factor resources has been improved, thereby continuously enhancing total factor productivity.

By deepening reforms, China will continue to break down industry barriers and promote market competition, enabling resources to flow more efficiently into areas with higher production efficiency and innovation capacity, thereby increasing the overall economic growth potential.

It will also stimulate the vitality of various market entities, especially the innovation vitality of private enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises. These enterprises have become an important force driving economic growth by continuously exploring new market areas through technological innovation and model innovation, injecting new momentum into economic growth.

China regards innovation as the primary driving force for development, and through the implementation of an innovation-driven development strategy, it has

strengthened technological, industrial and management innovation, continuously improving the quality and efficiency of the economy.

Deepening reforms will also promote the optimization and upgrading of the industrial structure, accelerating the transformation and upgrading of traditional industries and the cultivation and development of emerging industries.

By developing high-tech industries and strategic emerging industries, China has continuously improved its position in the global industrial and value chains, enhancing its economic competitiveness and sustainable development capacity.

China's economy is moving toward a green and low-carbon transformation. By developing industries such as clean energy and energy conservation and environmental protection, China has not only provided new momentum for economic growth, but also made a positive contribution to global efforts to combat climate change.

Nevertheless, new urbanization is an important way to unleash the potential of domestic demand. By accelerating the process of urbanization for the rural migrant population, the huge domestic demand potential of the agricultural migrant population in consumption and public investment has been unleashed, which will provide new momentum for economic growth.

With the increase in residents' income levels and changes in consumption concepts, China's consumer market shows a trend of consumption upgrading. Deepening reforms will promote the healthy development of the consumer market, providing consumers with a richer choice of goods and services, and promoting sustained growth in consumption.

According to data released by the National Bureau of Statistics, China's GDP grew by 5 percent year-on-year in the first half of 2024, showing that its economy has maintained stable growth in a complex and volatile domestic and international environment.

Currently, many institutions are optimistic about China's economic performance in the second half of the year, expecting economic growth to rebound after the gradual implementation of multiple policies. It is expected that the country will achieve its full-year GDP growth rate target of around 5 percent.

*The writer is a senior researcher at the Academy of Macroeconomic Research, which is part of the National Development and Reform Commission. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

## China's exports integrating into global supply chains

MAIN STREET

By Zhong Ninghua

During the global economic recovery and intensifying trade tensions, China's exports continue to attract global attention. In recent years, the country's total exports grew from 17.24 trillion yuan (\$2.41 trillion) in 2019 to 23.77 trillion yuan of late. This period has also witnessed a noticeable trend toward diversification in both export destinations and products.

## Export growth

In 2016, China's exports to the United States were valued at 2.54 trillion yuan. Despite trade frictions initiated by then-president Donald Trump in 2018, US-bound exports had risen to 3.87 trillion yuan by 2022. In 2023, this figure slightly decreased to 3.52 trillion yuan, but it still represented an over 1.3-fold increase from 2016. From January to May 2024, China's exports to the US stood at 1.39 trillion yuan, a 3.6 percent increase year-on-year.

Amid rising inflation in the US, cost-efficient Chinese products have helped US households reduce living

costs and enhance their purchasing power, particularly benefiting middle- and lower-income groups. These benefits have driven the overall increase in China's exports to the US.

Simultaneously, exports to markets involved in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Mexico, Central Asia and Arab nations have shown robust growth. ASEAN is now the largest trading partner of China, with China's exports reaching 3.71 trillion yuan in 2023, maintaining the high level seen in the previous year. The country's exports to Central Asia totaled 436.71 billion yuan in the same year, up 53.77 percent year-on-year. Exports to Arab countries amounted to 1.28 trillion yuan last year, an 11.72 percent increase year-on-year. Notably, exports to the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia increased by 9.78 percent and 19.9 percent, respectively, year-on-year in 2023.

From January to May this year, exports to these regions continued to rise. Exports to ASEAN totaled 1.68 trillion yuan, up 13.5 percent year-on-year, with notable increases to Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Indonesia. Exports to Central Asia amounted to 179.22 billion yuan, up 20.36 percent year-on-year. Exports to Arab countries amounted to 581.93 billion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 14.79 percent, with

exports to the UAE growing by 18.82 percent and to Saudi Arabia by 15.28 percent.

**The rise in green energy-related products not only promotes trade with various regions, but also supports the global shift toward green and low-carbon production.**

## Green evolution

With diversified export destinations, China's range of products sold overseas has broadened. A few years ago, clothing, furniture and home appliances dominated exports. In 2023, electric passenger vehicles, lithium-ion batteries and solar panels had become the fastest-growing export goods, totaling 1.06 trillion yuan, an increase of 29.9 percent. The rise in green energy-related products not only promotes trade with various regions, but also supports the global shift toward green and low-carbon production.

Private and foreign-invested enterprises are key to China's exports. In 2023, the number of foreign trade operators with import and export records for the first time exceeded 600,000, including 556,000 private enterprises. Private enterprises accounted for 14.74 trillion yuan of exports, representing 62 percent of the total export value for that year. Foreign enterprises exported 6.78 trillion yuan, accounting for 28.5 percent of the national total. The establishment of 21,764 new foreign-invested enterprises marked a 17.4 percent year-on-year increase in the number of such enterprises.

As China adjusts its export structure, many foreign firms are reshaping their investment strategies within the country. Production lines are shifting from mobile phones, computers and home appliances to high-tech products such as new displays and high-performance batteries. Notably, investment in research and development by foreign firms is growing.

For instance, BMW Group announced a 20-billion-yuan investment plan for new energy vehicle production at its Shenyang, Liaoning province base last year. Likewise, AstraZeneca, a multinational biopharmaceutical company, invested \$475 million in a new drug plant in Wuxi, Jiangsu province. From January to May 2024, the manufacturing sector attracted 117.1

billion yuan in foreign investment, while that in high-tech manufacturing stood at 50.41 billion yuan, with its share in total investment rising by 2.7 percentage points compared with a year ago. These changes reflect China's robust industrial and supply chains in emerging fields, such as NEVs, and highlight the overall upgrade in the country's industrial structure.

## Market expansion

Against a complex global economic and political backdrop, Chinese companies are expanding investments all over the world to tap wider global markets. In 2022, China's total outbound direct investment in all industries was close to 985.37 billion yuan. In 2023, it exceeded 1 trillion yuan, marking a 5.7 percent increase year-on-year, with a primary focus on Southeast Asia, Africa and Latin America, where those investments have driven local economic development and employment. From January to May, China's total industrial investment abroad reached 497.85 billion yuan, up 13.20 percent year-on-year.

Chinese companies are transforming into multinational corporations, deeply participating in global supply chains and integrating into global resources such as raw materials and components. By bringing technology and innovation to other

countries, Chinese companies have helped upgrade local industries and improve efficiency.

The growth of China's exports is both driven by, and offers a solution to, major global challenges, including high inflation, poverty and global warming.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, poverty rates have risen in some developing countries. According to the 2023 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index report by the United Nations Development Programme, approximately 1 billion people live in acute multidimensional poverty globally, half of whom are children. Since 2020, the extreme poverty rate has increased for the first time since 1998. More cost-efficient products are needed to improve the living standards of poor populations.

Additionally, global warming is accelerating, with 2023 marking the highest global average temperature since records began in 1850. Extreme weather events such as heavy rains, hurricanes and hail are becoming more frequent. Addressing these challenges requires establishing an integrated trade system. Such a system facilitates efficient integration, benefits disadvantaged populations and promotes green, low-carbon development.

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## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Neighbors' adhering to socialist path is right way to build community with a shared future

It is undoubtedly a common expectation of Beijing and Hanoi that the ongoing visit to China of To Lam, general secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee and president of Vietnam, can help further synergize the two countries' joint efforts to advance together along the socialist path, build a community with a shared future, and safeguard international fairness and justice.

Lam said recently that his country has always given top priority to developing relations with China, which is the only country that meets all the priority factors of Vietnam's foreign policy. Choosing China as the destination for his first overseas visit since he was elected chief of the CPV on Aug 3 fully reflects the high importance Hanoi attaches to developing relations between the two parties and the two countries.

The ardor and earnestness Vietnam has demonstrated in that regard has always been reciprocated by China, which offers its sincerity and full support for cooperation in return. As President Xi Jinping said in his signed article published in the Nhan Dan Newspaper of Vietnam at the end of last year before his visit to the country, the Chinese side always takes it as a priority in its neighborhood diplomacy to develop relations with Vietnam.

China not only values its traditional friendship with Vietnam, but is also committed to enhancing their common interest with mutually beneficial cooperation so as to keep their "camaraderie plus brotherhood" relationship thriving in the new era, enabling it to deliver more benefits to the two peoples.

