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Annual publishing fair draws all to new literature and merchandise

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Left: Deng Xiaoping addresses the Sixth Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on April 9, 1974; Right: Deng's southern tour in 1992 pushed China's reform and opening-up policy further.



Xi: Advance historic cause initiated by Deng

President stresses deepening reform to make further progress in Chinese modernization

By CAO DESHENG caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping lauded the "outstanding contributions" of late leader Deng Xiaoping (1904-97) on Thursday, and called for advancing socialism with Chinese characteristics initiated by Deng, the chief architect of China's reform and opening-up policy.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks when addressing a symposium organized by the CPC Central Committee to commemorate the 120th anniversary of Deng's birth on Thursday.

Hailing Deng's historical feats in national independence and the people's liberation, in the founding of the People's Republic of China and socialist construction, as well as in the founding of socialism with Chinese characteristics, Xi said that Deng made outstanding contributions to the Party, the people, the country, the nation and the world.

Deng pushed China to achieve a new breakthrough in adapting Marxism to the Chinese context, break new ground in socialist modernization, and set a correct path for the country's complete reunification, Xi said.

Deng's achievements have been immortalized in history and will always inspire future generations, he said.

Deng's reform and opening-up policy was officially launched at the third plenary session of the 11th CPC Central Committee in December 1978, paving the way for China's future growth. His southern tour in 1992, especially his visit to Shenzhen, Guangdong province, pushed China's reform and opening-up further at a critical juncture.

Xi called for continuing to study and apply Deng Xiaoping Theory, the series of political and economic ideologies that play an important role in modern China, such as opening up China to the outside world, the implementation of "one country, two systems", and advocating political and economic pragmatism



China Post issues a set of four stamps on Thursday to commemorate the 120th birth anniversary of the leader. YANG BO / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

through the phrase "seek truth from facts".

Deng was the pioneer of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and the concept was first highlighted when he addressed the opening ceremony of the 12th CPC National Congress in Beijing on Sept 1, 1982.

The imperative to build socialism with Chinese characteristics is based on the fact that China is in the primary stages of socialism, accord-

ing to Deng's theory. The overall approach is to promote economic, political, cultural, social and ecological progress.

Xi emphasized at Thursday's meeting that the best way to commemorate Deng is to continue advancing the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics that he initiated.

The country must forge ahead, focusing on the central task of building a strong country and realizing

national rejuvenation through comprehensively advancing Chinese modernization, he said.

Xi underlined the need to further comprehensively deepen reforms to provide strong impetus and institutional safeguards for Chinese modernization.

"We must promote high-level opening-up, steadily expand institutional opening-up and promote the high-quality development of the Belt and Road Initiative. We must coordinate openness and security and safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests."

Xi also urged efforts to achieve more notable and substantive progress in promoting common prosperity for all.

Noting that realizing China's complete reunification had long been the aspiration of Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping and other members of the older generation of revolutionaries, Xi urged resolute efforts to promote the peaceful development of relations across the Taiwan Strait, and firmly oppose "Taiwan independence" to safeguard China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

He also reiterated China's com-

mitment to promoting world peace, saying that the nation will provide new opportunities for the world with new progress in Chinese modernization.

Zulkaifli Hassan Khan, president of the Society of International Relations & Law in Islamabad, Pakistan, and director of the Pak-China Corridor of Knowledge, said that Xi's acknowledgment of Deng's outstanding contributions vividly reflects Xi's pivotal role in the further strengthening of socialism with Chinese characteristics, which has ultimately transformed the country's socioeconomic outlook.

Khan noted Xi's emphasis on the country continuing to thoroughly study and apply Deng Xiaoping Theory, saying that it remains the foundation of China's economic transition, social transformation and industrial modernization leading the country toward openness and modernization.

Xu Weixue in Hong Kong contributed to this story.

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Initiative in pursuit of equity, dialogue shine light on world

The word *civilization* is derived from the Latin word *civis*, meaning citizen. In modern history, the word civilization was first used in France in the 18th century, drawing philosophical linkages to ancient Greeks and Romans.

The study of Western civilization today reveals embedded flaws and a sense of superiority. The superiority complex gathered strength after the West-led Industrial Revolution. Arrogant and

ruthless, Western countries embarked on a colonization spree, enslaving humans and looting resources that finally culminated with World War II. The second attempt at colonization started with the building of new instruments of colonization in the name of global liberal order and continued till the conclusion of the Cold War, which provided them with another opportunity to strengthen their hegemony and dominance.

WORLD WATCH

By Shakeel Ahmad Ramay

They invented theories like the End of History and Clash of Civilizations to portray Western culture and liberal ideology as the ultimate reality of humanity.

Against these backdrops, China launched the Global Civilization Initiative. The GCI promotes the philosophy of harmony in diversity and peaceful and cooperative coexistence.

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Premier says China to boost ties with Belarus

By MO JINGXI in Minsk mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

Premier Li Qiang said on Thursday that China is ready to continuously deepen political mutual trust and advance mutually beneficial cooperation with Belarus to promote the high-level development of their all-weather comprehensive strategic partnership.

When meeting with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko during his official visit to the Eastern European country, Li said that China-Belarus relations have remained vibrant for the past 32 years despite the changing international landscape, and practical cooperation between the two countries has yielded fruitful results benefiting their peoples.

Belarus was among the first group of countries that responded to the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative and participated in cooperation projects under the framework, which yielded benefits in various fields. With bilateral trade exceeding \$8.4 billion last year, China is the second-largest trading partner of Belarus and its largest trading partner in Asia.



Chinese Premier Li Qiang shakes hands with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko during their meeting on Thursday in Minsk, Belarus. PRESS SERVICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS VIA REUTERS

Li said that China is willing to better align its development strategies with Belarus, advance cooperation in all fields with solid efforts, and steadily expand the volume of bilateral trade. He also called on the two sides to make greater efforts to implement projects such as the China-Belarus Industrial Park, a landmark cooperation project within the Belt and

Inside

Road framework. Before the meeting, Li visited the Victory Monument in Minsk and laid a wreath.

Lukashenko hailed the strong momentum in the bilateral relationship, saying that it is at its highest level in history.

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WANDERLUST FOR PET TRAVEL UNLEASHES MARKET POTENTIAL

Tourism operators profit from owners' desire to take furry companions on holidays

By YANG FEIYUE yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn

Zeng Qingbin always plans ahead and has to make extra considerations for two special family members whenever he hits the road.

Over the past eight years, the 35-year-old from Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, has traveled across the country with his dogs — a Shiba

In-depth

Inu called Chai Chai and Labrador retriever Ba Bao — who he treats as his children.

They have made it as far as the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region in the northwest of the coun-

try, Hainan province in the south, and the Inner Mongolia autonomous region in the north.

One of the most unforgettable journeys was to Xinjiang in May last year, when he took the dogs to Sayram Lake in Bortala Mongolian autonomous prefecture, as well as the region's vast grasslands and deserts.

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"I had always dreamed of giving them free rein and having them run wild on a big grassland, with the snow-capped mountains in the background," Zeng said.

The trip lasted for two weeks. Zeng said he was tired by the end of it, but "everything was so worth it".

He got to spend time with his dogs in a setting that was very different from a city, and became closer to his pets.

"I got my first dog, a Shiba Inu, in 2017, a year after coming to Hangzhou for work," Zeng said. "I knew it would bring me happiness, and it did."

He felt guilty about leaving Chai Chai behind during the daytime while he was at work, so he got Ba Bao to keep the Shiba Inu company.

"They have accompanied me since I started trying to establish myself in Hangzhou, and they provide me with a lot of emotional support," he said.

Zeng began his career in real estate, and in 2020 decided to start his own tea business.

He works hard running the business, and gets a lot of comfort from Chai Chai and Ba Bao who run toward him and jump into his arms when he comes home.

"Their time with me is very short, so within my capabilities, I hope to create wonderful experiences for them," he said.

Prepared to pay

Zeng is among many dog owners who are eager to travel with their pets, irrespective of the expenses.

Most of the owners were born in the 1980s and 1990s, are well educated and have higher incomes, according to a survey conducted in December by the pet industry data platform petdata.cn, under the guidance of the China Pet Industry Association.

Owners born in the 90s accounted for 46.6 percent of the total, 2.1 percentage points higher than 2022. Those born in the 80s made up 31.1 percent, up 10.8 percentage points, the report showed.

Last year, the number of pet dogs in China reached 51.75 million, a year-on-year increase of 1.1 percent. The number of pet cats was 69.8 million, an increase of 6.8 percent year-on-year, making the country the second largest pet market in the world after the United States.

The scale of pet-related industries in China reached 592.8 billion yuan (\$81.8 billion) in 2023, and is expected to reach 811.4 billion yuan by 2025, according to consultancy iiMedia Research, based in Guangzhou, Guangdong province.

The rapidly emerging pet tourism industry has encouraged new players to enter the market.

For a decade, Zhang Wei arranged hiking trips, but in February 2022 he switched his focus to pet hiking tours.

"It was because of my dog. I had to leave it alone at home during workdays and again on weekends. It was sad, and I just couldn't do it anymore," said Zhang, 40, from Beijing.

At first, he took his six-year-old border collie on hiking trips whenever he had the time.

"I figured there must be other dog owners, like me, who want to blow off steam with their dogs in the outdoors, since the city is not too friendly to dogs," Zhang explained.

With his rich hiking experiences, he soon came up with a few hiking routes that owners and their dogs could tackle together. The outings were an immediate success.

Zhang's first WeChat hiking group was soon filled with 500 members, and more people requested his services through word-of-mouth. "Many people treat their dogs like children and have a desire to travel with them," Zhang said, adding that most of his customers are aged 20 to 35.

To date, he has about 5,500 followers in more than 10 WeChat groups.

Room at the inn

From day trips in suburban areas of Beijing to weeklong journeys to Hebei province and Inner Mongolia, Zhang has arranged about 180 pet trips. Each usually has two to five professional guides for groups of up to 30 owners and their dogs.

"Safety is of the utmost importance, and all the guides have been trained to deal with various emergencies in the mountains," Zhang said. Planning is made for emergency scenarios such as medical problems or dogs going missing.

Before a trip, Zhang's team members ask pet owners to fill in a form on their dog, such as whether it is obedient or if it gets along with other canines.

A hike usually lasts four to five hours and

Airlines, hotels cater to new breed of travelers

Zeng Qingbin enjoys the scenery with his dogs in Kumtag Desert, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region in May, 2023. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Top and above left: Cat lovers with their furry companions visit an exhibition that showcases Egyptian art at the Shanghai Museum on July 27. PHOTOS BY GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY **Above right:** A man cycles with his dog in Yantai, Shandong province, in April. TANG KE / CHINA DAILY

chartered buses are offered, with pet-friendly hotels and restaurants arranged for the tour.

Fun water destinations in Beijing's Changping district, and forest expeditions in Hebei province are among the most popular trips. "We usually organize two to four events a week, and each of them is quickly filled once they become available for bookings," Zhang said.

Hotels that cater to pets were among the first businesses to benefit from the emerging market.

Xiaozhu Inc, a homestay service provider, reported that searches containing the words "pets allowed" during the June Dragon Boat Festival surged 274 percent year-on-year.

Tujia, another homestay booking platform, reported that similar searches quadrupled in the two weeks leading up to the festival, and its amount of usual bookings doubled.

Huamei resort, a 4A-level tourist resort in the Changbai Mountains region in Jilin

province, received its first group of tourists with pets during this year's Dragon Boat Festival.

Twenty travelers with 15 pets spent three days at the resort, enjoying activities such as a bonfire party, pillow fights, barbecues and rafting.

Wang Jianlu, a resort staff member, said nearly all the resort operations are now pet-friendly. A business plan to cater to pet owners, including dining, lodging, shopping, and entertainment, has been put in place, he said. In the future, the number of pet-friendly hotel rooms in the resort is expected to total 100.

The resort is also in discussions with the operators of nearby scenic spots and attractions that currently prohibit pets, to explore policies that allow visitors to bring their animals.

Although pet tourism is still a niche market, its products have considerable profit margins, Wang said. "The resort is very opti-

mistic about the development prospects of this market and considers it an important business to develop in the future," he said.

Flying start

Public transportation authorities have rolled out special services in recent years to meet the needs of owners who travel with their pets.

Although pets are currently not allowed on high-speed trains, some railway operators have begun exploring the possibility of permitting small pets to travel under certain conditions. In May, the country's railway customer service center launched a survey to gauge passengers' opinions on the issue.

Airline companies have started to offer chartered services for owners and their pets.

In 2022, Zeng from Hangzhou noticed some airlines were offering pet-carrying travel services and he immediately signed up for one. In the past, he mostly took self-driving tours to mountainous areas in Jiang-

su province, Zhejiang and Shanghai.

The first long-distance flight he took with his dogs was to Xishuangbanna Dai autonomous prefecture, Yunnan province, in January 2022.

Zeng said it was an unforgettable trip. He made friends with about 30 other dog owners during that journey, which lasted about a week. "Most of them were warmhearted and full of love, and we understood each other and looked out for one another's dogs," he said.

Airline companies like Shanghai-based Juneyao Air arrange pet tours once every three months, Zeng has noticed, while Hainan Airlines sometimes allows pet owners to take their dogs on flights but they must occupy the last row.

The price of a domestic flight for a dog ranges from 3,500 to 7,000 yuan and is double the amount for big canines, he said.

As he travels more with his dogs, Zeng said he is noticing significant improvements in pet-related travel services.

"Each time the check-in and boarding process becomes more streamlined, and the environment gets friendlier," he said.

For instance, previously he had to separate from his dogs to go through the security check and reunite with them after boarding. Now he can take his dogs directly on the plane.

"This is so much more thoughtful and humane," he said.

Overseas trip

On June 14, China's first outbound charter flight allowing pets landed at Shanghai Pudong International Airport after taking a group to Thailand. The flight was organized by a company called I Baby Go.

A total of 60 tourists and 18 pet dogs spent nine days in Bangkok and Pattaya and smoothly passed customs checks.

"They need to submit documentation such as a valid quarantine certificate issued by the official animal quarantine agency of the exporting country or region and a rabies vaccination certificate," said Yin Na, an official with the Shanghai Pudong Airport's customs inspection department.

Yin said a pet returning to China must go through several quarantine and health checks before being allowed back into the country.

"For non-designated countries or regions (not officially recognized by the authorities), a rabies antibody test report is also required, and you must go through the entry pet clearance procedures," Yin said.

"Pets with complete and qualified documentation and no abnormalities in on-site quarantine can be brought into the country by travelers without the need for quarantine."

A spokesman for I Baby Go said the Thailand trip was its first attempt at outbound pet tourism and more trips to South Korea, Southeast Asia and Europe will be planned.

Bounding ahead

Though domestic pet tourism is currently in its infancy and is a niche market facing many challenges, its impact and consumption potential are enormous, making it worthy of active exploration by the tourism industry, experts said.

Li Bin, a professor at Beijing International Studies University's School of Tourism Sciences, said cultural and tourism enterprises should go beyond offering boarding and care services for pets.

They should create more play areas for pets, enabling increased interactions between pets and humans, which is a crucial step in developing the pet tourism market.

Relevant authorities should establish and improve regulations and standards related to the pet tourism market to guide and foster a positive pet-friendly consumption environment, Li added.

Zeng plans to continue traveling with Chai Chai and Ba Bao, and has booked a trip to the Ningxia Hui autonomous region and Gansu province in September.

"I have long been interested in traveling, and having dogs has in some way fueled my wanderlust," he said, adding that the difference now is putting his dogs' needs first when planning a trip.

Zeng believes he will have more options when traveling with his dogs in the future.

"More chain hotels and destinations have offered nice experiences for pets, and even the outbound trips are now conveniently available," he noted.

"I will try and go as far as possible with my dogs and let them see what the world has to offer," he said.

TOP NEWS

Old Chinese novel making waves globally

Dedicated online communities studying *Journey to the West* sprout on social mediaBy HOU CHENCHEN
houchench@chinadaily.com.cn

"Wukong! My bro!" exclaimed Kalex Willzy when he saw Sun Wukong hiding his golden staff in his ear in an electronic game, which instantly reminded him of the famous scene from the 16th century Chinese novel *Journey to the West*.

Once, Sun Wukong's fame in the West could be attributed to the Japanese anime *Dragon Ball*, in which he goes by the name Son Goku. Now the name Wukong is attracting a huge number of eyeballs on YouTube, and online communities dedicated to *Journey to the West* have appeared on social media platforms.

Willzy, a radio host for a hip-hop channel in the UK and a YouTuber, began exploring *Journey to the West* last year through the 1986 Chinese TV series. His interest in Chinese mythology was sparked after seeing a preview of *Black Myth: Wukong*, a Chinese video game based on *Journey to the West*.

Online gamers can't stop gushing about the game that was released on Tuesday. "I've been an assassin during the French Revolution, a cowboy on the American frontier and a tough guy in bustling cities, but now I want to be China's Monkey King," wrote one player on social media.

For Willzy, it's as much about learning as about playing. "By playing *Wukong* we learn much about him and Chinese culture because we have to if we want to be successful. We spend hours, days, weeks and even months playing, so naturally we often learn a lot from them."

Cas, 35, a YouTuber in the United States, said: "I wanted to know more about *Journey to the West* once I began researching *Black Myth: Wukong*." Cas, who runs *Fextralife*, a games review channel with more than a million followers, said he delved into *Journey to the West* by drawing on a variety of sources, including forums, TV shows, anime, manga and online encyclopedias.

Wukong's story is "a gateway to Chinese culture," Cas said, adding that Wukong is the "Prodo (of *Lord of the Rings*) of Asia". He became acquainted with Sun Wukong many years ago from the game *League of Legends* and *Dragon Ball*.

"There is an under-representation of Chinese myths, literary works and fables in gaming," Cas said. "I'm glad I managed to create a relatable overview for one of China's biggest classic novels and received so much support for it."

Black Myth: Wukong has become a top seller on Steam, a global digital distribution platform for games, and peak concurrent game players on Steam surpassed two million, reflecting China's expanding cultural presence beyond traditional boundaries, with video games the new ambassadors of its heritage.

"Chinese cultural elements are merging with cutting-edge technologies to form a digital flow, creating a new image of China that is cute and cool as well as dynamic," Xinhua quoted Shi Anbin, professor for global media and communication at Tsinghua University as saying.

Li Tianfei, a writer and popularizer of the epic, said the tale of Sun Wukong and his companions is not just a cultural treasure but a story with global and universal relevance.

"At its core, *Journey to the West* is about growth and freedom. This mirrors the journey of Marvel's superheroes and is a key reason why the story is continuously reimagined abroad."

What sets Sun Wukong apart from other heroes is the rich tapestry of nearly 1,000 years of Chinese culture that has shaped him. *Journey to the West* offers a sprawling narrative that covers a perilous journey, numerous encounters and exploration of various cultures. The versatility of its narrative makes it a rich source for diverse storytelling genres and cultural backgrounds.

The tale has been translated into more than a dozen languages, with more than 60 versions available worldwide. Digital media has further propelled international adaptations of the story.

"We need to move beyond the confines of the 400-year-old original to offer something new. The story's core lies in its universal human themes," Li said, adding, "*Journey to the West* is like a river, continuously taking in tributaries and creating ripples. The ripples are the essence of the tale."

Duan Jichu contributed to this story.

Gamers showcase promotional material for *Black Myth: Wukong* on Wednesday in Shanghai. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Ready to win



Members of the Chinese delegation arrive at the Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris, France, on Wednesday for the 2024 Summer Paralympic Games. The Games will be held in the French capital from Aug 28 through Sept 8. CAI YANG / XINHUA

Concerns rage over Fukushima discharge

By SHAO XINYING
shaoxinying@chinadaily.com.cn

Concerns and opposition persist as Saturday marks one year of Japan beginning to release contaminated water from the wrecked Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant into the Pacific Ocean.

The date serves as a grim reminder of the environmental and economic impacts of a "deeply irresponsible" move, experts said. Despite assurances from Japanese authorities, skepticism remains as fears of long-term contamination and its consequences continue to grow.

Despite fierce opposition both at home and abroad, Japan began discharging so-called "treated" water from the nuclear plant into the Pacific Ocean, with the latest and eighth round carried out on Aug 7.

The Chinese embassy in Japan expressed its firm opposition to the irresponsible move, noting that it concerns the health of all mankind, the global marine environment and international public interests, which meant it was not a private matter of Japan.

