

Deadly disease returns

Continuing conflict blamed for polio outbreak, threatening children in Gaza  
WORLD, PAGE 6



Excavation of ancient tombs brings Han Dynasty back to life  
CHINA, PAGE 5



Corridor of art

Ancient stone arches reminder of community's pride in Chaozhou  
CITY TALES, PAGE 8-9

# CHINA DAILY

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## Desperate measures



Residents bring down a mud wall of a house on Tuesday to create a makeshift levee amid flooding in Masawi, in the northern state of Merowe, Sudan. Surging waters have wiped out more than 20 villages and killed at least 30 people after the Arbaat Dam collapsed over the weekend. The accident devastated a region already reeling from months of civil war. AFP

## Beijing, Washington agree to enhance collaboration

By ZHANG YUNBI  
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Beijing and Washington agreed to further roll out dialogues and collaboration involving areas such as the two nations' militaries, climate change and artificial intelligence, as senior Chinese and US officials wrapped up their two-day strategic communication in Beijing on Wednesday.

Observers said the productive Beijing meeting can help manage differences and stabilize bilateral ties in the near future. Wang and Sullivan previously held three rounds of strategic communications in Austria, Malta and Thailand.

The two sides also discussed "having a new round of interactions between the two heads of state in the near future", the ministry said.

They agreed to continue implementing the consensus reached at the San Francisco summit last year, and to maintain high-level exchanges and communication at various levels.

As part of the meeting's outcomes, the two countries agreed to continue cooperation in areas such as counterterrorism, law enforcement and repatriation of illegal immigrants, and in addressing climate change.

The two sides agreed on a number of institutional arrangements, including holding video conversations between military theater commanders at an appropriate time and convening the second round of the China-US Intergovernmental Dialogue on Artificial Intelligence.

"Strategic communication helps Beijing and Washington better understand each other in the context of the bigger picture, pave the way for future high-level interactions, boost progress on some specific issues and help to manage problems," said Wu Xinbo, dean of Fudan University's Institute of International Studies.

The Beijing meeting also shows Washington's readiness to keep the ties steady during the remainder of Joe Biden's term as US president, Wu added.

On the Taiwan question, Wang emphasized that China will surely be reunified, and "Taiwan independence" would constitute the biggest risk to peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

The US should put into practice its commitment to not supporting "Taiwan independence", adhere to the one-China principle and the three China-US joint communiques, stop arming Taiwan, and support China's peaceful reunification, he added.

Sullivan said the US upholds the one-China policy and does not support "Taiwan independence", "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan".

On the economic front, the annual trade volume between the two countries exceeded \$660 billion last year. Wang said "national security needs to have clear boundaries" and should be properly defined in the economic realm.

He asked the US to stop suppressing China in the economic, trade and science and technology fields, saying that using "overcapacity" as

an excuse for protectionism "will harm global green development and affect world economic growth".

Sullivan said Washington agrees that the two sides should treat each other as equals, competition should be healthy and fair, and the US has no intention of decoupling from China.

Between the US and China, there are differences and competition, as well as many areas for cooperation, he added.

On the situation in the South China Sea, Wang asked the US "not to support and condone the Philippines' infringement of (China's) rights and interests".

Su Xiaohui, deputy director of the Department of American Studies at the China Institute of International Studies, said, "If the US persists in perceiving China as an adversary, it will create huge uncertainty for bilateral relations, and also bring about greater risks."

The two sides also exchanged views on topics including the Ukraine crisis, the Middle East and the Korean Peninsula.

Regarding the Ukraine conflict, Wang said Washington should not shirk its responsibility or arbitrarily impose "illegal unilateral sanctions".

## DRIVING REFORM

# Self-driving tech fueled by innovation

Nation's collaborative approach helps advance connected vehicles and autonomous driving

By YAN DONGJIE  
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As China strives for technological innovation represented by intelligent connected vehicles and autonomous driving, it has created a distinctive Chinese innovation model, with government departments, enterprises and research institutions collaborating closely and policies being drafted to support the nation's technological growth, said experts, entrepreneurs and officials.

Zhao Xiangmo, vice-chairman of the China Society of Automotive Engineers, said that with the development of new energy vehicles and self-driving tech, the automotive industry is undergoing a qualitative change.

As self-driving vehicles become more prominent, China's solution is vehicle-road-cloud integration, which is a technology more complex than the single-vehicle intelligence explored by the United States 30 years ago, said Zhao, who is also president of the Xi'an University of Architecture and Technology in Shaanxi province.

Vehicle-road-cloud integration uses artificial intelligence and technologies such as cellular vehicle-to-everything, or C-V2X, and 5G to enable seamless collaboration between humans, vehicles, roads and cloud systems.

Zhao attributes China's success in the field of intelligent driving to its unique path of independent innovation, which has mobilized various forces from government departments, automotive companies,

cloud computing enterprises and research institutions to achieve collaborative development under a top-level framework.

"This is a vast technological system involving vehicle, road, internet and cloud computing, in which each segment can drive an industry."

"It's impossible to proceed without teamwork. This is also a typical area where new quality productive forces are concentrated," he said.

The third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China held last month emphasized the need to coordinate the construction of various scientific and technological innovation platforms, encourage and regulate the development of new research and development institutions, leverage the leading role of China's huge market, strengthen the coordination of innovative resources and organizational strength, and promote the integration of technological innovation and industrial innovation.

In September 2020, the Beijing municipal government decided to establish the world's first high-level autonomous driving demonstration zone, featuring vehicle-road-cloud integration, in the Beijing Economic-Technological Development Area.

See *Driving*, page 3



Online See more by scanning the code.

## Bonding over mooncakes



Foreign students taking part in the 2024 "Chinese Bridge" competition learn to make mooncakes in Fuzhou, Fujian province, on Tuesday. The 21-day Chinese proficiency competition will be held in September in Pingtan, Fujian. WANG DONGMING / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

## US RATE CONCERNS DRIVE RENMINBI'S ASCENDANCY

While greenback struggles, Chinese bonds look more attractive to investors as opening-up advances

By ZHOU LANXU  
and LIU ZIZHENG

Over recent months, a seemingly surprising trend has emerged on the global financial landscape — foreign investors are flocking to Chinese renminbi bonds, even as US bonds boast higher yields.

### In-depth

As of July, overseas institutions' holdings in China's interbank bond market had risen for 11 consecutive months, an increase in foreign holdings of as much as

1.28 trillion yuan (\$179.78 billion), data from the Shanghai head office of the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, showed.

At first glance, the inflow looks counterintuitive — why would investors opt for lower-yielding bonds? As of late August, the 10-year US Treasury bonds still

yielded around 1.67 percentage points more than their Chinese counterparts, according to market tracker Wind Info.

The answer, analysts suggest, partially lies in the anticipated interest rate cuts by the United States.

See *RMB*, page 2

## Sino-EU ties can benefit from mutual development

Against the backdrop of a complex geopolitical situation and increasing challenges in the world, the European and Chinese economies remain highly intertwined and interdependent. Overall, the relationship between the European Union and China is indeed complicated, with a lot of arguments for decoupling and de-risking. Our two global powers are strategic rivals in some aspects, but let us not forget about the high complementarity of our economies.

The recent European elections resulted in significant political

### WORLD WATCH

By Bernard Dewit

shifts, with the popularity of right-wing populist parties growing, and the green parties experiencing losses. Rising populism and the resulting fragmentation in the European Parliament could pose a threat to the stability of European policymaking and potentially have a negative influence on EU-China relations. Despite these changes,

centrist parties have managed to maintain a strong presence, so the continuity of the EU's climate action should stay in place.

Generally speaking, the EU's policy toward China has undergone significant discussions and changes in recent years. Europe has been seeking to attain strategic independence and greater reciprocity in international relations.

As the EU is focusing on integrating green technologies into its industries in the framework of the European Green Deal, competition with China in these sectors is

increasing. As European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen mentioned, the European climate policy is seen as an economic policy to ensure European competitiveness, which means growing trade tensions with China on electric vehicles, solar panels and wind turbines.

The EU's recent subsidy investigations into and tariffs on Chinese EVs are a good example of these growing trade tensions. Its countervailing duties on certain types of electric vehicles from China went into effect at the beginning of July. They are based on the idea that Chi-

nese State subsidies to support EVs are potentially threatening the European car industry and market. The number of imported Chinese EVs is indeed large, but still only represents a small share of European car sales. The European Commission's tariff decision will only be permanently enforced if it is not opposed by a majority of European countries.

The negotiations among member states to determine the final outcome still offer an opportunity for dialogue and to examine the prospects for cooperation and common development between the EU and China.

See *Cooperation*, page 3

INSIDE China, Vietnam to boost connectivity Global Views, page 13 www.chinadailyglobal.com A member of ANN China Daily Global ©2024 All Rights Reserved Newsstand prices: US \$1 Canada C\$1 UK 1.1 EU 1€ Kenya 50 Kenya Shilling Asia Pacific: Thailand 120 thb; Philippines 120 php; Myanmar 2000 kyat; Japan 210 yen; Dubai 10 dirham; Pakistan 300 rupee

## PAGE TWO

## RMB: A favored alternative to US dollar

From page 1

The US Federal Reserve is expected to lower rates from the current 5.25 to 5.5 percent range, to avoid a recession. With China's monetary policy to remain stable, the renminbi is poised to rebound against the dollar. This has set the stage for profitable exchange rate plays, with the possibilities of investors converting dollars to renminbi, investing in Chinese bonds, and locking in a profit by selling renminbi forward at a higher rate.

From October 2023 to January 2024, Chinese bonds yielded 107 basis points higher on average than US bond yields of the same maturity after taking into account foreign exchange hedging, according to calculations by BOC International.

**Resilience of assets**

A more fundamental reason for the inflow, financial experts from home and abroad said, is something beyond technical trading strategies — the growing appeal of renminbi-denominated assets among international investors, a trend that has withstood the headwinds of US rate hikes.

Since the US Fed started a drastic rate hike cycle in March 2022 to combat inflation, foreign holdings in China's interbank bond market have risen. They reached 470 billion yuan as of July, with the 1.28-trillion-yuan inflow since September last year surpassing the outflow of 810 billion yuan between March 2022 and August 2023, according to the PBOC's Shanghai head office.

The allure of renminbi-denominated assets has been underpinned by a global shift away from over-reliance on the US dollar, China's expansive economic ties, and the country's ongoing financial opening-up, the experts said.

These factors, they said, will continue to help the renminbi's ascent as an international currency, strengthening its reserve, payment, financing and pricing functions, and offering a win-win for the global economy.

"Demand for diversification of reserves away from the US dollar remains strong globally, driven by geopolitical, economic and financial dynamics," said Massimiliano Castelli, head of strategy for official institutions at UBS Asset Management.

"We believe the dollar is and will remain for the foreseeable future the main store of value for global investors, including reserve managers. However, currency diversification is set to continue in the future as the world gradually moves toward a multipolar system.

"The renminbi looks set to continue its steady rise in global foreign exchange reserves, in particular if it is supported by an improvement in the Chinese economy, the ongoing rise in the use of the renminbi in cross-border payments and the more widespread use of the digital yuan," said Castelli.

Zhu Min, former deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund, said, "The world sees that a dominant US dollar is not necessarily a good thing for the whole world, because US monetary policy and fiscal policy may have a big impact on the dollar's value and capital movements."

"Having a more balanced force against the dollar is good for the whole world. So I think the renminbi will continue to internationalize to serve that role, not only for China, but for the whole world, and particularly for international financial architecture," Zhu said.

The world's pursuit of alternative international currencies to the greenback, including the renminbi, has accelerated after the US froze the Russian central bank's foreign exchange reserves and removed several Russian financial institutions from the Swift messaging system in 2022, in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

**'Shaky' greenback**

Zhang Ming, deputy director of the Institute of Finance and Banking, which is part of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said the "weaponization" of the dollar has presented an important opportunity for renminbi internationalization.

Many countries have realized that it is dangerous to rely solely on the greenback, said Zhang, who is also deputy director of the National Institution for Finance and Development.

In July, the renminbi's share in global payments, measured by value, hit a record 4.74 percent, Swift data showed. It remained the fourth most active currency for global payments by value for the ninth consecutive month.

The Chinese currency was the second-largest global currency in the trade finance market for the second consecutive month, with a market share of 6 percent in July.

As the world has sought systems other than Swift, the Cross-border Interbank Payment System, or CIPS, which specializes in renminbi cross-border payment and clearing, has grown in popularity. In July, two direct and six indirect participants were added to CIPS. By the end of July, there were 150 direct participants and 1,401 indirect participants in the system.

An increasing number of economies are also experimenting with central bank digital currencies, or CBDCs, in cross-border



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

payments, which can not only bypass the Swift system, but enjoy a faster settlement speed than the traditional agent bank system, as a third party intermediary is no longer required.

Earlier this year, Saudi Arabia joined Project mBridge, a cross-border platform for experimenting with CBDCs — including the digital yuan — for international trade, as the sixth full participant.

Project mBridge resulted from collaboration starting in 2021 between the Bank for International Settlements' innovation arm, the Bank of Thailand, the Central Bank of the United Arab Emirates, the Digital Currency Institute of the PBOC, and the Hong Kong Monetary Authority.

**Global, domestic challenges**

Geopolitical dynamics, however, can be a double-edged sword, experts said, with The Wall Street Journal reporting in April that the US was drafting sanctions that threaten to cut some Chinese banks off from the global financial system.

A survey by UBS Asset Management of 40 central banks, which manage about half of the global foreign exchange reserves, showed that 47 percent of them believed that US-China tensions had not yet affected the internationalization trend of the renminbi. Thirty-nine percent said it had slowed it down and 14 percent said the tensions had accelerated the trend.

Zhang, from CASS, identified the US suppression of China as a key challenge facing the renminbi's internationalization. This is in addition to domestic challenges such as economic growth slowing, the yields of financial products declining, and domestic financial risks becoming more apparent.

While ramping up efforts to boost eco-

nomical growth, China can further internationalize the renminbi through three main tasks, Zhang said. They are: improving the currency's function in commodity pricing, providing more high-quality renminbi financial assets to overseas investors via both onshore and offshore markets, and stepping up the development of CIPS.

He said: "Since the PBOC began promoting renminbi internationalization in 2009, it has made significant progress over the past 15 years — the renminbi now holds about a 5 percent share in international transactions and 2 to 3 percent in global reserves. The area that remains relatively weak is pricing."

To further strengthen the renminbi's pricing function, China — as a major buyer and seller of commodities — can promote renminbi pricing in the trade of commodities such as iron ore, copper and natural gas, Zhang said. He cited the example of Shanghai's launch of an international crude oil futures market denominated in renminbi in 2018, which has grown rapidly into the third largest of its kind in the world.

The resolution adopted at the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in July said that efforts should be made to steadily and prudently advance the internationalization of the renminbi and develop offshore renminbi markets.

It also said the country would push forward the development of a homegrown, controllable cross-border payment system and make steady progress in the R&D and application of the digital renminbi.

Zhang said CIPS would serve as a "backup option" for China and the world, particularly if geopolitical conflicts continue to escalate and the US imposes further financial sanctions. "Not only China, but also the European

Union, India and Saudi Arabia are looking for new payment and settlement systems. We are providing these countries with a second or third option as well," he said.

**Attracting participants**

Efforts are needed to boost the number of banks directly participating in CIPS. The more direct participants there are, the stronger the network will become and the faster payment and settlement will be, Zhang said.

Project mBridge may assume greater importance going forward as an alternative and more efficient option for global payment and settlement, he added.

Xiong Aizong, a senior research fellow at CASS' Institute of World Economics and Politics, said there is room for development concerning offshore renminbi clearing, which can increase the cross-border trade and use of the yuan.

"Last year, renminbi clearing banks or arrangements were established in Brazil, Pakistan, Serbia, Cambodia and other economies, which greatly promoted the use of renminbi by enterprises and financial institutions in these economies for cross-border transactions," Xiong said.

Deepening high-level financial opening-up to expand the channels for foreign investment in renminbi assets is also key to internationalizing the currency, he said. The Bond Connect program launched in 2017, the improved qualified foreign institutional investor mechanisms, and the Swap Connect market access scheme launched last year, have all added to the currency's appeal to international investors, Xiong added.

Pan Gongsheng, governor of the PBOC, said in an interview with People's Daily in

August that the central bank will promote renminbi internationalization by adhering to market-driven and voluntary principles, continue to improve cross-border renminbi policies, optimize the global layout of renminbi clearing banks, and promote the healthy development of the offshore renminbi markets.

In line with Pan's remarks, the PBOC in August inked a memorandum of understanding with Vietnam's central bank for bilateral local currency swaps, which can facilitate cross-border trade and investment in the renminbi. By the end of 2023, the PBOC had entered into agreements with over 40 central banks for bilateral local currency swaps totaling 4.16 trillion yuan.

Pan added that the central bank will keep the renminbi exchange rate generally stable at a reasonable, balanced level.

Huang Yiping, dean of Peking University's National School of Development, said China should also consider providing commercialized investments, low-cost funding and government aid to developing economies to help them bridge the funding gap in achieving a green transition.

Such a scheme would be comparable to the US-sponsored Marshall Plan to rebuild post-World War II Europe, but with a focus on green development. The scheme would be a "win-win" as it would facilitate the global pursuit of carbon neutrality, while helping bolster China's new energy exports and promoting the internationalization of both Chinese financial institutions and the renminbi, Huang said.

Li Zitong contributed to this story.

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## TOP NEWS

# Deng's 1979 visit reshaped US-China ties

Historic trip set the stage for cooperation between both countries in different fields

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco  
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Aug 22 marks the 120th birth anniversary of Deng Xiaoping, the late leader widely regarded as the pioneer of China's economic reforms. Today, his legacy extends far beyond China's borders.

Deng's historic visit to the United States in 1979 stands out as a pivotal moment that reshaped US-China relations and set the stage for decades of cooperation between the two countries.