On the basis of their fruitful 15-year comprehensive strategic partnership, China and Vietnam agreed on building a community with a shared future that carries strategic significance during Xi's visit to Hanoi, which has served to push the relations between the two countries and the two parties to a new strategic height.

Lam's three-day visit starting on Sunday is set to produce a series of agreements on cooperation projects that will substantiate future mutual efforts to help translate that vision into reality, and add new substance to the principles of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness that guide their relations.

China has long been Vietnam's largest trading partner, and Vietnam is China's biggest trading partner in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the fourth-largest globally. The China-Vietnam bilateral trade volume reached \$230 billion in 2023, accounting for about one-fourth of the latter's foreign trade.

The two countries are now looking to accelerate the docking of the Belt and Road Initiative and the Two Corridors and One Economic Circle strategy, and broaden cooperation in such areas as connectivity, green energy and critical minerals.

That being said, as long as the two sides stay focused on the right direction of development of their respective party and country, the two neighbors have no reason to allow their maritime disputes to be leveraged by any external party to sow discord among them. They should act on the common understandings reached by their leaders, properly manage their differences on maritime issues, and jointly look for mutually acceptable solutions.

The more some are trying to drive a wedge between them, the more efforts they should make to vigorously promote cooperation and communication to build an enabling external environment for their respective development and to realize long-term stability and security in the region.

Both China and Vietnam value the importance of dialogue, consultation and peaceful cooperation, and firmly uphold the basic norms of international relations underpinned by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. They should support each other on issues involving their respective core interests and major concerns, and maintain close coordination in regional and international cooperation mechanisms.

It is anticipated that the Vietnamese leader's visit will inject more positive energy into the two neighbors' joint efforts to promote their long-term development and regional peace and stability.

## US key to unlocking gateway to cease-fire

Speaking at the United Nations Security Council Briefing on the Situation in the Middle East last week, China's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Fu Cong, pointed out that two months ago, when pushing for Security Council Resolution 2735, the United States claimed that Israel had accepted a cease-fire agreement. But that instead of credible signs of Israel's commitment to a cease-fire, what was being seen was ever-expanding military operations and ever-increasing civilian casualties. He also correctly pointed out that the US has enough influence over Israel to push it to stop its military operations and to negotiate in good faith for an immediate and durable cease-fire.

Instead, the US is continuing to string the same old line. On Thursday, mediators from the US, Qatar and Egypt said they had presented a proposal for a cease-fire and hostage release deal that "closes the remaining gap" between Israel and Hamas.

US President Joe Biden said on Friday: "We are closer than we have ever been."

Any agreement that suffices to bring the brutal conflict between Israel and Hamas to an immediate end would of course be a tremendous accomplishment. It would not only stop the humanitarian crisis in the region that has been worsening on a daily basis, but also prevent a wider Middle East war.

But at this point at least, neither Israel nor Hamas sounds as though a deal is in the offing.

"We are not on the verge of an agreement or a real negotiation, but are faced with directives imposed by the US," senior Hamas spokesman Samou Abu Zuhri said.

It is not only the US that is supposedly trying to push a deal into place, France and the United Kingdom have sent their top diplomats to Israel to deliver the message of urgency in ending the hostilities. British Foreign Secretary David Lammy and French Foreign Minister Stephane Sejourne both underscored now is a key moment "because it could lead to peace or war".

Continuing or expanding the present conflict would prove disastrous not only for the two parties themselves, but for the civilian population in Gaza, which is paying a heavy price for the US' indulgence of its ally.

But neither Israel nor Hamas seems ready to accept the other's latest conditions for a cease-fire and hostage swap, as their conditions are still too divergent for now. Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu government insists its conditions for a deal remain unchanged, which are unacceptable to Hamas. And Hamas remains suspicious of Israel's sincerity, and is still counting on Teheran's and its regional allies' promised strikes to weaken Israel's resolve to pursue its war aims.

Yet despite the worsening humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian enclave and the rising death toll that have drained international sympathy for Israel, the Netanyahu government has shown no sign of de-escalating its military operations in Gaza. Nor has Washington made corresponding moves to press for de-escalation. Instead, both the Biden administration and the Republican presidential candidate, Donald Trump, have reiterated their respective support for Israel, the former with new arms sales. That may at least partly explain why a senior Hamas official said there had been no progress in Qatar, and the mediators were "selling illusions".

Israel has just issued a new evacuation order to make way for its further military operation in Gaza. There have been new reports of violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians in occupied territories.

Such developments certainly are not conducive to striking a deal.

China has reiterated that the key to avoiding the deterioration and escalation of the situation lies in achieving a comprehensive and lasting cease-fire in Gaza without delay. It urges the US to act responsibly and take sincere actions to push Israel to stop its military operations in Gaza as soon as possible.

## Cai Meng



## Opinion Line

## Lancang-Mekong cooperation leaves no space for divisive wedge

The ninth Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, on Friday issued a substantial news release reaffirming the commitment of the six countries along the river to further strengthen their across-the-board cooperation, ranging from trade and the economy to fighting cross-border crimes, environmental protection and disaster prevention and relief.

Senior diplomats from China, Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos took advantage of the meeting to carry out multiple bilateral and multilateral meetings on many issues of common concern and interest in the region and beyond.

They vowed to work together to maintain the rapid development momentum of the Lancang-Mekong cooperation mechanism, deepen comprehensive and pragmatic collaboration, enhance mutual trust,

expand common interests, further strengthen good-neighborly friendship, and jointly build a Lancang-Mekong community with a shared future for peace and prosperity.

The amicable atmosphere in which the talks were carried out in good faith and the achievements of the meetings indicate that, despite some external parties' attempts to sow discord among these countries, they remain vigilant about the risks of being distracted from their development agenda. Serving as a piece on the board of certain major countries in their geopolitical games harms their national interests and also risks sabotaging regional stability.

The lessons of history have made them clearheaded that only through cooperation and communication can they continuously increase their common interests and promote a stable and peaceful external development environment.

That's why, as the meeting in Chiang Mai shows, all six countries firmly adhere to multilateralism and open regionalism and resolutely resist zero-sum games and the calls for "decoupling".

As Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said at the meeting, China is willing to strengthen cooperation with the other five countries in artificial intelligence technology, innovation, high-tech research and aerospace programs. That fully demonstrates the earnestness of China to share its development opportunities with its neighbors, as Beijing believes regional common development serves all parties and a widening development gap between neighbors can not only cause a host of cross-border issues but also create the space for a wedge to be easily driven between them by external parties looking to play one country against another.

—LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

## NEV battery recycling can turn waste into treasure

The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology recently started soliciting public opinions on a revised industry standard for the recycling and disposal of NEV power batteries. The revision covers the whole industry chain of the fast-growing business and aims to standardize and strengthen supervision of relevant practices that vary in different places.

Data show that in 2023, the total amount of retired NEV power batteries in China exceeded 580,000 tons. It is estimated that by 2030, the scale of the power battery recycling market will exceed 100 billion yuan (\$13.96 billion).

NEV power batteries include certain components containing harmful chemicals. If they can be recycled

and utilized properly, not only will dangerous pollution be avoided but it will also save tremendous amounts of raw materials and resources. The number of new energy vehicles on Chinese roads has been increasing fast since 2016. As the service life of the power batteries ranges from five to eight years, the country is facing the first wave of NEV power battery retirement.

But the battery recycling industry is still in its infancy. Statistics show that only one-quarter of used NEV power batteries are now properly recycled. Although there exist dozens of industry standards in the industry, they are either outdated or weak in compelling force. The newly revised document is expected to change that situation and serve as a compulsory

national standard for the industry.

Upstream and downstream enterprises of the NEV power battery industry also need to strengthen their collaboration and explore new business models to ensure that the discarded batteries become a valuable source of reusable materials.

While many developed economies are trying to catch up with China in power battery technology, the revised industry standard should play a role in prompting enterprises to take advantage of their know-how and market status to markedly increase their input into R&D in used battery recycling, which will become a new track of the NEV industry and help spur green development.

—ECONOMIC DAILY

## What They Say

## Huge and targeted inputs harvested gold medal tally

The heated discussion some Indian media outlets have sparked on the sizable Indian team's zero-gold performance at the just-concluded Paris Olympics represents a good beginning for the South Asian giant to think seriously about how to seek breakthroughs in competitive sports on the world stage.

That Pakistan obtained one gold medal, in the men's javelin at the Games, the first gold India's neighbor has won at the Olympics in about 40 years, has further spurred the discussions.

Some Indians have pointed to the Chinese team's good performance in Paris — China grabbed 40 gold medals the same as the United States — urging the Indian government to heed the lessons of China.

That the two countries have similar population size and both are at similar development stages are the major reasons why some Indians have made the comparison. But

those do not mean China's experience in sports is of direct reference value to India.