The move to dump nuclear-contaminated water into the ocean "severely violates the international law" and is "highly irresponsible and selfish," drawing widespread condemnation from the international community, particularly neighboring countries that bear the brunt of the impact, Meng Xiaoxu, a researcher at the Institute of Japan Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, told China Daily.

"Under international law, states have a duty to prevent harm and must minimize trans-boundary damage," Meng said, citing the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter, adopted by the International Maritime Organization in 1972, to which Japan is a signatory. The convention aims to control and prevent marine pollution by prohibiting the dumping of hazardous materials.

Japan has violated other international laws such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, adopted in 1982, Meng said.

South Korean environment activists staged a rally near a building that houses the Japanese embassy in Seoul on Wednesday to demand Japan stop the discharge. The country's opposition Democratic Party leader Lee Jae-myung denounced Japan's action as an "act of terror".

In April, Japanese civic groups submitted more than 180,000 signatures to the government, demanding an immediate stop to the release.

"The Japanese government has not effectively addressed the concerns of its citizens, or neighboring countries, and the international community," Wang Zhen, a research professor of international politics at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of International Relations, told China Daily. The behavior is entirely "self-serving and harmful to others, driven by narrow selfishness at the expense of others," he said.

A significant leak of 25 tons of radioactive water detected this month at Fukushima, once again highlights the "management chaos" at Tokyo Electric Power Company, the operator of the plant, Wang said. A massive earthquake and ensuing tsunami on March 11, 2011, severely damaged the nuclear reactors at the Fukushima plant, resulting in a level-7 nuclear accident, the highest on the International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale.

In 2015, the government and TEPCO promised local fishermen and fishing federations that they would not dump nuclear-contaminated water into the sea "without the understanding of those concerned".

However, in 2021, the Japanese government unilaterally decided to discharge millions of tons of nuclear-contaminated water into the sea in 2023 after "treatment and dilution", a process that can continue for decades.

According to Wang, Japan initially adopted a cautious attitude. He added that the shift in 2021 was driven by the fact that TEPCO's storage tanks were projected to become full by autumn 2022.

Mitsuhsa Furuichi, a parliamentarian from the Fukushima

Prefecture, said the Japanese government and TEPCO opted for what they call the "cheapest" way of getting rid of the nuclear-contaminated water.

The Japanese government set up a committee to determine what to do with the water, Furuichi told CGTN in April. "The committee decided that the cheapest way was to discharge the water into the sea. And since it could be done at a cost of 3 billion yen (\$20 million) or so, they chose to do that... Also, about 80 billion yen was spent on 'reputation damage' control."

"The primary consideration for discharge is cost-saving, rather than the environmental safety of its citizens and the international community," Wang said. "TEPCO's spending on public relations, rather than investing in nuclear security and proper treatment, further highlights the 'narrow self-interest and opportunism' of both the Japanese government and TEPCO."

The "cheapest" solution turned out to be the "most costly" for the international community in terms of the nuclear risks borne by the whole of humanity, Meng said.

Without sufficient scientific evidence and transparency, the irresponsible discharge will inevitably result in serious consequences, Meng added.

The US State Department said in a statement in August last year the United States "is satisfied with Japan's safe, transparent, and science-based process".

"There is a clear tendency among Western countries to politicize the environmental issues surrounding Japan's move," Meng said. "From a strategic perspective, the US supports its ally Japan and sees potential benefits in deteriorating Sino-Japanese relations."

Some US politicians not only refrain from condemning Japan's discharge but criticize other countries' legitimate concerns and moves including the suspension of seafood imports from Fukushima, Wang said.

"Would the US and its Western allies remain as calm and 'satisfied' if other non-Western countries adopted similarly irresponsible practices as Japan?" Wang asked.

Ties: Visits to advance cooperation

From page 1

Belarus sincerely appreciates China's long-term and selfless support for the country's economic and social development, Lukashenko said, adding that his country is ready to deepen practical cooperation with China in areas such as trade, the economy, agriculture, and science and technology.

Li arrived in Belarus on Thursday morning after wrapping up his first visit to Russia as Chinese premier, a trip observers said demonstrated the maturity of China-Russia relationship despite external disturbances.

In Moscow, Li co-chaired the 29th regular meeting between Chinese and Russian heads of government with Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, and also met with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

He told Putin that the steady development of bilateral ties not only meets the fundamental interests of both sides, but also contributes to regional and global peace, stability and prosperity.

At a time when the world is going through rapid changes unseen in a century, the premier said that China will work with Russia to further strengthen multilateral coordination, and keep consolidating mutual trust and cooperation with developing countries.

Noting that 2024 marks the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Russia, Putin said this year is a significant milestone for bilateral ties.

Russia will work with China to further strengthen cooperation that benefits both sides, expand people-to-people exchanges, and carry out close collaboration within multilateral mechanisms, such as BRICS, in order to push for greater development of bilateral ties, he said.

According to a communique jointly issued after the meeting between Li and Mishustin, China and Russia will fully tap the potential of bilateral ties and deepen and expand cooperation in key areas for the common benefits of both sides.

Li Yonghui, a researcher of Russian studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said that China and Russia are expected to further strengthen cooperation in trade and economy, particularly by promoting investment, as well as enhance people-to-people exchanges.

"Li's visit has not only reflected close collaboration between the two countries amid the current international landscape, but also consolidated the foundation for future cooperation, demonstrating their willingness and determination to carry out mutually beneficial cooperation in various fields," the researcher said.

Qian Feng, an expert with Tsinghua University's National Strategy Institute and a senior research fellow at Beijing-based think tank Taihe Institute, said the premier's visit once again shows the international community that consolidating China-Russia relations is a strategic choice made by the two nations based on their fundamental interests.

GCI: Proposal celebrates all civilizations

From page 1

In contrast to Western superiority complex, harmony is deeply rooted in Chinese civilization. As Confucius said, a gentleman aims at harmony and not at uniformity.

The genesis of GCI is built on the belief that the world is home to numerous cultures, philosophies, economic development patterns, environment, diplomacy, and people with diverse beliefs, habits, attitudes, and countries with different geographies, resources and nationalities. People live within different geographical boundaries, enjoy unique identities, and strive to flourish.

In the same way, each country is a mini world in itself and carries characteristics of the world. However, the people within a country harmonize their diversity and strive for development, peace, and secure liv-

ing. It is a well-recognized fact that a better-harmonized country ensures a pleasant and secure living experience.

President Xi Jinping echoed this sentiment while elaborating on the initiative at the Communist Party of China in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-Level Meeting in March 2023. The president's speech indicated that the GCI had many distinguishing characteristics.

First, the GCI recognizes that we belong to diverse cultures, believe in different systems, have distinctive histories, and are in different stages of development. We should adhere to respecting diversity.

Second, it promotes the idea that no one is superior to another; being human, we are all equal. We should strive to achieve our common aspirations for peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and free-

dom, which are common values of humanity.

Third, the GCI emphasizes that the world should uphold the value of learning and not let pride and prejudice hinder learning. We should not hesitate to recognize the diverse contributions of civilizations to human modernization. There should be no ambiguity that, historically, each civilization contributed to modernizing human civilization. Therefore, no one should become a victim of the illusion that only one particular civilization contributed to human civilization. Hence, the prime goal should be learning from each other, contributing to humanity's well-being, and meeting common people's expectations.

Moreover, learning is a two-way affair: learn and impart learning to others. China is cognizant that learning from others has helped it

grow. Therefore, China is now responsible for imparting learning as a major economic and technological power.

Fourth, the GCI negates the notion of the End of History. It forwards the idea, rather than belief, that human civilization always strives to modernize and look for better. Only the drivers and actors change, not the human aspiration to modernize. China is now a major driver and actor of a new wave of modernization.

Fifth, it recognizes that we must respect and appreciate other cultures, such as their elders and writers.

Sixth, the GCI adheres to the ancient Chinese philosophy of sharing prosperity. The Belt and Road Initiative is the most prominent example on this front, involving 152 member countries and 32 international organizations. China has invested almost \$1 trillion on numerous projects. The BRI has contributed to bringing millions of people out of the poverty trap.

Seventh, China promotes com-

mon, comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable security.

Eighth, the GCI negates the theory of the Clash of Civilizations, a byproduct of the hegemonic mindset and attitude. The initiative clearly spells out that China does not subscribe to this mentality. China believes in peaceful and cooperative living with other civilizations, as well as the equality of humanity and all civilizations.

However, there is one important aspect China must not overlook. Certain civilizations have sub-civilizations, or there are more competitors to claim certain civilizations. For example, under Islamic civilization, we can find numerous sub-civilizations like Arab, Iranian, Indus, Egyptian, Turkish, etc. On the other hand, Pakistan and India claim the Indus civilization. Thus, China should promote a dialogue at the sub-civilization level, which will help minimize differences and pave the way for dialogue among civilizations.

It can be inferred that the GCI prioritizes dialogue over confrontation, win-win cooperation over a zero-sum game, and advocates for a level playing field. The initiative gives due importance to principles of equity and equality without any prejudices. It aims to explore establishing networks of inter-civilization dialogue to enhance mutual learning and find new ways of cooperation. China is ready to share its experience, prosperity and cultural products to create a harmonious world. The country believes that every civilization has contributed to the development and modernization of the world. Thus, every civilization has something to celebrate.

The author is CEO of AIERD, adviser of Global Development Initiative Forum, SDGs Secretariate, Parliament of Pakistan and recipient of Pride of Pakistan Award. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CHINA

Jewelry maker becomes polished businesswoman

By CHENG SI
chengsi@chinadaily.com.cn

Despite being partially sighted, Dong Guirong has not only made a living from spotting precious gemstones in the dusty soil of the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, she's gone on to become a successful agate jewelry maker.

In solidarity with her humble beginnings, the 54-year-old from the region's Xin Barga Right Banner in Hulunbuir is today plowing her efforts into providing opportunities for local people who may face adversity.

"Gemstones are results of volcanic eruptions, and are like gifts from nature," she said. "I hope the agate pieces that I've designed can help young people with disabilities erupt with inspiration."

Her efforts to pass down the skills necessary to polish and carve agate gemstones are providing valuable skills to those seeking to earn a living in a similar fashion.

Dong learned to face adversity from an early age.

"My right eye was hurt in an accident when I was 6. My family didn't have much money for treatment, which meant that from middle school my vision was permanently blurred," she said.

Years later, Dong and her husband made a living by selling wool and sheepskin, despite her husband being allergic to animal hides. She would occasionally spot rough agate gemstones in the scrub, and over time she developed a bit of a collection.

"I got the idea of starting an agate business in 2002 after a traveler bought a rough agate from me for 500 yuan (\$69.7). I thought it might be a good idea to turn my hobby into a profitable business," she said. "Gemstones are scattered on the grassland and it only takes patience to find them."

"Around 2004, we made up our minds to quit the wool business and start a business collecting and designing agates. My friends and family members thought we were crazy at the time," she said.

It was not all smooth sailing at first. "The place where we would go to look for stones was 100 kilometers from our home and we had to do the journey on a motorbike, which was very uncomfortable. Our legs were very sore and frozen stiff by the time we got there," she said.

"We usually finished the search for stones at around 9 or 10 pm, and then returned home to clean the rough gemstones. I didn't feel tired though, as it was fascinating."

Once the rough agates were buffed and smoothed, the next step was to come up with interesting designs to carve them into.

Here is where Dong encountered another obstacle.

In order to learn how to carve her stones, she went to Alshaa League, which has a mature market for agate and many jewelry suppliers and gifted artisans.

"The jewelry manufacturers and suppliers there said they didn't have time to teach

Partially sighted Dong Guirong has turned rough stones into smooth success story



Clockwise from top: Dong Guirong teaches students winding techniques on agate gemstones in Xin Barga Right Banner, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, in August last year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Dong (right) displays a gemstone work at a Naadam fair in Xin Barga Right Banner on Aug 5. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Dong sets up the agate gemstone work *Feast on Grassland* at an exhibition center in Xin Barga Right Banner earlier this month. CHENG SI / CHINA DAILY

me, and doubted my ability to run the business. But I didn't give up and just sat there watching how they made jewelry pieces with my cheeky smile," she said.

In time, she became a gifted stone sculptor herself.

Almost all the design inspirations came from nature, with traditional culture, the food of the Mongolian ethnic group to which she belongs, and the grassland all providing her with creativity, she said. She pieced cleaned agates together and shaped them into horses, trees or even a dish of stewed pork.

"My most satisfying work is one themed on longevity, with agates and crystals carved into squirrels and pine trees — two symbols of prolonging life in China. I was also inspired by some Mongolian cultural elements and created a food-themed work, which consists of 1,296 dishes made from agate, amethyst and other gemstones. The inspirations always come on a whim and I draw them down whenever I get new ideas," she said.

It was this aspect of turning the polished stones into finely crafted works of art that attracted the market and enabled her to turn her business into a commercial success.

"No one wants to buy rough gemstones, but if you polish them and make them into beautiful jewelry, like rings and pins, customers will be attracted, especially women."

Dong's self-belief and hard work finally paid off.

Her artistic creations and fine jewelry pieces have brought her and her family a good income, with the annual turnover of her company reaching 1 million yuan before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. She said that she had a tough time running the business during the pandemic, but never surrendered and finally pulled through.

The plaudits for her work came in from high up in June 2022, when she was enshrined as an official inheritor of intangible cultural heritage in Xin Barga Right Banner.

Dong's efforts were justly rewarded for her outstanding techniques in making agate jewelry.

As the current chair of the banner's association of people with visual disabilities, Dong wants to do more to give those who may face obstacles in life a leg up.

"I am devoting efforts to build an agate-themed museum in the next 5 years, and I will make it not only a base to popularize gemstone knowledge but a home for disabled workers," she said.

The successful businesswoman will invest 40 million yuan in the 4,800-square-meter museum project, she said.

"I wish to leave something useful to the young generation; a place where they can learn about and arouse their interest in agates. Also, as a disabled person who has received so much help from other people over the years, I hope I can deliver warmth and opportunities to other people with disabilities."

Craftswoman looks past disability to inspire others to get creative with tree bark

By CHENG SI

Drawing her inspiration from nature, 60-year-old Li Shuying from the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, breathes new life to birch bark by crafting them into vivid animals, ancient Chinese beauties and breathtaking landscape paintings.

From Bailang town in Arxan city of the region's Hinggan League — an area famous for its lush birch forests — Li has created artworks with birch bark for decades. She collects the bark from dead birch trees or those that fall naturally, cuts the bark into shapes and creatively pieces them together.

"Each artwork I make keeps the natural grain and color of the birch bark. I cut and piece them into mountains, rabbits, cats, portraits and whatever else inspires me," she said. "My first satisfying work was inspired by some plant-themed embroidery my mother had done."

"I feel most proud of my work portraying 108 heroes, the main characters of the Chinese novel *Shuihu Zhuan*, or *Water Margin*, which depicts legends from the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127)."

She said that the piece took her three months to make and won her first place at an art competition in Hinggan League in 2013.

It's clearly her passion, as Li's eyes light up whenever she discusses her artwork. This place of happiness comes on the back of a disability that affected her leg, as she faced grim moments and eventually found a meaningful and fulfilling purpose in life.

"I got by on doing flexible work like selling mushrooms or other mountain delicacies before I started creating birch bark pieces in 2002. I joined an art competition organized by the local forestry bureau and won the first prize. Then I got help from the local government who supported me to start a birch bark workshop in 2009.

"At first I was very introverted and dared not to meet people because of the low self-esteem brought by my disability. But everything changed after I found my interest in creating birch bark pieces. My family members have also given me strong support," she said.

Today, her workshop bustles in summer with visitors coming in a continuous stream. "Most of them come to experience making their own birch bark art pieces, especially the children, and an experience class costs only 15 yuan (\$2.10) per person. I also sell finished goods or take bespoke orders. In the peak season from May to September, I can generate a revenue of over 100,000 yuan."

Li said the winter in Bailang is chilly and long with few travelers, so she usually closes the workshop from October to early spring. "I'm not idle during the winter, however, with so much preparation work like collecting materials and thinking what I have to do

for next year's birch bark art creation."

She has also given back to the community by assisting others with disabilities by offering them jobs.

"I've taught 60 to 70 people, including those with disabilities, how to make birch bark pieces in the past 10 or more years. My courses are free of charge and I provide them with all the equipment, including cleaned birch bark, paper and picture frames. I have five to six flexible workers at my workshop and three of them have disabilities. They work with me from May to late September — the town's tourism peak season and I pay them a monthly salary of about 3,000 yuan," she said.

Li was recognized as an inheritor of intangible cultural heritage for making birch bark art in 2020 by the Hinggan League. Last year, she opened another workshop in Ulaanhot, the league's capital city.

"The workshop in Ulaanhot is not aimed

at making profits, but rather it's a place where more people with disabilities can learn the skills of making birch bark artworks and earn their livings. I organized four training courses last year, with each course attracting 20 disabled people.

"It's not a regular activity but I go there whenever I have spare time. The door of the workshop is always open, so the disabled learners can go there to create their art pieces whenever they want and don't pay any money for electricity or water bills," she said. "Several more training courses will be organized this year."

Li has also utilized new technologies to help enrich her creations and plans to start livestreaming in the near future. "Initially, my shyness held me back, but many of my friends have encouraged me to do some online business. I think it's time for me to set an example for my disabled peers and hopefully they can take some inspiration from what I do."



From left: Li Shuying (left) guides fellow disabled women in making tree bark artwork in Arxan, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, in March. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Li creates tree bark pieces at her workshop in Arxan. CHENG SI / CHINA DAILY Li introduces her birch bark artworks to tourists

WORLD

'City of Film' set to drive Thai soft power strategy

By YANG WANLI in Pattaya, Thailand
yangwanli@chinadaily.com.cn

In a significant move to bolster Thailand's creative economy, authorities are focusing on developing coastal city Pattaya into a film industry hub as part of the country's soft power strategy.

"Pattaya is not only well known as a tourism city, but also holds strong potential to become Thailand's 'City of Film', taking the center stage in the film and creative industries," said Arunya Keatkeaw, deputy director-general of The Government Public Relations Department.

At the Pattaya Film Festival, which began on Wednesday, she highlighted Pattaya's growing role in the national economy and its contribution in promoting Thai films internationally, aiming to boost the country's global soft power and creative industries.

Earlier this year, the Thai government introduced the "Ignite Thailand" development plan, which prioritizes soft power across 11 sectors, including sports, tourism and film. Soft power is seen as a way to enhance the country's economy and tourism through culture.

As a crucial part in film industry, Pattaya is set to be developed into a "City of Film" and a location for film shooting. The Pattaya Film Festival aims to bring films of diverse sensibilities to audiences for free and includes a film competition, workshops and seminars.

Siwat Bunker, deputy permanent secretary of Pattaya, said on Thursday the city aims to become a member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in the field of film.

"Under the plan, the city will be a one-stop service center for film and creative industries. In addition, a theme park covering 640,000 square meters will be built to accommodate film industry," he said, adding that some educational institutes will also provide relevant curricula and training.

Thailand, recognized as one of the world's investment hubs for filmmaking, earned more than 6.6 billion baht (\$192 million) from foreign filmmaking last year, the Thailand Film Office said.

To enhance films that promote Thailand's soft power, the Ministry of Culture has allocated a 30 million baht (\$870,000) subsidy for each film or animation film project.

"We believe that the development of Thailand as a center for filmmaking will also help promote other related industries, generate more employment and income and distribute wealth across regional areas," said Panidapa Suankaew, chief of the film business promotion section of Thailand Film Office.

Major target market

Nuanvan Daraswasdi, an expert in policy and strategy from the Ministry of Culture, said: "China is our major target market. We realized the fact when we participated in a major film festival in China years ago and surprisingly found that Chinese audiences are very interested in Thai films and TV dramas."

Chalermchatri Yukol, president of the Film and Series Subcommittee of the National Soft Power Strategy Committee, highlighted the strong connections between Thailand and China, including blood ties, friendship and fruitful collaboration in the film industry.

Apart from film production and investment, many education institutes offering film courses have Chinese sponsorship, he said. "Almost all the high-quality and affordable film equipment is made in China, which contributes a lot to a better future of our domestic film industry."

Shared blood ties foster the same empathy between audiences in both countries, he said. "We are also discussing with Chinese authorities, hoping to introduce more Thai films to Chinese audiences."