In January 1979, just weeks after China and the US formally established diplomatic relations, Deng embarked on a groundbreaking visit to the United States. At that time, he was the highest-ranking Chinese official to visit the country since 1949, so the trip carried enormous symbolic and practical significance.

"Deng's 1979 trip was extremely successful as he charismatically wooed Congress, the media, and the American people," said the US Department of State's Office of the Historian, which has included Deng's visit in its publication, "Milestones in the History of US Foreign Relations".

Deng, the then vice-premier of China and a pragmatic reformer, arrived in the US with clear objectives.

"Deng fully understood the importance of a conducive international environment for China's modernization, and the United States held the key for regional and global stability," Zhu Zhiqun, professor of political science and international relations at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania, told China Daily.

"The purpose of the visit was to present to the United States a new and reforming China in the post-Mao era and to seek US support for China's modernization," he said.

While high-level meetings were a key part of the agenda, the Chinese leader visited Atlanta, Houston and Seattle. In Atlanta, Georgia, Deng toured the headquarters of Coca-Cola, signaling China's openness to US businesses. His visit to Boeing Field in Seattle, Washington state, underscored an interest in aviation technology.

Perhaps most memorably, Deng donned a cowboy hat at a rodeo near Houston, Texas, creating an iconic image that humanized the Chinese leader for many people in the US. The famous photograph of Deng in a cowboy hat, which appeared in newspapers across the country, became a symbol of China's willingness to engage with the West.

"The visit was quite successful. The cities he went to were carefully chosen to highlight the goal of his visit," said Zhu. "During his visits to Coca-Cola and Boeing, Deng extended invitations to the US

business community and welcomed them to invest in China."

Ezra Vogel, the late socialist and renowned scholar on modern China, highlighted in his book *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China* how Deng's visit fostered long-term US-China ties through business-oriented agreements and networking.

"American businesspeople who had heard Deng speak in various cities immediately began to prepare for trips to China to explore business opportunities. Many of the 17 governors who met him in Atlanta planned delegations to China with local businesspeople," Vogel wrote.

The then US secretaries of commerce, agriculture and energy also prepared to lead delegations in the months ahead to expand relations in their respective areas, according to Vogel. "Members of Congress, even many who had complained about China in the past, vied to join these and other trips to China," he said.

By visiting NASA and other institutions, Deng also helped establish the link between the scientific communities and encouraged scientific cooperation between the two countries, Zhu noted.

Deng's visit yielded immediate tangible results. On Jan 31, 1979, China signed the science and technology agreement with the US to accelerate scientific exchanges. That laid the foundation for extensive research cooperation that would benefit both countries and the rest of the world in the years to come.

The 1980s, following Deng's visit, was a "golden period" or "honeymoon" in US-China relations, with "intensive cooperation between the two countries and growing US investment in China," said Zhu of Bucknell University.

The era saw rapid growth in trade, cultural exchanges and diplomatic cooperation. US companies began to view China as a promising market and manufacturing base, while Chinese students and researchers gained access to cutting-edge knowledge and technology in US institutions.

The fundamental shift toward engagement and cooperation that Deng's visit represented has remained a significant factor in US-China relations, even as the relationship has experienced ups and downs over the decades.

Despite the challenges, the importance of US-China cooperation in addressing global issues remains clear. As Deng himself stated during his visit, "Amicable cooperation between two major countries, situated on opposite shores of the Pacific, is undoubtedly an important factor working for peace in this area and in the world as a whole."

## Typhoon chaos



Rescue operations get underway on Wednesday at the site of a landslide that occurred the previous day in the Aichi Prefecture city of Gamagori, as heavy rain hit central Japan city due to the approach of Typhoon Shanshan. Four members of a family who lived in a house at the site are missing.

KYODO NEWS VIA GETTY IMAGES

## Driving: Great potential seen in developing Robotaxi services

From page 1

Beijing Connected and Autonomous Vehicles Technology Co was set up as the operating platform, in conjunction with the National Innovation Center of Intelligent and Connected Vehicles and other research and development institutions, forming a structure involving government departments, academia, industries and investors among other entities.

Pony.ai, an autonomous driving research and development company that started operating in Silicon Valley in 2016, established its first domestic research center in the Beijing Economic-Technological Development Area in 2017, becoming one of the first companies to have a presence in the demonstration zone.

"The construction of the demonstration zone has accelerated Pony.ai's research and testing," said Zhang Ning, vice-president of the company and head of its Beijing research center. "On average, there is a technological breakthrough or policy move every three months — a pace that is exhilarating."

One of Pony.ai's main businesses involves the Robotaxi, an autonomous taxi service. In 2018, the company obtained a testing license and began conducting trial runs with a safety officer in the driver's seat. In April 2021, the officer moved to the passenger seat; in July 2022, to the back seat; and by the end of that year, "fully driverless" tests were successfully conducted.

"After accumulating enough testing data, following evaluation by the demonstration zone's management committee, Pony.ai started providing Robotaxi services for

a fee since last year. Now, anyone in the demonstration zone can hail a ride in these taxis using their mobile phone," Zhang said.

Currently, only China and the US have achieved commercial operation of self-driving taxis, he noted. While Google's Waymo has undergone 15 years of development, China has made rapid progress in the past five years, thanks to the close cooperation between government departments, enterprises and research institutions.

"The resonance between policy and technological innovation is crucial. The government acts as a guiding beacon, boosting the confidence of enterprises and promoting technological development through funding and policies. This is how the Robotaxi has achieved such rapid development in such a short time," Zhang said.

"The testing data accumulated by enterprises serves as a reference for government policymaking, with the government overseeing and making decisions to share the risks with enterprises," he added.

Zhang said he believes that the potential of developing the Robotaxi service in China's major cities is at least 10 times greater than in US cities such as San Francisco, because the population in major Chinese cities is larger.

"Moreover, China's roads are more complex. After training in such situations, the nation's autonomous driving tech will be far more competitive when exported to other countries," he said.

In the field of autonomous driving, China's commercialization landscape and future market will be much larger than those of the US, he added.

On public roads, Pony.ai has achieved 35 million kilometers of real-world autonomous driving efficiency. "It's equivalent to the driving experience of dozens of ordinary drivers in a lifetime," Zhang said, adding that data shows Robotaxis are 10 times safer than taxis driven by humans.

Yuan Chengyin, director and general manager of the National New Energy Vehicle Technology Innovation Center, said: "In the development process of intelligent driving in China, what I deeply appreciate is the Chinese innovation model of tackling key issues. It's somewhat like passing a baton in foreign countries, but under our government initiatives it requires integrating all resources to focus fully on completing a task with a clear purpose and determination."

Yuan, who is also secretary-general of the China Automotive Chip Industry Innovation Strategic Alliance, said that this year, the percentage of car chips produced domestically for China's use will increase from 5 percent to 20 percent.

Over the past four years, the demonstration zone in Beijing has introduced more than 30 companies for research and development of autonomous driving tech and intelligent connected functions, deploying over 800 autonomous vehicles for testing, resulting in more than 60 standard achievements, according to the zone's management committee.

The demonstration zone has established the nation's first domestic standard system for vehicle-road-cloud integration, with vehicles such as self-driving taxis, unmanned delivery vans and unmanned cleaning trucks already in operation.

## Cooperation: Momentum to be built amid challenges

From page 1

The EU will continue to pursue its de-risking strategy and will introduce further policies aimed at enabling European companies to compete with China on green technologies. In the meantime, China is starting its own investigation into some European exports of products such as cognac. We will, therefore, have to carefully monitor these tensions so as not to end up in a full-blown trade war.

As chairman of the Belgian-Chinese Chamber of Commerce, I believe in bilateral cooperation, and I trust that the cooperation between the two sides is beneficial for both parties and for the world in general. We can't forget that there is a mutual dependence between the EU and China, so there should not be any fundamental conflict of interest between the two. Both sides benefit from each other's development, adhere to strategic autonomy and multilateralism, and have a broad consensus on climate change and other global issues.

## Fostering constructive cooperation between China and the EU on crucial issues such as climate change and ending world hunger is indispensable.

Against the backdrop of complicated geopolitical changes and challenges in an increasingly bipolar world, fostering constructive cooperation between China and the EU on crucial issues such as climate change and ending world hunger is indispensable.

This was also reiterated by the European Commission's Executive Vice-President Maros Sefcovic, who wants to keep green as "the color of our cooperation." He said "it is important to not lose track of what matters... the survival of the human race and maintaining a habitable planet" during the fifth EU-China High-Level Environment and Climate Dialogue in June.

Let us continue to build on the momentum the EU and China had going while cooperating to reach the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement targets. There are still plenty of cooperation opportunities when it comes to emission trading systems, climate-smart cities, scientific and technological development, long-term low emissions development strategies, greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles and agriculture, and more. Addressing environmental concerns while promoting renewable energy sources can lead to long-term benefits for both regions. Not only for all citizens, but in particular for European and Chinese businesses which can leverage their know-how, create new jobs and investment opportunities in both markets.

The author is chairman of the Belgian-Chinese Chamber of Commerce and senior partner of Dewit Law Office. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## Paralympians eagerly anticipating new success as Games get underway

By LI YINGXUE in Paris  
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On Tuesday night, Yu Yutan was busy familiarizing himself with the stadium near Eiffel Tower in Paris. As a member of the Chinese visually impaired soccer team, Yu was eagerly looking forward to his first match in the 2024 Paralympic Games that got underway in the French capital on Wednesday evening.

"We're fully prepared and eagerly anticipating the competition. I'm looking forward to the feeling of stepping onto this beautiful pitch," the player said.

The Paris Paralympic Games began on a happy note on Wednesday evening with an opening ceremony at the Place de la Concorde, where around 270 members of the Chinese delegation were present. Wheelchair fencer Gu Haiyan and weightlifter Qi Yongkai had the honor of serving as



Team China athletes take part in pre-match training sessions on Friday as they get ready to compete in the 2024 Paris Paralympic Games. CAI YANG / XINHUA

flag bearers for Team China.

The Games will continue through Sept 8.

China's 284 Paralympic athletes will compete in 19 sports across 302 events. Bolstered by meticu-

lous preparations, the team is determined to achieve outstanding results.

Wei Wei, a member of the Chinese swimming team's support staff, said that the team has been acclimating in Paris for nearly a week and was in great shape.

"The athletes are participating in high-quality training sessions and maintaining excellent mental focus," Wei added.

On Wednesday morning, the team completed its final training session before the competition, which begins on Thursday.

In the swimming events, which will run from Thursday to Sept 7, 141 gold medals are up for grabs. Wei said that China's 46 swimmers are fully prepared and determined to perform at their best.

Meanwhile, the cycling team, a blend of veteran and emerging athletes, is also ready to compete.

Coach Li Peng said that individualized training plans tailored to each cyclist's strengths had been created.

"Our athletes are committed, and our coaches, medical staff and technicians are all working in sync, united in their drive to excel," Li said.

Xu Min, a member of the Chinese delegation's medical team, detailed the crucial role it is playing in supporting the athletes.

"Our main focus is injury prevention during training and competition, as well as delivering prompt medical and rehabilitation services," Xu said.

The medical team is a multidisciplinary unit, consisting of 23 specialists from the fields of orthopedics, rehabilitation, endocrinology and ophthalmology, among others. The experts have been drawn from both sports-specific hospitals and leading general hospitals, ensuring comprehensive care

for the athletes, Xu said.

According to experts, sports play an essential role in enhancing the physical and mental well-being of the disabled, while also aiding their integration into society. By the end of last year, China had established 12,463 rehabilitation centers nationwide, supported by a workforce of 360,000 professionals, according to the China Disabled Persons' Federation.

Guo Lingling, a powerlifting champion at the Tokyo Paralympics, faced significant challenges in her youth due to polio, which left her dependent on a wheelchair and crutches. However, powerlifting provided a transformative source of strength and clarity.

"Powerlifting has allowed me to connect with new friends, experience diverse perspectives, and find a renewed sense of purpose," Guo said.

## CHINA

## A giant step



First grade students explore the Xinghan Primary School campus in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, with a teacher dressed as an astronaut on Wednesday. Ahead of the opening of the new semester in September, the school has organized a variety of special activities, including an "Interactive Cabin", "Happy Planet" and "Time Management Room" over three and a half days to help its new first graders adapt smoothly to the transition from kindergarten. SHAO DAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

# China ranks first in number of science and technology clusters

WIPO Global Innovation Index shows two more Chinese centers in top 100

By CAO YIN  
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China now leads the world with 26 science and technology clusters in the top 100, reflecting the country's rapid growth in innovation output, according to the World Intellectual Property Organization.

This year's WIPO Global Innovation Index, released on Monday, shows China has two more clusters than last year, surpassing the United States and Germany. The index revealed that seven of the top 10 clusters are in Asia and three in the US.

Tokyo-Yokohama in Japan is the largest cluster globally, with the Shenzhen-Hong Kong-Guangzhou cluster in China ranking second. Beijing moved up one spot from last year to claim third place.

The report highlighted that clusters in middle-income economies experienced the strongest growth in science and technology, with Chinese clusters showing the steepest increase, particularly in Hefei, Anhui province, and Zhengzhou, Henan province.

"Science and technology clusters are the foundation of robust national innovation ecosystems," said WIPO Director-General Daren Tang. "It is encouraging to see these clusters thriving not just in the mature hubs of industrialized nations, but also in the emerging innovation hot spots of selected developing economies."

Tang added that WIPO will continue to support the clusters in using intellectual property to translate research into practical solutions.

WIPO's Global Innovation Index ranks countries and economies based on the development and achievements of their clusters.

Guo Wen, spokeswoman for the China National Intellectual Property Administration, noted the important role played by the central region, including Henan and Anhui, in China's high-quality development, citing its unique geographical advantages and broad market potential.

She said that IP services in the region have advanced in recent years. As of June, the region held 618,000 valid invention patents, 19 percent more than the same period last year, and had registered over 7 million trademarks, up 11 percent year-on-year.

Henan has also launched projects to enhance IP rights in major industries, establishing two national-level IP operation centers for new energy auto parts and biological agriculture, said Liu Huaizhang, an

official from the provincial IP bureau.

In recent years, China has prioritized science and technology, emphasizing innovation as a primary driver of development. The country has promoted significant regional strategies, such as the coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region and the integrated development of the Yangtze River Delta. It has also supported efforts by Beijing, Shanghai and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area to build internationally influential science and technology innovation centers.

Vice-Minister of Science and Technology Zhang Guangjun said last year that China is eager to continue its cooperation with international organizations such as WIPO to address global challenges by enhancing technological creativity and strengthening the innovation, application, management and protection of IP.

# Sam Hou-fai announces Macao leadership bid

By FANG XUE in Hong Kong  
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Sam Hou-fai, who just resigned from his long-held position as head of Macao's top court, announced his candidacy on Wednesday for special administrative region chief executive, promising to improve governance efficiency and promote economic diversification.

At a news conference, Sam said his decision was driven by a commitment to uphold the "one country, two systems" principle in Macao and ensure the city's stability and prosperity. He also expressed a desire to improve the lives of Macao's residents.

The election for Macao's next chief executive will take place on Oct 13, with the nomination period running from Thursday to Sept 12. Current Chief Executive Ho Iat-seng, who has been in office since 2019, announced last week that he would not seek a second term due to health reasons.

Sam pledged to leverage Macao's strengths under the "one country, two systems" framework and deepen ties with overseas regions, particularly Portuguese-speaking countries. He also vowed to promote economic diversification, using the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin as a key area for developing emerging industries and integrating into the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

He highlighted the need for reforms to enhance governance efficiency and improve the government's decision-making capacity, emphasizing the impor-

ance of civil servants being more community-focused.

"Macao's development faces many challenges amid changing internal and external environments," Sam said. "By running for chief executive, I hope to unite all walks of life in the city to build a more prosperous and harmonious community and contribute to the nation's development."

Born in Guangdong province in 1962, Sam moved to Macao in the 1980s and has worked in the city's judicial sector for nearly 40 years. He was appointed by the central government as president of Macao's Court of Final Appeal in 1999, a position he held until his resignation took effect on Wednesday.

Macao law prohibits current principal officials and members of the judiciary from running for chief executive.

Citing his extensive experience in the city, Sam said he believes he has a deep understanding of the city and is confident he will be recognized as "a native of Macao".

Sam has set up his election office and aims to secure the support of members of the Chief Executive Election Committee during the nomination period. The 400-member committee, which reflects Macao's various sectors, will elect the next chief executive. Candidates must obtain nominations from at least 66 members to be eligible for the leadership race.

Sam has already garnered support from local political and business leaders, including Kou Hoi-in, president of the Legislative Assembly of Macao, and Chui Sai-cheong, president of the Macao Chamber of Commerce.

# Opportunities aplenty



Job seekers look for opportunities at a job fair at the Shanghai World Expo Exhibition and Convention Center on Wednesday. Nearly 500 employers offered over 6,000 jobs.

LIU XIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

# Former top legislator in Shanghai sentenced

Dong Yunhu, a former senior legislator in Shanghai, was sentenced to life imprisonment on Wednesday for receiving bribes.

Dong, former secretary of the leading Party members' group of the Standing Committee of the Shanghai Municipal People's Congress and former chairman of the committee, was also deprived of his political rights for life. His personal property will be confiscated, and his illegal gains from bribes will be turned over to the State treasury, the Hefei Intermediate People's Court in Anhui province said.

The court found that Dong had taken undue advantage of his various posts to provide assistance to various organizations and individuals in matters such as financing and loans, land transfers, business operations and personnel arrangements. In return, he illegally accepted money and valuables worth more than 148 million yuan (\$20.8 million).

The court said Dong had been cooperative in the investigation and in returning the illegal gains, which had been recovered in full. That was taken into consideration when handing down the sentence.