According to the Indian media, the overall investment in sports in the country is only about 1.13 percent of that of China. Although both are developing economies, the sport market, industry and infrastructure in China are markedly more developed than those in India.

China has demonstrated its unique institutional strengths in competitive sports, except soccer. Under its pyramid-style State-run sports system that stretches from the grassroots level to the national teams, China can concentrate its funds and resources to cultivate the most talented athletes standing out from a large talent pool, providing them with scientific and professional training since childhood.

Also China attaches great importance to the development of mass sports and youth sports. Efforts in

this regard have been made in a systemic way in combination with the country's endeavors to promote national fitness, sports economy and industry.

The country has stuck to the two-track model of development in sport long before its dazzling debut in the LA Games in 1984, when it won 15 golds, and ranked fourth on the table in terms of the number of gold medals won.

Those in India looking forward to seeing their country overtake China on the medal table of the Olympics should not only focus on the gold medals but China's long-term huge input into the sports sector and relevant industries over the past more than seven decades.

It is the huge part of an iceberg below the surface of the water that truly floats the whole colossus, and it is the deep root that ensures the tree can stand tall.

—GUANCHANG

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## COMMENT



China and the World Roundtable | China-Brazil Relations

**Editor's note:** Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, China and Brazil have been contributing to global peace, stability and prosperity. The two sides have also maintained stable economic development while spreading their global influence. Three experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

Mauricio Santoro

## A partnership to build a multipolar world

There was a time when only partnerships between rich countries (of the Global North) carried any significance in international relations. Not anymore. Brazil and China are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic relations as one of the key interactions in the emerging world order.

From difficult beginnings, Brazil and China have built strong economic and political ties in several areas — from trade and investment to climate change. At the core of their common agendas are two main goals: helping each other prosper, and working together to build a multipolar world order in which power is distributed in a fair manner and developing countries get their due share and say.

In 1974, Brazil was ruled by General Ernesto Geisel, head of a conservative military regime, while Chairman Mao Zedong was at the helm of the Chinese nation. Despite their different political outlooks, both governments were pragmatic enough to recognize in each other as emerging economies and important players of the Global South. The other common factor was their similar stances on global affairs in international organizations such as the United Nations.

In the initial years of reform and opening-up, China looked to Brazil's impressive fast-paced growth in the 20th century as a source of inspiration for successfully launching development projects such as special economic zones. The Brazilian hydropower dam on the Paraná River was a reference to build the Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River, and the Carajás mining complex in the Amazon has worked in cooperation with Chinese miners.

Also, working together, Chinese and Brazilian scientists and diplomats developed the innovative China-Brazil Earth Resource Satellite program to build satellites — five have been built so far.

In 1993, China and Brazil entered into a "strategic partnership", making Brazil the first developing country to do so. A common

aspect of their foreign policies today, the concept of strategic partnership was new at the time. The decision to establish a strategic partnership suggested Brasília and Beijing realized their relationship was exceptionally important, beyond daily concerns. And in 2012, China and Brazil elevated bilateral relations to a "comprehensive strategic partnership".

The global commodity boom in the 2000s gave the Sino-Brazilian partnership economic muscle. A rising China with double-digit growth created excellent opportunities for Brazil's agribusiness, and the mining and oil sectors, with its exports, led by soybean, iron



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ore and oil, skyrocketing. In 2009, China became Brazil's largest trade partner, replacing the United States from a position the latter had held since the 19th century. Sino-Brazilian trade is still increasing, and the bilateral trade volume last year exceeded \$157 billion.

For China, Brazil, with a market of more than 200 million consumers, is one of the biggest trade and economic partners outside Asia — behind only the US and Germany. Today, Chinese companies export industrial products to Brazil and have made massive investments in the country, building infrastructure facilities such as ports and

railroads, while creating jobs. Major Chinese enterprises such as the State Grid, Huawei and BYD are significant investors in Brazil, well-liked in the Brazilian market and operate without the political restrictions they often face in the West.

Over the past years, the Sino-Brazilian partnership has been extended to new areas, such as environmental protection. Since the Paris Agreement of 2015, Brazil and China have been coordinating their climate diplomacy and playing bolder roles in the fight against climate change, by developing green technologies and renewable energy like wind and solar power. Chinese companies have a significant economic presence in the Amazon and have been taking appropriate measures for the preservation of the ecology. For example, COFCO only purchases soybean that carry a certification proving they were not grown on farms created by illegally clearing forest land.

Besides, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and his Chinese counterpart share many values, including the commitment to build a community of the Global South, in order to promote common development and help reform the world order to make it fairer and equitable. Both leaders are also opposed to the conflicts and tensions triggered by the US-led West, including the Israel-Palestine and Russia-Ukraine conflicts.

Moreover, Brazil is recovering from a long decade of political crisis and economic stagnation, and looks to China as an able and trusted partner that can help it overcome the many challenges it faces. For Beijing, too, Brasília is a trusted partner which supports China in economic, trade and other disputes with the United States and the European Union. Going beyond bilateral relations, Brazil and China are also partners in several groupings, including BRICS and the G20. And they will continue to support each other both in normal times and in times of crisis.

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SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

Renato Baumann

## Golden jubilee of Brazil-China diplomatic relations

The first Chinese-Brazilian project dates back to 1812, when the then Brazilian emperor brought in Chinese workers to develop a tea plantation near Rio de Janeiro, the country's capital at the time. In 1900, a new wave of Chinese immigrants landed in São Paulo. Economic relations between Brazil and China had then been sporadic and remained so until 1949.

Diplomatic relations between the Federative Republic of Brazil and the People's Republic of China were established in 1974. This year therefore marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between China and Brazil. Important as it is, the 50 years of Sino-Brazilian relations disguise the fact that Brazil had no diplomatic relations with China for no less than 25 years before 1974 due to ideological prejudice. The pragmatic approach adopted by both sides led to the resumption of formal diplomatic relations, following the thaw in Sino-US relations.

In the five decades since the establishment of formal diplomatic ties, trade and investment between the two sides have surpassed every forecast. The most well-known and frequently mentioned fact is that China has been Brazil's largest trade partner for 15 consecutive years, be it as a destination for Brazilian products or as a source of Brazilian imports. China has contributed for several years to Brazil's trade surplus.

With a limited amount of arable land and inadequate water sources, coupled with rapid urbanization and rising wages, China may increasingly rely on imports of food and raw materials, even though it has the capacity to ensure its own food security. Also, to fuel its GDP growth, even at a slower pace than before, China will require raw materials, minerals in particular. That is good news for Brazilian exporters.

Yet the growing concern among Brazilians over their country's possible "overdependence" on China has prompted the country's authorities to diversify the export structure. The importance of Sino-Brazilian economic ties goes beyond the trade in goods, though. Chinese entities have invested more than \$70 billion in Brazil, with about three-fourths of the amount going to the energy sector. Of late, Chinese automobile manufacturers have also become active as investors in Brazil.

The other important dimension of Sino-Brazilian economic relations is the technological partnership. Among other things, Brazil and China have jointly built a series of satellites, an important tool for providing information on the weather.

Furthermore, China has provided a good deal of resources for Brazil via



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loans. For instance, during Brazilian vice-president Geraldo Alckmin's recent visit to China to attend the COSBAN (High-Level Sino-Brazilian Commission on Consultation and Cooperation) meeting, China promised to provide Brazil with a \$1.3 billion loan from the China Development Bank to Brazil's National Development Bank and Banco do Brasil, and a \$500 million loan from the Export-Import Bank of China to the Banco do Brasil. During the visit, the two sides also agreed to revive the China-Brazil Fund, established in 2015 but not yet operational.

China's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) emphasizes that the efforts made to realize a number of goals might contribute to strengthening cooperation between the two sides in sectors such as healthcare and biotechnology — these two sectors have high development and growth potential.

Brazil, on its part, has shown renewed interest in overcoming infrastructure constraints on its borders and getting access to the Pacific coast of South America. And it is expected that Chinese investors might contribute significantly to these ventures, by initiating good, technically sound projects.

This is not to say Sino-Brazilian relations are free of challenges.

Among the challenges the two sides have to overcome are the strategic use of non-tariff measures by the two countries, the discrepancies between the tariff levels of China and Brazil — which hurts Brazilian exports — Brazil's resistance to formally join the Belt and Road Initiative, and China's trade disputes with big Western economies which impacts Brazilian productivity, among others.

Since the two countries are also founding members of BRICS, they can count on a mechanism other than COSBAN and international forums to achieve common goals. As a matter of fact, BRICS is being increasingly seen as a multilateral platform that can help improve global governance.