Fleeing flames



A man guides animals away from the flames after a forest fire erupted in a grassy area of Kizilcahamam district, in Turkey's capital Ankara, on Wednesday. GUVEN YILMAZ VIA GETTY IMAGES

Stately homecoming



Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Manet (front) prays before a statue during a ceremony at the Peace Palace in Phnom Penh on Thursday, marking the return of trafficked artifacts from collectors and museums in the United States. The 70 returned statues symbolically reunited the Cambodian people with their ancestral souls, Hun Manet said. AGENCY KAMPUCHEA PRESS VIA AP

EU tariffs trigger trade war concerns

Experts: Decision targeting Chinese EVs threatens to hinder bloc's green efforts

By CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels
chenweihua@chinadaily.com.cn

The European Commission's decision to impose punitive duties on the imports of battery electric vehicles from China has drawn criticism from experts who worry about a potential trade war and a slowdown in the European Union's net-zero ambition.

The commission disclosed on Tuesday to interested parties the draft decision to impose definitive countervailing duties on imports of EVs from China, with a slight adjustment from the provisional duties announced earlier.

The latest duties range from 36.3 percent for SAIC, 19.3 percent for Geely, 17 percent for BYD and 9 percent for Tesla, which accounts for more than one-third of the EU's EV imports from China. The decision will not retroactively collect countervailing duties.

Ding Chun, director of the Center for European Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai, said the commission's decision is "extremely regrettable".

Neither China nor the EU should necessarily aim to achieve the most optimum outcome for themselves, but the second-best outcome through coordination, Ding said.

"They should be rational and practical and handle the dispute cautiously to avoid a trade war, which will be a lose-lose outcome for both sides."

The dispute should be resolved through healthy competition and cooperation to promote new energy vehicle industries, he said. "Protectionism won't help speed up technological advancement and industrial upgrade, or win competition and market or satisfy customers."

Chris Aylett, a research associate at the Environment and Society Centre at Chatham House, a think tank in London, voiced concerns that the EU tariffs will slow down the bloc's green transition.

Decarbonization technologies such as solar panels, wind turbines and EVs share a characteristic that

est low-carbon products will increase the cost of the transition and slow it down, increasing the risk of the EU missing its emission reduction targets," he said.

He also cautioned that if the EU keeps the cost of consumer goods such as EVs high, it will strengthen the perception of clean energy as something for the rich, and of concern for the climate as an elite pre-occupation.

"It is not hard to see how these issues could be exploited for political gain, posing further risks to a successful transition," Aylett said.

Uri Dadush and Conor McCaffrey, two researchers at Brussels-based think tank Bruegel, said the punitive tariffs "represent a formidable barrier in an industry where average profit margins are typically in the range of 4 percent to 8 percent."

The biggest effects of tariffs are the rise in consumer prices and, over time, the diversion of imports to more expensive third-party suppliers, they wrote in a joint analysis.

"In this case, high prices for EVs will cause additional damage by directly slowing the green transition and by garbling the commission's message about its urgency and overwhelming importance," they said. "Low-income EU consumers who need a car and are already struggling with high prices will be especially affected."

China has established a clear technological lead across the EV value chain, one that may no longer depend on subsidies, they added.

They suggest that Chinese OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) may respond to the duties by establishing production in the EU, but that option will also entail higher costs and prices, and in any event will only be open to the biggest producers.

"Some Chinese producers of EVs and batteries may prefer instead to establish their largest facilities in lower-cost locations with access to the EU market, as is already happening in Morocco and Turkey," the analysis said.

"Within the EU, Hungary, which maintains close relations with China, may turn out to be the preferred EU location for Chinese OEM investment."

sets them apart from other traded goods, Aylett wrote on the Chatham House website.

"When swapped for fossil fuel alternatives, they reduce the quantity of planet-warming gases being pumped into the atmosphere. They are needed in vast quantities, and in very short order, to give any chance of avoiding the worst impacts of climate change."

He argued that the EU's ambitious goal of net zero by 2050, along with an intermediate target of at least a 55 percent reduction by 2030, "implies deploying mass-market clean technology products like solar panels and electric vehicles in very large numbers."

World leader

"When it comes to cheap, clean technology, China is the undisputed world leader. Two decades of consistent and targeted industrial policy, combined with the benefits of a huge domestic market, mean that China today produces extremely competitively priced, high-quality, low-carbon goods," he said, citing examples that the cheapest EVs in France were priced between \$24,000 and \$32,500 last year, while in China, more than 50 models were retailing locally for less than \$15,000.

"All else being equal, anything which stems the flow of the cheap-

They should be rational and practical and handle the dispute cautiously to avoid a trade war, which will be a lose-lose outcome for both sides."

Ding Chun, director of the Center for European Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai

Trump holds 1st outdoor rally since attempted assassination

ASHEBORO, United States — Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump held his first outdoor campaign event on Wednesday since an assassination attempt, lobbying insults at his Democratic opponent Kamala Harris from behind bullet-proof glass at a rally in the battleground state of North Carolina.

Trump, 78, speaking against a backdrop of vintage warplanes at an aviation museum, called Harris the "most radical left person" ever to run for the White House and claimed that millions of jobs will "vanish overnight" if she wins in November.

"Your life savings will be totally wiped out," Trump told the crowd, one of a number of apocalyptic scenarios he painted during his speech.

"All over the world, our adversaries knew that America was not to be trifled with when I was your commander in chief," he said. "If comrade Kamala wins this November, World War III is virtually guaranteed to happen."

With Harris drawing enthusiastic crowds since replacing President Joe Biden at the top of the Democratic ticket, the event in Asheboro was a chance for Trump to reclaim his longtime dominance in staging spectacular rallies.

It was his first big outdoor event since being lightly wounded in an attempted assassination at a similarly open site in Butler, Pennsylvania, a month ago. That attack left one rally participant dead before the 20-year-old gunman was killed by a Secret Service sniper.

The Secret Service recommended that Trump stick to more easily controllable indoor venues such as sports arenas. He has since held about a dozen indoor events.

A bulletproof screen could be seen around the podium where Trump and his vice-presidential pick, J.D. Vance, addressed the crowd in Asheboro.

At one point during his speech, Trump left the stage and entered the crowd to check on an attendee who was suffering a medical issue.

Crowds are an integral part of Trump's political brand, with the right-wing billionaire seeking to portray himself as an outsider and man of the people.

North Carolina is one of a handful of swing states that are expected to determine the outcome of the Nov 5 election.

Potential Kennedy deal

Meanwhile, a super PAC, or political action committee, supporting independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr told Reuters on Wednesday that Kennedy wants a deal with Trump in which he endorses the Republican rival in exchange for a job in a potential Trump administration.

Kennedy is planning to drop out of the election and endorse Trump, but that hinges on whether the Republican offers Kennedy "and others" a position in the White House if elected, Larry Sharpe, outreach director with American Values 2024, told Reuters.

Super PACs can raise unlimited amounts of money for candidates but are prohibited from coordinating directly with the campaign. American Values has raised more than \$50 million in support of Kennedy, according to Federal Election Commission filings through June 30.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Israel kills top Palestinian militant as truce talks stumble

SIDON, Lebanon — The Israeli military killed a senior Palestinian militant in Lebanon on Wednesday, leading to accusations from the Fatah movement that Israel was trying to ignite a regional war.

The strike that killed Khalil Maqdash, described by Fatah as "one of the leaders" of its armed wing in Lebanon, came hours after United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken ended a tour of the Middle East aimed at reaching a cease-fire in the conflict in Gaza.

Fatah, which is based in the Isra-

li-occupied West Bank, said Maqdash was killed near the southern Lebanese city of Sidon.

Israel accused him of "directing attacks and smuggling weapons" to the West Bank and collaborating with Iranian forces.

His killing marked the first time Israel has targeted a senior Fatah member in more than 10 months of cross-border clashes with Lebanese militants, mostly from Hezbollah, during the Gaza conflict.

Tawfiq Tirawy, a member of Fatah's central committee, told Agence

France-Press that the "assassination ... is further proof that Israel wants to ignite a full-scale war in the region."

On the ground, Gaza was again rocked by airstrikes. The civil defense agency in the Hamas-run territory said at least three people were killed and 10 children wounded in an Israeli strike on a school-turned-shelter in Gaza City.

In Lebanon, Hezbollah claimed attacks on Israeli military positions across the border, including in the annexed Golan Heights, after several Israeli strikes that the Health

Ministry said had killed five people.

On Thursday, China's embassy in Beirut urged Chinese citizens in Lebanon to leave "as soon as possible".

"Recently, the situation on the Lebanese-Israeli border has continued to be tense, and security circumstances in Lebanon are severe and complex," it said in a statement, advising Chinese citizens in Lebanon to "take the opportunity while commercial flights are still running to return to China or leave the country as soon as possible".

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



Emergency workers and civilians surround a car hit by an Israeli drone attack, which killed one person, in Sidon, southern Lebanon, on Wednesday. ANADOLU VIA GETTY IMAGES

WORLD

Sri Lanka eyes rebound of tourism sector

Promotional campaign targeting China and others expected to lure more visitors

By XU WEIWEI in Hong Kong
vivienxu@chinadailyapac.com

Sri Lanka's tourism recovery is expected to gain further momentum on the back of a planned new promotional campaign and the nation's diverse attractions, with the sector's rebound aiding the nation's broader economic revival, experts said.

Sri Lanka expects to attract 2.3 million foreign tourists this year, and 3 million in 2025, its tourism authorities said.

According to the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, a new promotional campaign covering key source markets will be launched in the second week of September. The first phase of the campaign will target five countries — China, Britain, France, Germany and India.

Sri Lanka's cabinet approved issuing free tourist visas to visitors from 35 countries including China, India and Russia, said cabinet spokesman and Transport Minister Bandula Gunawardana on Thursday.

Tourists will be given 30-day visas under a six-month pilot program that will start from Oct 1, Gunawardana told reporters at a weekly cabinet briefing.

Natalia Bayona, executive director of UN Tourism, said Sri Lanka's tourism sector is distinguished by its diverse attractions, which include beaches, wildlife sanctuaries, rainforest areas, tea plantations, ancient heritage and Buddhist cultural sites.

"This variety appeals to a wide range of tourists like those interested in adventure and culture," she said.

According to UN Tourism's World Tourism Barometer, Sri Lanka's tourism sector has shown a steady and encouraging post-pandemic recovery. While challenges remain, consistent growth in tourist arrivals demonstrates that Sri Lanka is successfully regaining its position as a popular travel destination, signaling a positive outlook for the contin-

ued recovery and expansion of its tourism sector, the UN agency said.

Priantha Fernando, chairman of the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, said that whatever a tourist may look for within one island, they can find it in Sri Lanka, which enjoys different climatic conditions in its various regions.

"For certain, China is one of our key markets," he added.

Niraj de Mel, chairman of the Sri Lanka Tea Board, said Sri Lanka's tourism has different levels, offering suitable options based on travelers' budgets and preferences. For instance, the country draws in a lot of people who are attracted to beaches, as well as those who like to visit the tea estates known for cultivating the world-class Ceylon tea, he noted.

Rising revenue

Tourism has become one of Sri Lanka's top foreign revenue generators. Statistics from the Central Bank of Sri Lanka show that the nation's earnings from tourism rose to over \$1.88 billion in the first seven months of this year, a 73.3 percent increase compared to the same period last year.

The industry will continue to play an indispensable role in the South Asian nation's economic recovery, analysts said.

Bayona from UN Tourism said Sri Lanka offers significant opportunities for investment and trade in the tourism industry.

"The government's initiative to provide beach land and islets for development encourages investments in new resorts, eco-friendly accommodations, and tourism infrastructure," she said.

"This creates a favorable environment for economic growth, job creation, and the sustainable expansion of the tourism sector."

Agencies and Xinhua contributed to this story.



Traditional musicians perform in front of the historic Temple of the Sacred Tooth in Kandy, Sri Lanka, on Monday. ISHARA S. KODIKARA / AFP

Immigrants in Australia confused by voting rules

By KARL WILSON in Sydney
karlwilson@chinadailyapac.com

Voting in Australia is compulsory, and while this may be considered a good thing, confusion sets in when voters cast their ballots, especially for immigrants voting for the first time.

A recent survey of first-generation Chinese and South Asian migrants found more than half the Chinese said the voting system can be daunting and confusing, while just under half the South Asian respondents said the same thing.

Australia's voting system is by proportional representation, where a candidate who gets 40 percent of the vote could still lose to one with 35 percent once preferences from other parties are distributed.

In some elections, ballot papers have had up to 100 candidates which need to be numbered in order of preference. For example, if a Labor candidate is number 20 on the ballot paper, the voter needs to put 1 in the candidate's box and fill the rest in

order of preference. A missing number or a repeated number means the ballot is spoiled and not counted.

Fan Yang, a research fellow at the University of Melbourne's law school and one of those involved in the research, told China Daily the system can be confusing for migrants at first.

For several years, Fan, along with colleague Sukhmani Khorana from the University of New South Wales, has been looking into Australia's voting system and how it impacts migrants.

Their latest survey was conducted on first-generation Chinese and South Asian migrants. About half of those polled said they lacked political literacy and were thus unable to make an informed choice.

"This gap in understanding among newer migrant communities has allowed for the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation," Khorana, an expert on migrant and refugee communities, told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation on Aug 6.

To the rescue



Volunteers rescue women and children trapped in the flood by a boat in the southeastern city of Feni, Bangladesh, on Wednesday. By Thursday, at least five people had died and hundreds of thousands stranded in the floods in the country's southern and eastern areas. MUHAMMAD AMDAD HOSSAIN / SOLENT

Energy connectivity, cooperation key to Africa's financial inclusion, experts say

By OTIATO OPALI in Nairobi, Kenya
otiatoo@chinadaily.com.cn

The surge in digital financial tools in Africa through mobile phone connectivity has broadened financial access but is hindered by lack of access to affordable clean energy, experts who had gathered in Kenya's capital Nairobi said on Wednesday, adding that China-Africa cooperation can help bridge the continent's access-to-energy gap.

Speaking during the China-Africa Digital Financial Inclusion Summit 2024, Bei Duoguang, president of the Chinese Academy of Financial Inclusion at Renmin University of China, said the focus in Africa should be covering the last mile in energy connectivity in order to bring people in far-flung areas into the financial systems.

Bei cited the example of Kenya's M-Pesa virtual banking system, which is supported by the Huawei Mobile Money Platform as an innovative way, through which Africa uses digital technology to handle financial services. However, people in areas with no electricity find it difficult to use such solu-

tions because simple tasks like charging a phone are a challenge.

According to the International Energy Agency, 600 million people in Africa lack power supply, Bei said. "However, Africa has a huge potential in renewable energy like solar, which can help connect farmers and businesses to reliable energy," he said.

Reflecting on the upcoming Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, or FOCAC, summit to be held in Beijing next month, Christine Mwangi, regional coordinator for NGO World Wide Fund for Nature in Africa, said the pledge to increase trade between China and Africa can be met through agriculture.

Challenge remains

Mwangi commended the cooperation between Africa and China in areas such as value addition promotion and manufacturing. However, the need for clean and affordable energy to help farmers in processes such as value addition or sustainable manufacturing remains a challenge.

She urged policymakers in Africa and China to establish funds

through avenues like the FOCAC for providing energy access in agriculture and manufacturing since sustainable agriculture is the best way to conserve environment and ensure biodiversity.

Ji Min, director of the Counselor Office at the People's Bank of China, said they are working toward green investments, especially in businesses involved in renewable energy like wind and solar energy for small and medium-sized enterprises in rural areas.

Ji lauded Egypt for using this path to successfully issue a three-year Sustainability Panda Bond worth \$478.7 million last year. It is the first country in the Middle East and Africa to issue such bonds in the Chinese financial market, underscoring China and Egypt's commitment to driving sustainable development, Ji said.

The daylong summit brought together more than 100 participants from the banking and financial sector, government officials as well as experts from development and trade institutions in China and Africa.

Hainan Airlines has new Seattle flight

By HENG WEILI in New York
hengweili@chinadailyusa.com

In a positive sign for air travel between China and the United States, Hainan Airlines has announced the launch of a new route connecting Haikou, capital of South China's Hainan province, and Seattle, starting next month.

The once-weekly round-trip flight will start on Sept 26 and include a stopover in Chongqing, in Southwest China.

Flight HU445 will depart Haikou every Thursday. Both the outbound and inbound flights will include a stopover in Southwest China's Chongqing municipality.

The outbound flight from China will depart Haikou Meilan International Airport at 7 am Beijing time, arriving in Chongqing at 9:10 am. It will leave the Chongqing airport at 11:20 am and arrive at Seattle Tacoma International Airport in Washington state at 9 am Seattle time. The flight time is expected to be 17 hours.

The return flight will leave Seattle at 11 am local time, arriving in Chongqing at 4 pm Beijing time the next day. It will depart Chongqing at 6:30 pm and arrive at the Haikou airport at 8:45 pm, for an expected flight time of 18 hours and 45 minutes.

Hainan Airlines has been flying to Seattle, but via Beijing.

The new route will be the first from Haikou to the US operated by Hainan Airlines. It is expected to also support the development of the Hainan Free Trade Port.

In recent years, Hainan has increased efforts to resume and launch international air routes. As of May, the province had 46 overseas passenger routes, with the number expected to reach 62 by



Hainan Airlines planes are seen at the international airport in Haikou, Hainan province. XINHUA

the end of this year.

The flight also could contribute to Haikou's efforts to attract international talent.

In June, the city issued the "Announcement on the Recruitment of Urgently Needed Talents from Foreign College Graduates for Enterprises and Institutions in 2024".

The initiative aims to recruit 342 talents from among international college graduates for enterprises and institutions.

Of the positions, 19 are designated for public institutions, 10 for statutory institutions, 61 for State-owned enterprises, and 252 for enterprises within the city's key industry parks.

Hainan Airlines, which was established in 1993, and its subsidiaries operated nearly 1,800 domestic and international routes as of 2023.

In February 2024, Hainan Airlines was awarded the "One Star Flight Safety Diamond Award" by the Civil Aviation Administration of China for achieving 10 million

consecutive hours of safe flight.

US-China air travel, however, is still far below pre-pandemic levels and also has been slowed due to political tensions.

The number of international flights by international airlines from North America and Europe to China is down more than 60 percent this summer from the 2018 peak of more than 13,000, the Financial Times reported on Monday, citing data from industry tracker OAG.

Chinese airlines, however, have reduced their flights on such routes by only 30 percent since their 2019 peak, the FT reported. And they are providing twice as many flights to those routes this summer as their Western counterparts are.

The US Department of Transportation approved increased frequency for US-China flights in February, allowing Chinese passenger airlines to boost their weekly round-trip US flights to 50 from 35, as of March 2024. Still, that number is only one-third of pre-pandemic levels, airlinegeeks.com reported.

Search for new govt commences in France

By JULIAN SHEA in London
julian@mail.chinadailyuk.com

With the end of the summer holiday in sight and the Paris Olympic Games having passed, French politicians are once again turning their attention to the business of trying to resolve the issue of who runs the country following the recent snap legislative election.

The vote, across two rounds in June and July, was called by President Emmanuel Macron to see off the threat from the far-right National Rally party, or RN.

But it was only partly successful as although his own centrist Ensemble coalition won more seats than RN in the National Assembly, the left-wing alliance, known as the New Popular Front, or NFP, ended up with the largest number of seats, but still no overall majority.

This means the parliament is divided into three large blocs with major ideological differences, and six weeks since voting finished and the result became clear, the country still has the same cabinet and same prime minister, Gabriel Attal, in a caretaker capacity until a new government can be formed.



The current situation can only be provisional — everyone's just getting ready for the next election, whether that's a general or a presidential election."

David Todd, professor of modern history at Sciences Po University in Paris

Macron now faces the challenge of breaking the political logjam, and will start talks, initially with the NFP, on Friday.

"The appointment of a prime minister will follow on from these consultations and their conclusions," said a statement from the Elysee Palace. Macron, it continued, hoped "to continue to move toward the constitution of the broadest and most stable majority possible in the service of the country".

NFP's leading prime ministerial candidate is left-wing economist Lucie Castets, but Macron has made it clear he would prefer someone with a wider base of support who is less likely to prompt a vote of no confidence in the government in the National Assembly.

Other contenders include the Socialist Party's Bernard Cazeneuve, who previously served as prime minister from 2016-17 and has significant top-level ministerial experience, or if a more right-wing option is preferred, Xavier Bertrand of the Republicans party.