Separately, Du Zhaoai, a former deputy director of the General Administration of Sport and former Party secretary of the Chi-

**148 million yuan**

worth of bribes were accepted by Dong Yunhu, a former senior legislator in Shanghai.

nese Football Association, pleaded guilty at the Wuhan Intermediate People's Court in Hubei province on Wednesday to accepting bribes totaling over 43 million yuan.

Du, 64, admitted to his crimes and made a final statement in court. Sentencing will be announced at a later date, the court said.

Prosecutors accused Du of using his various positions — including as director of the administration's track and field sports management center, member of the administration's leading Party members group, assistant director and deputy director of the administration, and Party secretary and vice-president of the Chinese Football Association — to provide assistance to units and individuals in matters such as event organization, personnel arrangements and player transfers.

In return, Du accepted more than 43.41 million yuan in cash and properties, either directly or through relatives and associates.

Prosecutors called for Du to be

held criminally responsible for his actions. Over 20 people, including national lawmakers, political advisers and journalists, attended the trial.

Du was placed under investigation in April last year, and was expelled from the Communist Party of China, removed from his posts, and arrested in October. His prosecution was initiated in Wuhan in January.

China's anti-corruption efforts in the sports sector have intensified since 2022, starting with an investigation into Li Tie, the former head coach of the Chinese men's soccer team. Several senior officials have since been investigated and sentenced, including Chen Xuyuan, a former CFA president, who was sentenced to life imprisonment in March, and Yu Hongchen, a former president of the Chinese Athletics Association, who received a 13-year prison term the same month.

In the past week, courts in Hubei have sentenced several former soccer officials as part of the ongoing anti-graft campaign in the sports sector. Former CFA vice-chairman Li Yuyi was sentenced to 11 years in prison, and a former head of the CFA's competition department, Huang Song, received a seven-year jail term. The courts also heard cases involving four other former soccer officials, including Liu Yi, a former secretary-general of the CFA, and Tan Hai, a former director of the CFA's referee management department.

CHINA DAILY—XINHUA

# New material for solid lithium batteries

QINGDAO — Chinese researchers have developed a new cathode material that could significantly increase the number of times all-solid-state lithium batteries can be recharged, potentially enhancing their commercial viability.

The study, recently published in the journal Nature Energy, was conducted by a team from the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Qingdao Institute of Bioenergy and Bioprocess Technology in Shandong province.

The team said that all-solid-state lithium batteries, which use solid electrolytes, are less prone to leakage and combustion than conventional liquid lithium-ion batteries, which are widely used in electric vehicles, mobile phones and computers.

Ju Jiangwei, a researcher at the institute and the study's corresponding author, said the new cathode material provides all-solid-state lithium batteries with high conductivity, high specific discharge capacity, minimal volume change, high energy density and an extended cycle life compared to previous versions.

The new cathode material, which has yet to be named, offers significant safety and performance improvements. Ju said it achieves electronic and ionic conductivity more than 1,000 times higher than traditional battery cathode materials, which makes for smooth charge and discharge cycles with-

out the need for conductive additives, simplifying the battery preparation process and enhancing the battery's overall performance.

Ju said the new material's 1.2 percent volume change during charge and discharge is more conducive to maintaining battery stability than traditional materials, which experience a volume change of over 2.6 percent. Even after 5,000 charge and discharge cycles, the new material retains 80 percent of its initial capacity.

The new material also provides a battery energy density of up to 390 watt-hours per kilogram, which is almost a third more than the most advanced lithium-ion batteries currently on the market.

According to the research team, all-solid-state lithium batteries represent a new generation of energy storage technology with significant potential in the power battery market. Their successful commercialization could provide strong momentum for China's new energy automobile industry and low-altitude economy. They can also store electricity generated from wind and solar energy, supporting China's "dual carbon" goals of peaking carbon emissions by 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality by 2060, and promoting a green and low-carbon economic transition.

The researchers initially took inspiration from a 2008 paper by Nobel chemistry laureate John

Bannister Goodenough, which suggested the parent material for the new cathode could have excellent ionic conductivity. Due to its complex elemental composition, the team spent two years synthesizing it.

"Contrary to our expectations, the ionic conductivity of this material is low, while the electronic conductivity is high," Ju said. "We first improved the ionic conductivity by doping it with germanium, then enhanced the electronic conductivity by replacing sulfur with selenium, and finally obtained the new material."

The team also discovered that substituting germanium with more abundant and cheaper silicon could significantly reduce production costs, facilitating the commercialization of all-solid-state lithium batteries.

"We are currently preparing this material in small batches and expect to achieve large-scale production in two to three years," Ju said. "In terms of cost, we hope to develop a new material with less lithium in the future. If successful, the cost of sulfide solid-state lithium batteries could be reduced to 30 percent of that of liquid lithium batteries."

Ju said the research team will also focus on the recycling of all-solid-state lithium batteries in future studies.

XINHUA

# CHINA



From left: A piece of lacquerware unearthed from the Mawangdui tombs in Changsha, Hunan province. A replica of a scroll unearthed at Mawangdui. Visitors view a digital exhibition of the tomb at Hunan Museum in Changsha. A lacquerware vase excavated from the tombs.

By ZOU SHUO in Changsha  
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## Decades of excavation brings Han Dynasty back to life

Mawangdui tombs continue to reveal ancient treasures and precious artifacts

Fifty years after excavations began at the Mawangdui Han Tombs, new technologies such as 5G, artificial intelligence and big data are bringing the ancient society to life and giving people a closer and more immersive interaction with history, archaeological experts said.

Initial excavations at the Mawangdui tombs in Hunan province took place between 1972 and 1974, and represent one of China's most significant archaeological discoveries of the 20th century.

The tombs contain the well-preserved remains of the Marquis Dai's wife, Lady Xin Zhui, who was buried more than 2,000 years ago during the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24).

The tombs have offered up 26,937 artifacts so far, according to Hunan Museum in Changsha.

Unearthed artifacts include Xin Zhui's remains, as well as lacquerware, textiles and bamboo and silk manuscripts.

Of the 1,017 lacquerware pieces recovered, 869 are still intact. Of the textiles — mainly silk and hemp — only 212 of the 24,490 pieces unearthed remain intact. There are also 1,430 bamboo and silk manuscripts items, including silk books and paintings, wooden tablets and bamboo slips, the museum said.

More than 300 experts from home and abroad gathered in Changsha, capital of Hunan, during a recent forum to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the discovery.

A set of books detailing the latest academic findings was published during the forum, and the Mawangdui Research Institute was established. Hunan Museum also signed cooperation agreements with six institutions and universities to better use technology in promoting the culture of Mawangdui.

Mao Weiming, governor of Hunan, said that among the discoveries were the world's oldest existing astronomical map, the world's earliest military map, the earliest silk fabric combining printing and painting, and the lightest, thinnest plain gauze single garment in the world.

Currently, more than 4,000 schol-

ars and experts are studying the Mawangdui Han Tombs, and the cumulative number of visitors exceeds 100 million, with average annual visits of over 4 million in recent years, he said at the opening ceremony of the forum.

The popularity of Mawangdui indicates that people are increasingly impressed by cultural relics, which allow them to better understand and respect history. At the same time, this has promoted the development of archaeology and the popularity of cultural relics and culture, he said.

Li Qun, head of the National Cultural Heritage Administration, said the tombs demonstrate the achievements of the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) in economics, philosophy, culture, art, medicine, and science and technology. It is a treasure of world civilization.

He said that archaeological



The plain gauze single garment unearthed from the Mawangdui Han Tombs in Changsha, Hunan province.  
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

research at the tombs serves as an exemplary model of multidisciplinary collaboration and remains a major academic subject of interest to scholars in China and abroad.

It is important to continue research, focusing primarily on areas such as bamboo and silk manuscripts, philosophy, art and traditional Chinese medicine, to explore historical culture and ancient wisdom, he said.

Duan Xiaoming, head of Hunan Museum, said the museum has completed digitally collecting high-definition information for 948 artifacts, including 285 3D models and 7,779 images. Over the next year, the work of digitally collecting the artifacts will be completed, he said.

Hunan Museum intends to publish a list of books on its findings and to cooperate with universities and research institutions globally,

strengthening digital presentation and promotion, he said.

*The Art of Life: Multimedia Exhibition of Mawangdui Han Culture*, jointly organized by Hunan Museum, the Digital Library of China and Harvard FAS CAMlab in the United States, opened at the museum on June 8 and runs until February.

The exhibition uses technologies such as 3D and other multimedia technologies to give visitors a theatrical and immersive experience of the life of people in the Han Dynasty.

Eugene Y. Wang, an art professor at Harvard University and one of the curators of the exhibition, said the significance of the tombs is not just that they represent social life during the Han Dynasty, but more importantly embody an illusory world that can be showcased through multimedia.

Bringing cultural relics to life showcases the social scene of ancient times and digs deep into the legendary world behind them, he said.

Yu Yanjiao, director and researcher at Hunan Museum's Mawangdui Han Tombs and Collection Research Exhibition Center, said the quantity of unearthed artifacts from the tombs is massive, with a broad interdisciplinary scope.

There are still many unsolved mysteries despite 50 years of excavation, requiring extensive research by scholars through multidisciplinary collaboration and the use of technology, she added.

Liu Zhao, director of the Center for Research on Chinese Excavated Classics and Paleography at Fudan University in Shanghai, said the excavated bamboo and silk manuscripts contain 130,000 characters, and much work remains to explain their artistic value.

"Although 50 years is a long time in a researcher's career, it's a very short time from the perspective of overall academic development," Liu said.

He encouraged researchers from around the world, especially young people, to join the efforts. Liu believes that with continuous and further exploration, coupled with the assistance of new technologies, future studies will yield more results.

## Documentary unfolds valiance of Dongji fishermen

HANGZHOU — After nightfall on Friday, an open-air film was screened amid the sea breeze and the murmur of the waves on Dongji Island of Zhoushan, East China's Zhejiang province.

Traversing time and space, the light and shadow of history were projected onto the screen, gathering a group of dedicated viewers, most of whom are fishermen on the island.

This was the local premiere of the documentary film *The Sinking of the Lisbon Maru*, which tells the story of a lesser-known WWII tragedy involving Japanese fascists and British prisoners of war on the island, where it occurred.

In October 1942, *Lisbon Maru*, a cargo vessel requisitioned by the Japanese army to transport more than 1,800 British POWs from Hong Kong to Japan, was hit by the United States military off the Zhoushan Islands in Zhejiang province. Local fishermen risked their own lives and rescued over 380 POWs.

"Creating this film serves a dual purpose: it's not just about shedding light on this chapter of history to the world, but also about illuminating the heroic deeds of our forebears — the fishermen of Dongji — and inspiring pride in their acts of kindness and bravery," said Fang Li, the film's producer and director.

Fang noted that their story is one of valor and humanity that transcends time, and he hopes the story can resonate with audiences everywhere.

The documentary is entirely based on that real historical event.

In the film, oral recollections of survivors, family members of the POWs, Chinese fishermen and relevant Japanese and American personnel piece together the history. The realistic post production effects starkly present the merciless face of war and the bravery of the fishermen, bringing the dark history to life for all to see.

Though many Dongji fishermen have heard of the incident, they have a vague memory. It was not until the documentary was released that they managed to portray a clear picture. When footage of Dongji fishermen appeared on camera

recounting the scenes of them paddling their boats out to rescue the prisoners, many became profoundly emotional with tears in their eyes.

The film poignantly conveyed the harsh realities of war and the profound impact it has on humanity, serving as a reminder that we must never forget history and should always strive for peace, noted Liang Yindi, a descendant of one of the rescuers.

"Despite the fact that the Dongji fishermen who bravely participated in the rescue mission have now all passed away, their legacy of courage and compassion remains timeless. I

am committed to honoring their spirit and ensuring that the story of the *Lisbon Maru* reaches a wider audience, keeping their memory alive for future generations," Liang stressed.

To bring this film to life, Fang, along with a dedicated film crew, embarked on a transoceanic journey that spanned the UK, Canada, the US and Japan.

They met with eyewitnesses and descendants, gathering and curating an extensive collection of invaluable historical documents and visuals.

Their efforts were aimed at re-

creating the dramatic rescue operation with as much authenticity and respect as possible, ensuring that the narrative is both compelling and true to the events that unfolded.

"We have tracked down over 380 descendants of the survivors, conducting more than 130 in-depth, face-to-face interviews," Fang said.

"Our team has also amassed an extensive archive of historical photographs. It is our ambition to weave these fragments of personal narratives and visual records into a comprehensive tapestry that authentically represents the full scope of history," he added.

Prior to this, the valiant acts of the Dongji fishermen had seldom reached a global audience.

"During my interviews with the descendants of the fishermen, a common refrain was that their forefathers felt they were merely fulfilling their duty when they spoke of the rescue," Fang said.

"Conversely, the descendants of the POWs invariably conveyed deep gratitude and reverence for the Dongji fishermen. These fishermen, with their heroism, bravery and humility, deserve to be honored," he added.

The documentary was pre-screened last year in London, Bournemouth, Edinburgh and several other places in the UK, and will be put on public release in China on Sept 6.

"I'm confident that once this film is aired across the country, it will bring to light the story of this small island and shed light on the events that transpired here 82 years ago," Fang said.

Having been bestowed the title of "Honored Islander" of Dongji, Fang spoke with heartfelt emotion.

"This honor is not just a recognition from the residents of Dongji, but also a profound validation of the film's significance," he said. "I hope the audience will be inspired to visit Dongji more often, to really soak up the local culture and the warmth of its people. I'm sure as they explore, they'll feel the weight of the history that this island holds."



From left: The documentary film *The Sinking of the Lisbon Maru* is pre-screened on Aug 1 last year in London. SUN XIAONA / FOR CHINA DAILY  
Members of the documentary's production team meet the audience after its premiere in Shanghai on June 14. LI ZHENYU / FOR CHINA DAILY

XINHUA

## WORLD



Palestinian boy Abdel-Rahman Abu El-Jedian, who contracted polio a month ago, sleeps as he is surrounded by family members in their displacement tent in Deir al-Balah, central Gaza, on Tuesday. The 10-month-old is the first confirmed case of polio inside Gaza in 25 years, according to the World Health Organization. EYAD BABA / AFP

## Continuing conflict blamed for outbreak of polio

GAZA — Born into the devastating Palestine-Israel conflict, 10-month-old Abdel-Rahman Abu El-Jedian started crawling early. Then one day, he froze, his left leg appeared to be paralyzed.

The baby boy is the first confirmed case of polio inside Gaza in 25 years, the World Health Organization said.

Abdel-Rahman was an energetic baby, said the child's mother, Nevine Abu El-Jedian, fighting back tears. "Suddenly, that was reversed. Suddenly, he stopped crawling, stopped moving, stopped standing up and stopped sitting," she added.

Healthcare workers in Gaza have been warning of the potential for a polio outbreak for months, as the humanitarian crisis unleashed by Israel's military campaign on the strip grows.

Before the conflict, Gaza's children were largely vaccinated against polio, the WHO said.

But Abdel-Rahman was not vaccinated because he was born just before Oct 7, when Hamas militants attacked Israel and Israel launched a retaliatory offensive on Gaza that forced his family to flee. Hospitals came under attack and regular vaccinations for newborns all but stopped.

The WHO said that for every case of paralysis because of polio, there are hundreds more who likely have been infected but are not showing symptoms. Most people who contract the disease do not experience symptoms and those who do usually recover in a week or so. But there is no cure and when polio causes paralysis, it is usually permanent. If the paralysis affects breathing muscles, the disease can be fatal.

The Abu El-Jedian family, like many, now live in a crowded tent camp, near heaps of garbage and dirty wastewater flowing into the streets that aid workers describe as

breeding grounds for diseases such as polio.

The family of 10 left their home in the northern Gaza town of Beit Lahiya, moving from shelter to shelter until finally settling in a tent in the central city of Deir al-Balah.

"My son was not vaccinated because of the continued displacement," his mother said. "We are sheltering here in the tent in such health conditions where there is no medication, no capabilities, no supplements."

In order to vaccinate most of Gaza's children under the age of 10, UNICEF spokesperson Ammar Ammar said a cease-fire is necessary. The health agencies seek a pause in the fighting, which in recent days has sent thousands of Palestinian families fleeing under successive Israeli evacuation orders.

However, Israeli forces sent tanks deeper into Khan Younis in the

southern Gaza Strip on Wednesday and launched strikes across the enclave, killing at least 34 Palestinians, according to medics.

Meanwhile, the Israeli military said on Tuesday that forces had found a hostage, 52-year-old Kaid Farhan Alkadi, in a tunnel in southern Gaza "when he was alone," despite a previous assessment that militants "and explosives" were there.

He is one of 251 people abducted by Palestinian militants during the Oct 7 attack on southern Israel, 104 of whom are still captive in Gaza, including 34 the military says are dead.

At Israel's Soroka Medical Center where Alkadi was taken to, hospital director Shlomi Kodess told Agence France-Presse he "appears to be in good condition".

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## Iran warns of 'unpredictable' retaliation

Response vowed against Israel for killing Hamas leader in violation of sovereignty

By MIKE GU and JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong

Iran says its potential retaliation against Israel for the killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh will be "unpredictable", while an analyst points to varied actions.

"For the time being, (Israel) must remain in a state of anxiety and panic as it awaits our revenge, but what is certain is that the response will be unpredictable," Iran's Deputy Defense Minister Seyed Hojatollah Ghoreishi was quoted by Iran's Tasnim News Agency as saying on Tuesday.

Reacting to the killing of Haniyeh on July 31 in Teheran, high-ranking Iranian officials have vowed to give a strong response, with Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei saying that Israel has prepared the ground for harsh punishment for itself through the assassination, Mehr News Agency reported.

On Tuesday, in a video broadcast on state television, Khamenei indicated that there was "no barrier" to discussions with the "enemy", possibly about civil use of nuclear energy and economic sanctions.

It is the US administration led by Donald Trump that pulled out of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which was signed in July 2015 and limits Iran's nuclear development.