In today's rapidly changing world where global institutional architecture is being challenged from different angles, there is an urgent need to set clear development and partnership goals. This does not mean that countries should opt out of the partnerships they have with other countries in order to establish a partnership with another country. But a new path of equilibrium must be developed, so as to accommodate new, determining factors and new players. Hopefully, deeper economic and trade relations between Brazil and China will help the Brazilian government to better integrate the country's economy with the global economy.

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

Yue Yunxia

## Beijing, Brasilia forge new South-South cooperation model

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Brazil. Over the past five decades, the bilateral relationship has become a new model of South-South cooperation for sustainable development.

Despite the distance of 18,000 kilometers between them, China and Brazil have set many records in bilateral relations. Brazil was the first developing country to establish a strategic partnership with China and became the first country in Latin America to upgrade it to a comprehensive strategic partnership. For 15 consecutive years, China has been Brazil's largest trading partner, top export destination and main source of investment. The two sides have also strengthened collaboration within the frameworks of the United Nations, the G20, BRICS and the World Trade Organization to defend the rights and interests of emerging market economies and developing countries.

China-Brazil cooperation has seen accelerated growth, with the two countries agreeing in 2014 to build a global community of shared future. On the economic front, the Sino-Brazilian trade volume has been growing steadily, from more than \$10 billion in 2004 to \$100 billion in 2018, and is expected to exceed \$200 billion this year. Chinese investment in Brazil, too, has grown over the years, and now accounts for about 47 percent of China's total investment in South America.

Institutionally, the two sides have inked innumerable agreements. At the start of their diplomatic relations in 1974, the two countries signed three important bilateral agreements and documents. The list of agreements has now increased to more than 120, covering fields as varied as diplomacy, trade, technology, culture and education.

The rapid growth of China-Brazil relations is based on mutual political trust and strategic communication, and the two countries respect each other's development paths. Yet trade is the cornerstone of China-Brazil economic relations. Four main factors have been contributing to the deepening of bilateral relationship.

The first is the complementary nature of China-Brazil economic and trade cooperation. China mainly exports high-tech manufactured goods to Brazil and imports primary products, raw materials, agriproducts and some manufactured goods. But despite growing steadily, bilateral trade has created a structural disequilibrium, which the two sides have made serious efforts to correct. Still, China's trade deficit with Brazil increased from \$1 billion in 2001 to \$63 billion in 2023, suggesting Brazil reaps rich benefits from trade with China.

The two countries have tried to improve the quality of their cooperation, too. China's investments in Brazil cover high-tech sectors, such as energy, manufacturing, communications, and large-scale infrastructure projects, including thermal power plants, ultra-high-voltage (UHV) transmission lines, natural gas pipelines and port dredging, which have enhanced Brazil's manufacturing capacity and improved the country's business environment. Brazil, on its part, widened the range of its export products to China from 956 HS 6-digit commodity codes in 2001 to 1,489 HS 6-digit CC in 2023.

Second, China and Brazil have extended their cooperation to fields such as technology, the green economy, the digital economy, artificial intelligence, aerospace and healthcare, with the aim of improving the well-being of the people in the two countries.

Cultural exchanges between the two sides, too, have flourished, with many cultural events being held in the two countries to expand people-to-people exchanges and improve communication. While Brazilian nationals can enjoy 72/144-hour visa-free transit at 37 Chinese ports, Brazil has extended its visa-free transit policy to Chinese official passports. And direct flights between Beijing and Sao Paulo have resumed.

Third, China-Brazil ties have transformed into a long-term development-oriented strategic cooperation. Brazil supports the internationalization of the yuan, and the countries use each other's currencies to settle bilateral trade. China supports Brazil's high-tech and energy transition, and has placed a batch of orders with Brazilian aircraft manufacturer Embraer. China has also helped complete the landmark Belo Monte UHV transmission project, which helps Brazil to supply electricity to far-off, even remote, places in an environmentally-friendly manner.

And fourth, China and Brazil have been working together to boost not only mutual development but also global development. The two countries are committed to safeguarding the rights and interests of the Global South. For example, China-Brazil cooperation in bulk commodities including iron ore has helped enhance developing countries' pricing power, and the two countries' cooperation within BRICS promotes the development of a fairer, equitable and just global governance system, in which the voices of the Global South are heard.

The two countries have also been trying to help resolve global disputes and conflicts. In fact, the joint Sino-Brazilian proposal for a political resolution to the Russia-Ukraine conflict garnered the support of 45 countries within a week.

The four factors behind the deepening of China-Brazil cooperation can also help them achieve common development. And while China's pursuit of high-quality development and high-level opening-up and Brazil's new industrial policy have created new opportunities for both sides, their deepening mutually beneficial cooperation will usher in a new phase of progressive cooperation among the countries of the Global South and promote global governance reform.

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



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## GLOBAL VIEWS

ZINE BARKA

## Long-time friends and natural partners

Algeria will work with China to take Arab-China and Africa-China cooperation to new heights

Established in October 2000, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation is a platform for political dialogue and a multilateral mechanism for South-South cooperation, based on the principles of equality, mutual trust and mutual benefit.

In this regard, Africa and China have come a long way to achieve a perfect convergence of views and interests, within the framework of a comprehensive strategic partnership that is being expanded and amplified through agreements and treaties.

This is dynamic and concrete testimony that between China and Africa there is a long tradition of friendship, exchanges and cooperation, based on a solid foundation of values and principles of the rejection of colonialism and imperialist domination that was imposed on many African countries at the time.

An example of the spirit of China-Africa friendship and cooperation is the friendly relations between Algeria and China.

The friendship between Algeria and China was formed a long time ago. No business interest was behind this, but a common and shared philosophy of fighting and standing against colonialism and human exploitation which are the solid foundation of the China-Algeria friendship. And this exceptional relationship has grown stronger over the years. The data and the projects undertaken are real proofs of the consolidation of the friendship between the two countries.

Relations between China and Algeria are supported by historical and diplomatic ties and have developed into commercial partnerships as well as having socio-cultural aspects. China has provided material support, including a medical team, shipments of wheat, school equipment, and a \$50 million low-interest loan in the past decades. More recently, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, China started to deliver much-needed medical equipment to Algeria, including respirators, medical protective clothes and screening kits.

Besides, China contributed to several significant development projects, particularly in construc-

tion and infrastructure, such as the new airport of Algiers, buildings of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Constitutional Court, the Olympic Stadium of Oran, the 1,216-kilometer-long East-West highway, and the construction of what is the third-largest mosque in the world.

Trade between the two countries is also flourishing. China has recently surpassed France as the top supplier to Algeria. Algeria endorsed the Belt and Road Initiative in 2018, and both countries signed a three-year cooperation plan for 2022-24. Furthermore, they have recently signed their second five-year plan for the period 2022-26.

The plan aims to further intensify contacts and cooperation between Algeria and China in all fields. The Algerian government is eager to attract FDI by offering generous tax exemptions and other reductions. In July 2022, the New Law No 22-18 for the Promotion of Investment in Algeria was signed. The purpose of this new law is to "lay down the rules governing investment, define the rights and obligations of investors, and establish incentive schemes applicable to investments in the economic activities of production of goods and services, carried out by natural or legal persons, national or foreign, resident or nonresident". Its provisions are designed to "encourage investment to develop priority sectors of activity with high added value, ensure sustainable and balanced territorial development, and enhance natural resources and local raw materials". It also aims to "promote technology transfer and develop innovation and the knowledge-based economy, generalize the use of new technologies, boost job creation, promote the skills of human resources, and strengthen and improve the competitiveness of the national economy and its export capacity".

The most important aspect of this new law is to enshrine "the freedom to invest", as well as "transparency and equality in the treatment of investments". To this end, a High National Committee for Investment attached to the presidency of the republic has been established, which is responsible for deciding on appeals brought by investors.

To consolidate its relations with China, a second five-year plan

2022-26 has been put in place within the framework of comprehensive strategic cooperation. The signing of this strategic plan is intended to be "a strengthening of the comprehensive strategic partnership agreement signed in 2014" and a consecration of the willingness of the two countries to strengthen Algerian-Chinese relations and promote them at the highest levels, in line with the aspirations of the two friendly countries. Algeria has thus become the first Arab country to establish such a level of partnership with Beijing.

During the official visit of the Algerian president to China in July 2023, 19 cooperation agreements and memoranda were signed to further strengthen bilateral relations, covering various sectors such as rail transport, technology transfer, agricultural cooperation and communications, as well as sports, investment and trade cooperation. Other memoranda were also signed in the fields of urban planning, scientific research, justice, social development, renewable energy, hydrogen and other sectors.

On the Arab-African continent, Algeria thinks highly of the important role played by the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum and the FOCAC in advancing Arab-China and Africa-China relations. Algeria will work with China to take Arab-China and Africa-China cooperation to new heights and deliver more benefits to the Algerian and Chinese people.