Marine Le Pen and her protégé Jordan Bardella, whose far-right National Rally came third in the second round of the legislative elections, will be taking their turn to speak with Macron on Monday, reported the France 24 news website.

David Todd, a professor of modern history at Sciences Po University in Paris, told the website that the country is in uncharted political waters, and there is no clear way ahead.

"There's no precedent in the (post-1958) Fifth Republic to the situation we're in," he said.

"The current situation can only be provisional — everyone's just getting ready for the next election, whether that's a general or a presidential election. It's not really about running a government, but about running an electoral campaign."

GLOBAL LENS



Kauli Vaast, a surfer of France, shakes hands with the captain of a local boat in Teahupo'o on July 25.



A local resident spearfishes at a coral reef in Teahupo'o on Aug 9.



Kauli Vaast of France competes at the Paris 2024 Olympics surfing competition in Teahupo'o, Tahiti, French Polynesia, on July 27. PHOTOS BY CARLOS BARRIA / REUTERS

ECHO OF THE WAVES



A whale is seen near Teahupo'o on Aug 8.



A Polynesian woman reclines in the chair and sells bonito fish outside her house in Teahupo'o, on Aug 10.



Polynesians wear traditional costumes ahead of the opening ceremony for the Paris 2024 Olympics in Papara, Tahiti, on July 26.

At Polynesia's Olympic surfing venue, people fight for a reef and a way of life

On the remote south coast of Tahiti, French Polynesia, its Jurassic peaks and azure lagoon accessible only by boat, Patrick Rochette is explaining how centuries-old Polynesian conservation traditions are being revived to protect this unique environment.

Mingled with gruesome tales of the island's history of tribal wars and the roots of wave-riding, it's a compelling account that resonates with the school children that the Tahitian elder has brought to this idyllic spot close to the Olympic surfing venue of Teahupo'o.

Among the interconnected Polynesian concepts lost or repressed during Tahiti's French colonization that Rochette describes: respect for tupuna, the ancestors; mana, the spiritual power of people and places; tapu, which is sacred; rahui, a restriction or prohibition; and the guardians — the whales, sharks, turtles.

For Rochette and others, countering the pressures of over-exploitation and climate change go hand-in-hand with a cultural renaissance in the Pacific island group.

"We Polynesians, in 15 or 20 years, if we don't do anything, there'll be nothing left," Rochette said in a boat, speeding down the jungle-clad coast. "We have to do it together, not just here, but the Pacific community has to do all of this together."

Polynesia (from the Greek words meaning "many islands") is a large grouping of over one thousand islands scattered over the central and southern Pacific Ocean.

The Polynesian Triangle encom-



A Polynesian poses for a portrait near Teahupo'o on Aug 6.

passes some 10 million square miles of the Pacific Ocean with Hawaii, New Zealand (Aotearoa) and Easter Island (Rapa Nui) at its corners. Its people, who trace their lineage back to a spiritual homeland, are closely connected by language, culture and their seafaring history.

As ideas of sustainability and conservation build momentum around the world, the adoption of traditional and culturally relevant approaches is becoming more popular among indigenous communities.

In Polynesia, an intimate knowledge of the moana, the ocean, and the concept of guardianship is resonating as pressures on reefs and lagoons from both development and climate change.

Wave of 'mana'

Tereva David is working with the local Teahupo'o community to embrace the Polynesian way of living in harmony with the environment.

One of the best to ride the Paris Olympics' ferocious wave in front of his village, David has run camps for promising young French Polynesian surfers for the past decade.

David, 35, teaches them respect — not just for the wave, but for themselves, for each other and for their culture and environment.

"My mom, when she was a little girl, she was forbidden to speak Tahitian," he said. "For a while there, it wasn't looking good when you speak Tahitian — 'Oh, you're too rude, or you're from the street, or from Teahupo'o, in the bush!'"

Now, Tahitian language and culture is a source of pride in Teahupo'o, where clear rivers run through the village to the black sand beach and the lagoon.

Olympic gold for 22-year-old local surfer Kauli Vaast also generated great mana, spiritual power or cultural pride.

"Only kings were able to surf here before," David said. "For us, surfing is sacred, it's the culture — like dancing, like canoe paddling, like singing, like making food for everybody."

David said the community had worked to ensure having one of the world's most powerful and alluring waves on their doorsteps fully benefited the village.

Locals now provide surf camps, camera operators, taxi boats, and water safety patrols when top surfers come for big swells.

"It took us a long time but we finally did it. Now, nobody comes in and does it like the circus — we regulate," says David.

"For us, it was the thing to do, to represent our mana, to represent our tupuna, our ancestors."

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BUSINESS

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Experts see real estate stability

Policy support for reducing inventories, improving supply set to prove effective

By LIU ZHIHUA, OUYANG SHIJIA and ZHOU LANXU

China's real estate industry is expected to stabilize gradually amid stronger policy support for reducing inventories, improving new supplies and easing liquidity stress of developers, as the country accelerates the establishment of a new development model for long-term high-quality development of the sector, experts said.

Latest data from the National Financial Regulatory Administration showed on Wednesday that commercial banks have reviewed 5,392 projects on the so-called white list. The list recommends real estate projects eligible for financial support from financial institutions since the launch of the urban real estate financing coordination mechanisms in the first quarter.

Approximately 1.4 trillion yuan (\$200 billion) has been approved for financing such selected projects. Real estate remains a key industry for the Chinese economy, and urgent improvement to the balance sheets of real estate companies is needed, said scholar Zhang Yansheng.

"To establish a new and better development model in the real estate sector, it is crucial to effectively balance the functions of housing as a commodity as well as a key factor for improving people's livelihoods," Zhang said, adding that ensuring such a balance will be a focus of policy orientations for next step.

While new urbanization will provide new growth points for the real estate industry, it is essential to clarify the division of responsibilities and financial obligations between the central and local governments, as well as ensure stable economic growth, he said.

At a meeting held by the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee on July 30, Chinese leadership stressed it is important to reduce inventories and optimize new housing supply. The purchase of existing commercial housing for use as affordable housing should be actively supported.

Work must be done to ensure the delivery of pre-sold homes, and accelerate the establishment of a new development model for the real estate sector, according to the meeting.

Wang Xingping, senior analyst of corporates at ratings agency Fitch Bohua, said he expects the Chinese authorities to not only continue to support property financing but also focus on promoting sales and reducing property inventories.

"Measures may include further relaxing home purchase qualifications in high-tier cities, lowering the cost of home purchases, and increasing home purchase subsidies," Wang said.

"An L-shaped recovery is anticipated. However, this recovery trend will be jointly determined by policy support, restoration of market confidence, and differentiated development among cities."

Zhang Ming, deputy director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Finance and Banking, said that in an optimistic scenario, the slide in property prices in first- and second-tier cities may stop in the second half of the year.

"If people expect that home prices in first- and second-tier cities have bottomed out, much of the pent-up demand will find release," he said.

"The governments of first- and second-tier cities need to adjust their approach. They shouldn't ease policies bit by bit but implement a comprehensive relaxation at one go and signal to the market that these policies won't be changed for the next three to five years."

Liao Yuanyuan, director of the Statistics and Risk Surveillance Department of the administration, said at a news conference on Wednesday that the NFRA will collaborate with all departments concerned to continue pressing local governments, property developers and financial institutions to "shoulder their responsibilities" and "enhance the effectiveness of the urban real estate financing coordination mechanisms".

Contact the writers at liuzhihua@chinadaily.com.cn



A robot draws a picture at the ongoing 2024 World Robot Conference in Beijing. CHEN XIAOGEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

China ahead in humanoid robots field

By FAN FEIFEI
fanfeifei@chinadaily.com.cn

Humanoid robots are expected to usher in a new stage of growth as Chinese tech companies venture into the field to cash in on the immense market opportunities going forward, said experts and business executives.

Their comments have come as humanoid robots took center stage at the ongoing 2024 World Robot Conference, which runs till Sunday in Beijing.

According to a report released at the conference by the World Robot Cooperation Organization, humanoid robots will profoundly transform human production and lifestyle, while leading society into a new stage of intelligent development and bringing disruptive changes to various industries.

In the industrial sector, humanoid robots will participate widely in hazardous production processes, significantly enhancing production efficiency and safety. They will become a crucial force in executing tasks such as scientific exploration, disaster relief and security inspections in extreme environments, as per the report.

Qiao Hong, president of WRCO, said multimodal large language models, which possess the ability to generate text, images, audio and video based on given prompts, will provide humanoid robots with enhanced understanding, perception and decision-making capabilities.

Chinese robotics firms are at the forefront of advancements in

the development of humanoid robots, achieving significant breakthroughs in both lower and upper limb functionalities, and bolstering the application of cutting-edge robotics technology in the manufacturing sector, industry insiders said.

At the conference, UBTECH Robotics, a Shenzhen, Guangdong province-based robot developer, is showcasing its industrial humanoid robot, Walker S, which has been applied in car factories to carry out tasks such as intelligent sorting, intelligent quality inspection, and installation of car components.

UBTECH said in July that it would work with FAW-Volkswagen, one of China's earliest joint venture automakers, to develop highly intelligent and flexible production lines, as well as an unmanned car factory.

The collaboration aims to integrate humanoid robots into industrial operations at FAW-Volkswagen's factory in Qingdao, Shandong province, where the robots will undertake tasks such as bolt tightening, component assembly and handling automotive parts.

Tan Min, chief brand officer of UBTECH, said the emergence of humanoid robots will change the way people live and work, and improve production efficiency and people's quality of life.

These robots, he added, will not only play a vital role in intelligent manufacturing, but could also be used in fields such as personal services, healthcare and education.

China aims to build an innovation system for humanoid robots

by 2025, with breakthroughs to be made in several key technologies to ensure the safe and effective supply of core components, according to a guideline unveiled by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology. By 2027, the country will establish a secure and reliable industrial and supply chain system of humanoid robots, the guideline said.

An industry report co-compiled by UBTECH and other partners has forecast that the market size of humanoid robots in China will reach some 2.76 billion yuan (\$386.7 million) this year and is expected to touch 75 billion yuan by 2029, accounting for 32.7 percent of the global total.

Marina Bill, president of the International Federation of Robotics, said about 60,000 industrial robots were installed in China 10 years ago, and it has gone up to 290,000 now. "Hardly any other country in the world has had that quick a development."

Bill, who is also the global head of marketing and sales and head of product line software and digital in industrial conglomerate ABB's robotics division, said China is a very important country for robotics, and the company has continuously expanded its footprint here.

"Just a couple of years ago, we opened our mega factory in Shanghai where we now have a huge production of robots," Bill said, adding that the company does research and development for global products in China and will work with local suppliers in various areas.

Dairy imports from EU face probe

By ZHONG NAN
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

China's decision to launch an anti-subsidy probe into certain dairy products imported from the European Union fully aligns with domestic laws and World Trade Organization rules, said a commerce official on Thursday.

The government will review the applicants' qualifications, details regarding the products under investigation, the impact of these products on the domestic industry, and pertinent information about the involved countries or regions, said the Ministry of Commerce in an online notice on Wednesday.

Addressing a weekly news conference in Beijing, He Yadong, a spokesman for the Ministry of Commerce, said this case is unrelated to the EU's latest move to impose definitive countervailing duties on imports of electric vehicles.

He made the remarks after the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, announced on Tuesday its plans to impose import tariffs of up to 36.3 percent on EVs produced in China. Any potential measures would be in effect for five years, with a final decision still pending.

The dairy case was initiated in response to a request from enterprises in China. It fundamentally differs from the EC's abrupt decision to launch an anti-subsidy investigation into Chinese EVs without any request from member states or industry groups, the spokesman added.

"We will conduct the investigation openly and transparently, in accordance with Chinese laws and regulations, and in compliance with WTO rules, ensuring that the rights of all stakeholders are fully protected," said He.

In a statement released by the Brussels-based China Chamber of Commerce to the EU (CCCEU) earlier this week, the chamber said that the development of the European EV industry, along with the EC's own report, shows that there is no sufficient evidence to demonstrate that China's EVs cause substantial material injury to the EU market.

The EC's unfair use of trade tools to hinder free trade in EVs, along with a protectionist approach, will ultimately weaken the resilience of the European EV industry, disrupt the level playing field, and undermine the EU's own green transition, said the statement.

Moreover, the CCCEU said it will exacerbate trade tensions between China and the EU, sending a profoundly negative signal to global cooperation and green development.

The EU's decision to impose high tariffs on Chinese EVs is motivated by a desire to protect its domestic auto sector and by concerns over the rise of Chinese automakers, said Chen Bin, deputy director of the expert committee at the Beijing-based China Machinery Industry Federation.

However, Chen noted that the EU's tariff policy comes with significant drawbacks. To meet its ambitious emission reduction targets, including the phase-out of gasoline-powered auto sales by 2035, the EU requires affordable EVs. The high tariffs are likely to increase EV prices, potentially slowing their widespread adoption.

China saw its first half auto exports soar 30.5 percent year-on-year to 2.79 million units, said the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

Due to the impact of the anti-subsidy investigation, the EU was the only major automotive export market of China to experience a decline in Chinese auto imports in the first half.

Although establishing production bases in non-EU countries like Thailand and Türkiye may help bypass high tariffs and reduce dependence on the EU market, Bai Ming, a member of the Academic Degree Committee at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation in Beijing, warned that Chinese auto manufacturers should not rush into localizing production solely in response to tariff increases.

Briefly

Expo to boost global digital trade ties

The third Global Digital Trade Expo will take place in Hangzhou, capital of East China's Zhejiang province, from Sept 25 to 29. The expo aims to leverage global digital trade resources to enhance cooperation and promote development, according to the Ministry of Commerce. The expo will span 150,000 square meters, featuring a comprehensive exhibition area and eight specialized zones dedicated to various digital industries.

Shanghai ranks 3rd in int'l shipping centers

Shanghai has been ranked third among leading international shipping centers. Singapore, London, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Dubai have secured the top five spots in the Xinhua-Baltic International Shipping Center Development Index (2024). With their outstanding shipping service capabilities and industry-leading port infrastructure, these cities provide a strong guarantee for the smooth operation of global shipping, according to the index report.

XINHUA — CHINA DAILY

EVs showing greater potential to feed grids

By CHEN MEILING in Beijing and GUO JUN in Nanjing

Electric vehicles can potentially double up as super giant "mobile power banks" to support electricity supply and ensure grid stability during peak power consumption periods, as recent trials across Jiangsu province have shown, experts said.

Jiangsu has launched China's first large-scale vehicle-to-grid interaction trials, involving four cities for reverse charging. It enables EVs to serve as mobile energy storage units, helping enhance a real-time power system balance.

In addition to normal charging processes, V2G technology allows vehicle batteries to discharge power back to the grid when needed.

In reverse charging trials from 7 pm to 10 pm from Aug 1 to 10, 63 charging piles equipped with V2G interaction functionality were available for EV owners in the four cities of Nanjing, Suzhou, Changzhou and Wuxi. Participants who were invited to join the program received discount charging vouchers for their efforts.

Zhu Shixin, an EV owner in Wuxi who took part in the reverse charging program, said: "For every 1 kilowatt-hour of electricity delivered, I can receive a subsidy of 5 yuan

(\$0.7). My car discharged about 20 kWh of electricity, so I earned about 100 yuan."

The same day, from 8 pm to 9 pm, 36 other EV owners participated in the trial. The maximum discharge load reached 1,047 kilowatts, which met the electricity demand of 209 households in the surrounding neighborhoods for one hour, said State Grid Jiangsu Electric Power in Nanjing, which conducted the trials.

According to Jiao Xize, a marketing staff member at the company, the trials aim to verify the feasibility and safety of V2G technology, and determine whether it is possible to ease power supply pressure during peak times such as in summer and winter, and the results "were quite satisfying".

In recent years, China has seen rapid development of the EV sector. The growing number of EVs, however, has put more pressure on the power grid. So the reverse charging technology can be a back-up solution for possible supply shortages during peak times, Jiao said.

"The most challenging problem, however, is owners' willingness, as they worry it might affect battery life spans," he said, adding that the technology is quite mature and will not damage batteries.



Charging piles seen on a street in Changzhou, Jiangsu province. WANG QIMING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Though the technology may not be put into large-scale use in the near future, Jiao said he believes the market potential of V2G is large and more trials will be done by the company to gain deeper experience.

Shao Dan, an EV owner in Nanjing, said he commutes to and from work in his vehicle and barely uses it at other times, so he charges it about once a week.

"If reverse charging could offer me charging discounts, I would be willing to give it a try. This way, my expenses would be lower," Shao said.

Currently, the number of EVs in Jiangsu is around 2 million, which is expected to exceed 10 million by 2030, according to State Grid Jiangsu Electric Power.

"If 10 percent of EV owners vol-

untarily participate in reverse charging, it can provide the power grid with a peak-shaving capacity exceeding 1 million kW, equivalent to building a million-kilowatt mobile power bank, which will support the construction of Jiangsu's new power system," he added.

In order to promote large-scale application of V2G technology in the future, Huang Xueliang, a professor at Nanjing-based Southeast University's school of electrical engineering, suggested more policy support to improve the market trading mechanism, benefit EV owners and strengthen information security.

Contact the writers at chenmeiling@chinadaily.com.cn

BUSINESS

Ganfeng Lithium inks JV deal in Turkiye

By LIU YUKUN
liuyukun@chinadaily.com.cn

Ganfeng Lithium has announced a strategic partnership with Turkish battery maker Yigit Aku to establish a joint venture in Turkiye.

The venture will invest \$500 million to develop a lithium battery project with an annual capacity of 5 gigawatt-hours, including production lines for both batteries and battery packs. It will also establish a research and development center focused on advancing technologies such as solid-state batteries, marine batteries and aerospace batteries.

As a leading domestic lithium salt producer, Ganfeng Lithium has expanded its lithium battery business significantly in recent years. It now offers a range of products including solid-state lithium batteries and energy storage systems.

The company's 2023 financial report said its lithium battery products generated 7.71 billion yuan (\$1 billion) in revenue, accounting for 23.38 percent of total revenue. In 2023, production of lithium batteries and energy storage products reached 10.6 GWh.

Recent years have seen a notable increase in battery companies planning overseas factories. In July, following investment plans in Hungary and Morocco, Sunwoda announced plans to build a battery plant in Vietnam, while Eve Energy plans to invest 3 billion yuan in Malaysia for an energy storage and consumer battery manufacturing project.

Experts say that amid geopolitical instability and global trade tensions, many downstream customers now prefer battery suppliers with overseas manufacturing capabilities for on-time delivery. For lithium battery companies, expanding internationally is becoming increasingly essential.

Research institute EVTank said the internationalization of China's lithium battery sector is shifting from exports to direct overseas investment and local production.

As of June, total overseas investment by Chinese lithium battery companies had reached 564.8 billion yuan, with Europe as the main destination, followed by Southeast Asia. The United States accounted for only 10 percent of total such investment.

RealLi Research said Hungary and Turkiye have become key destinations for Chinese battery firms' international expansion.

Guolian Securities said that as top battery companies have continued to expand their overseas capacity over the past two years, upstream material and auxiliary companies are also progressing well. Their presence in Europe, the Americas, Japan, South Korea and Southeast Asia is expected to create a complete industrial chain with surrounding battery factories, enhancing competitiveness in cost control and supply security.

However, recent industrial policies in Europe and the US have pushed for local procurement of lithium batteries and core materials while imposing restrictions on Chinese capital, presenting challenges to China's energy storage sector's international growth, experts said.

Yu Qingjiao, secretary-general of the Zhongguancun New Battery Technology Innovation Alliance, said products exported to Europe will face stricter requirements on carbon footprints, battery passports and recycling, which will increase costs for companies. Over the long term, these changes will likely lead to significant industry restructuring.

"The export landscape for China's energy storage products is evolving, with a shift from merely battery and component exports to setting up overseas production sites. Furthermore, destinations of overseas productions are becoming more diverse with an increasing number of emerging markets being selected due to geopolitical and trade uncertainties in markets like Europe and the US," said Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University.



A saleswoman arranges wines imported from Australia at a bonded zone in Nantong, Jiangsu province. XU CONGJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Australian wines sparkle again in China on eased ties

Lifting of duties results in 17% growth in exports to mainland last fiscal year

By WANG KEJU
wangkeju@chinadaily.com.cn

Australian wine's renewed access to the Chinese market has not only provided a much-needed boost for the sector, but has also underscored the importance of fostering robust trade relationships to sustain growth and competitiveness, analysts said.