The United States also reintroduced more sanctions against Iran. Such sanctions, among others, have made it difficult for Iran to purchase medicine and health supplies from abroad, including COVID-19 vaccines.

White House national security spokesman John Kirby said on Tuesday the US remains committed to defending Israel in the event of a possible Iranian attack.

Kirby told Israel's Channel 12 that it was tough to predict the chances of an attack but the White House takes Iran rhetorically seriously.

"We believe that they are still positioned and poised to launch an attack should they want to do that,

which is why we have that enhanced force posture in the region," he said.

"Our messaging to Iran is consistent, has been and will stay consistent. One, don't do it. There's no reason to escalate this. There's no reason to potentially start some sort of all-out regional war. And number two, we are going to be prepared to defend Israel if it comes to that."

Some other US officials are also constantly issuing statements about potential retaliatory strikes on Israeli targets over the violation of Iranian sovereignty.

Patrick Ryder, spokesman for the US Department of Defense, said on Monday that the Pentagon continues to assess that there is a threat of attack by Iran and resistance groups against Israel.

## Possible actions

Nagapushpa Devendra, a West Asia analyst and research scholar at the University of Erfurt in Germany, told China Daily that Iran may undertake "direct but more indirect" retaliatory actions against Israel.

Iran's actions may include supporting or encouraging proxy groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon or other military forces in the region to launch attack on Israeli targets, Devendra said. Iran might also engage in cyber operations or other asymmetric tactics in response to the killing of Haniyeh, she said.

Regarding the reason for Iran's potential actions, she said: "Under the leadership of Iran's newly elected president, Iran is attempting to regain its security influence and capabilities that were undermined by sanctions imposed by the US. Given this scenario, it is likely that Iran's response may also be a way to assert its position as a key player in regional politics."

Agencies contributed to this story.

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## Envoy: 'No reason' for 'zero-sum' US-China ties

By YIFAN XU in Washington [yifanxu@chinadailyusa.com](mailto:yifanxu@chinadailyusa.com)

China's ambassador to the United States said that "China's journey of reform and opening-up will never stop", which means "opportunity, opportunity and opportunity" for the US and the world.

Ambassador Xie Feng also said that "cooperation is the only right choice" for China and the US.

"Not long ago, the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China held its third plenary session, which made systematic planning for further deepening reform comprehensively to advance Chinese modernization," Xie said.

"A new milestone in China's reform and opening-up, the meeting is also a gateway for the world to understand China," Xie said in the keynote speech via video at the sixth US-China Business Forum held by Forbes China on Tuesday in New York.

"It will both shape China's future trajectory and influence the world in a significant way," he said.

Xie said that with greater depth of reform will come new opportunities for growth; with higher-standard

opening-up will come new market opportunities; and with higher-quality development will come new opportunities for cooperation.

He said that in the first half of this year, China's GDP grew 5 percent compared with last year, outperforming many other major economies. "This shows its resilience."

"Opening-up is a defining feature of Chinese modernization," Xie said, and China is aiming "to make the pie bigger and the list of cooperation longer, so as to deliver win-win outcomes for all", which means "we will open up more doors" and "we will break down more barriers."

Xie said that high-quality development is the "primary task" in building China into a modern socialist country.

The newly launched Chinese video game *Black Myth: Wukong* is an example, he said, saying it "has recently become a global hit".

"Within just one hour of its launch, its concurrent player count hit 1 million, and its collaboration merch quickly sold out," he said. "So you can see the huge consumption potential in the debut economy and also the magic of integrating traditional

culture with modern technology."

More than 120 people attended the forum, including US-China Business Council President Craig Allen; National Committee on US-China Relations President Stephen Orlins; the chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai, Sean Stein; and Hu Wei, the chairman of the China General Chamber of Commerce.

In his remarks, Xie also said that "scapegoating solves no problem, and trade war, industrial war or tech war produces no winner" when there are new circumstances and challenges.

"A major inspiration we can get from China-US relations over the past 45 years is that when we work together, both countries and peoples will fare well; but when we turn against each other, both sides and the world will suffer. Cooperation is the only right choice," he said.

Xie said that China and the US need to "both expand cooperation in traditional areas including economy, trade and agriculture, and nurture cooperation in new areas such as climate change and AI, so that both our countries and the world will come out as winners".

He said that "there is simply no reason" why the China-US relationship should be a zero-sum game.

"Tesla's Gigafactory Shanghai can now produce more than 950,000 vehicles per year, and its megapack factory there is nearly half complete just three months after construction started. Apple is ramping up its investment in China, expanding its applied research center in Shanghai and opening a new lab in Shenzhen," Xie said. "All these are evidence of the vigor of China-US business cooperation."

"Our two countries can help each other succeed in a race to the top, and both develop ourselves and prosper together on this vast planet," Xie said.

The ambassador noted that President Xi Jinping outlined three principles for the bilateral relationship: mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation.

"We are ready to work with the United States in that spirit, enhance dialogue and communication, properly manage differences, and expand mutually beneficial cooperation, so as to stabilize and improve the relationship and take it forward," Xie concluded.

## Zheng overcomes second tough start at US Open

By HENG WEILI in New York [hengweili@chinadailyusa.com](mailto:hengweili@chinadailyusa.com)

Another challenging start at the US Open? No problem for China's Zheng Qinwen.

For the second time in her two matches at the Grand Slam tennis tournament, Zheng dropped the first set before rallying to victory.

She defeated Erika Andreeva of Russia, 6-7 (3-7), 6-1, 6-2 on Wednesday on the strength of a powerful service game.

Zheng, 21, who won the gold medal in women's singles at this summer's Paris Olympics, unleashed a stunning 20 aces in the match, which was played in

sweltering temperatures at Louis Armstrong Stadium in Flushing Meadows, Queens, New York. Her opponent managed to put up only two aces.

Zheng's 82 percent first-serve win percentage was a key factor to her advancing to the third round. She also produced five winners on returns.

Andreeva had already defeated Yuan Yue of China and was looking to reach the third round at the US Open for the first time.

Andreeva's younger sister, Mirra, 17, is a rising star in the tennis world and has already advanced to the round of 64 at the US Open. Despite Andreeva taking an early

lead and then clinching the tie-break in the first set, Zheng, the world's seventh-ranked woman's player, fought back with her solid first serve.

"I started the match quite slow. Little by little, I started to feel better in the reaction, in my serve," said Zheng, who was runner-up at another Grand Slam tournament, the Australian Open, earlier this year.

"Honestly, today, I know (how) I entered the match wasn't the way I wanted, but I'm glad I still fought until the end. I didn't give up because she got a lot of chances in the second set."

Zheng lost the first two games of

the opening set, and although she rebounded with a service break of her own, she was always playing catch-up in the first set.

Down 6-5, China's top-ranked player served well to force a tie-break, but a third double fault in the set gave Andreeva the upper hand. The 20-year-old Russian sealed the set when Zheng's backhand went wide.

Zheng gained momentum in the second set. With the score tied 1-1, she won five games in a row with a superb first serve, while Andreeva made several errors.

Andreeva's struggles continued into the third set where one of her powerful returns went wide and

was caught by a spectator behind the chair umpire.

Zheng, meanwhile, began dealing winners and aces. She wrapped up the match with two aces and will face Germany's Jule Niemeier next.

"When I lost the first set, and after I see the crowd supporting me, I say to myself, 'Let's keep fighting, even if it's a difficult day,'" Zheng said. "I want to say thanks to the crowd who supported me today; that was an amazing atmosphere."

In the first round on Monday, Zheng defeated Amanda Anisimova of the United States in three sets, 4-6, 6-4, 6-2.

After her victory that day, Zheng was asked in an on-court interview about the Olympic gold medal, China's first in tennis.

She replied that she didn't have her medal with her, before mentioning tennis great Novak Djokovic of Serbia, whom she has expressed admiration of before and who won the gold medal in men's singles at the Paris Games.

Djokovic, 37, is also competing in the US Open, which he won last year. He is looking to win his 25th major tournament; he already holds the men's record for the most majors with 24.

He had planned to bring the gold medal with him to New York, but couldn't find it, as his children played a prank on him and hid it.

"I forgot it because my kids hid it somewhere," he told Forbes. "So, then I was panicking because I had to take it."

Agencies contributed to this story.

# ACROSS ASIA

Editor's note:

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

In Malaysian state Sabah, the success of environmental efforts has facilitated the planting of thousands of trees and the green rehabilitation of 5,400 hectares, part of a broader initiative targeting more than 11,600 hectares of degraded forest, thus establishing a critical sanctuary that now supports nearly 400 orangutans.

Sabah is in the northern part of Borneo, which is the only island of its kind that covers three countries: Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia.

It is one of the two Malaysian northern Borneo states, with the other being Sarawak. Sabah was part of the British protectorate of North Borneo until 1963.

Mountainous and jungle-covered, with astounding flora and fauna, Sabah's nickname — the land below the wind — stems from its location: just south of the typhoon belt, in the equatorial doldrums. There are about 11,000 orangutans in Sabah.

The world's largest arboreal animals are thriving in Sabah's Bukit Piton Forest Reserve, thanks to concerted efforts to conserve the great ape's habitat between government agencies and the private sector.

Sabah Wildlife Department's Deputy Director Roland Oliver Niun said conservation efforts supported by organizations like Yayasan Sime Darby, or YSD, at the forest reserve in the Lahad Datu District have significantly increased the usable habitat for orangutans.

He said habitat restoration has been supported through the planting of native tree species, adding it has also accelerated natural forest recovery.

"Now, there is evidence that orangutans are able to travel through, find shelter, and access food resources in areas previously inaccessible to them," he said during the International Orangutan Day 2024 event in Sandakan, Sabah, on Aug 19.

The green measures have effectively contributed to Sabah's achievement of having 80 percent of its orangutans thriving in protected forests, Niun said.

"They make use of these newly restored forests, thus avoiding negative interactions and the need for translocations," he said.

"With YSD's ongoing support, we will continue to build on these successes and collaboratively address the remaining challenges to ensure the protection of orangutans throughout the region," Niun said.

He was speaking during the Sandakan event that was held in collaboration with the Sabah Forestry Department and the Sabah Wildlife Department at the Rainforest Discovery Centre.

This year's in-person event, the first following a virtual celebration in 2021, commemorates 15 years of



Orangutan conservation in Malaysia's Sabah bears fruit

An orangutan and her baby spend time together at an orangutan rehabilitation in Sabah, Malaysia, on Aug 21. PHOTOS BY WILL HALL / SOLENT NEWS

## Climbing green heights



An orangutan with her offspring at an orangutan rehabilitation center in Sabah on Aug 21.

The successful rehabilitation of the Bukit Piton Forest Reserve has revitalized critical habitats for orangutans and engaged local communities in meaningful ways."

Datuk Frederick Kugan, Sabah's chief conservator of forests

YSD's commitment to orangutan conservation.

It spotlights the foundation's decade-long 25 million ringgit (\$5.75 million) initiative in the Bukit Piton Forest Reserve, formerly known as the Northern Ulu Segama Forest Reserve, a key effort in Sabah's conservation landscape.

The celebration also marks the continuation of YSD's work with the

Human-Orangutan Coexistence Project, now progressing into its second phase with the South East Asia Rainforest Research Partnership.

The project illustrates the importance of multi-sector collaboration for effective orangutan conservation in Sabah.

Sabah's chief conservator of forests, Datuk Frederick Kugan, said a 10-year partnership with SD Guthrie



A young orangutan hangs out at an orangutan rehabilitation center in Sabah on Aug 21.

and YSD has significantly advanced the forestry department's forest conservation technical expertise.

This is, he said, while rehabilitating highly degraded forest which is an important orangutan habitat area in Sabah.

"The successful rehabilitation of the Bukit Piton Forest Reserve has revitalized critical habitats for orangutans and engaged local communities in meaningful ways.

"This initiative is a prime example of how collaborative efforts lead to real change," Kugan said.

"As stewards of Sabah's natural heritage, our focus remains on applying what we have learned to expand forest conservation across Sabah, safeguarding biodiversity, and enhancing the ecological services that benefit all of Sabah."

Building on over a decade of efforts, YSD's support was instrumental in the reclassification of the Northern Ulu Segama Forest Reserve as a Class 1 Protection Forest Reserve in 2012.

This was a milestone achieved in coordination with the forestry department, permanently safeguarding the area from logging and ensuring a fully protected habitat for orangutans.

The success has meant thousands of trees planted and 5,400 hectares rehabilitated, part of a broader initiative targeting 11,612 hectares of degraded forest to help provide a major sanctuary for nearly 400 orangutans.

The Human-Orangutan Coexistence Project supported by YSD is under the leadership of Felicity Oram, who brings a wealth of experience in orangutan conservation.

The project also emphasizes the capacity building of local researchers, offering scholarships, comprehensive training and exposure to ensure sustainable orangutan conservation practices.

The second phase of the project will extend scientific monitoring of orangutans across an additional 10,000 hectares while maintaining the existing monitoring network of 30,000 hectares established in the first phase.

YSD's chief executive officer, Yatela Zainal Abidin, said it was heartwarming to see orangutan nests in the thriving trees they planted together in Bukit Piton.

At the same time, she added that best management practices were adopted in plantation estates, fostering harmony with orangutans.

"I am proud of the orangutan conservation strides we have made since 2010 with various stakeholders in Sabah ... Our efforts have rehabilitated highly degraded natural habitats, and we are now focusing on human orangutan coexistence management," she said.

THE STAR

## Couples welcome more shared leave in Singapore

Software engineer Wilson Quah, 39, and his wife, 35, are planning to start a family but wanted to hit certain life milestones first.

After moving into their flat in August last year and becoming more established in their careers, the couple finally feel the time is right.

"We're not getting any younger," Quah said.

News that parents will get an extra 10 weeks of shared leave and that full-day childcare fees at government-supported preschools will go down has made the couple more certain about their decision. Both changes were announced on Aug 18 during Singaporean Prime Minister Lawrence Wong's first National Day Rally speech.

Quah said he is cognizant of the time and attention that babies need, and does not want to outsource too much care to a helper in the future. More leave will make it easier for him and his wife, who is also working full-time in human resources, to care for their future child without having to think about work.

"There're always disruptions, taking care of an infant 24 hours a day. They might wake up, you don't get enough sleep, and then you cannot perform well in the office," he said. "We will take whatever (leave) we need to."

With the changes, parents-to-be will get another 10 weeks of shared leave on top of their current leave entitlement, bringing the total amount of government-paid parental leave to 30 weeks.

The two extra weeks of voluntary

This adds to the confidence that the system supports their childbearing decisions."

Mathew Mathews, principal research fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies

paternity leave will be made mandatory from April 1, 2025, meaning that employers must grant such leave applications.

To give employers time to adjust, changes to the shared parental leave scheme will be made in two phases, starting with six weeks of shared leave from April 1, 2025, then the full 10 weeks from April 1, 2026.

While surveys show that most young Singaporeans want to marry and have children, they also have competing aspirations and life goals, Wong said in his speech.

Quah agreed with this assessment, adding that young Singaporean couples typically do not want to settle down immediately.

"You want to have some career advancement first, work for a few years, maybe five to eight years, then also get your own house. Then you can start to think ahead ... It's quite a big jump to start a family in Singapore."

Analysts said the move will help parents reconcile family aspirations with the demands of work, making them feel more supported.

The changes show that "it is possible to reconcile family aspirations with a very demanding workforce", said Mathew Mathews, principal research fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies. The extra 10 weeks will be a "sweetener" to nudge those open to having children into doing so, he said.

"Essentially, what these policies signal is that the government is requiring workplaces to make adjustments to allow both (mother and father) to take time out to pursue those family aspirations.

"This adds to the confidence that the system supports their childbearing decisions."

He added that the decision to make paternity leave mandatory similarly signals that it is expected of men to take time to be with their families when a baby is born.

New father Toh Zhi Han, 37, was the first in his company to make use of the voluntary two-week paternity leave when his first child was born in May.

But the client adviser understands why not all fathers may be willing to do so. For instance, there is the fear of being a burden to colleagues and of one's career progression being hindered as a result, he said.

When he was on paternity leave, his colleagues had to take on extra work and clients still reached out to him at times. "You can go on leave, but the work will not disappear," he said.

Toh and his wife Eunice, who had already been considering a second child, feel more certain with the new shared parental leave scheme.

"It gives me more confidence that having a second one will be easier, because there's actually more time off from work to take care of my child, and with all these additional responsibilities, I can actually have more time at home to settle down," he said.

THE STRAITS TIMES

## Dishes give those in need less to chew on

Dishes aimed at bringing the pleasure of tasty food to those who have problems chewing and swallowing are gaining popularity.

"Inclusive food" dishes are intended for everyone — even those who can eat without problems — who want to enjoy tasty food.

Some of the dishes are designed to look and taste like regular foods — one dish that on first glance looks like a whole apple is actually an apple-flavored jelly covered in a cheese-based mousse and coated with a berry sauce. The dessert is so soft that it can be swallowed without biting.

Pastry chef Kayo Shimizu, 45, created the dish last autumn after speaking with parents of children who have difficulty chewing and swallowing. She decided to develop a dessert that would have a pleasant texture when eaten.

The chef has offered such "inclusive food" before as part of a project in collaboration with the Tokyo metropolitan government. She plans to open a cafe and offer

the dessert as a menu item.

"I want to create food that smells, feels and looks good for people who have difficulty eating," Shimizu said.

Inclusive food is based on the idea that sharing the joy of eating regardless of disability is an important experience. It is prepared so that everyone can start eating at the same time, with extra preparation, such as crushing the food with a blender, not required.

Haruka Tohara, a professor at Tokyo Medical and Dental University, said, "With a wider choice of meals, people with swallowing and chewing problems will enjoy eating more and these people and their families will be motivated to live more positively."