Among the recent economic projects initiated by the two countries, the Gara Djebilet megaproject is a notable highlight. It is a strategic project for the construction of the iron ore processing plant at one of the largest reserves in the world, with an estimated 3.5 billion tons of ore, entrusted to an Algerian mining industrial group (SONAREM) in partnership with two Chinese consortiums, CMH and Shanghai Delong Steel.

The second megaproject in this region of southern Algeria relates to the construction of the Bechar-Tindouf-Gara Djebilet Railway that stretches 950 kilometers in southern Algeria. This is a huge challenge, both technical and financial, that the country wants to take up in the coming years. The first construction sites have already been launched, with the help of the China Railway Construction Corporation.

Let us conclude by mentioning another aspect of the partnership between Algeria and China, which relates to culture. In July, a Chinese construction company officially set up a project to build the Palace of Culture and Entertainment in a working-class suburb of Algiers.

This is China's second cultural donation to Algeria, after that of the Algiers Opera, which "demonstrates the depth and solidity of this privileged relationship and the sincere friendship between the peoples and leaders of the two countries". This "precious gift" covers an area of 18,000 square meters, and will house several structures including a large reading room, workshops, multimedia rooms, a cinema and three exhibition rooms, in addition to other structures that will be built on the land adjacent to the project, such as a youth center, administrative offices, a children's nursery, technical rooms, handball and football fields, and a square dedicated to outdoor activities.

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SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

ZHENG XIANWU AND TIAN SHIHUI

## True blue

China is actively deepening maritime cooperation with ASEAN in response to the strategic pressure from the US

As the strategic competition between China and the United States intensifies, Southeast Asia has become a key arena. And the maritime sector has become a key battleground where the US seeks to contain and counter China in this area.

To consolidate the US' maritime dominance in the Asia-Pacific region, the Joe Biden administration has pushed maritime issues in the region toward politicization, militarization and ideological confrontation. The US "ASEANization" of maritime issues is especially evident after the Biden administration announced a \$60 million commitment to support the implementation of the maritime pillar of the ASEAN outlook on the "Indo-Pacific" and launched new regional maritime initiatives.

Besides, the Biden administration aims to build an "Indo-Pacific" maritime alliance system. This system is hinged on alliances such as Washington's partnerships with Tokyo, Canberra and Manila, linked by frameworks such as the Quad (US-Japan-India-Australia) and AUKUS (Australia-UK-US), and constructed across the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It is supported by military actions from the US Navy and Coast Guard. This system has a clear objective of countering China and integrates a deterrence strategy against China. In contrast, China actively upholds a "dialogue rather than confrontation, partnership rather than alliance" approach, prioritizing cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and focusing on neighboring countries and major powers to build a blue partnership network.

As a key participant in East Asian and broader regional governance, ASEAN has been promoting the solution of regional maritime issues through its cooperation framework centered on the "ASEAN plus" mechanism. Amid great power competition, ASEAN-led platforms are likely to become the only institutional option for dialogue aimed at peacefully resolving the regional maritime issues. However, the strategic competition between China and the US makes it difficult for ASEAN to demonstrate sufficient leadership and authority within its own maritime cooperation mechanisms, creating opportunities for Washington and Beijing to engage in the alignment of issues with the regional bloc and supplement regional maritime order construction.

First, ASEAN has not only expanded, institutionalized and standardized its internal defense cooperation but has also deepened defense cooperation with external major powers into sensitive areas. From 2018 to 2023, ASEAN member states conducted their first joint

naval exercises with China, the US, Russia, and India, incorporating global and regional powers into ASEAN-led defense cooperation, thereby demonstrating ASEAN's influence and decision-making capability in defense matters.

Second, ASEAN tends to prioritize economic and nontraditional security issues with a focus on development and security, while de-emphasizing political and traditional security issues, the latter being the focus of attention from Washington. The US has been engaging Southeast Asian countries in large-scale naval exercises in the South China Sea, such as the US-Thailand Cobra Gold, US-Philippines Balikatan, US-Philippines Kamandag, and US-Indonesia Super Garuda Shield exercises. Additionally, the Pentagon is optimizing its military deployments in the region, including rotating Marine Corps units and military bases in Southeast Asia, to strengthen its forward military presence in the South China Sea and surrounding areas. Meanwhile, the China-led BRI adheres to a goal, action, and outcome-oriented approach, which has enhanced ASEAN's economic resilience and potential by strategically planning and implementing various initiatives. China tends to offer policy guidance and provide funding for the 10-nation bloc's economic and development plans, such as infrastructure projects like the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor, the development of deep-water ports in Myanmar and container terminals in Cambodia.

To avoid choosing sides between China and the US, ASEAN tends to move forward with simultaneous cooperation with both countries, using balanced cooperation and corresponding reconciliation to offset the conflict risks brought by US militarization.

Rooted in shared visions, values, international law frameworks, and cooperative outcomes, the US "Indo-Pacific" strategy and the ASEAN outlook on the "Indo-Pacific" are increasingly converging and closely "aligned", making the "ASEANization" and the "Indo-Pacificization" convergence of regional maritime issues a possible risk. Additionally, as the maritime sector has become a crucial entry point for the US to contain China, Washington has sought to exacerbate disputes between China and neighboring countries over maritime boundaries and resources disputes, encouraging unilateral provocations by South China Sea claimants, and undermining the peaceful resolution of the disputes framework painstakingly formed by ASEAN and China. Against this backdrop, China is actively deepening maritime cooperation with ASEAN.

First, ASEAN-led platforms are important channels for resolving regional maritime issues, helping to alleviate regional tensions and enhance regional strategic autonomy. In October 2023, China and ASEAN completed the second review of the single draft negotiating text of the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea as scheduled.

The third review on the negotiating text was also launched. This progress reflects that the power to set regional rules is in the hands of regional countries rather than hegemonic powers. It also helps to thwart attempts from the US to contain and encircle China with rules.

Second, China and ASEAN have undertaken a series of cooperative actions to develop and utilize maritime space and resources and address maritime security challenges. Both sides have relied on maritime connectivity construction to promote the development of ports, waterways, and logistics in Southeast Asia, coordinating the development of land, sea, air, and rail channels, and building a shipping network that is oriented toward ASEAN, linking the Indian and Pacific Oceans, and extending globally. Both sides have jointly launched and implemented the China-ASEAN Green Envoys Program and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Blue Carbon Program, conducting blue carbon projects such as preservation of coastal wetlands and mangrove forests and ecological fishery farming. Both sides have conducted maritime search and rescue tabletop exercises and joint maritime search and rescue drills, built a Southeast Asia marine environment forecasting and disaster warning system and promoted joint development with South China Sea claimant states. Multiple cooperation projects, such as China Petroleum and Chemical Corp's refineries in Johor, Malaysia, and Batam Island, Indonesia, as well as China National Offshore Oil Corp's deep-water gas field in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, have been launched. By providing technical and economic support in these cooperative actions, China demonstrates its firm commitment to regional peace, stability and development.

Finally, by establishing multilevel, multichannel communication, consultation and dialogue mechanisms with ASEAN and its member states, China can play a significant role in the formulation of regional maritime rules and maritime order, thereby enhancing its discourse power and leadership in regional affairs. In addition to high-level exchanges and dialogue mechanisms between leaders and maritime departments, China has also led the establishment of several mechanisms and platforms, such as the China-ASEAN Maritime Consultation Mechanism, China-ASEAN Marine Cooperation Center, China-ASEAN Port Cities Cooperation Network Forum, and the East Asia Marine Cooperation Platform, which serve as important links in building blue partnerships and a community of shared interests.

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LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

LIFE

CULTURAL JOURNEY

# Axis becomes center of attention

Historic route through the capital is focus of information drive to highlight its significance, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

Halima, from Iran, took a break from her business trip to Beijing and signed up for an immersion trip through the Beijing Central Axis on Aug 5.

"I am curious about it," she says about the axis, which is lined by key structures exhibiting the ideal layout of the Chinese capital and was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List on July 27.

Halima started her trip at Jingshan Park where she got a bird's-eye view of the Palace Museum and was stunned by the historical architecture's grandeur and sheer volume. Then, she walked about 4 kilometers soaking up what the Beijing Central Axis has to offer, including the Bell and Drum Towers, where she was fascinated by how the ancients kept time.

In addition to sightseeing, she tried distinctive tourist facilities along the way. She took a particular shine to a traditional shoe shop near the Drum Tower.

"They were special and pretty," she says, adding that she just bought a traditional Chinese *mamianqun* (horse-faced skirt).

The central axis trip adds to her affection toward Chinese culture, Halima says.