The total export value of Australian wines was 2.2 billion Australian dollars (\$1.48 billion) during the previous fiscal year — from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024 — up 17 percent year-on-year, according to a report released by Wine Australia, the Australian government's statutory authority that promotes and regulates its wine industry.

The surge in Australian wine exports during this period, as shown by the report, has been largely attributed to a pivotal policy change by China in March, when tariffs on Australian wines were lifted.

On March 28, the Ministry of Commerce announced the termination of anti-dumping and anti-subsidy duties on imported Australian wine, effective March 29.

Tariffs of up to 212 percent were originally introduced by the minis-

“The restored access to one of the world's largest consumer markets for wine has rekindled prospects for Australian wine producers...”

Bai Ming, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation

try in November 2020. A final ruling the following March set anti-dumping and anti-subsidy duties of between 116 percent and 218 percent for a five-year period.

Simultaneously, China and Australia submitted a notification to the World Trade Organization's Dispute Settlement Body of a mutually agreed solution on discontinuing these punitive tariffs.

This led to an upswing in Australian wine exports to the Chinese market from April to June, propelling the Chinese mainland to become the number one export

market for Australian wine in terms of value, and number four in terms of volume during the last fiscal year, the report revealed.

Between April and June, 31 million liters of wine valued at \$389 million were exported to the Chinese mainland.

This resulted in Australian wine exports to the destination increasing from 1 million liters valued at \$8 million in the fiscal year before the last, to 33 million liters valued at \$400 million in the previous fiscal year, according to the report.

"The restored access to one of the world's largest consumer markets for wine has rekindled prospects for Australian wine producers, enabling them to once again tap into the immense potential offered by Chinese consumers," said Bai Ming, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

Moreover, the improvement of trade ties between Australia and China serves as a poignant reminder of the mutual benefits that accrue from fostering open, cooperative trade environments that facilitate the free flow of goods and services, Bai said.

However, despite the impressive growth in exports to China, the expansion still represents only a fraction of the historic peak levels witnessed in the market, analysts said.

Changes in wine consumption patterns, particularly in the realms of business banquets and gift-giving, have led to a marked reduction in wine drinking, resulting in a notable shrinkage in the market as a whole, said Guo Songquan, a wine industry analyst.

According to a report by International Wine and Spirits Record, the consumption of domestically produced wine in China plummeted from 95 million cases in 2017 to 27 million cases by 2023, while sales of imported wine dropped from 61 million cases to less than 20 million cases over the same six-year period.

Collectively, the consumption of both domestic and imported wines in the Chinese mainland now stands at less than one-third of levels recorded six years ago, according to the report.

The reentry of Australian wines into the Chinese market is not expected to significantly alter the overall Chinese wine market.

However, given the finite size of the market, any gains made by Australian wines might come at the expense of competitors like French and Chilean wines, Guo said.

The degree of impact will be determined by the marketing efforts of Australian wine brands and the responsive measures adopted by other countries in the industry, Guo added.

Giving the right push



An employee of State Grid Wenzhou Electric Power Co explains to students the first aid procedures to be taken following an electric shock, at the company's facility in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, last week. ZHOU YIXI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Yangtze River Delta clear leader in trade

By SHI JING in Shanghai
shijing@chinadaily.com.cn

Industrial upgrades and restructuring have boosted foreign trade in the Yangtze River Delta region both in terms of value and volume, said industry experts.

The total import and export value of the region grew 5.8 percent year-on-year to hit a new high of 9.1 trillion yuan (\$1.3 trillion) during the first seven months, said Shanghai Customs on Sunday.

The region, which contributed about 24 percent to China's GDP in 2023, accounted for 36.7 percent of the country's total trade value in the January-July period.

Nearly 181 billion yuan worth of cars were exported from the region during the period, up 2.7 percent year-on-year and accounting for 39 percent of the country's total auto exports. The export value of ships spiked 79 percent from a year earlier to top 111.4 billion yuan, accounting for 64.1 percent of China's total.

In June, Anhui province in the northern part of the Yangtze River Delta region exported over 9.1-billion-yuan worth of vehicles, up 47.3

percent year-on-year and hitting a new high. The province, which is home to well-known domestic automakers such as Chery and JAC Group, saw its auto export value spike 32 percent to approach 40.3 billion yuan in the first half.

While domestic clients contributed the most to Zhejiang-based Haidong Shipyard's revenue in the recent past, the company has begun to see rising demand from overseas this year. There are six ships currently under construction on order from foreign clients, with the combined value amounting to \$130 million, said Haidong's Director Li Yanggang.

"We have \$800 million worth of export orders to meet at present," Li said.

High-tech companies based in the Yangtze River Delta region exported 1.2 trillion yuan worth of products during the first seven months, up 4.4 percent year-on-year. The value was equal to 34.8 percent of China's total high-tech product export value registered during the same period, Shanghai Customs said.

Wu Fuxiang, director of the department of industrial economics at Nanjing University, said the

steady growth in the export of mechanical and electrical products, which are an integral part of high-tech products, reflects the industrial upgrading and technology advances in the Yangtze River Delta region.

Continued technological innovation in the region has helped optimize the export structure and improve exports' competitiveness in the global market, Wu said.

The region's total two-way trade value with markets involved in the Belt and Road Initiative jumped 7.7 percent year-on-year to 4.06 trillion yuan in the first seven months, while that with other Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership member countries rose 4.9 percent year-on-year to 2.77 trillion yuan. Its trade with other BRICS members grew 8.3 percent on a yearly basis to 1.21 trillion yuan.

Yixing Danson Technology, based in Jiangsu province, said its exports to other BRI markets surged 12.6 percent year-on-year to top 120 million yuan in the first half. According to the company's Executive Director Sun Xiao, this can be largely attributed to the company's technological advances, especially in its signature



A researcher works at a biochemical center in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, in July. JIANG HAN / XINHUA

products — super-absorbent polymers — bold exploration of overseas markets, higher efficiency of Customs officials and the benefit of free trade agreements.

Private enterprises in the Yangtze River Delta region have been playing an important role in boosting foreign trade, said Shanghai cus-

tomers, as these companies saw 4.89 trillion yuan worth of imports and exports in the first seven months, up 9 percent year-on-year.

Zeng Gang, director of East China Normal University's Institute of Urban Development, said that China takes the world's lead in terms of foreign trade services and the estab-

lishment of platform companies. At the same time, local governments are quite outbound while being attentive to risks.

It is for these reasons that Yangtze River Delta region companies have been moving up the value chain and taking the upper hand in global competition, Zeng said.

BUSINESSFOCUS

CHINA UP-CLOSE

Copper asset in Zambia a true gold mine

Chinese firm says more efforts will be made to boost efficiency, upgrade tech

By CHENG YU
chengyu@chinadaily.com.cn

At the Lubambe Copper Mine in Zambia, Bwalya Mwitwa, a skilled mining worker, operates a cutting-edge dual-boom intelligent drilling jumbo. The intelligent drilling system monitors complex conditions in real-time, allowing him to adjust drilling angles and pressure levels with pinpoint accuracy.

The mine, a key asset with a long history and promising reserves, has been seeing increasing smart mining technologies applied after it was acquired by leading Chinese enterprise JCHX Mining Management Co Ltd in June.

Amid rising demand for crucial resources from countries and regions worldwide, the acquisition of the mine marked a broader effort by Chinese companies to secure raw materials critical for key industries, thus helping diversify supply chains and expand their global influence.

The Lubambe mine, which spans over 5,800 hectares, is designed for an annual production capacity of 2.5 million metric tons of copper ore. As JCHX takes the reins, more efforts will be made by the company to help enhance efficiency, technological upgrades and sustainable resource management.

Tim Duffy, Lubambe's former CEO, said he was looking forward to JCHX's entry to lead the mine, as fresh management strategies and opportunities for revitalization are expected to come with the move.

JCHX, which was listed on the Shanghai Stock Exchange in 2015, has long been known for its decades of expertise in non-coal underground mining, managing services covering the business of engineering, development and operation, offering one-stop solutions for its clients.

The company's expansion into mining resource acquisition, particularly the Lubambe Copper Mine, illustrates its pivot toward integrating mining operations with resource ownership, a strategy aimed at enhancing global competitiveness, industry experts said.

JCHX Chairman Wang Qinghai said that the company's initial foray into Zambia two decades ago marked China's first venture into international nonferrous metal mining operations, and today, JCHX is one of Zambia's largest employers among Chinese enterprises, under-

scoring its sustained commitment to the region.

The move also came at a time around the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Zambia. As Zambia ranks as Africa's second-largest copper producer, the deal strengthens China's footprint in the region while bolstering local economic development.

"The company aims to optimize production efficiency and achieve sustainable resource development while creating employment opportunities and economic benefits for the local community," said Wang.

He said it is also representative of broader efforts by JCHX to expand mining services and resources, which are integral to the firm's international expansion. Beyond Zambia, the company has been actively diversifying its global footprint, acquiring assets in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Colombia.

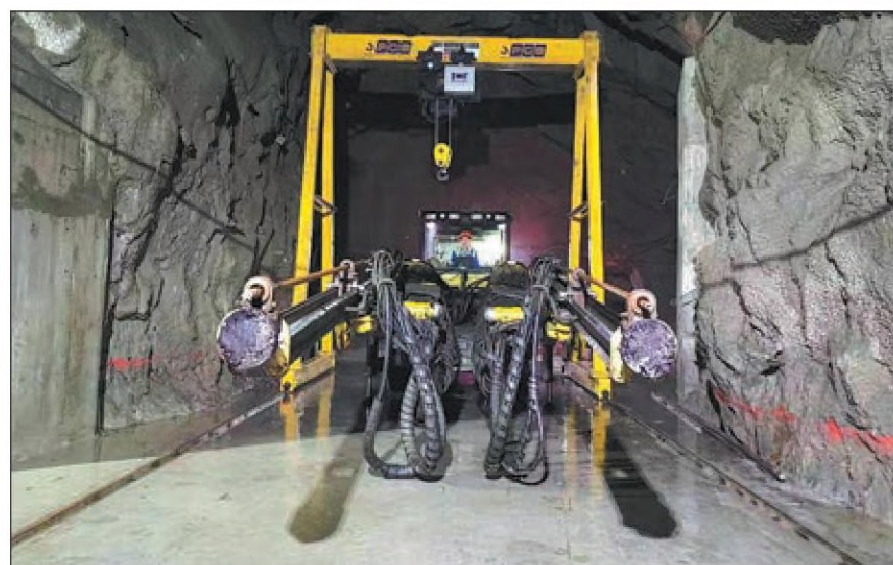
As it navigates an increasingly competitive global mining landscape, Wang said that the company remains committed to aligning its business strategies with sustainable development and local community welfare. This includes investment in infrastructure, healthcare and education in project areas, as well as offering competitive wages and job training to over 4,500 local employees.

"Chinese companies are enhancing their international competitiveness and positioning themselves as key players in both China's Belt and Road Initiative and the global mining sector," he emphasized.

In recent years, copper demand has risen significantly. According to Wood Mackenzie, a global provider of data and analytics, the percentage of global copper demand coming from green sectors, such as renewables and electric vehicles, is predicted to double over the next 10 years from about 8 percent to about 16 percent.

Wood Mackenzie predicts that world copper consumption will rise about 24 percent year-on-year to approximately 32 million tons a year. To get on course for net zero emissions by around 2050, which is required for the Paris Agreement goal of attempting to limit global warming to 1.5 C, copper supplies will have to increase even faster.

A Goldman Sachs analyst also predicted that green sector use of copper had a 4 percent share in copper consumption in 2020 and this is



Top: An aerial view of the Lonshi Copper Mine project in the Democratic Republic of Congo in July. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY
Above: A JCHX employee operates a dual-boom intelligent drilling jumbo in Chambishi, Zambia, in July. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

expected to more than quadruple to 17 percent by 2030. It is estimated that a net-zero emissions pathway will create the need for 54 percent more copper on top of that in 2030.

Driven by China's emerging manufacturing, construction, electronics and renewable energy sectors, the country is one of the largest copper consumption markets globally.

Mao Jingwen, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering, said that given the current global mining landscape and China's need to secure critical mineral resources, it is essential to deepen technological innovation and accelerate the implementation of going

global strategy for overseas exploration.

"Strengthening domestic exploration and development to increase reserves and production of critical minerals is of great significance, as China remains highly dependent on external supplies for strategic minerals, especially for key resources like copper, lithium and rare earth elements," Mao said.

In recent years, the country imported over 70 percent of its copper and more than 80 percent of its lithium, which reflected its reliance on global supply chains, he said.

To address this dependency, Mao pointed out that while enhancing

domestic resource recycling and expanding local reserves are crucial, "the most urgent task is to diversify sources of strategic minerals from different countries and regions."

Thanks to the BRI, large State-owned companies like China Minmetals Corp are heavily involved in overseas mining acquisitions, with private firms like JCHX having also become significant players in recent years.

MMG Ltd, a subsidiary of mining giant China Minmetals, finalized the acquisition of a large-scale copper mine in Botswana earlier this year. The new mine has copper

“Chinese companies are enhancing their international competitiveness and positioning themselves as key players in both China's Belt and Road Initiative and the global mining sector.”

Wang Qinghai, chairman of JCHX Mining Management Co Ltd

reserves of over 6 million tons and mining rights covering an area of more than 4,000 square kilometers.

According to MMG, the acquisition is a critical move amid the company's resolve to improve its ability to ensure the supply of strategic resources and vigorously promote the increase of reserves and production.

The newly acquired copper mine was put into operation in June 2021, targeting an annual output of 60,000 tons of copper and 1.6 million ounces (45.36 tons) of silver. In addition, the long-life mine has both cost-competitive advantages and rich resource potential.

Peng Qiming, head of the China Mining Association, said in an interview that thanks to China's well-developed communications with economies participating in the BRI, many Chinese mineral companies are cooperating with leading global players to jointly develop mining resources overseas.

Rare earths to see high-quality development

By CHENG YU

China's efforts to promote high-quality development of the rare-earth metals and minerals sector will offer strong impetus to the industry's green and standardized development amid growing demand for crucial raw materials from emerging areas like new energy vehicles, said industry experts and company executives.

Their comments came as the country is stepping up efforts to drive the sector's high-quality development after unveiling new regulations on mining, smelting and trading of rare-earth metals and alloys in late June.

Rare-earth metals and alloys are chemical elements indispensable to low-carbon technologies, such as the production of electric vehicles, smartphones and other advanced high-tech products.

The regulation, issued by the State Council — China's Cabinet — said the country will encourage and support the research, development and application of new technologies, products, materials and equipment in the rare-earth sector.

The Chinese government will carry out "unified planning" for the development of the rare-earth sector, and pay equal attention to the protection of resources and the development and utilization of such resources, according to the new regulation, which will take effect on Oct 1.

Ge Honglin, Party secretary and president of the China Nonferrous Metals Industry Association, said that rare-earth elements, often referred to as "industrial vitamins", are crucial raw materials for high-tech industries and the national defense sector.

"China's rare-earth industry faces challenges in areas such as protective resource development, original technological innovation and industry order regulation," Ge said, adding that the new regulation addresses these challenges.

China has been making significant contributions to meeting domestic and international demand for these crucial chemical elements, which in turn is creating considerable pressure on the country's natural resources, Ge said.

The new regulation underscores

the need for protective resource development and calls for planned utilization of rare-earth elements in order to drive green and high-quality development of the sector, he said.

Last year, China accounted for about 60 percent of global rare-earth mining and close to 90 percent of processing and refining, said the International Energy Agency.

Over recent years in China, disorderly mining gave way to rational regulation, and bulk exports of rare earths are gradually being replaced by increased imports, according to a report released by China AVIC Securities.

China's status has changed from being the largest exporter of rare-earth resources to becoming a country that consumes rare earths, with the rapid increase in demand for wind power, new energy vehicles, and other energy-saving and emission-reduction technologies driving this shift, said the report.

Meanwhile, data from the United States Geological Survey showed that as of 2022, the world's total reserves of rare earths were estimat-

ed to be 130 million metric tons, of which China possessed 44 million tons, or 33.8 percent.

Ao Hong, Party secretary and chairman of China Rare Earth Group Co Ltd, said that global demand for rare earths is rapidly increasing from strategic emerging industries like new energy vehicles, wind power and intelligent manufacturing, as well as the transformation and upgrading of traditional industries such as energy-saving motors.

"The new regulation will help to drive a win-win industrial ecosystem for upstream and downstream in meeting such supply and demand across the world," Ao said.

A rare-earth element tracking system has been proposed in the regulation. Companies involved in mining, smelting and separation of rare-earth elements, as well as in the export of products made with the use of such elements, will now have to establish a system to record the flow of their products.

Liu Peixun, deputy general manager of Baogang Group, one of the world's largest production and research bases for rare-earth ele-



Visitors check out rare-earth material samples during an international mineral cooperation forum in Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, in May 2023. YU JING / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

ments — based in North China's Inner Mongolia autonomous region — said this is the first time that the country is regulating the development and utilization of rare-earth resources through legislation, which will be a "milestone" regulation for companies.

"Inspired by such efforts, our company will strive to make the process of rare-earth production more

eco-friendly, make related equipment smarter and upgrade related technologies, in order to increase the added value of rare-earth products," Liu said, noting that the company sincerely supports China's industrial transformation.

He added that Baogang Group is also stepping up efforts to help build a national-level trade center for rare-earth elements.

COMMENT

Editorials

Advancing socialism with Chinese characteristics builds on Deng's legacy

Thursday marked the 120th anniversary of the birth of Deng Xiaoping. The grand gathering the central authorities held in Beijing that day, as well as the series of commemorative activities organized nationwide to cherish the memory of the former Chinese leader all convey the great influence he had on the country.

Deng made indelible contributions, in theory, ideology, institutions and practice, that ushered in a new phase of development featuring a pioneering spirit and pragmatism, rather than conformism and dogmatism.

His most important political legacies have been socialism with Chinese characteristics that he led the Communist Party of China and the Chinese people to create, and the Deng Xiaoping Theory. Although the formation of the theory named after him dates back to the revolutionary era long before New China was founded, it was during Deng's exploration of the socialist path with Chinese characteristics with the launch of reform and opening-up that it developed rapidly in the process of testing and practice.

The theory, which stresses seeking truth from facts, is an adaptation of Marxism-Leninism to the existing socioeconomic conditions of China. It has played an indispensable role as a guideline for the making of a series of groundbreaking top-level-design policies and as the inspiration for numerous trailblazers in all walks of life since the late 1970s.

It has enabled China to make the most of what it has and can do while firmly adhering to its socialist path, producing the mutually reinforcing effects between the enhancement of the common good of the people and the consolidation of the Party's leadership. That provided the guarantee for China's fast economic growth in the following decades and long-term political and social stability featuring tremendous institutional dynamics, vitality, inclusiveness and flexibility.

In that sense, as the chief architect of the reform and opening-up policy and its implementation, Deng also played a key role in laying the foundation for Chinese-style modernization. In 1992, after Deng visited some coastal cities in a show of his rock-solid support to local reformists, the Party made the founding of "a socialist market economic system" the goal of the country's economic reform for the first time at its 14th National Congress. From then on the Party and the nation have concentrated their efforts to strive for the realization of that objective and the daunting task of cutting the cake fairly while making it bigger.

At the same time, as a leader with much experience of wars and chaos, Deng insisted China always adhere to the path of peaceful development, and put forward the proposition that peace and development are the two themes of the contemporary world. His farsighted pro-peace and pro-development proposals are still the twin pillars of China's foreign policy framework today, which centers on opposing hegemony and promoting international cooperation and exchanges with all countries.

By acting on that, China has not only created for itself and its neighbors a good external development environment but also promoted regional and world peace, stability and common development, laying the foundation for the vision it proposed in the new era of building a community with a shared future for mankind.

As Deng once noted, the leadership of the Party is the most fundamental guarantee for the nation to withstand storms. Facing rising uncertainties and risks in its external development environment, as President Xi Jinping pointed out on Thursday, to promote Chinese modernization and advance socialism with Chinese characteristics under the Party's leadership are the best way to carry on Deng's historical legacy. To that end, the country must firmly adhere to the path of reform and opening-up and continuously strengthen the leadership of the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core, in order to continuously break new ground for China's development and promote world peace and common development.