"If more restaurants are cooperative ... it will make it easier for these people to go out despite their disabilities, and it will contribute to a more inclusive society," Tohara said.

Some restaurants have started to offer menu items that are edible to everyone, including people who find it difficult to chew and swallow.

Soup Stock Tokyo's Lumine Tachikawa outlet in Tachikawa, Tokyo, has eight items on its soup menu that take into account people who have difficulty chewing.

Sakura Kato, 43, a representative of "mogmog engine", a general incorporated association formed by parents of children who need help when eating, is grateful for the move of inclusive food. Her second daughter Mako, 14, has muscular dystrophy, an intractable disease that causes muscle weakness throughout the body.

Kato said that her daughter loves eating. "Even though she cannot communicate well with words, I can tell when she is enjoying the taste of food as she eats faster than usual," Kato said.

"I hope that everyone in the same room will be able to start eating the same meal after saying *itadakimasu* (a phrase used to express thanks for the food)," Kato said.

THE JAPAN NEWS

## Divinity in motion

People on the streets carry an idol of elephant-headed Ganesha, the Hindu god of wisdom and prosperity, ahead of the Ganesh Chaturthi festival, in Mumbai on Aug 25. This year's 10-day nationwide festival in India is to begin on Sept 7.



ASHISH VAISHNAV / NEWSCOM

一城 CITY TALES 一街

Editor's note: An array of Chinese cities have maintained their cultural memories in the form of historical neighborhoods that have only added to their multilayered charm and vigor with the passage of time. China Daily is taking readers on a journey to some of these timeless areas, where President Xi Jinping has left his footsteps and remarked on the preservation and vitalization of heritage. In this installment, we walk through Chaozhou's Taiping Road historical area in Guangdong province and see how the commemorative arches lining the street act as repositories of city's emphasis on education.

# TRADITION BEATS ON TAIPING ROAD

Ancient stone commemorative arches are a daily reminder of community's pride in its academic prowess over generations, **Wang Ru** reports in Chaozhou, Guangdong.

A bird's-eye view of Chaozhou ancient city, with the Guangli Gate Tower facing the pontoon Guangli Bridge across the Hanjiang River. LIN WENQIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

The old buildings, intricate stone carvings and beautiful calligraphy found along Paifang Street in Chaozhou, Guangdong province, create an amazing corridor of art. Paifang refers to commemorative arches, and these structures, reminiscent of the legends of the Chaoshan region (which includes Chaozhou, Shantou and Jieyang), are silent witnesses to the fact that flesh may wither, but memory endures.

The street, which is also known as Taiping Road, has been one of Chaozhou's main thoroughfares for a very long time, and traces of the past, tangible and intangible, continue to thrive.

Covering the street and a small area of nearby alleys, the Taiping Road historical area is one of four blocks in the ancient layout, which is located in the western part of modern Chaozhou, a coastal city on the South China Sea.

An alley links Paifang Street with the Guangli Gate Tower, an ancient city gate, and Guangli Bridge, an old pontoon bridge dating to the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279). All are landmarks of the city that tourists try not to miss.

The street is lined with *qilou* (arcade buildings) dating back to the early 20th century, and 23 layered *paifang*. Although the existing *paifang* were restored between 2006 and 2009, they can still evoke memories of ancient Chaozhou glory in the *keju*, or imperial exams.

Chen Xianwu, a 53-year-old scholar of the city's history and culture, says the *paifang* were all built to commemorate successful candidates who got excellent results in the imperial exams in Chaozhou prefecture, which covered today's Chaoshan area during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties.

"Judging from historical literature, Chaozhou prefecture had 330 *paifang*... The Taiping Road which extended 1.74 kilometers used to have 43, and people could see one every 40 meters," says Chen.

He says that the most symbolic among them is called Zhuangyuan Fang, and was erected in memory of Lin Daqin (1511-45), who achieved the highest scores in a final *keju* exam in the mid-Ming Dynasty period. *Zhuangyuan* was the name given to the top tier of imperial exam candidates, with the overall winner being called *jinshi*.

"Historical records show that Lin became the top candidate at just 22, a very young age. In comparison, another of the *paifang* on the street was put up to commemorate Qing Dynasty official Liu Qizhen (1648-1721), who became *jinshi* at the age of 87. This demonstrates Lin's ability," he says.

Chen says that Zhuangyuan Fang has a horizontal beam weighing 12 metric tons, which is placed on top of two pillars to symbolize that these people were vital to the country, and says the beam was lifted into place by a machine invented during the Ming period, which was similar to a crane.

As a result, the arches on the street symbolize good students, and have helped motivate people to study diligently since ancient times. "An elderly man once told me when he was young, his grandmother brought him to the street and told him to study hard so that one day he could have his own *paifang* here. With these role models, how could students not study hard?" says Chen.

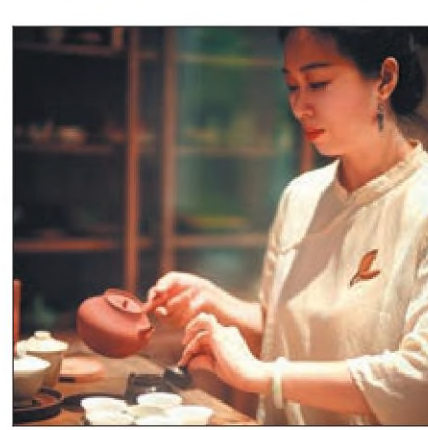
"This story also reflects the significance of Paifang Street today — it's not just a tourist street, but serves as a bridge connecting our modern world with the traditional culture of the past," he adds.

The erecting of so many *paifang* indicates the local emphasis on education and culture, which is believed to have started with Han Yu, a Tang Dynasty (618-907) politician and man of letters who was banished from the court to Chaozhou, and greatly contributed to the area during his eight months of service.

One of Han's most significant contributions was to promote local education and reestablish a government-sponsored educational institution that had fallen into disuse. He also placed local people in charge of the institution, and donated his own savings to improve its facilities.



Clockwise from top: Commemorative arch Zhuangyuan Fang decorates Paifang Street in Chaozhou, Guangdong province. A night view of Paifang Street. Long Sufang displays her skills of Chaozhou *gongfu* tea. Chen Jia works on a wood carving. Three wood carvings on the beams of the Jilue Huanggong Ancestral Temple in the city. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



"To the celestial court a proposal was made, and I am banished 8,000 miles away to Chaozhou." This verse, written by Han, is meant to suggest the great distance, literal and metaphorical, between Chaozhou and the Central Plains, which was the cultural hub at the time. Consequently, it was difficult to bring Central Plains culture to Chaozhou. ... But the arrival of Han, a representative of the culture of the Central Plains, and especially of orthodox Confucian culture, helped integrate Central Plains and Chaozhou culture. ... Since then, Chaozhou has been influenced by Confucian culture as well," says Chen.

In October 2020, President Xi Jinping visited Chaozhou and learned about the restoration and protection of the city's historical areas as he walked along Paifang Street, urging greater effort to protect cultural heritage.

The many studios lining the street are a showcase of local crafts. Chen says that historically, due to the lack of farmland in the area, people turned to making handicrafts that could be sold to Southeast Asia to make a living.

To make their work competitive, they devoted great effort to perfecting their work. One symbolic local craft is wood carving. Chen Jia, an inheritor of the craft, who has a studio on Paifang Street, says it used to decorate beams in traditional Chaozhou homes.

The Jilue Huanggong Ancestral Temple, a Qing Dynasty building in the ancient city, still contains outstanding examples of Chaozhou wood carvings, says Chen Xianwu.

Chen Jia says the decorative baskets, which are carved out of a single block of wood, and traditionally covered in carvings of lobsters and crabs, are quite demanding to make, as the carver has to picture the finished piece before deciding where to start carving.

"As we carve the basket, we have to insert the knife into the spaces between the latticework to hollow out the inside of the basket and carve little crabs and lobsters inside. We often find it difficult to manipulate the blade, because the small size of the holes hinders us from freely using it," says Chen Jia.

"The finished item is visible in a series of clear layers that demonstrate the intricate craftsmanship involved in its creation," she adds.

A similar degree of meticulousness can also be seen in Chaozhou embroidery. When Kang Huifang, a national-level inheritor of the craft, made the *Golden Arowana*, she used silk threads in 18 colors to embroider the eye of the fish, so that it had a vivid expression just like a real fish.

Kang says she has had her studio on the street for 16 years because it has a long history and strong cultural associations. As a result, she believes more visitors are attracted to the street and to her studio, allowing her to better promote her craft.

Home to several ancient wells and modern tea-houses, the street also demonstrates the local culture of drinking tea.

Long Sufang, who runs a tea-house on Paifang Street, is an inheritor of Chaozhou *gongfu* tea, a traditional ceremony that demonstrates *gongfu*, or skill, of Chaozhou people at making a good cup of tea.

The craft was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2022.

"The ceremony has many detailed requirements for preparing, brewing and serving tea. The atmosphere, including the fragrance of the room and music, is also important. It is about Chaozhou aesthetics," says Long.

Here, *gongfu* tea has become a way of social intercourse. "In Chaozhou, a special bond forms once people have enjoyed a cup of *gongfu* tea together. This helps enhance solidarity and has become an important part of Chaozhou culture," says Long.

Yang Lurong and Kong Wenzheng contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at wangru@chinadaily.com.cn



Chaozhou embroidery inheritor Kang Huifang's works (from top): Plum Blossom, Orchid, Bamboo and Chrysanthemum; Golden Arowana; Good Luck and Eternal Happiness; Suzhao Qinggong, a decoration for auspiciousness, and Tigers. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Sensitive restoration means old is new as residents enjoy streets of charm

By WANG RU in Chaozhou, Guangdong, and LI WENFANG in Guangzhou weangru@chinadaily.com.cn

Traditional and modern elements combine beautifully in the ancient city of Chaozhou in Guangdong province, especially along its famous Paifang Street. The residents of the Taiping Road historical area, which includes Paifang Street, cherish its memory, while welcoming the interest of the hordes of visitors attracted by its distinctive culture.

According to Chen Xiyang, head of the department of ancient city protection and development of Chaozhou's culture, radio, television, tourism and sports bureau, there are more than 50,000 residents still living in the old city, which is very much alive, bustling with the energy and activity of everyday life.

Chen believes that besides the deep affection residents have for their historical neighborhood, the primary reason they continue to live there is that the infrastructure and supporting facilities have been improved for their convenience.

"For example, we have restored the facades of residential buildings, paved the roads, improved drainage facilities, and upgraded underground pipelines of all kinds," says Chen.

He adds a cautious approach to restoration has been taken, and even the repair of a single wall can require the input of experts. As a result, they have adopted different methods of restoration for different walls to retain the features of each.

Thanks to these efforts, former residents have remained, enabling the block to retain its soul. "On the main street we can see flourishing commercial activities and the development of tourism. And when we walk around the back alleys, we see residents living and working in peace and satisfaction. This balance between residents and visitors is what we have been working for," says Chen.

Huang Lisheng, a 73-year-old resident whose family has lived in the area since the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), is among them. Growing up, he watched his father and grandfather sell homemade shoes on Paifang Street, and has seen the area's development from uneven ground to paved stone roads.

He has worked as a volunteer in the area for the last 12 years, monitoring sanitation and public security at primary and secondary schools and helping direct traffic.

He says that after he retired, he was bored staying at home, and finds it more meaningful to be of use to people in the area.

"I walk back and forth along the street nearly 20 times on average every day," he says. "Every time people have a problem to solve, they contact me."

Ding Shouyi, director of the Beijing branch of the Guangzhou Urban Planning and Research Institute, says that retaining the block's residents was part of the city's original plan for its development.

In 1992, Chaozhou proposed protecting its ancient city without large-scale demolition or reconstruction.

A new city was built to the west, which is 10 times the size of the historical city, and took over many of its functions instead of upgrading the old city itself, which would have necessitated the removal of historical buildings. Ding says this is why it remains intact today.

He makes a point of highlighting the upgrades that have enabled the historical area to cater to modern needs.

"We encourage the proper innovation of historical areas. Protection is not solely focused on keeping all the original features, as is the case with artifacts. Instead, we regard historical areas and buildings as living heritage, and support protection through use," says Ding.

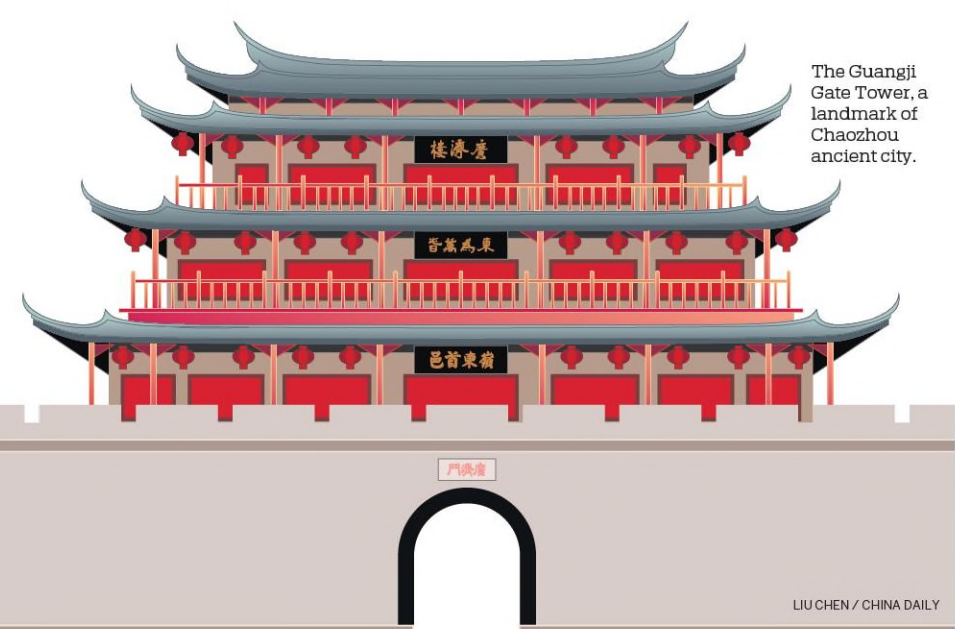
Consequently, he says that commercial activities are not designated by the government or by urban planners, but grow out of the needs of daily life.

For example, there are many stalls selling herbal tea. That's because the area's humidity has led to the local habit of drinking tea to dispel dampness and prevent lethargy, even though many tourists may find themselves not used to the taste.

"If we tried to designate the commercial activities along the street, we probably would not allow so many herbal tea stalls, as they do not attract tourists. Instead, we might open more fast food chains. But since the block is primarily a community for local people, rather than a tourist attraction, the stalls remain as part of the area's vibrant culture," says Ding.

"Our experience in recent years has demonstrated that with the appropriate architectural design and improvements to facilities, the quality of life in old houses and neighborhoods is no worse than that in apartments in new residential areas," he adds.

Xing Yu contributed to this story.



The Guangli Gate Tower, a landmark of Chaozhou ancient city.

LIU CHEN / CHINA DAILY

## CULTURE



US composer Kevin Puts is given the 1573 International Award for Best Composer this year. He will be in Shanghai to accept the award on Sept 18. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



## Making *Contact* wins US composer 1573 award

A concert of his music and lectures to be given in Shanghai and Beijing after the ceremony, **Chen Nan** reports.

In a world where artistic boundaries often reflect cultural divides, an unexpected connection between two composers from different corners of the world has been created.

In 2023, as renowned composer Guo Wenjing was watching the 65th Grammy Awards ceremony, he learned of Kevin Puts, and the US composer's triple concerto *Contact*, written for string trio Time for Three. The concerto, which had just won the Grammy Award for Best Contemporary Classical Composition, featured on a Deutsche Grammophon recording by the trio, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and Chinese-American conductor Xian Zhan, *Letters for the Future*.

Guo also learned that the collaborative process between Puts and Time for Three deepened during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the poignant exploration of human connection and longing that resulted resonated with newfound significance in a world then marked by isolation and a yearning for contact.

"Before that, I had never heard his music. When I listened to *Contact*, I was very touched and impressed by his storytelling instinct, which made contemporary music accessible to a wider audience," says the 68-year-old, who is known for his contributions to contemporary Chinese music, and for having composed concertos and operas for both

Western and Chinese instruments.

In a moment of cross-cultural recognition, Guo, who is the chairman of the jury of 1573 International Award for Best Composer, recommended Puts submit a piece to the competition organizers. The jury then decided to award Puts with the top prize and invite him to China.

The 1573 International Award for Best Composer was launched last year and the winners so far have been Hugues Dufourt from France and Chen Qigang from China. The jury is entirely composed of musicians, including Chinese conductor Zhang Yi and composer Hao Weiya. The award is part of the International Festival of Poetry & Liquor, which was started by well-known Chinese poet Jidi Majia in 2017.

"This award highlights Puts' ability to blend modern compositional techniques with elements that resonate with wider audiences, bridging a gap between the often abstract world of contemporary music and the traditional appeal of classical forms," says Guo. "For years, I have noticed that the audience feels a distance from contemporary music. It's not their fault. Composers should place more value on melodic clarity and structural elegance, which contrast with the dense, and sometimes obscure nature of much contemporary work."

On Sept 18, Puts will be in Shanghai to

accept the award and will attend a concert of his music by the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Yang Yang. He will also give lectures at both the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing.

Puts has chosen three pieces, including his debut opera, *Silent Night*, which won him the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for Music, and a short piece, *Virelai*, based on a melody written by the 14th-century French composer and poet Guillaume de Machaut.

"I have never worked with an orchestra in China and this is very exciting for me," he says. "Of course, with any orchestra, there is always a bit of time necessary to get used to my language as a composer. But my music is inspired by the great work of the past, so I hope the musicians find their parts playable, idiomatic, and satisfying, even when it's challenging."

The composer says that his wife, Lisa GiHae Kim, a violinist in the New York Philharmonic, toured eight cities in China, including Beijing, in 2018. He and their young son accompanied her. "It was a fascinating trip and I was eager to return," he says.