The trip was part of efforts by the Beijing Bureau of Culture and Tourism and drew more than 100 visitors from home and abroad to better appreciate the historical and cultural value of the Beijing Central Axis.

Routes have been developed to offer different views of the grand scenes and vivid explanations behind major historical sites on the Beijing Central Axis, which covers an area of 589 hectares and has a buffer zone of 4,542 hectares.

It marks China's 59th World Heritage Site and Beijing's eighth.

The new UNESCO World Heritage status and summer peak travel season have brought unprecedented attention to the area, and the inflow of tourists is expected to surge, says Zhang Jing, head of the resources development division of the Beijing Bureau of Culture and Tourism.

"The success of the Beijing Central Axis being inscribed as a World Heritage Site is only the beginning. We still have a long way to go in strengthening management and enhancing tourism quality, but we have started taking action," Zhang adds.

The Beijing authorities have adopted measures, from short to long term, to optimize tourism services.

A central axis tourism service management plan will be formulated by the end of this year. During the third and fourth quarters, the supply of central axis tourism products will be further enriched. In the short term, cultural exploration activities for the Beijing Central Axis will be organized to further optimize tourism routes and update and standardize the explanations provided by tour guides, thus better satisfying summer vacationers.

More tourism products featuring digital, immersion and learning experiences along the central axis are expected to be rolled out and creative and cultural products will be offered, Zhang says.

In addition to government organs, experts in the field have recently actively proposed suggestions for



**Clockwise from top:** The Shouhuang Palace (Palace of Imperial Longevity) complex in Jingshan Park, the Drum tower, and the Temple of Heaven are some of the landmark attractions along the Beijing Central Axis. PHOTOS BY JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY **Below:** A map of the 15 key structures along the axis. PROVIDED BY BEIJING MUNICIPAL OFFICE FOR CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF BEIJING CENTRAL AXIS TO CHINA DAILY

upgrading cultural and tourism services for the Beijing Central Axis.

Huang Bin, executive vice-dean of the China Institute of New Economy, stresses that local culture should be given a central role during the future development of the axis.

"It is the fundamental core of the area," Huang says.

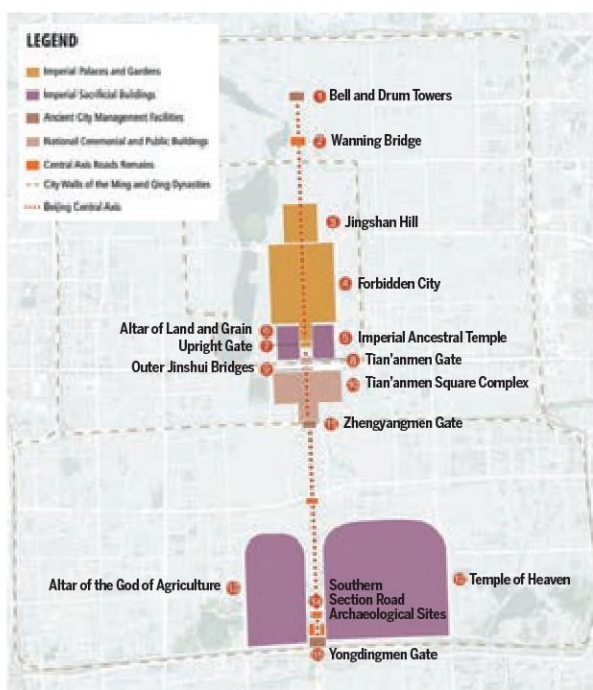
But for the Beijing Central Axis to become a popular destination, he says it should align with trendy activities, including many current collaborations.

"Innovation and creativity are crucial, but fundamentally they are driven by data or more specifically by artificial intelligence," Huang says.

Unlike physical infrastructure, which is difficult to rebuild and change, content within can be updated quickly with the commercial application of new technologies, including virtual reality, he explains.

He also suggests giving preferential treatment to residents and communities in running certain franchises that could produce income and enhance travelers' experiences.

Dai Juncheng from the School of Culture and Communication, Central University of Finance and Eco-



nomics, says world cultural heritage status will surely produce a positive influence over the inbound tourism market.

"Compared to natural heritage, the market potential of world cultural heritage is much greater," Dai says.

At this point, Dai says related parties should listen to feedback from inbound travelers to better understand their needs and pave the way for future cultural and tourism experiences design and marketing.

Studies should also be carried out on the needs of travelers from different areas, including Asia, Europe and Americas, he says.

"We have to do a good job delivering an interpretation system for the central axis, so its stories can be genuinely and vividly told," Dai notes.

Lyu Zhou, director of the National Heritage Center at Tsinghua University, says he has seen the Beijing Central Axis application for the UNESCO listing bring tremendous vitality to the capital, igniting people's love for the city and awakening cultural confidence and awareness.

Many residents have contributed their narratives to the history, and anecdotes about the axis and travel

products featuring its culture have come up, he says.

Lyu says the focus of future work around the central axis lies in the full use of the area's history and cultural resources to play a positive role in conveying its value and having more people understand China.

Luo Kai, an official from the new social stratum association of the capital city's Dongcheng district, believes it's important to vividly present the central axis to the youth.

"Youth plays an important role in the protection and sustainable development of the Beijing Central Axis," says Luo, who has engaged in cultural heritage education for years.

Luo says he will continue to explore various methods, such as immersive study tours, to enhance young people's understanding of traditional culture and guide them to establish a commitment to protecting historical cultural heritage.

Ma Zhentao, a commentator with China Tourism News, proposes more efforts for the whole cultural heritage and environmental protection with a focus on optimizing the axis management mechanism, improving residents' livelihoods and exploring a new coordinated cultural heritage protection and modern urban development model.

Ma advocates the use of AI and big data in axis protection, such as intelligent analysis to predict the risk of erosion in ancient buildings to formulate repair plans in advance, and big data to analyze tourist behavior and optimize tour routes and management measures.

VR and other technologies can be employed to create high-precision digital records of important buildings and sites along the Beijing Central Axis, Ma says.

He also urges related parties to establish detailed digital archives to provide strong support for future repairs, research and exhibitions and to create a digital museum or online display platform for the Beijing Central Axis, allowing the public to learn about its history and culture with more convenience.

Having worked in inbound tourism for many years, tour guide Dou Junjie says he has deeply felt the recent heat of international travelers' enthusiasm toward the central axis.

He has offered several cultural tours to the central axis over the past few weeks.

"These tours are giving an increasingly three-dimensional, rich and colorful understanding of the capital's cultural connotations," Dou says.

He believes that 70 percent of a good tour is about comprehensive guidance and explanation and 30 percent about travel.

He says he has kept a constantly updated historical and cultural database of the Beijing Central Axis, which includes over 140 knowledge points and more than 80,000 words. This encompasses famous ancient sites, historical and cultural information and the intangible cultural heritage of Beijing, such as traditional crafts.

"I'm looking forward to taking more people, especially international travelers, on the cultural exploration of the central axis to help them better appreciate its essence," Dou says.

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## Public transport offers fascinating view

Following the official inscription of the Beijing Central Axis on the UNESCO World Heritage List on July 27, the summer has seen a surge in citizens and tourists keen to immerse themselves in its historical splendor.

Running for 7.8 kilometers through the heart of the capital, the Beijing Central Axis is comprised of 15 well-known attractions. It starts at the Bell and Drum Towers and leads south through landmark sites, including the Forbidden City, Tian'anmen Gate, and Zhengyangmen Gate. Flanking the axis to the east and west are cultural treasures like the Imperial Ancestral Temple, the Altar of Land and Grain, the Temple of Heaven, and the Altar of the God of Agriculture.

The Beijing Commission of Transport recommends using sub-

way Line 8 or bus No 5 to explore it.

Cao Qiong, who is in charge of the operation and management department of the Beijing Mass Transit Railway Operation Corp Ltd, says that Line 8's design mirrors the central axis by incorporating drawings or patterns of 15 ancient buildings along the central axis into its carriage aesthetic, celebrating the heritage of the area.

Line 8 has 34 stations, with notable stops at Qianmen, Wangfujing, Gulou, Shichahai, Nanluoguxiang and Yongdingmen, that trace the path of the Beijing Central Axis.

"Line 8's north-south orientation is an underground echo of the central axis," Cao says.

Each subway car door is adorned with images of the ancient architecture that exists along the axis, and on the seats there are also paintings

or patterns of these famous structures. Even the armrests are decorated with painted landscapes that bring the axis to life.

To accommodate the summer's average daily flow of 30,000 passengers, Line 8 has added extra services, with trains now running every 4 minutes, a 25 percent increase in capacity.

For a more historical perspective, the No 5 bus offers panoramic views. Starting at Caihuiyong Flyover, it passes significant landmarks like Qianmen and Tian'anmen, closely paralleling the axis.