Neighbors give fresh boost to cooperation

Under the strategic guidance of the two heads of state, which has played a decisive role in promoting the geopolitical alignment of the two countries and the convergence of their interests, China and Russia have continually strengthened their cooperation and coordination in recent years.

Washington has tried to make a meal of this as part of its geostrategic game, attempting to position the two countries in popular perception as rogue elements within the international system that need to be caged. But it is a no-brainer for the two neighbors to seek to tap the full potential of their complementary economies by making the most of their geographical proximity, world view affinities and mutual trust.

China is a manufacturing powerhouse with a huge consumer market, while Russia is rich in natural resources, particularly oil and gas, which means there are promising opportunities for trade and investment to the benefit of both countries. It should come as no surprise therefore that Premier Li Qiang's visit to Russia this week was a further demonstration of the two neighbors' resolve to strengthen their practical cooperation.

Li co-chaired the 29th regular meeting between the Chinese and Russian heads of government in Moscow on Wednesday, along with Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, during which the two sides stressed the need to further optimize the structure of their cooperation by deepening it in traditional areas and working together to explore the potential of joint efforts in emerging areas. Since Russia is one of the world's largest producers of oil and natural gas, and China is one of the world's largest energy consumers, there is still significant energy cooperation potential to be tapped. There is also much scope for fruitful cooperation in other areas, such as emerging technologies.

Thus in the joint communique issued after Wednesday's meeting, the two neighbors indicated that they have agreed to a series of arrangements that will inject new vitality into their cooperative economic relations. These include expanding their cooperation in emerging areas such as the digital economy, biomedicine and green development, the holding of the ninth China-Russia Expo in Russia in 2025, the expansion of the mutual access categories of agricultural products, and cooperation in Arctic shipping routes.

All these fruitful results from this year's meeting between the Chinese and Russian heads of government indicate the two countries are making strenuous efforts to create new growth points for their economies and bilateral trade.

As this year marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between Beijing and Moscow, it is only natural that the two countries should seize the opportunity to consolidate their friendly relations. In their joint communique, Beijing and Moscow reiterated that their relationship is not an alliance and it is nonconfrontational. It is only those who view the relationship through a lens of ideological antagonism that seek to portray it in a different, more sinister, light.

Instead of being a threat to global stability, or targeting third parties, as these cobwebbed champions of an obsolete worldview try to claim, the steady development of China-Russia relations not only serves the fundamental interests of the two countries and two peoples, but also contributes to global development.

Sharing similar views on major global challenges and hotspot issues, the two neighbors have set an example of friendly and mutually beneficial major-country relations and act as a practical driving force for the realization of the Global South's aspiration for a fair and inclusive global system. Russia is a key partner in China's Belt and Road Initiative that aims to enhance infrastructure connectivity and economic cooperation across Asia, Africa and Europe, and the two countries also carry out close coordination and cooperation within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICS and other international frameworks.

In these ways, contrary to the smears of the hegemonists, the China-Russia ties uphold the spirit of multilateralism and fairness and seek to inject stability into a turbulent world.

Luo Jie



Opinion Line

Creating market access for all will help upgrade the industry

China's central authorities introduced guidelines on Wednesday for improving the market access system. The implementation of the guidelines will be conducive to improving the market access system and optimizing the market access environment for new business forms and in new areas.

The guidelines make clear the objectives for the construction of the market access system, saying the country will build an open and transparent market access system with standardized, orderly and equal competition, clear rights and responsibilities, and strong supervision. It also requires all kinds of market access management measures under the framework of the law to be included in the national unified negative list for market access, prohibiting the illegal establishment of access permits outside the list, the illegal addition of access conditions, and the setting of negative lists similar to the market access in nature.

This will ensure there is only one negative list and no other lists are allowed to exist, establishing the seriousness of the market access system.

The document emphasizes coordinated and integrated access policies for domestic and foreign investment, and equal national treatment for the two. Where access restrictions are lifted on foreign investment, they should be lifted on domestic investment, too, and the entry threshold set for domestic investment should also be applied to foreign investment, it says. This is a problem-oriented approach to implement equal market access for domestic and foreign investment.

For new business forms and fields, the guidelines call for the formulation of implementation plans to optimize the market environment, to improve access efficiency, promote the innovative allocation of production factors, and accelerate the development of new quality productive forces. Given that some new

business forms and new areas are facing unclear access rules and their ways to access the market need to be optimized, relaxing market access for new business forms and new areas will help more social forces to enter industries that used to have "high thresholds" and promote the smooth flow of advanced and high-quality production factors to generate new quality productive forces.

The service industry is the area with the greatest market potential, and social capital, especially private capital and foreign capital, has a strong willingness for entry. Further clearing up all kinds of restrictions on access to the service industry, removing explicit or implicit market barriers, and relaxing market access in a timely manner, will help create a market accessible to all kinds of players and promote the deep transformation and upgrading of the industry.

— XINHUA NEWS AGENCY

STAR research in pursuit of a shared history

A research team led by researcher Qiu Hao from the Institute of Modern Physics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, unveiled the heaviest antimatter nucleus ever detected, anti-hyper-H4, at the US Department of Energy's Brookhaven National Laboratory, marking a big step in mankind's pursuit of the universe's mysteries.

Physicists believe that in the nascent stage of the universe equal amounts of matter and antimatter should have existed, yet there was some asymmetry, which caused about a 10-billionth of matter to survive annihilation to give birth to stars

and galaxies in the universe.

Therefore, the asymmetry between matter and antimatter is of fundamental interest to understand the history of our universe. Despite the quest for antimatter for almost 100 years, no antimatter nucleus heavier than an antiproton has ever been observed in natural conditions, forcing scientists to study the tracks of particles streaming from 6 billion collisions of atomic nuclei at the Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider in Brookhaven — an "atom smasher" that recreates the conditions of the early universe, or, more specifically, simulates the Big

Bang to allow antimatter to reappear.

As early as 2010, the Solenoidal Tracker experiment at RHIC, also called STAR, created the rare particle anti-hyper-triton, and now, 14 years later, they have observed the anti-hyper-H4, which is composed of four antimatter particles — an antiproton, two antineutrons, and one antihyperon; anti-hyper-triton had three. It shows how difficult research in antimatter is.

That this was achieved by a Chinese team in a US laboratory highlights the importance of international cooperation in research in fundamental sciences.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Symptoms and root causes of conflicts must be addressed

Editor's Note: The following are excerpts of remarks by Chinese ambassador, Fu Cong, at the United Nations Security Council Open Debate on Peace Building and Sustaining Peace: The New Agenda for Peace — Addressing Global, Regional and National Aspects of Conflict Prevention on Wednesday.

We need to enhance the effectiveness and relevance of conflict prevention, and address both the symptoms and underlying issues, in particular by tackling the root causes of conflict, and strive to translate the international community's shared vision for peace into effective actions to realize lasting peace.

Development should be prioritized. Poverty and underdevelopment are major sources of conflict. Poverty reduction and development must be taken as foundational tasks for conflict prevention.

Effective governance is indispensable for a country to maintain long-term stability and achieve sustainable economic and social development. As countries differ in their national conditions, it is important that they should independently explore a development path that suits their own conditions, improve their governance

systems and enhance their governance capacity.

It is only through inclusive development that we can establish the foundation for lasting peace. It is important to enhance access to public services, so that all ethnicities and social groups can participate in and benefit from development, while the special needs of vulnerable groups and regions with development difficulties need to be properly addressed.

Effective conflict prevention requires favorable external conditions. The UN should ensure that it plays its due role in conflict prevention and increase its inputs to promote global development. An open and nondiscriminatory international economic and trade environment should be established so that more developing countries can participate fairly in economic, scientific and technological cooperation and share the dividends of development.

Meanwhile, efforts should be made to promote reform of the international financial architecture, so that it can

better meet the needs of developing countries in such areas as financing for development, addressing the impacts of climate change and capacity building.

We should uphold international justice, oppose interference in the internal affairs of other countries, and oppose unilateralism and hegemony. Here, I wish to emphasize that the indiscriminate imposition of illegal unilateral sanctions by some countries in violation of the UN Charter and international law not only exacerbates the economic and social difficulties of the countries targeted, but also sows the seeds for new conflicts and instability. We urge these countries to immediately lift all unilateral sanctions.

Maintaining stable economic growth and continuously creating jobs and wealth is the basis for achieving long-term peace and stability in a country and among countries. Only by enhancing people's sense of gain can we realize the common aspiration for an end to conflict.

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Contact us at:

China Daily
15 Huxin Donglie Chaoyang District,
Beijing 100029
News: +86 (0) 10 6491-8366
editor@chinadaily.com.cn
Advertisement: +86 (0) 10 6491-8631
ads@chinadaily.com.cn
Subscription: +86-400-699-0203
subscription.chinadaily.com.cn
App: www.chinadaily.com.cn/moblie/daily.html

China Daily UK
90 Cannon St, London EC4N 6HA, UK
+44 (0) 207 398 8270
editor@chinadailyuk.com

China Daily Asia Pacific
China Daily Hong Kong
Unit 1818, Hing Wai Centre, 7 Tin Wan
Praya Road, Aberdeen, Hong Kong
+852 2518 5111
editor@chinadailyhk.com
editor@chinadailypac.com

China Daily USA
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,
New York, NY 10036
+1 212 537 8888
editor@chinadailyusa.com

China Daily Africa
P.O. Box 27281-00100, Nairobi, Kenya
+254 (0) 20 242 8589 (Nairobi)
editor@chinadailyafrica.com
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

COMMENT

David Gosset

Historic plenums path to modernization

Deng Xiaoping (1904-97) was born in Guang'an, Sichuan province, 120 years ago. By the age of 74, the man who had witnessed nearly the entire 20th century changed China's trajectory and indirectly shaped the world as we know it today.

In my quest to enrich my understanding of China, a significant encounter has been with Eugenio Bregolat, who served as Spain's ambassador to China three times — a rarity in diplomatic circles. Bregolat is also the author of a book, *The Second Chinese Revolution (2014)*, which explores China's transformation following Deng Xiaoping's rise to power. This is a book with great analytical quality, offering insights from extensive experience in world affairs.

His choice of the book's title is revealing: The first Chinese revolution succeeded in 1949, leading to the establishment of the People's Republic of China under the leadership of Mao Zedong (1893-1976), and the second occurred in 1978.

'New Long March' to transform China

Indeed, the reforms initiated by the third plenary session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in 1978 were nothing short of revolutionary. The plenum described "socialist modernization" as a "profound and extensive revolution" and called for a "new Long March" to transform China into a modern, powerful socialist country. This pivotal moment ushered in the era of reform and opening-up.

We all know what happened next: by transforming itself, China transformed the world. By 2001, China had joined the World Trade Organization, and the coun-

try is today the world's second-largest economy. It has regained a central role in global affairs, yet history is ongoing, and China continues to evolve in a world shaped by new dynamics. Recently, a narrative of "peak China" has emerged, suggesting China has already reached its zenith and may now face stagnation. I disagree with this perspective.

The third plenary session of the 20th CPC Central Committee, held in July 2024, signifies a new momentum akin to the 1978 "new Long March." China is not static, as the "peak China" narrative falsely implies. Anyone directly connected with Chinese society would be aware that the country is very much on the move, driven by a collective ambition proportionate to the glories that have shaped its ancient civilization.

In the "Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Further Deepening Reform Comprehensively to Advance Chinese Modernization" adopted by the third plenum of the 20th CPC Central Committee, a connection is explicitly made between the two political events separated by 46 years: "Reform and opening up have been crucial to the cause of the Party and the people, enabling us to catch up with the times in great strides. The third plenary session of the 11th CPC Central Committee was a landmark event that ushered in a new period: one of reform, opening up, and socialist modernization."

The core message of the third plenum of the 20th CPC Central Committee is that both reform and opening-up must be deepened. This indicates not contentment with the current status quo but a drive for further progress. China, while pursuing its own model of political modernity and aiming for high-quality development, remains committed to opening-up.

A reader might ask, "But announcements following a political meeting are

not actions, and there is a significant gap between a plan and its realization." This is a legitimate question. However, the past four decades have demonstrated that China is highly capable of implementing its plans.

This capability is at the very heart of Chinese governance: strategic planning combined with effective implementation. The plan to develop a new city called Shenzhen? Accomplished. The plan to complement Puxi in Shanghai with Pudong? Accomplished. The plan to integrate 11 cities into the Greater Bay Area? Accomplished. The list could go on. Therefore, the likelihood is very high that China will successfully execute what its third plenum envisioned last month.

Transition from quantity to quality

The best way to understand China's current trajectory is as a transition from quantity to quality. This shift has several implications. First, China's ongoing "renaissance" will continue, enhancing its power and global influence.

Second, the world will need to adapt to highly competitive Chinese enterprises offering high-quality products and services. To use a managerial metaphor, Chinese enterprises will transition from a "red ocean strategy" to a "blue ocean strategy."

And third, China's evolving ecosystem will attract not only manufacturers but also innovators. Companies that choose to distance themselves from China risk missing out on a vast market and a large middle-income group, as well as potentially overlooking groundbreaking ideas and processes that could impact the global market.

The communique and resolution of the third plenum suggest that conditions are ripe for China and the world to co-create value and design a global governance structure that reflects the shifting bal-

ance of power. Ignoring these new dynamics in Chinese society would mean overlooking their inevitable impact on the global stage.

The resolution, previously quoted, states: "We will stay committed to the common values of all humanity, pursue the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative, and call for an equal and orderly multipolar world and universal beneficial and inclusive economic globalization. We will deepen institutional reforms related to the work of foreign affairs and get involved in leading the reform and development of the global governance system." In the Resolution, the China watcher perceives clarity, consistency, and predictability — qualities that are desperately needed in a world fraught with various forms of disorder.

Let us step back and adopt a long-term perspective. The Industrial Revolution that emerged in Europe created a new world. At the end of the 18th century, China was unable to engage with this new world. The Middle Kingdom lost its centrality and was marginalized for 150 years. Today, China is accelerating its modernization in a revolutionary manner. It possesses all the resources, particularly human talent, to offer new solutions to global problems. It would be a strategic blunder of immense proportions for the West to disconnect from such an ambition, which has a potential epoch-making impact.

The author, a Sinologist, is the founder of the China-Europe-America Global Initiative, editor of China and the World in three volumes, and the creator of the Inspiring Series, a collection of books that aims to introduce China to the world. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



Chen Weihua

The author is chief of China Daily EU Bureau based in Brussels. chenweihua@chinadaily.com.cn

Belgian students show the right way forward for Western leaders

At a reception hosted by the Chinese embassy in Belgium last Friday, I was seated at a table with several Belgian couples whose children were scheduled to leave to study in China for a year. Those sitting at the table and I shared our travel experiences. A woman asked me what I thought of Haikou, capital of the island province of Hainan.

"The beaches in Sanya are nicer," I replied instinctively before regretting my answer.

It turned out that her son, a graduate student of China studies at KU Leuven, will attend Hainan University in Haikou and she is planning to visit him.

Some 30 Belgian students will go to China to study in the coming year with the help of the China Scholarship Council.

A Belgian student I met later that night said he chose Haikou because he is not like others who prefer big cities such as Beijing and Shanghai.

"I guess I just talked to your mom," I said.

"The one in green flowery shirt?" he asked, pointing to the table where I had been sitting earlier.

When I asked what he was looking forward to most during his upcoming first trip to China, he said he wanted to improve his language skills, as well as see firsthand how different China was from the one described in the West.

The European Union, on which the US has enormous influence, has been heavily impacted by the smear campaign.

That's exactly what I expect from the students. Seeing, indeed, is believing: to see China firsthand in a more in-depth way by mingling with the Chinese people, to learn the language and history, to know about its culture and society, and to understand the great transformation China has undergone in the last 46 years since the launch of reform and opening-up, as well as to understand the challenges the country faces, and suggest the room for improvement for the country of over 1.4 billion people.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the intensifying global geopolitical tensions have affected the number of foreign students and foreign tourists studying, or planning to study, in China, but that is changing thanks partly to China's visa-free policy for many nationals of European countries.

Disinformation about China is rife in the West, mainly because of the US' reckless smear campaign against China. The European Union, on which the US has enormous influence, has been heavily impacted by the smear campaign.

Like most countries, China may not be a paradise. But it is certainly not hell as many Western media and politicians try to portray it to be. It is a big, populous, diverse and complex country that even Chinese people like me have much to discover.

Several KU Leuven graduates who are about to go to China are students of Prof Dorien Emmers, an economist whose experience of studying at the Southwestern University of Finance and Economics in Chengdu, Sichuan province, more than a decade ago has had a huge impact on her career. She has become an expert on the Chinese economy and a strong advocate for studying in China.

This fact reminded me of a recent video on a social media platform by Christopher Green, the new US consul general in Wuhan, Hubei province. In the video, he has emphasized the importance of exchanges between the two peoples, the necessity for China and the US to learn from each other, and his strong interest in learning about Chinese history and culture.

Green's post is a breath of fresh air at a time when many other US diplomats are indulging in smear campaigns against China.

In late 2009, then US President Barack Obama launched the "100,000 Strong Initiative" to encourage US students to study in China, prompting students to study the Chinese language in US schools. However, the resurgence of McCarthyism in the US over the past few years has greatly dampened that zeal. Ignorance about China, as exhibited by some US politicians, has often been a trait of US society. That is also sadly becoming true in some European capitals.

The world faces many grave challenges, from conflicts to climate change, and these challenges can be dealt with effectively only by organizing more exchanges between the peoples and better understanding each other.

Sun Jiashan

Cultural spillover effect bears rich dividends

"Black Myth: Wukong", a single-player video game, became an instant hit upon its launch on Tuesday, setting multiple records including that for the highest number of simultaneous online users, with hashtags on the video game accumulating a record 2 billion views on China's X-like microblog Weibo by Wednesday.

The game, developed and published by Chinese company Game Science, a new start-up, has since been trending online, both domestically and internationally. Based on the monkey king, Sun Wukong, from the Chinese literary classic *Journey to the West*, "Black Myth: Wukong" was, at one point, being played concurrently by 2.2 million players on Steam, a major online gaming platform, on Wednesday. No wonder some experts said the adaptation of *Journey to the West* will prompt Western players to learn more about China's culture.

"Black Myth: Wukong", even before its official launch in China, benefited not only the gaming industry, but also sectors such as the stock market. On the other hand, the cultural and tourism departments of cities, counties and rural areas have released multiple collaborative videos, demonstrating the potential of such works to integrate the cultural and tourism sectors. Also, ride-hailing enterprise Didi, the Lenovo Group and Luckin Coffee are incorporating elements inspired by "Black Myth: Wukong" into their promotional campaigns.

The video game has spread across societies, promoting the coordinated development of related industries in the shortest span of time.

None of this has happened by chance. In August 2020, when Game Science, which at the time employed fewer than 30 people, released a promotional video of "Black Myth: Wukong", the realistic details, aesthetic features and exemplary craftsmanship of the video game sparked widespread discussions, with some people asking when China will have its own AAA-level game and when Chinese-made games will reflect a distinctive Chinese style.

"Black Myth: Wukong" has answered those questions, as it has been widely lauded as China's first AAA game — high development cost, long production cycle and huge investment, with industry analysts viewing its sudden fame and popularity as marking an inflection point for China's PC/console gaming sector.

All countries and regions have endeavored to showcase their culture to the world and enhance their image through media such as movies, TV shows, and



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

As such, there is a need to re-examine and attach greater importance to the strategic value of China's digital cultural industry.

online posts including video clips and online games. Thanks to such endeavor, the *Journey to the West* series, which debuted in the 1960s, achieved international success, influencing future Japanese anime creations and laying the foundation for Chinese-made animated films.

Subsequent animated films such as *Nezha Conquers the Dragon King* have left a clear imprint on viewers' mind. This is where the biggest significance of "Black Myth: Wukong" lies.

Video games have become an important part of the common cultural experi-

ence of youths across the world, irrespective of their ethnicity, race, creed, color and religion. In fact, video games were featured as competitive electronic sports at the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, in 2023. And before the Paris 2024 Summer Olympics, the International Olympic Committee announced that the first Olympic Esports Games will be held in Saudi Arabia in 2025, indicating gaming as an official Olympic sport has a promising future.

Over the past few years, China's cultural industry, which has become one of the pillar industries of the national economy, has given us one excellent production after another, from *The Wandering Earth* and *The Three-Body Problem* to milestone creations such as *Chang'an*.