Born in 1972 in St Louis, Missouri, Puts has established himself as one of America's leading composers, gaining international acclaim.

Winner of numerous prestigious awards, he has had work commissioned,

performed and recorded by leading ensembles, and soloists around the world, including Yo-Yo Ma, Renee Fleming, Jeffrey Kahane, Dame Evelyn Glennie, the New York Philharmonic, the Tonhalle-Orchester Zurich, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Miro Quartet, and the symphony orchestras of Baltimore, Cincinnati, Detroit, Atlanta, Colorado, Houston, Fort Worth, St Louis and Minnesota.

As a child, Puts enjoyed all kinds of orchestral music, which he listened to at home with his parents, ranging from Beethoven, to Bernstein, to music he heard at the cinema. One of his favorites was a piece written by John Williams. His journey into the world of composition began at the Eastman School of Music, where he earned both his bachelor's and master's degrees.

"It's a composer's job to master every element of musical storytelling, from harmony, to rhythm, to orchestration, to pacing, to the development of the material," he says. "I want the audience to be with me. I don't aspire to confusion."

Puts' impact extends beyond his compositions; he is also recognized for his dedication to education and mentorship.

Since 2006, he has been a member of the composition faculty at the Johns Hopkins University's Peabody Institute, and will serve as Distinguished Visiting

Chinese composer Guo Wenjing, chairman of the jury of 1573 International Award for Best Composer.

Composer at the Juilliard School this academic year. He will also return to his role as director of the Minnesota Orchestra Composer Institute next year.

"My interest in teaching has always been to lightly guide every talented young composer on their journey. I want them to feel confident in their voice, to own it, to not be ashamed of their musical interests no matter what they are," Puts says. "I am interested in craft above all, no matter what the style is."

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## Menu of adventure on food journey leaves me hungry for more

I'm convinced there's a family somewhere in Beijing who've been talking about me.

It was the end of June, I'd been in China about four days, it was getting late on a Sunday and I'd no food in the flat, so I stepped into the first restaurant I came across (which in Beijing means walking for about 0.5 seconds in any direction). It turned out to be a hotpot place. I'd never been in a hotpot restaurant before, in China or anywhere else.

Sitting down at a massive table, I immediately got stuck into the 3-liter bottle of water in front of me while starting a frantic attempt to communicate, "Just feed me whatever is in the kitchen?"

But the young waiter was a

study in patience. No matter how long it took, he was determined to see I got exactly what I wanted. Problem was, I didn't know what I wanted.

Roughly an hour and two translation apps (one English-to-Chinese and another Chinese-to-Irish) later, we had kind of got to the point where we knew what I was eating, or the waiter had.

Then, the cooking started in the big pot in front of me and it turned out the bottle of water was for that, not me. The waiter brought me some diluted fruit juice to drink while I watched the food cook, not being able to resist moving my head almost inside the pot. The restaurant was empty but for me and a family over by the window, who had slowed their eating right down to decide what was wrong with me. By the sound of it, they had competing theories.

It's lucky the place wasn't busy

because the waiter kept having to come back to stop me lifting raw meat out of the pot to eat. But the real nightmare began when the meat was ready and he watched me disgrace myself with the chopsticks for several minutes before asking me via his phone, "*An feidir liom cabhrú leat foghlaim?*" (Can I help you learn?). So the family across the way, who had completely stopped eating by now, got to watch the prolonged painful lesson, sticks and fingers flying everywhere, before he gave up and started mixing the cooked meat in some sauce for me.

I had to draw the line when he — and I committed a journalist's cardinal sin here by forgetting to write down his name — asked, "*An feidir liom do nudail a mhéascadh duit?*" (Can I mix your noodles for you?).

Fast-forward four weeks, and Li Hai says he has a fish order in for

me from Tianjin, his native city. Not only that, he says he'll take me fishing there in the autumn. In Beijing, people only fish in the canal or in the Liangma River for fun, not for sustenance, he insists dismissively.

I met Li at a restaurant not far from where I live. I was walking home from the local library and, as usual, remembered I had nothing at home to cook, so I stepped off the street and into the small, packed neighborhood joint.

I pointed at the wall to a photo of noodles in soup that looked like what some people were eating and sat down where I could, at a table with Li, who was more than happy to have me.

He laughed when I ordered a bottle of beer and offered me his bottle of water. This man is seriously into healthy living, I thought, as he insisted I drink. My mouth lit up, followed by my throat. It

wasn't water. Li laughed again as I gulped the *baijiu* (white liquor) down and felt the heat spreading to my chest.

We attempted to communicate haltingly — in Chinese, I managed to tell him my name and where I was from, then we laughed at each other's incomprehensible jokes — until we resorted to the translation apps on our phones.

"I fish once in a while, but I'm not good at it," he told me.

"Tianjin seafood is relatively simple, but because of the mud coast the seafood from there is more delicate than sandy places like Dalian and Huludao (Liaoning province) or Beidaihe (in Hebei province)."

I'll have to wait a few days, he says, seafood is still fattening around this time, but from Tianjin he's going to get me sent ocean crab, conch meat, shrimp and "a kind of yellow insect from the sea

that's very tasty. You shouldn't be afraid to eat them".

"Locally, we call the yellow bug a lynx. To this day, I don't even know the academic name."

When my soup arrived — it turned out the specialty of the place was *zhajiàng* (fried bean paste) noodles — and I turned down the offer of a spoon to maneuver my chopsticks like two articulated lorries, Li nodded and smiled in approval. As he gave me the thumbs-up, I thought of my friend in the hotpot place. If only he could see me now.

As I was leaving, Li sent me a final message to translate on WeChat, "There's a real reason to cook food without boundaries."

The app had mangled his meaning in translation, I thought. Or, maybe, I'm still acclimatizing.

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## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Mutual respect and reciprocity basic requirements for sustainable relations

With tremendous common interests and daunting global challenges calling for their cooperation and coordination, the souring of relations between the two largest economies and two major players on the world stage serves no party's interests. That is why it is heartening to hear the two-day talks that finished on Wednesday between Foreign Minister Wang Yi and US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan in Beijing were "candid, substantial and constructive".

Those words have been used before to describe such high-ranking exchanges between the two sides over the past few years. That they were used again this time can be considered a reassuring sign that their potential frictional respective agendas for the talks were not abrasive and did not result in meaningless lecturing.

Although Beijing and Washington have different notions of what has caused the downturn in their relations, as well as different ideas on how to repair them, the ups and downs of the Sino-US ties over the past decades should be considered a common treasure trove from which, as Wang urged, they can draw some valuable lessons. Over the past decades, China-US cooperation has been of a win-win nature, and it should continue to be so. But for this to happen, the two countries need to establish a correct understanding of each other.

The Taiwan question is a fundamental core interest and an internal affair of China, and the US should realize that its speculating on the question makes the "pro-independence" secessionists the biggest threat to peace in the Taiwan Strait. As long as the US has the right perception on the nature and gravity of the Taiwan question, it will realize that supporting the secessionists is a ticking time bomb. Sullivan reiterated that there has been no change in the US' stance on the Taiwan question. But the administration's actions have belied those claims in the past, and the US still has much to do to convince Beijing that it truly is the case.

China's maritime disputes with its neighbors in the South China Sea did not become as fraught as they are today until the US started taking advantage of them to turn China's partners into pawns of its China-containment strategy. The hotspot issues that the US has kept itself busy in resolving these days should prompt Washington to realize that security must be common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable. No country can be safe by making others feeling endangered. That is also true of technology and economy, which the US has weaponized in a bid to hobble China's development.

It is encouraging that Sullivan said there are still many fields where the US can cooperate with China, as that is undoubtedly the case, and doing so would expand the common ground between the two sides, thus providing a more stable foundation for their relationship and a firmer platform on which to view the bigger picture and build better mutual understanding. That means relations should be based on an equal footing, and the handling of relevant issues should follow the principle of reciprocity.

The US thinks its sovereignty, territorial integrity, political system and development path, as well as the legitimate right of the US people to development, should and must be respected. But in return it should respect those of others, including China.

The US and China have to coexist on this planet, as Sullivan said. That means it behooves the two countries to find ways to make their relations sustainable. China is committed to enabling the Chinese people to live a better life and to making greater contributions to world peace and development and it has made it clear how it envisions doing so.

A key touchstone of the US' sincerity in seeking to mend ties with China will be to see whether Washington can therefore work with Beijing to open more channels, set up more platforms and create more opportunities to promote people-to-people exchanges to support those endeavors.

## Reality is tariff hikes of no real benefit

The Office of the United States Trade Representative is expected to make a final decision by the end of the month on its proposal to increase Section 301 duties on Chinese products in industries Washington has identified as strategic. The increases were originally scheduled to be phased in from Aug 1, as the White House believes the imposition of tariffs under section 301 of the Trade Act "have been effective in encouraging China to take positive steps in addressing the issues identified in the section 301 investigation, such as certain revisions in its foreign investment and administrative licensing laws". But the duties have been postponed due to dissenting voices from US business communities.

Economic and trade relations with China have been politicized to such an extent that any sign of perceived weakness may be politically problematic ahead of the upcoming presidential election. As such, a decision not to go ahead with the tariff hikes would not be easy at such a point. Since it is the option least likely to have any blowback, campaigning in US elections has degraded into a China-bashing competition such that neither candidate can afford to give the impression they do not dare to take on China.

First it was US President Joe Biden striving to present a tough line against China in response to Republican candidate Donald Trump's allegation that he was "weak" on China. Now that he has passed the torch to Vice-President Kamala Harris, the latter finds herself under tremendous pressure to build a tougher image than the sitting commander-in-chief. Mike Johnson, the Republican House speaker, has openly challenged her in that regard, claiming "The only person that our adversaries fear less than Joe Biden is Kamala Harris". While Trump, in his words, has boasted that he is the only one who elicits fear in Washington's purported adversaries.

With Democratic candidate Vice-President Harris being attacked by Trump and his loyalists for her lack of experience in economic and foreign affairs, she is under mounting pressure to lay out clearly defined economic and diplomatic priorities to fend off the barbs.

But while there is a great temptation to bow to the populist impulses and play the Trump game to showcase toughness, much of the economic woes the US faces today have actually derived from such impulses and a disregard for the economic reality and market rules.

As many coolheaded US economists and business insiders have correctly pointed out, it is not doing business with China, but rather refusing normal economic and trade dealings with China that has led to the US' current troubles.

Decades of healthy, brisk China-US economic and trade ties are indisputable proof that both economies prosper when they deal with each other following market rules and transcend ideological stereotypes and constraints. What we see today is almost the worst-case scenario between the world's two largest economies. The previous model in which China served as the world's, and in particular the US', manufacturing base and consumer market, was never, as some US politicians have sought to portray, one-sidedly benefiting China alone. US businesses and consumers both found themselves better off thanks to cost-effective Chinese exports and the two countries' mutually beneficial economic interdependence. Just as many have suggested, removing the trade barriers against China alone may significantly assuage the pain consecutive years of high inflation have inflicted on US businesses and consumers.

As Harris is widely believed to be trying to distance herself from the economic policies of both Trump and Biden. She is reportedly seeking to present her economic agenda as more ambitious and forward-looking, and "laser-focused on creating opportunities for the middle class". If that truly is her priority, she only needs to face the economic reality and demonstrate basic economic common sense to make a difference.

A pragmatic, less-politicized economic and trade relationship with China will go a long way to acting as the tonic the US economy needs.

Cai Meng



## Opinion Line

## Building a healthy market ecology good for the platform economy

Pinduoduo, a domestic e-commerce giant, will reportedly invest tens of billions of yuan to support new quality retailers in the next year, and carry out ecological governance of retailers, to realize healthy development of its platform ecology through long-term and patient investment.

Given that China's e-commerce market is to a large extent dominated by JD.com and Alibaba, Pinduoduo's fast growth is linked to its consumer-friendly measures such as lower prices and convenient refund procedures. In May, Pinduoduo launched a new tool for automatic price matching, through which Pinduoduo can analyze product

prices in real time and help merchants automatically adjust prices to attract consumers with lower prices.

However, this model also leads to excessive low-price competition, prompting merchants to sacrifice quality for costs. A model that relies on lower price competition is not only difficult to sustain, but also creates a lose-lose scenario for merchants and consumers. It is in the interest of consumers and businesses to provide high quality products at low prices rather than just at low prices.

Given that the law prohibits unfair competition, e-commerce platforms should build a commercial ecology that

provides healthy growth for businesses and consumers, meets consumer demand and promotes high-quality development on the supply side.

As the country's e-commerce needs to shift to competing for higher-quality products, that will test how the major platforms can increase their competitiveness, rather than relying solely on lowering product prices.

Such a competitive ecology will create a win-win situation for the platforms, merchants and consumers, and provide a guarantee for the sustainable and high-quality development of the e-commerce industry.

- 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS HERALD

## Flooding does not mean greening of the desert

No matter how many accounts share video clips showing flooding in parts of the Taklimakan Desert, it seems not enough to create awareness about climate change. It doesn't help either that some assume the rain is making the environment in northwestern China better.

As early as July 2021 there had been reports that an oil field located in the Taklimakan Desert was flooded, with over 300 square kilometers of land in the region going under water. A number of telecommunications poles, about 50 vehicles and roughly 30,000 other appliances were seen submerged.

From that year onwards, every summer has seen flooding in Taklimakan, leading

some to joke that the camels there should better learn to swim before it's too late.

The joke may be funny but the claim that climate change is going to benefit the arid region isn't. Yes, because of the rain, parts of the desert have turned wet, but that's not sustainable. Researchers say that a large percentage of the water comes from melting glaciers in the Tianshan Mountains, which is a source of several rivers. Therefore, once all the glaciers melt, all the rivers will dry up and there will be no source of water left.

The largest glacier in the Tianshan Mountains, for example, has melted so much that it split into two in 1993, and is still retreating by 5-7 meters every year.

The damage to local biodiversity is so deep that the population of Ili pika, a small rabbit-like mammal, dipped by 57 percent from 1982 to 2002 and it can hardly be seen now.

The flooding also happens because of increased rainfall. However, that water can hardly improve the local ecology because the sandy soil, unlike clayey soil, can hardly retain the water.

It is thus illusory to see in the flooding in Taklimakan Desert a possibility of the desert turning green. Climate change is a major challenge facing mankind and what is needed is for the world to join hands to reverse the trend.

- ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

## What They Say

## Washington just paying lip service to Middle East peace

Although Tel Aviv called its operation in Jenin and Tulkarm in the occupied West Bank on Wednesday a "counterterrorism operation to thwart terror", all signs testify to it being a major Israeli operation, with at least four Palestinian cities being targeted at the same time — Jenin, Tulkarm, Nablus and Tubas.

This has been the first time several Palestinian cities in the West Bank have been targeted by the Israeli military simultaneously since the second intifada — a major Palestinian uprising from 2000 to 2005.

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said that the Israeli Defense Forces have been "operating with full force since last night in the Jenin and Tulkarm refugee camps to dismantle Iranian-Islamic terror infrastructures established there".

He said that Israel had to deal with the threat in the West Bank just as it dealt with the terrorist infrastructure in

Gaza, and will take "whatever steps are required". Tel Aviv has already called for the evacuation of Palestinian residents in relevant cities of the West Bank.

Israel also attacked Hezbollah targets in Lebanon on the same day, three days after the two sides ended a short but intense conflict, as well as bombing central Gaza.

These are undoubtedly grave provocations to Iran, which has so far refrained from taking any action against Israel in retaliation for the assassination of Hamas' political leader in Teheran for the sake of Gaza cease-fire talks that are underway.

Gaza cease-fire talks reportedly resumed in Doha, capital of Qatar, on Wednesday attended by Israeli, United States, Egyptian and Qatari negotiators, after they failed to produce a temporary Gaza cease-fire deal in Cairo last week. There is still a big gap to be bridged between the two hostile parties as Tel Aviv insists on having control of Gaza's Philadelphi and Netzarim corridors to consolidate Israel's military gains in Gaza since Oct 7, while Hamas insists on Israel's full withdrawal from the enclave.

Israel's escalating policy, the destruction of cities, the killing of citizens, detentions and colonization, will not bring security and stability to anyone, said Nabil Abu Rudeineh, the spokesman for the presidency of the Palestinian Authority, urging the United States to intervene immediately and force the Israeli authorities to stop their comprehensive war on the Palestinian people.

It is the US that has been providing Israel with military, financial and intelligence supports throughout the crisis. It is thus well aware of Israel's latest West Bank moves. But the US still gave Tel Aviv the green light to do it, just as it must have done for the assassination of the Hamas leader last month.

The US pretends to be an active peace broker. Its negotiators have taken part in or hosted almost all major Gaza cease-fire talks till now, including those in Cairo last week and the ongoing one in Doha. So the question is how many lives will be lost and how much suffering will it cost for the US to stop paying lip service to peace.

- LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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## COMMENT

Otton Solis

## Chinese economic collapse not happening

True, China's current annual rate of economic growth of about 5 percent is low compared with its growth from 1980 to 2010, when it averaged nearly 10 percent. Yet in relation to the rest of the world, especially compared with the major Western economies, China's 5 percent growth is more than impressive.

According to the International Monetary Fund's latest report, the economic growth rates of the United States, Germany and Japan are 2.7, 0.2 and 0.9, respectively. The average for the European Union is 0.7 percent and the G7 countries 1.5 percent. There are some very small economies which are growing faster than China (for example, Palau or Niger), but among large and medium-sized economies, only India (7 percent), the Philippines (6.2 percent) and Vietnam (5.8 percent) are growing at a faster rate than China.

## Why the West wants to see China's collapse?

In spite of what a 5 percent economic growth means in the global context, it has become fashionable in the West to raise the alarm over China's economy. What are the reasons behind this?