The journey is enhanced by a looping audio guide, and the line has recently introduced a QR code that passengers can scan to get in-depth cultural insights on their mobile devices.

A tourist, Liu Gong, from Hebei province, praised the comfortable and scenic journey.

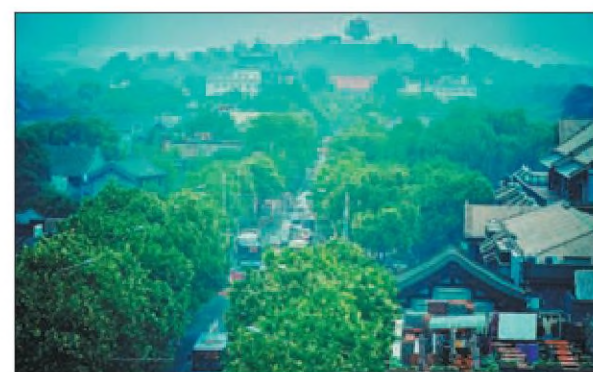
"The No 5 bus passes numerous famous Beijing attractions, and offers stunning views," he says. "The bus is cool, and the environment is clean and well-maintained."

Zhang Lu, a No 5 driver, hopes the bus becomes a cultural showcase for the Beijing Central Axis.

"We invite everyone to experience No 5 bus. Our commitment is to provide a safe, eco-friendly, and comfortable service, making No 5 a cultural gateway for both local and international visitors," Zhang says.

Wong Kai-wing contributed to this story.

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**Above:** The No 5 bus route takes passengers on the scenic and historic route along the Beijing Central Axis. JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY **Left:** Subway Line 8 also follows the axis and stops at many cultural landmarks. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## LIFE

## Fudan sets new scientific standards

Institution's reach has progressed in leaps and bounds, making it a leader in some fields, **Zhou Wenting** reports in Shanghai.

Started in Shanghai in 2018, the International Human Phenome Consortium has expanded to involve 23 institutions and teams based in 20 countries, including 14 academician-led teams, according to Shanghai-based Fudan University.

This is an indication that the International Human Phenome Project, a major initiative led by Chinese scientists to provide new insight into the analysis of health and disease, has been recognized by a growing number of scientists from around the world.

A phenome is the set of all traits expressed by an organism, cell, tissue or organ. If twins are separated and one grows up in a low-altitude region, while the other grows up in a high-altitude place, they will have totally different phenotypes — not only in appearance, but also in terms of proteins, metabolism and organ function. This is the result of the influence of environmental factors on the phenotype, influences that are closely related to health, disease and longevity.

"At its establishment, the project attracted the participation of 18 top scientists from 14 countries as founding board members, marking the first steps of the international scientific community in this international big science initiative," says Tian Mei, secretary of the IHPC.

"This has also established China's leading capacity and voice in the field," says Tian, who is also the executive president of the university's Human Phenome Institute.

#### International cooperation

Fudan's research strength in the field of human phenomes is the epitome of the prestigious school's role in international academic and research cooperation today. From participant and follower, Fudan, which is one of the country's top institutions of higher education, has grown in power across disciplines, to become a leader in the area of joint studies.

It also demonstrates that the university's sustained efforts to open up and enhanced capacity for global collaboration have reaped results, according to scholars.

The International Human Phenome Project, which was launched by scholars including Jin Li, president of Fudan University, is expected to play an important role in promoting the development of precision medicine, improving the accuracy of diagnosis, promoting the research and development of new drugs, and in analyzing the history of human evolution.

The second phase of the project was launched in November 2023. Ten academicians and some 400 scholars and experts from China and abroad attended the launch event.

A Human Phenome Atlas showing the associations between more than 1.5 million phenotypes, most of which had been newly discovered by scientists, was compiled during the first phase of the project between 2018 and 2022. It provides key clues to deciphering the causality and mechanisms between phenotypes and life phenomena, such as disease and aging.

In the second phase, a more complete map will be compiled, and scientists will conduct substantive, collaborative research in order to answer key queries around the phenotype and its regulatory mechanism, which is at the core of the mystery of life and health.

"We really need an Asian country to lead in life science instead of counting on Western countries, as human diversity is huge, and the data collected in research programs should not be limited to Western people only," says Hoh Boon Peng, a professor at the International Medical University Malaysia.



**Top:** More than 100 participants and guests from over 30 countries gather at the Rong Chang Cup Youth Innovation Competition on Global Governance, in Budapest, Hungary, in July. Fudan University was one of the organizers. **Above:** Craig Anderson (left), a clinical neuroscientist, joins Fudan University's Institute of Science and Technology for Brain-inspired Intelligence.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ed to Western people only," says Hoh Boon Peng, a professor at the International Medical University Malaysia.

Another example of Fudan's strength in leading international research is establishment of the first international center of excellence, or ICoE, on the Chinese mainland by Integrated Research on Disaster Risk, a global research program created by the International Science Council and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Founded in 2020, the Fudan University ICoE is dedicated to interdisciplinary research on the risk interconnectivity of climate change, the atmospheric environment, and health, and is closely focused on academic exchange and scientific research collaboration with overseas universities and research institutes.

Universities and institutes from Germany, the United States, France, and countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative, such as Indonesia, as well as international organizations, have joined the international cooperation network set up by the Fudan ICoE for interdisciplinary collaborative research.

The ICoE team participated in the compilation of the World Health Organization 2021 Global Air Quality Guidelines and co-hosted a symposium on air quality and health in the same year. The event was attended by the World Meteorological Organization, the WHO, and the United Nations Environment Programme, and their respective agencies. The heads of Asian regional offices participated in the discussions on the implementation of the new WHO guidelines in Asia.

"At its establishment, the project attracted the participation of 18 top scientists from 14 countries as founding board members, marking the first steps of the international scientific community in this international big science initiative."

**Tian Mei**, secretary, International Human Phenome Consortium

ment Programme, and their respective agencies. The heads of Asian regional offices participated in the discussions on the implementation of the new WHO guidelines in Asia.

"We're building a world-class platform," says Tang Xu, executive director of the center.

When talking about the secret to leading a series of high-level international research collaborations, Feng Jianfeng, dean of Fudan's Institute of Science and Technology for Brain-inspired Intelligence, says that they take the initiative to communicate with overseas counterparts through a

variety of channels.

"The departments of science, engineering and medicine of the university are taking scientific research as the focus to promote open cooperation, and train world-class scientists for the future," says Feng.

"During the past five years, the proportion of published papers involving international cooperation from our institute has risen as high as 79 percent in a single year. In 2022, the number of such papers reached 122," he says.

In the medical field, hospitals affiliated with Fudan University have also been responsible for a number of world firsts. These include the world's first gene therapy for hereditary deafness, the first stem cell transplant treatment for the IRF4 gene defect, a rare disease, and the annual treatment volume at one of the hospitals providing proton and heavy ion treatment is first in the world, according to the university.

They have also recently sent medical teams on behalf of the Shanghai healthcare force to support medical institutions in Morocco and Pakistan to promote the creation of a global community in the field of human health.

#### Building bridges

Fudan University has made the opening-up of education a continuous driving force. It has set up various stages for the training and exchange of young talent in global governance, and continues to contribute to communication and mutual learning among civilizations, as well as to promoting people-to-people ties between China and the world.

"The diversity of international students at Fudan is impressively high. I've never met people from so many different countries. Now I have friends from all over Asia, Australia, and South America," says Lan Kajtner, a graduate student from Slovenia at Fudan's School of Economics.

The Shanghai Summer School (BRICS Program), the Fudan International Summer School, and the Advanced Training Program for Young Diplomatic Talents From Belt and Road Countries are among summer programs that have been well-received by international students over the past five years, according to the university.

"It was an important life decision to participate in the BRICS Program in 2018," says Pedro Steenhagen, a Brazilian doctoral student in international politics at Fudan University.

In March last year, Steenhagen visited

Yangzhou in Jiangsu province as a representative of Brazil to participate in the BRICS Seminar on Governance and Cultural Exchange Forum 2023. In an interview to CGTN, he told the world about China's important role in global development, peacekeeping and the protection of BRICS partnerships.

Since the 1950s, more than 50,000 international students have graduated from Fudan University, becoming an important force in strengthening understanding of China and building bridges for Sino-foreign cooperation in all corners of the world.

Over the past few years, Fudan University has also taken the lead in setting up an international cooperation network. For example, it has opened its overseas centers for China studies at the University of California, San Diego, and at the University of Oslo.

#### Serving the BRI

Taking the opportunity to serve the Belt and Road Initiative, Fudan has also continued to promote the quality and efficiency of cooperation with counterparts in developing countries, and promotes the creation of platforms such as the Fudan-Latin America University Consortium, and the BRICS Universities League.