From original science fiction films and works reflecting foreign cultures to the productions reflecting the rich traditional Chinese culture, a series of

high-quality creations with excellent commercial, social and professional value have enthralled audiences in the past years, mirroring the qualitative improvement of China's cultural industry. In the gaming world, an AAA-level game like "Black Myth: Wukong" shows that the Chinese cultural industry has mastered more than just the simple technological and commercial aspects of video games.

In the era of mobile internet, online or video games not only influence film and TV productions, but also often serve as the ballast for success in the global market. From Apple, Amazon and Google to Microsoft, Tesla and NVIDIA, the gaming industry chain involves artificial intelligence, cloud computing, global real-time transmission networks, data storage, game engines, virtual reality, augmented reality, and other hardware and software industries, which play a crucial role in determining the global financial order. That's why "Black Myth: Wukong" has had a huge social impact globally.

High-dimension media, online or video games, and electronic sports, which influence the global youth, have become a major field of global ideological struggle. Games are increasingly reshaping the virtual world and expanding the geopolitical space of the real world, becoming the main representatives of virtual space geopolitics.

Compared with the physical geopolitical landscape, the power struggle in the virtual geopolitical space is more disparate and asymmetric, and like outer space, it is not entirely subject to the direct constraints of traditional sovereignty and international law. As such, there is a need to re-examine and attach greater importance to the strategic value of China's digital cultural industry.

The third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China called for promoting Chinese discourse and narrative systems, so as to better tell China's story. In fact, China has already been promoting high-level opening-up, including that of the cultural industry, exploring effective mechanisms for the integration of culture and technology, accelerating the development of new cultural formats, and helping create more high-quality works such as "Black Myth: Wukong". This means the future of China's digital industry is promising.

The author is an associate researcher at the Central Academy of Culture and Tourism Administration. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

GLOBAL VIEWS



Editor's note: The world has undergone many changes and shocks in recent years. Enhanced dialogue between scholars from China and overseas is needed to build mutual understanding on many problems the world faces. For this purpose, the China Watch Institute of China Daily and the National Institute for Global Strategy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, jointly present this special column: The Global Strategy Dialogue, in which experts from China and abroad will offer insightful views, analysis and fresh perspectives on long-term strategic issues of global importance.

DOMINIQUE DE VILLEPIN

Complementary keys

Reciprocity and dialogue essential to unlock the respect and trust necessary to prevent misunderstandings among nations

The world is becoming increasingly complex, and we are confronting an unprecedented accumulation of challenges and misunderstandings among nations.

First, the frequency of crises has escalated. From the Asian financial crisis in 1997 to the bursting of the internet bubble in 2001-02, the subprime mortgage crisis, the sovereign debt crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and now, the Great Inflation. We are also witnessing a resurgence of conflicts, in places such as Ukraine and Gaza.



In the West, there is a voter rebellion fueled by populist claims and anger. Simultaneously, we are witnessing an unprecedented global transition on several fronts: Geopolitical, with the confrontation between the United States and China; technological, with disruptive advancements, particularly in artificial intelligence; and ecological, with the looming threat of climate change, which disproportionately affects the most disadvantaged nations in the Global South. These shifts have profound consequences, especially in terms of migration, significantly impacting human lives and North-South relations.

In this context, there is a heightened risk of escalating tensions due to two main factors. The first is the deregulation of force, intensified by multiple military interventions, such as those in Kosovo (1999), Iraq (2003) and Libya (2011). This has been accompanied by a challenge to international law, most notably by Russia in Ukraine since 2014 and 2022, and by Israel's non-compliance with United Nations resolutions since 1948.

The second factor is the polarization of the international system. The rivalry

between the United States and China is gradually forcing countries to choose sides, even as many strive to remain non-aligned or multi-aligned. Strategic, economic, commercial, and technological motivations all play a role in this rivalry.

If unchecked, these risks of escalation and polarization could lead to the entanglement of blocs, deepening global divisions. This rivalry is particularly evident in Asia, the Pacific, and the South China Sea. The US is strengthening its position through new alliances such as the Quad and AUKUS, while China is expanding its influence through initiatives such as the Belt and Road and its closer ties with Russia, as well as launching the Global Security Initiative aimed at addressing global contemporary challenges.

This entanglement must be understood in the context of a globalization of conflict, pushing us toward a "global war" without limits, amplified by the interdependencies created by globalization, which heighten the danger.

This risk is further exacerbated by global vulnerabilities: a lack of leadership at the state level to address imbalances, a weakened multilateral system hampered by the veto power of major nations in the Security Council, and criticized for its lack of representativeness. Additionally, the world faces unpredictability due to an ongoing historical transition characterized by de-Westernization and deglobalization.

Adding to these challenges is the threat of technological disruption, which is transforming the traditional economic system. This disruption affects all areas, including digital technologies, big data, the internet of things and quantum internet, 5G and robotics. It also impacts strategic sectors such as defense, energy, health and education, with a strong symbolic dimension evident in the battles over Tik Tok and Huawei

in the US. This technological pressure creates uncertainties about employment, international trade, generational equity and the balance between developed and developing countries, with the risk of new speculative bubbles and the emergence of monopolistic cycles favoring the most powerful nations.

In the face of these destabilization risks, the international community has a responsibility. The European Union, in particular, must work to ease tensions between blocs. Europe and China should explore new approaches, perhaps serving as a laboratory for a new form of globalization.

It is also in the interest of the emerging world to avoid power polarization, as seen in the formation of the BRICS+ grouping and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

The spirit of cooperation must be central to security at all levels — climate, food, energy and financial security — relying on states as the best bulwark against insecurity and instability. This cooperative spirit must also promote peace between nations and the protection of the environment and culture. Cooperation is a necessary condition for effective multilateralism in combatting terrorism, preventing nuclear proliferation and facilitating peaceful conflict resolution.

This spirit of cooperation must not only be upheld at the state and multilateral institutional levels but also within the business community through a commitment to respect common rules and reciprocity in trade, investment and market access. This framework is essential to avoid the risk of protectionist escalation or trade wars in strategic sectors such as solar panels, electric batteries and semiconductors.

Reciprocity and dialogue are complementary keys. It is crucial for Europeans and Chinese to address all subjects, even



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

the most challenging, to find solutions that align with our shared interests. In these exceptionally grave times, we need dialogue, respect and trust.

The author is former prime minister of

France and distinguished professor at China Europe International Business School. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

NI FENG AND ZHU CHEN'GE

Focus on intermediate zones

The US is trying to gain the upper hand in its competition with China by pursuing zero-sum confrontation in the 'buffer zone regions'

As the US-China strategic competition has heated up in recent years, the United States has stepped up its criticism and attacks on the Belt and Road Initiative. It has even put forward some "alternatives" to the BRI in order to compete for influence in intermediate zone states.



Ni Feng



Zhu Chen'ge

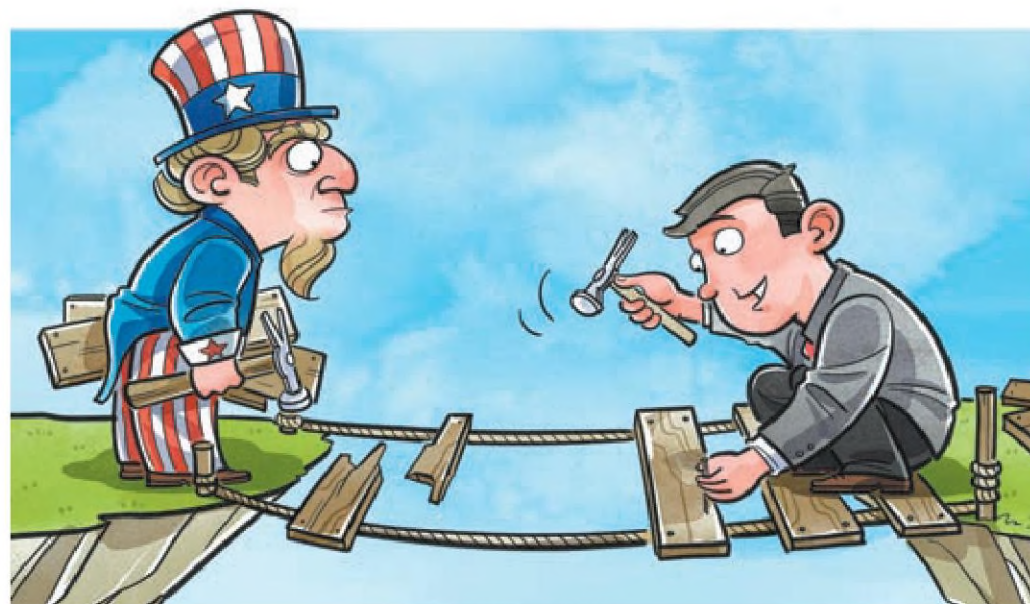
Intermediate zone states serve as buffer zones between big powers and help avoid direct conflicts between them. They are also regions where major powers compete for influence and strategic advantages. The BRI improves economic connectivity on a transcontinental scale, enhances relations between China and other countries participating in the initiative, and strengthens political trust between China and intermediate zone states in a nonpredatory way,

thus making important contributions to the reshaping of the global order driven by the collective rise of the Global South.

The US has also taken some steps to increase its political presence in the intermediate zone regions, but the alternatives it has offered have proved to be less attractive than the BRI, which has exacerbated the US' anxiety.

From the Barack Obama administration to the early period of Donald Trump's tenure, the US did not take an explicit stance against the BRI, and it even released positive signals occasionally. The US' strategy was to maintain policy flexibility. However, the success of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank was a turning point. After seeing the AIIB attract the participation of many nations, the US came to believe that China had the ambition to reshape the global financial governance structure.

The Trump administration's dramatic shift in its stance on the BRI was a prelude to the adjustment of its China strategy. It resorted to "minilateralism" to counter the BRI by rallying the support of a few key allies and pivoting to the "Indo-Pacific" region where there was still room to compete with China for influence. The Trump administration strengthened economic ties with some intermediate zone countries in Eurasia and Africa in order to gain bargaining chips for the US, preserve its core interests, and pressure these nations to reduce their cooperation with China.



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

The Joe Biden administration has resorted to new regional cooperation mechanisms to replace the BRI, instead of trying to strangle the BRI unilaterally.

First, the Biden administration has toned down the criticism of the BRI compared with the previous government, and has tried to denigrate the BRI from a third-party perspective in order to influence the perception of the BRI by intermediate zone states. In this way, it aims to peddle the US' alternatives to the BRI.

Second, the Biden administration has launched a set of "grand" infrastructure initiatives to counter the BRI, such as the Build Back Better World Initiative, the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment, and the "Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity". It has also continued or transformed established frameworks such as the Quad security dialogue and the Blue Dot Network in order to

create exclusive cliques in trade and investment, infrastructure building, and supply chain cooperation.

Third, the US seeks to hold its traditional allies, partners and neutral states together via hyping up the same political values shared by Western nations, so as to undermine the common identity of China and other Global South countries, and to exert its influence in intermediate zone states.

By launching a zero-sum confrontation in intermediate zone regions, the US is trying to gain the upper hand in its competition with China, which will have a negative impact on global security.

First, it will accelerate the collapse of the current global cooperation architecture.

The US' strategic competition targeting the BRI will make confrontation the mainstream of international relations, leading to overlapping of international institutions, resources waste and zero-sum competition.

The US has abandoned the efforts to align with the BRI via multilateral cooperation frameworks and instead adopts a competitive strategy, which is more costly and risky.

Second, the US' competition strategy pursues its own narrow goals at the expense of global cooperation. In other words, by hyping up the "China threat", the US tries to win over the support of neutral states in its competition with China. As a byproduct of this strategic movement, the US' asymmetrical advantages over its allies have been strengthened, making it more difficult to restrain the US' unilateral global actions.

Third, the escalating China-US strategic competition has exacerbated the uncertainties in global economic cooperation. With the US mounting strategic pressure on China to pursue its unilateral interests, some intermediate zone countries have become

more prudent in participating in BRI projects, resorting to a hedging strategy. The US' allies and partners that want to enhance cooperation with China are the countries that suffer the most.

The US presidential election has reached a critical stage. Despite the differences in their detailed policy visions, both the Democratic and the Republican parties seek to rope in third-party states to jump on the US' anti-China bandwagon, and prevent China from increasing its influence in the intermediate zone regions.

The BRI faces various challenges and opportunities. The US is a key external factor that influences the success of the BRI. It is imperative for China to grasp the essence of the challenges facing the BRI to promote the high-quality development of the initiative.

First, the China strategies of successive US administrations have shown a clear path of inheritance and evolution. The China-US competition over the BRI will be a major part in the broader strategic competition between the two powers for a long time to come.

Second, with the escalation of global infrastructure and institutional competition, China faces growing uncertainties in expanding cooperation with other developing countries under the framework of the BRI. This should prompt China to send clearer signals of its willingness to cooperate with intermediate zone states, thereby reducing the international community's misunderstanding and misrepresentation of China's global cooperation vision. It should make better use of its own comparative advantages to keep the BRI attractive to other nations.

Third, China and other major countries should manage their competition in the international system and seek mutual benefits, which is a new arena to ensure the stable development of major country relations. Based on the San Francisco Vision, China and the US should manage their differences in regional economic cooperation systems, promote mutually beneficial cooperation, and shoulder the responsibilities of major countries in order to benefit the whole world.

Ni Feng is director of the Institute of American Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Zhu Chen'ge is an assistant researcher of the Institute of American Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The authors contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

LIFE

LIVING HERITAGE

Brewing up a flavorsome tale

Gongcheng oil tea depends on tradition and technique to produce a tasty and aromatic treat, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

Rhythmic thumping cuts through the early morning stillness in the lanes and alleys of Gongcheng Yao autonomous county in Guilin in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. The sound is being made by local residents pounding fresh tea leaves with wooden hammers, before garlic, ginger and peanuts are added, and mashed together with water and oil in a heated iron pan.

Delicious aromas waft through the air.

Every so often, some of the mixture is removed and filtered through a bamboo sieve, producing a soupy beverage with a greenish yellow tint.

This liquid is the base for Gongcheng oil tea, which is usually served with a range of condiments, including steamed or roasted rice, nuts, parsley and chives. Their soft and crunchy textures create an intriguing palate experience.

The Yao people believe the beverage ensures mental vitality and sharpness, and soothes internal organs.

"Making Gongcheng oil tea is a meticulous process, both in terms of the selection of ingredients and their preparation," says Zhou Liwei. He is an inheritor of the Gongcheng oil tea-making practice that was listed as a national intangible cultural heritage in 2021, which was included in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2022, as part of traditional tea processing techniques and associated social practices in China.

"Its distinctive feature lies in the process of hammering, which results in a flavor that is quite different from tea made by steeping, brewing, boiling or simmering," says Zhou, who is in his 40s, and has practiced the art with his elders since he was a child.

Decades of promotion recently led to him being added to the list of national outstanding individuals in intangible cultural heritage protection by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Gongcheng is hemmed in by mountains on three sides, with higher terrain to the north than to the south. Its subtropical monsoon climate zone has made it a tea production center since ancient times. The county was established during the Sui Dynasty (581-618) when it was originally called Chacheng (City of Tea). Local history chronicles that the city was known for its significant tea cultivation and trade more than 1,000 years ago.

Gongcheng techniques have been preserved since the rise of tea culture during the Tang Dynasty (618-907). As the Yao people moved to the area from other parts of the country, they added ginger to the mix, and created a prototype of oil tea designed to ward against the humid climate.

"The people who lived in the region primarily consumed grains and meat, which were not easy to digest. Oil tea played a balancing role in their diet, as it helped regulate the digestive system," Zhou says.

Oil tea continued to be refined during the Song Dynasty (960-1279), with the addition of more ingredients. By the time of the Ming (1368-



Clockwise from top: Foreign visitors enjoy Gongcheng oil tea in a cultural event in Beihai, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. Zhou Liwei, an inheritor of the oil tea-making practice, demonstrates the craftsmanship in Guilin, Guangxi. Drinking the tea is a popular pastime for residents in the Gongcheng Yao autonomous county in Guilin. The oil tea is a hit among customers at a fair in Hong Kong.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, the tea was fried with other ingredients before being boiled, to shorten preparation.

"We primarily use large-leaf green tea, typically harvested during the Qingming and Guyu periods," Zhou says. Among the 24 solar terms, Qingming is one that is observed in early April when the temperature begins to rise and rainfall increases. It is also the time for spring cultivation and sowing. Guyu, or Grain Rain, is observed in late April, and is the last solar term of the spring.

"When picking the leaves, the tips of the branches are also collected. The leaves undergo several processes to become tea, including pan-frying to deactivate enzymes, rolling, drying and storing," he adds.

The key to making Gongcheng oil tea lies in two crucial steps: light hammering and hard pressing.

"The tea must be gently hammered and firmly pressed, while the heat is carefully controlled to prevent the bottom of the tea pot from burning. The mashing continues until a yellow-green crust forms at the bottom of the pot," Zhou explains.

At this point, hot water is added to extract the tea flavor. "Experienced tea makers will advise you not to add cold water, as this will ruin both the flavor and the appearance of the tea," he adds.

The finished oil tea is best when it has a rich yellow-green color, and has an aroma that is a blend of tea mixed with the scent of scallions and cilantro.

"The tea has a smooth, slightly spicy taste with a hint of bitterness, followed by a lingering sweetness that leaves a memorable aftertaste," Zhou says.

Over the years, oil tea has become

an important part of social interactions for the Yao people, and an expression of hospitality to welcome esteemed guests.

As an increasing number of people from Gongcheng began to work in downtown Guilin, they brought oil tea with them, says Yu Jiajun, head of the Guilin oil tea and food association.

Some oil tea shops have since appeared, Yu adds.

Local authorities launched technical standards for the tea and service norms in 2017 to promote its development. In 2023, more than 1,800 stores across the city sold oil tea, generating around 4 billion yuan (\$560 million) in revenue, according to the authorities.

Yu says that dozens of new shops have opened in urban areas, some of them over 1,000 square meters in size.

Wei Yi has opened one in Nanning, the capital of Guangxi, that appeals to young consumers.

She has decorated the shop with ethnic elements of the Guangxi region, and offers crossword puzzles to add to the experience.

"I opened the shop because my family members love drinking oil tea," she says.

Wei visited Gongcheng county to study the traditional making process, and then produced a range of flavors to cater to the market, a strategy that has proved a success.

She says she has noticed that her customers are interested in traditional flavors of the tea.

Zhou has made a point of integrating the tea tradition with modern life, striving to inject vitality into the form of cultural heritage.

In addition to making oil tea, he has worked with a team to produce bottled low-calorie oil tea, canned oil tea paste, and an oil tea-based hotpot soup, to appeal to customers far and wide.

Zhou has also taken on apprentices from abroad, which he says will help spread oil tea culture further afield.

"I'm setting up classes for the younger generation interested in oil tea preparation and its culture," Zhou says.

As a result of efforts by local government and tea makers, such as Zhou, Gongcheng oil tea was recommended as a diplomatic gift by six national government organs, including the Ministry of Commerce, in 2022.

Zhou is currently studying the history of oil tea customs and changes to tea practices to provide more theoretical support to pass the heritage on.

"Getting the award for being an outstanding individual nationwide is not only recognition of my personal efforts, but of the Gongcheng oil tea's value as precious cultural heritage," Zhou says.

He adds that this has given him more incentives to train people in the way of oil tea, engage in cultural exchange and cooperation, and apply science, such as smart production and digitalized exhibition, to broaden possibilities for the tea.

Contact the writer at yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn

What's on



Pioneering legend

Shanghai and Paris were cities of importance to Pan Yuliang (1895-1977), a pioneering figure of 20th-century Chinese art, who left behind

an oeuvre of paintings and sculptures. In the former, she received systematic training in art and was introduced to modern movements; while in the latter, she continued to be inspired and motivated, and displayed boundless creativity.

From Shanghai to Paris, an exhibition at the World Expo Museum in Shanghai, traces Pan's life and work in the two metropolises, taking visitors back to the time and social circumstances that influenced her life and work. It runs until Nov 10.

Pan was born with a gift for art, but her path to success was not smooth. Orphaned, she was taken in by an uncle, who sold the young teen to a brothel. She was rescued by Pan Zanhua, who married her, recognized her talent and sponsored her study of art.

9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 818 Mengzi Lu, Huangpu district, Shanghai. 021-2313-2818.