In the first place, it might be sheer ignorance about the comparative and historical reality, as mentioned above, and the economic cycle that characterizes economies in which the market plays a major role, which is the case with China. There is plenty of evidence pertaining to economic upturns and downturns in the Western economies and those in the Global South, as evidenced from the data on GDP, employment and inflation.

Different from the Great Depression of the 1930s and the 2008 global financial crisis, there have been recurring milder financial upheavals, some lengthier and deeper than others. The best-informed minds have found explanations in overinvestment when demand is growing, for example, due to governments' expansionary policies, sharp increases in productivity and wages or technological revolutions, and the subsequent underutilization of capacity and shrinking of investment that takes place when demand returns to normal.

That does not signify a crisis, let alone a collapse. China may be going through one of those typical downturns of the economic cycle. China has plenty of accumulated knowledge about the fiscal and monetary demand management policies, which could be used to overcome the 5 percent growth rate

sustainable in the new era. Beyond that, the Chinese authorities have always been very successful in clearing supply side bottlenecks.

## Third plenum suggests how to meet challenges

The third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China has suggested some measures to overcome those challenges.

However, Western enterprises' worries could be genuine because they fear their exports to China might shrink due to China's slowing economic growth rate. China is an important market for a range of products, from electronic slides to construction materials, building machinery, oil, coal, some metals, soybean, cereals and dairy products. As a result, the health of the Chinese economy could have a huge impact on the well-being of millions of people across the globe.

Overall, according to the IMF, if China's growth increases by an additional percentage point, it would add 0.3 percent to global economic growth. This means that if the Chinese economy were growing at its "usual rate" of 10 percent, the global economy's growth rate would be double that of the current rate of 3 percent. Indeed, the global economy would suffer immensely if either of these two mammoth economies (China

and the US) were to fall into recession.

The other concern over China's economic slowdown might be deemed sincere if it stems from the fact that economic slowdown could lead to political instability. While China has been able to overcome political crises in the past, some in the West may argue that the social consequences of economic recession in other countries have endangered peace and development. When facing an internal upheaval, politicians are known to adopt nationalistic and aggressive foreign policies as a way to maintain social harmony.

## Zero-sum games lead to wrong measures

Moreover, all those "worries" over and forecasts about China's economic crisis might just be wishful thinking. For those in the West who believe in zero-sum games, the worse the Chinese economy fares the better for them. That's why under the wrong assumption that if China becomes poorer their countries would become richer, protectionist-mercantilist strategies are at the core of the trade policy of the United States and the European Union toward China. Impoverishing China is their goal, and their thinking is based on that. No wonder they claim the Chinese economy is in a deep crisis.

Sure, China needs to make strong

decisions to boost its economic growth and overcome some specific problems (that is, unsold housing). But it has three substantive advantages in doing so.

First, China has adopted a pragmatic, result-oriented, non-ideological approach to governance. The Chinese leadership has no qualms in allowing the market to play a leading role in the allocation of resources and private businesses to thrive while taking measures to fix things if and when necessary.

Thanks to its approach, China can implement any measure available in the policy toolkit, be it macroeconomic or microeconomic, to address demand side and/or supply side problems. As such, many of the controversies that arise because of ideological posturing, typical to Western countries and most of the Global South, do not obstruct policy decisions and execution in China.

Second, the rate of savings (43 percent of GDP) in China, much higher than in any other economy in the world, gives the country a substantive advantage in increasing consumption, without posing any danger to the macroeconomic equilibrium and financial stability. The Chinese government could increase consumption by offering fiscal incentives or interest rate subsidies. If China chooses this path, it could increase investment, employment and GDP growth while improving people's well-being.

And third, China's development momentum cannot be stopped by fiat. It is the result of decades of high-quality education with emphasis on STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), huge investments in R&D and infrastructure, and adoption of highly productive technologies and clean energy. On the other hand, since protectionism is also opposed by many economists and business leaders in the West as well as multilateral companies, the current protectionist policies of some Western economies might not last long, which would further boost China's growth.

Therefore, China's slowing growth rate does not mean its economy has gone into recession. In fact, a mixture of ignorance, sincere concern and wishful thinking might be behind the alarm over the Chinese economy's slowing growth rate. In any event, with some measures, some of them strong, China can improve its growth rate and realize low-carbon development.

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Zhang Peng

## Innovation to drive high-quality development

The communique issued by the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, which was held in July, highlighted the need to "deepen supply-side structural reform, improve incentive and constraint mechanisms for promoting high-quality development, and strive to create new growth drivers and strengths".

The Chinese economy is transitioning from fast-paced, quantitative growth to high-quality development, with the focus now being on improving total factor productivity and promoting innovation-driven growth to meet the socioeconomic needs and advance Chinese modernization.

Following the 18th National Congress of the CPC in 2012, China made innovation the primary driving force of economic development. On the supply side, China has made some remarkable achievements. Thanks to new technological and industrial breakthroughs, China's new industrialization policy has boosted traditional industries and given rise to new industries.

In the first half of this year, 39 out of the 41 major industrial sectors achieved growth, with the added value of high-tech manufacturing industries increasing by 8.7 percent year-on-year and investment in high-tech industries growing by 10.6 percent year-on-year.

New industries and new infrastructure have advanced the digitalization of industries, and are helping develop new quality productive forces such as 5G and artificial intelligence facilitating the upgrading and transformation of traditional industries while nurturing new industries.

## Besides, the integration of the digital economy with the real economy can help manufacturing enterprises to venture into the services sector.

On the demand side, new consumption is becoming mainstream, with the consumption pattern showing distinct signs of customization and diversity. Also, in the first half of this year, per capita disposable income increased to 20,733 yuan (\$2,910), up 5.4 percent year-on-year, which is higher than the GDP growth rate.

While traditional consumption of goods and services, including restaurants and takeouts, remain strong, consumption of new products and services, including tourism, digital, green and health-related products, has been boosting consumption growth. The development of social productive forces and the improvement in labor productivity determine an economy's progress, and only continuous promotion of technological innovation, productive forces and labor productivity can lead to sustained and healthy socioeconomic development.

In fact, innovation has become the primary driving force of high-quality development in China. Innovation can also help meet Chinese people's growing need for a better life, and address the unbalanced and inadequate economic development problem.

New quality productive forces are advanced productive forces, which help achieve technological breakthroughs and can innovatively configure production factors and promote industrial upgrading.

Despite the complex and volatile international situation, opportunities outweigh challenges for China. The fundamental advantage of China's high-quality development, a huge market of over 1.4 billion consumers, has not changed. By adhering to people-centric principles, promoting innovation, upgrading industries and improving governance, the country can advance high-quality development and achieve Chinese modernization.

Although China's population is rapidly aging, the country can achieve sustainable development by exploiting the second demographic dividend, that is, new sources of economic growth, and more robustly promoting innovation. For that, China needs to increase investment in the education sector, especially in basic education and vocational education, and raise the overall level of human resources. It should also make good use of the opportunities created by new technological and industrial revolutions to expedite economic structural adjustments, and promote cross-regional, cross-industrial and cross-occupational labor mobility.

Industrial transformation, too, can promote innovation. Since enterprise-driven innovation plays a key role in high-quality development, China should improve the mechanisms for developing new quality productive forces and leverage enterprises' advantages to achieve economic growth.

Besides, the integration of the digital economy with the real economy can help manufacturing enterprises to venture into the services sector. And the improvement of modern infrastructure networks, such as next-generation internet and other advanced technology networks, can help transform the production infrastructure across industries and create new industries and businesses.

China has an efficient governance system, which will facilitate the construction of a world-class business environment that is governed by rule of law and will create a level playing field for all enterprises, both domestic and foreign, and State-owned and private. Yet high-quality development, on the whole, will depend on innovation and the seriousness with which the authorities promote innovation.

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SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

Li Kaisheng and Zhang Qiye

## Manila's cognitive warfare won't succeed

In the past year, the Philippines, under the guidance of, and in collaboration with, the United States, has been trying to turn the South China Sea into a battleground by, among other things, spreading lies about China. By doing so, the Philippines seeks to justify its illegal, provocative actions in the South China Sea, especially around maritime features belonging to China.

One such incident occurred in April when the Philippine Coast Guard's BRP *Teresa Magbanua* (MRRV-9701) intruded into the waters near China's Xianbin Reef. Manila tried to justify the move by claiming it was monitoring China's "illegal island-building activities".

However, the reality is that the Philippine vessel remained unlawfully anchored in the area in an attempt to establish the Philippines' de facto presence in the waters. Before the Aug 19 collision between a Philippine vessel and a Chinese law enforcement ship, Philippine Coast Guard spokesperson Commodore Jay Tarriela accused China of deploying large Coast Guard ships and "maritime militia" in and around the Xianbin Reef, claiming that such actions undermined regional stability and escalated tensions. Tarriela claimed the Philippine Coast Guard's presence in the area was to "defend sovereignty" and combat "illegal fishing and environmental degradation".

Another recent example is the Philippines' illegal activities near Huangyan Island. On Aug 8, Manila claimed that two Chinese military aircraft conducted "dangerous maneuvers" over the shoal and dropped flares near a Philippine plane carrying out a "maritime security operation" in what it claimed was Philippine waters. In reality, China was con-

ducting routine military exercises at the time, and the Philippine Air Force's NC-212 aircraft, ignoring repeated warnings from the Chinese side, intruded into Chinese airspace over the Huangyan Island in a bid to interfere in the exercises.

The Philippines has consistently spread falsehoods about China's South China Sea claims. For example, the Philippine media often add the phrase, "China claims almost all of the South China Sea", when reporting on China's maritime claims.

But China has clearly articulated its acclaims in its July 12, 2016, statement on sovereignty and maritime territorial rights in the South China Sea. China claims four main rights, the most important being its sovereignty over the South China Sea islands and historical rights in South China Sea. The Philippines' persistent distortion and smearing of China is aimed at soiling its international image.

To cover up its false information campaign and lead the international community astray, the Philippines accuses China of spreading "fake news". This tactic not only creates confusion in the international community but also helps Manila portray itself as a "victim" forced to "defend" its maritime territories. But Manila's misinformation campaign cannot change reality.

First, China's sovereignty over the maritime features in the South China Sea is supported by historical and legal evidence. China's insistence on resolving disputes through direct negotiations between the involved parties is the right approach to address the issue. The Philippines will not succeed in denying China's sovereignty using the so-called South China Sea arbitration ruling, as

maritime sovereignty is not subject to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Moreover, China issued an exclusionary declaration way back in 2006, saying that it does not accept the compulsory procedures under the UNCLOS on maritime delimitation, historic bays or titles. China's approach to resolving territorial disputes with the majority of its neighbors through friendly negotiations has proven practical and effective. As such, the Philippines' utter disregard for China's sage advice and its attempt to trigger a legal "fight" against China only reveal its ulterior motives.

Second, the US is primarily responsible for the escalating disputes in the South China Sea. It has roped in the Philippines to do its bidding, in order to advance its geopolitical interests in the region. While Manila has been repeatedly denying Washington's involvement, the reality is that US government agencies, think tanks and media have been perpetuating the false narrative on the South China Sea, which it aims to contain, because it perceives China as its greatest geopolitical rival.

By keeping the South China Sea issue alive, the US can justify strengthening its military presence in the Philippines and maintaining its dominance in the Asia-Pacific region with the help of its allies like Japan and the Philippines. The establishment of new US military bases on Luzon Island of the Philippines, ostensibly for humanitarian purposes, is, in fact, aimed at bolstering the first island chain and preparing for a potential confrontation with China over the Taiwan question.

Third, if tensions escalate, the Philippines will be the biggest loser. Stop-

ping its provocative moves and returning to cooperation are in the best interests of the Philippines. Over the past year, despite helping take forward the US' strategy to contain China, the Philippines has gained no substantial benefits in terms of its maritime claims. Should the Philippines miscalculate and provoke a conflict, it will suffer the most.

As neighbors and developing countries, Beijing and Manila both would benefit by working together to overcome common challenges such as de-globalization and climate change. But with many of the Philippines' political elites being coerced or persuaded to serve US interests, it is doubtful whether anyone among the Philippine leadership would understand what is truly good for their country.

For example, in mid-July, the Philippine government announced plans to expand the airport on Zhongye Island, which it illegally occupies. The New York Times' Chinese edition then fabricated a story to support this, saying that given China's growing presence in the South China Sea, the Philippines has been forced to upgrade its "dilapidated" military facilities. This new wave of cognitive warfare raises a vital question: Is the Philippines determined to push its luck further, potentially turning Zhongye Island into the next flashpoint after Ren'ai Reef and Xianbin Reef?

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## GLOBAL VIEWS

DAVID MONYAE

## Smart cooperation

Upcoming forum offers opportunity for China and Africa to discuss ways to harness the potential of digital technology in critical sectors

As Chinese and African leaders meet in September for the ninth instalment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, a range of issues from trade and investment to security and social development will be on the agenda.

One of the most important issues likely to be discussed at length because of its strategic importance will be cooperation in digital technology, which has emerged in the past 15 years as a driver of economic growth and development. This is not a new issue when it comes to China-Africa cooperation. Since 2006, digital cooperation has been included in the FOCAC Action Plans but it became more prominent in the 2021 Action Plan. Several initiatives namely the Initiative on Jointly Building a China-Africa Community with a Shared Future in Cyberspace and the China-Africa Digital Innovation Partnership Program have been proposed to enhance cooperation in this area. This is in addition to the China-Africa Digital Cooperation Forum which facilitates discussions on digital cooperation between FOCAC summits.

Further, China has pledged to implement 10 digital assistance projects in Africa to aid the development of digital infrastructure in Africa. China is already one of the most visible players in Africa's digital sector. Chinese companies have been contracted to build national information and communication technology backbones in several countries across the continent including Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Cameroon and Nigeria among others. A 2021 White Paper released by the Chinese government showed that Chinese enterprises have laid over 200,000 kilometers of optical fiber which has connected millions of people to the internet, have partnered with 1,500 companies in Africa in their dig-

ital transformation strategies, and have worked with 29 African governments in the development of e-government services. Moreover, China is also venturing into Africa's public cloud market with its companies having been contracted to build data centers in countries such as Senegal and South Africa.

The construction of digital infrastructure will boost Africa's capacity to harness big data and develop artificial intelligence tools which can improve productivity and economic efficiency leading to positive development outcomes. Studies by McKinsey Global Institute have predicted that the strategic use of big data could add \$13 trillion to the global economy by 2030.

As such, it is imperative for Africa and China to explore ways to harness digital technology for the growth of the economy in critical sectors such as agriculture and industry. While the continent has the largest share (about 60 percent) of the world's uncultivated arable land, it still spends about \$35 billion of scarce foreign currency per year on food imports. Further, although agriculture is the biggest economic sector in Africa accounting for 15 percent of its GDP and also the biggest employer, it still does not produce enough food to feed its people. This dire state of agriculture is largely due to numerous factors including weather patterns, political instability, misgovernance and the use of outdated technology. The use of big data in agriculture gathered through such technologies as sensors, satellites, drones and other devices can improve efficiency and help farmers make better decisions. These technologies collect data on different aspects of farming including soil conditions, weather patterns, crop health, and the optimal use of inputs.

Artificial intelligence algorithms can be used to analyze this data in order to help farmers make important decisions about when to plant, the

amount of inputs to use, and also predicting weather patterns. Hence, the deployment of big data and AI in African agriculture can drive productivity and help alleviate concerns about food security. As a global leader in digital technology and with 24 Agricultural Technology Demonstration Centers across Africa, China is well placed to help African countries improve agricultural production through the use of new technologies. The upcoming FOCAC should come up with practical strategies of how this can be done.

Industrial production in Africa is also lagging behind other regions which means that the continent loses precious foreign currency as it must import most of the manufactured products it needs. The share of the manufacturing sector in Africa's GDP is a lowly 13 percent while its share in global manufacturing was a paltry 2 percent from 2012 to 2019. Like in agriculture, big data analytics and AI can be used to drive efficiency and productivity in the African manufacturing sector. Technologies such as the industrial internet of things, manufacturing execution systems and industrial control systems have been deployed in manufacturing to gather, process and analyze information which aids decision-making and increases productivity. African countries can work with China to facilitate the transfer of the new technologies to their industrial sectors.

The FOCAC presents an opportunity for the two parties to discuss and chart a way forward in the incorporation of technology in the critical sectors of agriculture and manufacturing.

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WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

YANG YAORYUAN AND ZHAI KUN

## Driven by connectivity

China and Vietnam should improve cooperation in railway and agri projects, optimize exchange mechanism for their currencies and more

On Aug 19, To Lam, general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam and president of Vietnam, paid a state visit to China. The two sides signed 14 bilateral cooperation documents, which focused on planning the blueprint for all-round connectivity between the two countries in the future, and moving toward a new era of bilateral relations driven by "hard connectivity, soft connectivity, and heart-to-heart connectivity".



Yang Yaoyuan



Zhai Kun

The visit yielded remarkable results, breaking the bottleneck of China-Vietnam connectivity. In terms of railway construction, the signing of the Certificate of Transfer of Archives on the Results of the Vietnam Aid Project for the Lao Cai-Hanoi-Hai Phong Standard Gauge Railway Line Planning Project and an official letter from the Ministry of Transport of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the China International Development Cooperation Agency of the People's Republic of China on the feasibility study of the planning technical assistance project for the two standard gauge railways of Lang Son-Hanoi and Mong Cai-Ha Long-Hanoi have solved the problem in gauge and inconsistent technical standards. In terms of trade in agricultural products, customs clearance procedures have been simplified through the signing of protocols on phytosanitary and food safety requirements, which has facilitated the entry of Vietnamese agricultural products into the Chinese market.

In the financial services sector, a memorandum of understanding was signed to address obstacles in direct transactions between the renminbi and the Vietnamese dong, which is expected to reduce transaction costs and improve market liquidity. In the digital economy sector, the two sides signed a memorandum of understanding to remove obstacles in technical standards, data protection and other areas. In

people-to-people exchanges, the two sides agreed to deepen cooperation and plan to mark 2025 as the "Vietnam-China People-To-People Exchange Year" to enhance youth and subnational exchanges, mutual understanding and trust.