Some Fudan-developed technologies are also helping businesses overseas to operate better. In the Vinda Malaysia factory, a digital cleaner production platform with high levels of compatibility and strong data fusion capabilities was developed between January and September in 2023. It was the work of a joint team of several Chinese institutions led by the Department of Environmental Science and Engineering of Fudan University.

"The platform accumulated more than 5 million pieces of data during the demonstration, and the standards compiled by our team provide guidance on carbon neutrality practices and cleaner production and maintenance management," says Wang Yutao, leader on the team and a professor from the department.

"The standards conform to the advanced international level of cleaner production technology, and have important reference value and promotional prospects for improving cleaner production levels in the paper industry in BRI countries and regions," says Dominic Foo of the University of Nottingham Malaysia, who is also a Fellow of Academy of Sciences Malaysia.

Contact the writer at [zhouwenting@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:zhouwenting@chinadaily.com.cn)



**From left:** Doctors from the hospitals affiliated with Fudan University, who are participating in medical assistance in Morocco, perform an operation in a hospital; staff members at the Human Phenome Institute of Fudan University measure 3D data of the human body; and international students, participating in an international summer school focusing on climate change and its risks, hosted by Fudan University in July and August, visit the Shanghai Meteorology Museum as part of the course.

## CULTURE

## Iconic tower still helping to build ties



Beijing's White Dagoba Temple is the setting for a game that brings the past alive and promotes understanding between China and Nepal, **Hou Chenchen** reports.

The White Dagoba Temple in Beijing has dominated the skyline for centuries. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

On a stroll down an alley in central Beijing a distinctive white cone slowly emerges on the horizon, towering above the brownish-red sea of traditional Chinese walls in which it stands.

For centuries this religious monument, a dagoba, part of the Miaoying temple, has tantalized the eyes of those who come across it, whether they know anything about its meaning or not.

"Nihaoo," a young man, who turns out to be a Nepalese volunteer in the temple, shouts out cheerily. "Feel free to go inside the White Dagoba Temple and find out what's within."

A dagoba is a kind of a dome-shaped shrine containing Buddhist relics. Unlike traditional Chinese-style pagodas, which are tall, thin and multi-storied with corners, dagobas tend to be rounder and squatter.

Garbed in a *daura suruwai*, an exquisitely crafted traditional Nepalese suit consisting of a knee-length shirt and loose-fitting trousers, he brims with enthusiasm about the dagoba, intent on encouraging others to learn about this age-old emblem of friendship between two civilizations.

The Beijing White Dagoba Temple, being the biggest and the oldest Tibetan-style Buddhist dagoba in existence now in China, it is a vibrant testament to cultural exchange and shared knowledge between China and Nepal. It was designed by the Nepalese architect Arniko at the behest of Kublai Khan, the founder of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), in the late 13th century.

Inside, workers sit at desks in five main buildings of the dagoba, each station marking a pivotal moment in the monument's construction. At each station, visitors are encouraged to utter a certain phrase to a non-player character, underlining what they have learned, which is then rewarded with a literal stamp of approval.

This is part of *Finding Arniko*, an immersive and interactive game featured during Beijing White Dagoba Cultural Week in June.

The White Dagoba in Beijing is the sole complete historical site of the Dadu (the capital city) of the Yuan Dynasty that remains to this day.

"Cultural exchanges between China and Nepal are rich and profound, and the Dagoba one sees today is the best example of that," said Gao Jianqin, the game's designer, who works at the China-Nepal Culture Exchange Center in Beijing.

Arniko was a highly skilled artisan who helped build a dagoba in the Sa'kya region of Xizang, and he made a name for himself across Xizang and North China. When Kublai Khan decreed that a Buddha dagoba be erected on the historical site of the Yong'an Monastery, which had been destroyed, Arniko was assigned to design the white dagoba and to oversee its construction.

Seven hundred and fifty-three years later, Beijingers and anyone else with an ounce of interest are invited through



Surendra Kumar Yadav (left), a minister at the embassy of Nepal in Beijing, and Col. Jayendra K.C., a military attache at the embassy, visit the museum at the White Dagoba Temple in June.

*Finding Arniko* to learn a little about the man and to view what has become one of his most celebrated architectural accomplishments.

Gao said it is the first time he has devised a cultural game, something that has been a "special and memorable experience" for him. He chose the five most crucial moments in the history of Arniko's odyssey and incorporated these into the five main buildings of the White Dagoba Temple, he said. Visitors can immerse themselves in his adventure through interactive non-player character encounters, stepping into Arniko's world.

For the game Nepalese students in Beijing assume the various roles encountered by Arniko on his journey from Nepal to China. These roles include: Arniko himself; the king of the Malla Dynasty; Nepalese citizens; Phags-pa, the 1st "Guru for the Emperor" in the history of the Yuan Dynasty; and Kublai Khan, the founder of the Yuan Dynasty.

"I love the heart-warming joy of people from different countries coming together, something you can't experience any other way," Gao said. "I would jump at the chance to promote cultural exchange between China and Nepal in some other way."

"We wanted the public to be able to appreciate how deep the friendship between China and Nepal is, and to do so in an interesting way."

Liang Yuxuan, 21, a college student from Hong Kong,

visits the temple and enjoys the game a lot. She said: "When I talk to Nepalese, I feel a cultural exchange through time and space, friendship between the two countries down the ages. It's very touching."

Strolling along Beijing's fabled *hutong* and its streets, a sense of history and culture seeps from between every brick, she said.

#### Arniko in the new age

"Chinese are aware of the white dagoba, but they're unaware of its origins and who built it," said Anish Kumar Kuikel, 24, who plays the role of Arniko in the game, and who is studying for a master's degree in the international education of Chinese at Beijing Language and Culture University.

"Dagoba culture week was a great opportunity to promote Nepalese culture," he said. "Chinese people show great respect for Buddhism, our religion. When I explain that Nepal is where Buddhism originated, the birthplace of Gautama Buddha, they show huge interest in traveling to Nepal to know more about our culture."

Bidur K.C., 23, a Nepalese studying Chinese philosophy at Beijing Normal University, and who played the Malla King in *Finding Arniko*, said: "I was a tad nervous the day culture week opened, and curious about how tourists would react when they came across my character, dressed in Nepalese traditional clothes and speaking Chinese to them."

"In the event, people were very excited to see me and asked a lot about culture and traditions such as marriage in Nepal. My Chinese is not that good, but I did my best to present my homeland to them and showed them what Nepal is really like."

Shrestha Shrijana, 26, studying for a master's degree in international education of Chinese language at Beijing International Studies University, said she views the dagoba as the "largest symbol of civil and cultural communications between the two countries". Wearing Nepalese dress at the gate of dagoba, presenting her country's culture to people filled her with pride, she said.

The Nepalese actors and actresses expressed their interest and pride in building a new bridge between the two countries and their cultures. Another of the actors, Shrestha, said she had arrived in China a year ago, and as someone who appreciates different cultures, hopes that eventually she will don traditional Chinese dress.

"For me, the best part of Chinese culture is the traditional attire. There are so many ethnic groups with their unique dresses. I've tried Tibetan dress, and I plan eventually to try *hanfu*."

Bidur said his fascination with China began at a Chinese temple in Lumbini, where Gautama Buddha is said to have been born.

"As a child, I visited that temple frequently. Its architecture bears a striking resemblance to Chinese architecture, which sparked my interest in Chinese culture, people and language. Although China and Nepal have distinct cultures, both have rich histories. Coming from Nepalese society to China, I equally respect both cultures."

While studying at Lumbini Buddhist University, Bidur chose Chinese as his second language and decided to pursue his studies in China to delve deeper into Chinese philosophy.

Anish, who plays Arniko, and who has studied in China since 2019, said that visiting the Great Wall had been a lifelong dream of his.

"When I was a child one of my neighbors was from Xizang, and there was a photo of the Great Wall in his room. Later, I saw the Great Wall in many films, and I dreamed of visiting it in person."

He finally did so in 2023 as his first time, and then twice in 2024.

Like Shrestha, Anish is studying International Education of Chinese Language in Beijing and hopes to work in trade. Shrestha said she hopes to promote Chinese language and culture worldwide. China has helped Nepal build airports, hospitals, schools and sports centers, she said. "As for the Beijing White Dagoba Temple, it symbolizes the beautiful friendship between Nepal and China, a friendship I'm convinced will last forever."

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Left: Anish Kumar Kuikel (center), a Nepalese volunteer, plays the role of Arniko while posing with participants in the immersive cultural game, *Finding Arniko*, at the White Dagoba Temple in Beijing. Right: Shrestha Shrijana, a Nepalese volunteer, welcomes visitors during the *Finding Arniko* game at the White Dagoba Temple.