Monumental show

A treasure trove of art and culture on the roof of the world, the Potala Palace has defined the skyline of Lhasa in the Xizang autonomous region since the 7th century. The awe-inspiring structure is an embodiment of Tibetan history, society and culture, and reflects exchanges between the region and the rest of China.

Potala Palace, an exhibition at the Tianjin Art Museum until Oct 11, reveals the true face of this architectural marvel in a presentation of 100-odd artifacts from Lhasa. The first part of the exhibition focuses on the Potala Palace's architectural features, which reflect strategies for coping with the harsh conditions of high altitudes.

The second part presents a glimpse of the Potala Palace's extensive collection of *thangka* paintings, Buddhist statues and other ornaments,



and the third part traces the preservation projects and ongoing conservation needed to keep this UNESCO-listed World Heritage Site in top condition. 9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 60 Pingjiang Dao, Hexi district, Tianjin. 022-8388-3300.

Unique style

The work of Miguel Angel Payano Jr. is a vivid depiction of his background and experiences in Asia and North America. Born into a Dominican family, he grew up in New York, but for the past two decades, he has been living in Beijing, and speaks fluent Mandarin with a Beijing accent.

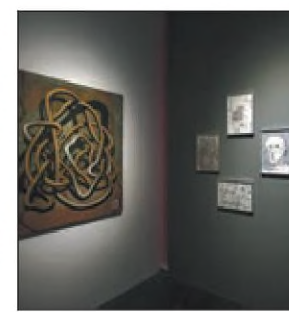
His ancestry and the influences of the multiple cultures to which he has been exposed are the motivations behind his "heavy collage" style, in which he piles up layers of pigment to create pieces that blur the boundary between painting and sculpture.

This work is now on show at his exhibition at the UCCA Center for Contemporary Art, *Woo-Woo*, homonyms for the Chinese characters of *wu* (to understand) and *wu* (material), signifying his intensified perception of the world and of himself as a

result of living in different cultures. The exhibition runs until Sept 8 and also includes work inspired by the way lines are drawn in calligraphy and ink paintings.

10 am-7 pm, closed on Mondays. 4 Jiuziwanqiao Road, Chaoyang district, Beijing. 010-5780-0200.

CHINA DAILY



LIFESHANGHAI



The 20th Shanghai Book Fair, held from Aug 14 to Tuesday, attracted 298,000 visitors to the Shanghai Exhibition Center. Favorite titles at the book fair grab the attention of a new generation.
PHOTOS BY GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

Books, bags and lots more fun

One of China's biggest annual publishing events draws crowds from all over the country in search of something new, **Zhang Kun** reports.

The 20th Shanghai Book Fair, one of China's largest annual fairs for readers and the publishing industry, recently took place at the Shanghai Exhibition Center, attracting visitors from all over the country. It wrapped up on Tuesday after a 7-day run, during which it received more than 40,000 visitors a day over a busy weekend period.

At the main exhibition venue, people browsed through the 160,000-odd books being sold by 360 publishing houses, and attended book events for their favorite authors from China and abroad.

An Wenwen from Chongqing took an early flight on Saturday morning as she wanted to have a face-to-face meeting with her favorite authors. "Hearing their thoughts about books and writing may inspire me more when I read their books," said the young woman, who returned to Chongqing later the same night.

"Many guest authors later recalled their pleasant surprise when they attended the Shanghai Book Fair. The love of reading became a rare phenomenon in many parts of the world as we entered the 21st century. The Shanghai Book Fair is among the events that changed this," Yuan Xiaoyi, a translator and professor at the East China Normal University, writes in an essay for China Reading Weekly, reminiscing about her experience of attending the fair as both a reader and an author.

"By creating a cultural event and a cultural brand, Shanghai boosted the impact of bookstores, which had been on the decline. The fair made books and authors accessible to the public," Yuan adds.

"Thanks to my long-term work in the field of world literature, I am fortunate to be a regular visitor to the Shanghai International Literary Week, where I can feel, hear about and discover new books, new people, and new literature with other readers," she writes.

Started in 2011 as an important part of the annual fair, literary week has now evolved into a vital platform for cultural exchange and literary discussion among Chinese and international writers. Over the years, the event has hosted nearly 300 writers and scholars from around the world, including four



Top: The week-long fair recorded sales of \$6.7 million on the official book cover price. **Above:** Livestreaming sales of books were a key feature.

Nobel Prize laureates in literature.

From laureates like France's Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clezio and Brit-

ain's V.S. Naipaul, to less well-known authors still struggling in their career, Yuan says that it was

the authors' books, not their stardom or prestige, that won the heart of readers in Shanghai.

This year the main forum took place on Aug 13 at the China Securities Museum in Hongkou district with speeches by an array of international literary figures, featuring luminaries such as Angola's Jose Eduardo Agualusa, France's Christian Garcin, Russia's Eugene Vodolazkin, Japanese authors Kanae Minato and Mizuki Tsujimura, Spain's Andres Barba, Romanian-born Hungarian writer Attila Bartis, poet Forrest Gander and cartoonist Dan Nott from the United States, and a lineup of esteemed Chinese writers.

The fair's organizers also tried to find more creative ways to reach more readers, as proved by the long lines of people wanting to collect souvenir seals in front of different pavilions.

"I come every year," a retired woman surnamed Wang tells China Daily, as she waited in line to have a seal stamped in her note pad at the pavilion of People's Literature Publishing House.

"It's only in the past couple of years that these seals have become popular at the Shanghai Book Fair. They aren't only for children and young readers, I like them quite a lot too, because they look nice and evoke nice memories," she says, flipping through the pages to show the seals she collected in previous years.

The seals, which come with the logos, patterns and signature imagery of different institutions and subjects, have been designed by publishers, who invite visitors to have them stamped on the title page of the books they purchase. This year, collecting the seals as souvenirs has also proved popular for many visitors to the fair.

"This is just a new means to reach out to readers. We have an online bookstore, and in the past, we've held frequent book launches and reading events online and offline, and more recently, we introduced a WeChat mini-program," says Han Weidong, director of the Shanghai Translation Publishing House. "We are also working with social media influencers to have them spread the message about new books."

"We often hear people say that we have published so many great books, but the market has evolved and people have such varied, and short spans of interest nowadays, so we have to continuously find new ways to engage them," Han says. "It is not enough to just say how great the books are, we have to look for things that grab attention, introduce new subjects and great authors, and convince people that reading will help solve problems in real life."

To achieve this, publishers also sell colorful book-themed merchandise at the fair, which has proved popular with buyers, some selling even more than the books they are about.

The Guangxi Normal University Press introduced the Kafka Tote at the fair last year. The canvas bag is embroidered with the signature of author Franz Kafka, alongside a quote of his in German that reads: "Despite the crowds, everyone is silent and isolated within themselves."

"Since last year, we have sold more than 20,000 of those totes," says Wu Haijiao, who works at the press.

Some visitors came looking for the bags, including one woman surnamed Li who works nearby and visited the fair during her lunch break. "I came first to check out the Kafka Tote," she says. "Good merchandise like this not only satisfies contemporary aesthetics and functional needs, it also spreads the ideas and attitudes of the author and publisher."

The weeklong fair gained a total sales of 48 million yuan (\$6.7 million), along with another 5 million from products like the tote bag, according to updates on Wednesday.

Contact the writer at zhangkun@chinadaily.com.cn

Baxin bargains on being about more than a store

By **WANG XIN**
wangxin2@chinadaily.com.cn

The Baxin Bookstore, a time-honored Shanghai establishment that dates back to 1912, has recently found a new existence as an integrated cultural and lifestyle space.

The century-old bookstore and publisher is located on Fuzhou Road, once one of four main roads in downtown Shanghai. Dotted with bookstores and publishing houses, it is known as the "street of culture".

After refurbishment as a cultural and commercial space, the new Baxin Bookstore opened on July 31 as Baxin Book S. With books as its core, it integrates a variety of other offerings including dining and cafe options, exhibitions, shows, a paper and a record store, expanding the role and possibilities of a bookstore.

Chen Xinqiao, its 34-year-old general manager, says that the bookstore occupies a prime location close to schools, white collar businesses, as well as tourists and visi-



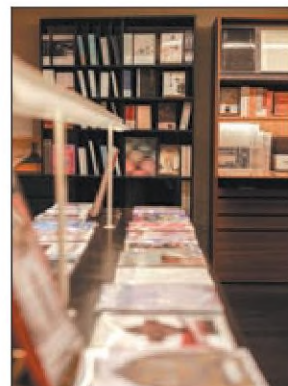
Left: Baxin Bookstore, a renowned bookstore in Shanghai, opened on July 31 after refurbishment. **Right:** Books on display at Baxin Bookstore. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

tors from all over China and the world.

"A bookstore is a physical space, and we must take into account the demand for offline consumption today, such as dining areas, (cultur-

al) salons for social networking, exhibitions and lectures," says Chen. "We are trying to attract more visitors with the different divisions and layout."

Baxin consists of six areas. In



addition to its well-designed bookstore and categorized display areas, its dining space and paper store are equally eye-catching.

Named the Bao Du Bookstore, which basically means "to read and

If you go

Baxin Book S
Address: No. 620 Fuzhou Road, Huangpu district, Shanghai

be full"; the dining space is inspired by the concepts of the "bistro" and the "strolling in books". Chen says that Baxin is like a book itself, as it hopes to provide visitors with a space to stroll among books and become mentally full, as well as become physically full with the tasty food on offer.

Superpaper Sonic, the paper store inside the bookstore, is another historical Shanghai brand. Established in 1934, it specializes in selling all kinds of paper, and is now looking to explore more possibilities in the use of paper, and different lifestyle options.

"Superpaper Sonic is becoming more international. Many of the products on sale are made for it

abroad in countries like Thailand and Nepal. It also offers paper lifestyle options. Apart from being used for writing and packaging, paper can also be a form of home decoration, used for curtains, carpets and even vases," he explains.

Despite the challenging status quo that traditional bookstores face, Chen, who is a book and bookstore lover and entered the industry four years ago, sees the necessity and value of cultural spaces and platforms.

"Over the past century, Baxin has gone through ups and downs, like any other old brand. Currently, I think the most challenging thing for bookstores is how to attract more readers and visitors with our offerings and limited display space," says Chen.

"So we have upgraded with food, displays, exhibitions and activities to make Baxin an interesting and relaxing cultural space, where people from different fields and sectors can enjoy themselves, as well as meet and talk."

A cultural festival was launched with the opening of the bookstore and featured a variety of artists and musical styles including piano, folk, jazz and R&B.

LIFE

Walking the cultural tightrope

An upcoming acrobatic show in Shenyang offers a taste of ways the art continues to evolve, **Cheng Yuezhu** reports.

Forming human pyramids on bicycles, swinging mid-air on a flying trapeze, walking along a tightrope while another performer balances on top doing a handstand — acrobatic performances often draw gasps and applause for their spine-tingling feats.

For many contemporary Chinese acrobatic troupes, these physical stunts have more to offer and some believe that these manifestations of human ability can be used to complement dramatic narratives, and embody the strength, bravery and resolution of characters.

Among troupes thinking this way is the Shenyang Acrobatic Performing Arts Corp from Liaoning province, which has merged acrobatics with storytelling in a drama titled *Xiansheng* (Starting Sounds). With its gripping acrobatic battle scenes, the production presents tales of Shenyang's resilience during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45).

The production is set to open the 12th China Acrobatic Exhibition, which is taking place until Sept 5 in Shenyang. The event promises an extravaganza of acrobatics from troupes around China, according to a news conference at the Ministry of Culture and Tourism on Aug 14.

Over the two weeks, 36 acts, eight dramas and 10 magic shows will be held. These include 32 acts and five dramas chosen from 109 submissions from around the country. The other four acts and three dramas are supported by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism's 2024 China Acrobatic Art Innovation Project.

The event has grown out of the National Acrobatic Competition, which was founded in 1984. From its 10th edition in 2019, it was renamed the China Acrobatic Exhibition, and the competition was replaced by a series of performances.

Taking place in Shenyang this



Top: A scene from acrobatic drama *Xiansheng* (Starting Sounds), a production by the Shenyang Acrobatic Performing Arts Corp, which kick-starts the 12th China Acrobatic Exhibition in Shenyang, Liaoning province, on Friday. **Li He / XINHUA** **Above:** Performers put on a show of hat tricks at a previous China Acrobatic Exhibition in Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. **Yu Jing / CHINA NEWS SERVICE**

year, the event is hosted by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the People's Government of Liaoning Province.

According to Huang Xiaojun, deputy director of the art department of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, this year's program features a wide range of productions from 25 provinces,

autonomous regions and municipalities, including those presented by 15 provincial-level acrobatic troupes, 20 troupes at municipal level or lower, as well as national troupes, and will provide an overview of acrobatic standards around China.

The productions focus on acrobatic skills, including traditional acro-

batic techniques, head balancing, bicycle tricks and aerial acrobatics.

"In the past, performances were mostly based around a core of techniques, which allowed Chinese acrobatic shows to frequently win international awards. But with the development of the times and changing audience expectations, many practitioners are now experimenting with ways to merge their acrobatic skills with narratives," Huang says.

"Acrobatic dramas merge acrobatics with other genres including magic, comedy, plays, dance and music, to promote advanced socialist culture, revolutionary culture and traditional Chinese culture. The overall quality of productions has been improving."

An array of subjects is covered by the productions, with many based on realistic themes. *Tianshan Snow*, a collaborative production by troupes from Shanghai and the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, highlights the friendship and collaboration between people of the two regions. The Inner Mongolia Art Theatre's *Our Beautiful Life* tells the story of art academy graduates devoting themselves to rural vitalization.

In addition to the performances, a series of events will also take place,

including seminars, post-performance review sessions, and performances hosted in the city's peripheral areas.

According to Lu Xichao, deputy director of the Liaoning Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism, the local government will arrange for elderly residents in welfare homes, children, model families and talented individuals to attend the performances.

To encourage more people to enjoy the performances and Shenyang itself, occasional two-for-one deals will be offered, giving showgoers complimentary scenic spot tickets.

During the event, all performers with valid credentials will enjoy free access to some local attractions, such as the Shenyang Imperial Palace Museum.

"Through the acrobatic exhibition, we invite people from across the country to visit Liaoning province to enjoy exceptional performances, and experience Liaoning's culture and lifestyle," Lu says.

"This event is not just a showcase of skills, it's also a vibrant presentation of local culture and art."

Contact the writer at chengyuezhu@chinadaily.com.cn

A Scottish feast that is poetry to body and soul

Food not only nourishes the body, it also nourishes the soul. The psychological impact of food is an interesting one, as it can also bring back memories.

This was the case when I recently had the chance to once again enjoy the traditional Scottish dish of haggis after many years.

Haggis is one of the most quintessential and characteristic aspects of Scottish culture, along with whisky.

For those of you who do not know what haggis is, let me explain.

It is composed of the liver, heart and lungs of a sheep, minced and mixed with beef or mutton suet and oatmeal, and seasoned with onion, pepper and other spices. The mixture is packed into a sheep's stomach and boiled.

To those of you who have never tried it, the notion of eating sheep organs may sound unpleasant, but I promise you that it is quite delicious.

But don't just take my word for it. This traditional dish, which was born out of necessity

due to its humble ingredients, was described in the following terms in the 2001 edition of the famous French gastronomic encyclopedia Larousse Gastronomique: "Although its description is not immediately appealing, haggis has an excellent nutty texture and delicious savory flavor".

But haggis means much more to Scots than simply being a traditional, and very characteristic dish.

The cultural connotations of haggis are very strong indeed. It is, in fact, an iconic part of Scottish culture.

That is due to its connection with the country's renowned national poet, Robert Burns (1759-96). Burns is celebrated not only for his outstanding poetry, but also for the democratic and progressive views he espoused, as he was a great admirer of both the American and the French revolutions.

Haggis is part of the democratic and progressive views he espoused, as he was a great admirer of both the American and the French revolutions. Haggis is part of the democratic and progressive views he espoused, as he was a great admirer of both the American and the French revolutions.

This traditional celebration of Scotland's national bard has changed very little since it was first known to have taken place in 1802 in the town of Greenock. In fact, it is such an important event that it is celebrated more than Saint Andrew's Day on Nov 30, which is Scotland's official national day.

The significance of the Burns Supper has reached far beyond the shores of Scotland, which is a mark of the poet's cultural significance, and his legacy.

Many of the celebrations are held by the widely dispersed Scottish diaspora in countries as far afield as Canada and Australia, but they are even held in Russia. Burns' legacy is so strong there that he featured on a special commemorative stamp issued in 1956 by the former Soviet Union.

So if you choose to celebrate the man described as "the greatest Scot" when his birthday comes around again on Jan 25, you will be in the company of millions of people in many parts of the world. And I hope you enjoy the haggis.

Contact the writer at ian@chinadaily.com.cn



Ian Morrison
Second Thoughts

Wuxi's new museum of city history takes a journalistic turn

When Xue Zhongqing was informed a month ago that he would become the curator of a new museum in Wuxi, Jiangsu province, he was filled with a burst of motivation.

"I saw a new challenge ahead with many details to manage, but I embraced the role with enthusiasm," says the 52-year-old journalist.

The Wuxi City Construction Museum, scheduled to open later this year, is envisioned as a landmark showcasing the city's transformation from a wilderness 3,200 years ago, to a thriving economic hub in the Yangtze River Delta region with a bright future.

Occupying 12,800 square meters in the Wuxi Economic Development District, the museum has a striking black-and-white design, with both three-story and single-story sections, and a sloped surrounding roof.

Xue drafted an action plan for the museum that recently won over the municipal authorities.

The senior journalist at Wuxi Daily and general manager of the Jiangnan Evening News was named last month as the professional in charge of the exhibition.

His plan divides the city's history into four distinct stages: its ancient past, its emergence as a commercial and industrial hub in the early 20th century, its revival as a vibrant city in modern times, and its role as a leader in China's decades-long process of reform and opening-up.

"I like Xue's plans for the halls," says Tang Keke, former president of the Wuxi Historical Society. "The narrative is compelling and the concepts are clear. I'm also impressed by his incorporation of comics and animated elements in the design."

With over 30 years of journalistic experience, Xue believes his background in the arts and varied expertise make him well-suited to



Left: An aerial view of the Wuxi City Construction Museum being built in Jiangsu province, scheduled to open later this year, where Xue Zhongqing will be curator. **Rong Xingyi / FOR CHINA DAILY**

Above: Xue working as a journalist.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

the role of curator.

"The job requires both a deep knowledge of the city and a keen aesthetic sense. I know my hometown well, I'm confident of my writing and photography skills. All this, coupled with my college fine arts major, will work in my favor," he says.

That said, Xue acknowledges that being a curator is a more complex job than he initially anticipated. The role encompasses a wide range of responsibilities, including managing the collection of exhibits, exhibition planning, and coordination with different parties.

"You have to be both sensible and sentimental, dealing with art, numbers, and people," he says. "I've always embraced every challenge, sorted things out, and expanded my experience."

He feels that the task of being in

charge of the exhibition will add another stage to his transition and growth from a photographer, to print journalist, multimedia journalist, general manager of a newspaper, and now curator.

Key to success

Studying for a fine arts major in college in 1991, Xue set his sights on becoming a news photographer. Two years later, he was hired as a graphic editor by the Wuxi Daily. Although it wasn't the role he originally applied for, he maintained a positive perspective.

After six years in the graphic department, Xue became a reporter in 1999, and began documenting everything happening in the city, with a firm belief that media should serve its role providing public information.

One of his most successful photography projects was a series that focused on construction workers on the Wuxi section of the Shanghai-Nanjing intercity railway in 2009. To capture the most touching moments, Xue visited different construction sites and spoke with the hardworking laborers he considers the unsung heroes of the country.

The photographs received national recognition in 2010, winning a silver award at an annual competition held by the China Photojournalists Society.

Exploring frontiers

Since the 2010s, he has shifted his focus from on-site reporting to academic research, publishing nearly 50 articles and theses on media communication development and trends. His successful endeavors in

this new area led to his appointment as deputy head of the Wuxi All-Media Communication Association, and earned him a guest professor position at the Wuxi Taihu University.

"A reporter is a witness to news and historical events, while a media scholar observes and reflects on the communication industry," he says.

When asked what drives him to adapt, Xue cites American photographer Ansel Adams (1902-84), a leading landscape photographer and environmentalist.

"I remind myself that I'm still young compared to Adams, and I'm striving to leave a meaningful impact in the fields I pursue."

Yan Weijue contributed to this story.

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