At the bilateral level, "hard connectivity" has deepened China-Vietnam economic cooperation and facilitated trade through infrastructure development; "soft connectivity" has promoted exchanges in science, technology, education and culture and enhanced mutual trust; while "heart-to-heart connectivity" has enhanced mutual understanding and friendship between the two peoples, paving the way for long-term cooperation. These measures have deepened China-Vietnam friendly relations, promoted economic integration and social progress and brought practical benefits to regional development. At the global level, the model emphasizes win-win cooperation, provides a platform for addressing global challenges, and helps improve the global governance mechanism. Through technological and economic cooperation with Vietnam, China has ensured the stability and diversity of its supply chain, alleviated economic pressure brought about by tensions between China and the United States, and helped maintain the stability of the global economic order.

Lam's visit has signaled a significant boost to connectivity between the two sides.

When it comes to implementation, however, cooperation projects may still encounter issues such as technical docking and insufficient capital investment. The promotion of railway projects requires huge financial and technical support; agricultural cooperation faces the risk of fierce market competition and price fluctuations; and the direct exchange rate mechanism between the renminbi and the Vietnamese dong needs to be further optimized. Besides, digital economy cooperation faces gaps in infrastructure development.

In the future, China-Vietnam relations driven by connectivity can be promoted in the following five areas.

First, the two sides need to improve the multilateral cooperation mechanism for railway projects. More international financial institutions and private capital must be attracted to participate, and the public-private partnership model

should be used to broaden financing channels. Both sides should strengthen technical exchanges and training to share construction experience, focusing on environmental protection and community participation to ensure sustainable development of the project.

Second, both sides need to make agricultural cooperation more stable and resilient. They should focus on strengthening the brand building of agricultural products and raising the added value of products. Meanwhile, China should continue to build China-ASEAN e-commerce platforms to expand product sales channels and lower market access barriers in a more proper way. Besides, an early warning mechanism can be established to respond to price fluctuations in a timely manner.

Third, both sides should optimize the market-based exchange rate mechanism between the renminbi and the Vietnamese dong. They can learn from the local currency settlement mechanism of China and Indonesia to upgrade the regional trading market between banks on the two sides.

Fourth, China can advance digital cooperation with Vietnam in accordance with the principle of "extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits". We will continue to narrow the digital gap through resource sharing, technology exchange and personnel training. China and Vietnam should work together to build a digital governance system, unify and standardize rules, and ensure data security and efficiency.

Fifth, both sides should strengthen the development of information exchange platforms to enhance transparency, hold cultural exchanges and educational programs, and encourage academic research and dialogues to gradually eliminate misunderstandings and prejudices between the two peoples.

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## BUSINESS

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# China may keep RMB stable if Fed cuts rates

Analysts: Spike unlikely, but capital flows, hopes should be managed

By ZHOU LANXU  
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With the United States appearing to be poised for interest rate cuts starting September, Chinese policymakers should strengthen monitoring of capital flows and prepare contingency plans against any potential sharp renminbi appreciation, analysts said.

While a significant appreciation of the renminbi, or the yuan, against the US dollar is unlikely, they said they still expect Chinese financial regulators to bolster the management of expectations amid lingering uncertainties.

Measures such as adjusting the foreign exchange reserve requirement ratio may be taken to maintain the overall stability of the yuan in the event of any surge in speculative capital inflows.

Talk about the potential for a drastic yuan rebound started after Bloomberg published a report on Tuesday. Stephen Jen, chief executive of British hedge fund Eurizon SLJ Capital, was quoted in the report as saying that Chinese companies may be enticed to sell a \$1 trillion pile of dollar-denominated assets if/when the US cuts interest rates, which could strengthen the yuan by up to 10 percent.

Jen's remarks came after US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell indicated on Friday that "the time has come" for interest rate cuts. His words led the market to bet that the Fed will start cutting its target range of interest rates, which now stands at 5.25 to 5.5 percent, at the next Federal Open Market Committee meeting on Sept 17 and 18.

"In the event of a Fed rate cut, we anticipate a redirection of international capital flows toward China, potentially prompting a reflow of capital of Chinese enterprises," said Xiong Aizong, a senior research fellow at the Institute of World Economics and Politics, which is part of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

"However, the yuan appreciation may not be as pronounced as Jen expects. The People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, is likely to implement its own rate cuts as well. Moreover, the US rate cuts are expected to be a gradual process."

In an interview with People's Daily earlier this month, Pan Gongsheng, governor of the PBOC, said the central bank will maintain a supportive monetary policy stance and keep the renminbi exchange rate generally stable at a reasonable and balanced level.

Xiong said: "In the case of (any) yuan appreciation, the PBOC and other authorities would take measures to prevent sharp fluctuations in the yuan's value."

"This may include intensifying the oversight of capital movements to curb abnormal capital flows, implementing additional easing measures and strengthening the management of expectations to prevent a one-sided, substantial appreciation of the yuan."

The renminbi has recovered against the greenback on expectations of a US rate cut next month, with the central parity rate of the renminbi against the dollar standing at 7.1216 on Wednesday, strengthening from the Aug 13 trough of 7.1479. This year began with the rate at 7.0770 on Jan 2.

Liu Chunsheng, an associate professor at the School of International Trade and Economics, which is part of the Central University of Finance and Economics, said the market has formed a consensus on a weakening US dollar, leading to the recent yuan appreciation.

He said the resistance level for the renminbi against the greenback is anticipated between 7 and 7.05 in the near term, suggesting the yuan appears to be on track for a mild recovery.

Liu cautioned that any significant yuan appreciation could pose considerable risks. "The influx of hot money could impact China's capital markets, leading to certain levels of price increases and associated financial risks. With the yuan appreciating, exports may come under pressure as well."

Liu said that regulatory authorities are unlikely to ignore any sudden substantial appreciation of the yuan. Measures may be taken to moderate such pressures and fluctuations, such as increasing the reserve requirement ratio for foreign exchange deposits to maintain yuan stability without direct exchange rate intervention.



Cars that are part of a vehicle trade-in program are on display at an auto expo in Yantai, Shandong province. TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Vehicle trade-in to boost consumption

By WANG KEJU  
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China's new round of vehicle trade-in program, initiated recently, is part of the country's efforts to further catalyze the consumption of big-ticket items and boost economic growth in the second half, according to officials and experts.

With the augmented support provided through enhanced subsidies and expanded funding, the stage is set for a surge in the adoption of new vehicles, thereby revitalizing the automotive market and delivering direct benefits to the people, they added.

In late April, the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Finance, along with some other departments, issued detailed guidelines to incentivize consumers for replacing old vehicles with new ones.

In a recent development aimed at further amplifying the effectiveness of this policy, the country has decided to allocate funds from ultralong special treasury bonds to bolster support for trade-ins of consumer goods.

The automotive industry is a critical engine driving economic growth, with the production value of automobiles accounting for around 10 percent of the country's gross domestic product and automotive consumption representing a similar proportion of the total retail sales of consumer goods in China, said Zhou Maohua, a researcher at China Everbright Bank.

By maintaining and expanding consumer spending in the automotive sector, the country can harness the power of consumption to stimulate economic

growth and achieve the targeted 5 percent GDP growth rate for the year, Zhou added.

Under the new policy, the subsidies for purchasing new energy passenger cars have been raised from 10,000 yuan (\$1,404) to 20,000 yuan, while subsidies for purchasing gasoline-powered passenger vehicles have surged from 7,000 yuan to 15,000 yuan, marking an increase of over 100 percent in both categories.

Moreover, the new subsidy standards will be implemented retroactively, allowing consumers who submitted subsidy applications prior to the new policy to benefit from the adjusted subsidy rates. For individuals who have already received subsidies, local authorities will compensate them for the difference based on the new policy standards.

Compared to developed economies in Europe and the Americas, as well as Japan and South Korea, China currently exhibits a longer vehicle replacement cycle and lower per capita car ownership, signaling substantial untapped potential for growth, particularly in the electric vehicle market, said Zhang Xiang, an auto industry researcher at Beijing-based North China University of Technology.

After over three months of implementing the relevant policies, the effectiveness of China's vehicle trade-in program is gradually becoming evident, with a significant surge in subsidy applications, said He Yadong, a spokesman for the Commerce Ministry.

As of Aug 22, the ministry has received over 680,000 subsidy applications for scrapping and replacing vehicles, with about

340,000 new applications submitted in the past month alone, He added.

The surge in subsidy applications bodes well for the auto market in China. Retail sales of passenger vehicles in the first 18 days of August, according to data from the China Passenger Car Association, reached 907,000 units, marking an 8 percent increase year-on-year and 16 percent growth month-on-month.

Notably, the impact of policies supporting new energy vehicles has been particularly pronounced, with retail sales of new energy passenger vehicles surging to 490,000 units during the same period, up 58 percent year-on-year, data from the association showed.

According to Bloomberg New Energy Finance, China's intensified policy is poised to inject fresh momentum into the NEV market, potentially unlocking a market value of \$26 billion.

Contrasting with conventional fuel vehicles, this initiative leans heavily toward NEVs, with the allocated funds expected to support a projected increase in sales of 1.1 million NEVs in 2024, further propelling the annual sales of NEVs in China to exceed 10 million units this year, according to Bloomberg.

However, against the backdrop of frequent price adjustments and intense competition in the automotive market, the effect of the trade-in policy has been somewhat diluted, with subsidy amounts being eroded by price wars, leading to a slower release of the policy's intended effect, said Lang Xuehong, deputy secretary-general of the China Automobile Dealers Association.

## Rio Tinto sees big potential for MNCs

By ZHENG XIN  
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China's rapid economic growth in recent years has fostered an open and diverse environment with massive business opportunities for multinational corporations, amid further opening-up and industrial reform, a top company executive said.

"Over the past few years, the Chinese market has undergone rapid growth and transformation, and its commitment to further open up its market, advance innovations, and shift toward high-quality development has fostered world-leading industries while creating opportunities for foreign businesses like Rio Tinto," said Alf Barrios, chief commercial officer of Rio Tinto, the world's largest iron ore firm.

"The mining industry plays a crucial role as an enabler of the energy transition. The strong demand for high-quality minerals in China, Rio Tinto's largest market that accounts for over half of its revenue, has generated substantial opportunities for investment and trade," Barrios said.

"China's economy, up by 5 percent in the first half of this year, demonstrates economic resilience despite ongoing challenges. We believe the government's efforts in advancing high-quality development will generate sustained demand for minerals essential for the energy transition and present opportunities for multinational companies to deepen their strategic partnerships with China."

According to Barrios, China's manufacturing sector is strong with energy transition at the heart of its growth. This transition has accounted for nearly a third of Chinese GDP growth in 2023 with strong growth in the first half of 2024, he said.

China continues to be one of the fastest-growing major economies, a driving force for the global economy and the world's top consumer and producer of metals, while its focus on innovation, green technologies, and digitalization positions it well for future growth. Investments in these areas are likely to drive productivity and economic advancement, he said.

China continues to be a key market for global mining giants in the iron ore sector, thanks to its vast market size, with major players eager to forge new partnerships in an increasingly green-oriented world, said Zhao Xiangbin, chief strategist at Beijing Gold and Forex Fortune Investment Management.

"As the trend toward decarbonization accelerates, the steel industry will gradually transition from high-growth to high-quality development, a shift that will create greater growth opportunities for companies like Rio Tinto," Zhao said.

Historically, Rio Tinto's collaboration with China has focused on supplying iron ore to Chinese steel companies, but there has also been an increase in cooperation in the low-carbon sector, said the company.

"Moreover, China's expanding global influence in areas such as new energy vehicles and renewable energy will drive demand for higher-quality imports of copper, aluminum and other materials," he said.

Around 60 percent of new solar and renewables capacities are installed in China and nearly two-thirds of global EV production and sales are in the country. Last year, China surpassed Japan to become the world's top auto exporter.

In response to the increasing demand for mineral products in China, Rio Tinto has committed to increasing its investments and strengthening partnerships with Chinese counterparts in the coming years.

Over the years, Rio Tinto has focused on extending its partnership with China, collaborating with partners, including Aluminum Corp of China (Chinalco) and China Baowu Steel Group Corp, to jointly develop the world's largest undeveloped high-grade iron ore deposits in Simandou, Guinea, which will provide essential raw material for the future of green steel once operational, said Barrios.

### Briefly

#### Daxing airport to serve business jets

Beijing Daxing International Airport on Tuesday opened the international passenger channel of its fixed-base operator as well as a maintenance, repair and overhaul facility for business jets. Business aviation is an important part of civil aviation transportation, and the latest move will greatly promote the development of business aviation at the Beijing Daxing airport, said Jia Jianqing, deputy general manager of Capital Airports Holdings Co Ltd.

#### Toyota hydrogen project starts

Japanese auto giant Toyota has begun operations of its phase-I fuel cell research and development and production project in Beijing, said local authorities on Tuesday. As one of the largest foreign-invested projects introduced by Beijing in the field of hydrogen energy, this project is expected to accelerate the resolution of industrialization challenges for hydrogen fuel cell vehicles while also promoting the development of the hydrogen energy industry. Its factory covers an area of 113,000 square meters.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

## Luxury firm Tapestry eyes young consumers

By ZHONG NAN  
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Tapestry Inc, a US luxury goods group, will focus on growing its store network, enhancing its digital presence and attracting more young consumers to keep pace with the rapidly evolving consumer trends in China, said a senior executive.

The owners of brands such as Coach, Kate Spade and Stuart Weitzman, the New York-based Tapestry had planned to open 100 stores across China between 2022 and 2025, and further spur sales through digital channels and duty-free business at Hainan Free Trade Port in Hainan province.

"We have already opened 70 stores across the country (since 2022) and that goal can be easily achieved by 2025. There will be more to come in the years ahead," said Sandeep Seth, Tapestry's chief growth officer and chief marketing officer for the group's Coach brand.

Eager to attract more consumers, digital-savvy millennials and Generation Z — those born between 1996 and 2010 — Tapestry opened a Coach coffee shop in Shanghai to create interactive experiences inspired by self-expression in July.

With nearly 400 stores across more than 90 cities in China, Seth said that Tapestry will emphasize emotional connections and shared

values with its customers and attempt to integrate both modern cultures and their preferences and functional requirements into its brands and products.

"China has a fast-changing consumption trend, and we always move at the speed of our consumers," said Seth, adding that seizing market share in the "She-economy", second and third-tier cities, and concepts like sustainable growth will be the company's priorities to boost sales in the country.

The "She-economy" refers to a trend in which a growing number of businesses are approaching their consumers and developing products from a female perspective.

Apart from opening its official flagship stores across various e-commerce platforms in China, Tapestry opened its first Coachtopia store, a sub-brand of Coach, in Sanya, Hainan, in April, followed by openings in Shanghai and Beijing. With a focus on sustainability, its products, including handbags, accessories, clothing and shoes, feature sustainable materials and innovative designs.

Despite a fast-changing environment, Tapestry has seen steady growth in China, with 5 percent year-on-year growth in its 2023 fiscal year and 3 percent in the 2024 fiscal year.

Expressing long-term confidence in the Chinese market, Seth said Chi-



Consumers check handbags at a store owned by Coach's sub-brand Coachtopia in Sanya, Hainan province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

na's resilient economy, improved business environment and strong consumer enthusiasm will further bolster the country's attractiveness to multinational corporations.

That sentiment is in line with the latest data. China saw total retail sales of consumer goods grow by 3.5 percent year-on-year in the first seven months, said the National Bureau of Statistics.

"China is not only a market but also a source of inspiration and innovation. Understanding Chinese culture and consumer behavior helps global brands develop products and marketing strategies that resonate more deeply with local consumers," he said, adding that the company will

participate in the China International Import Expo for the sixth time in Shanghai in November.

Seth is optimistic that China's visa-free policy for several countries, including Singapore, Australia and France, will encourage more corporate executives and professionals to travel to China, leading to increased business exchanges.

Despite challenges such as geopolitical tensions, rising protectionism and global supply chain adjustments, China remains a crucial market for global businesses, said Wang Xiaohong, a researcher specializing in cross-border investment at the China Center for International Economic Exchanges in Beijing.

## BUSINESS



Employees work on a display unit production facility in Guiyang, Guizhou province, in February. QU HONGLUN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

## Experts urge more efforts to sustain export potential

By CHEN YE in Ningbo, Zhejiang  
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Despite continuous growth in China's home appliance exports this year, the country must remain clear-headed in the face of a complex and volatile international trade environment, experts said.

"Thanks to a rebound in international demand and inventory replenishment, China's exports of mechanical and electrical products reached about \$1.18 trillion in the first seven months, a year-on-year increase of 5.6 percent. It played an important role in boosting the nation's foreign trade," said Zhang Yujing, president of the China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Machinery and Electronic Products.

Zhang's remarks came at the 2024 Industry's Working Conference on Promoting Higher-Quali-

ty Exports of Electronics and Home Appliances, which was held last week in Cixi, Zhejiang province.

According to the General Administration of Customs, the cumulative export value of appliances such as electric fans, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, microwave ovens, and LCD televisions reached 409.19 billion yuan (\$57.36 billion) from January to July, reflecting an 18.1 percent year-on-year growth. The increase outpaced the national overall export growth rate by 11.4 percentage points.

Wu Guangyu, general manager of Dun & Bradstreet China, said: "The export situation for home appliances has greatly improved compared to last year, showing a strong rebound. Trade dynamics are also shifting.

"However, traditional markets in Europe and North America are

growing at a much slower pace compared to Latin America, ASEAN and Africa, indicating a divergence in growth drivers. The fastest-growing trends are emerging in economies involved in the Belt and Road Initiative or in South America."

Wu said Dun & Bradstreet will continue to support the high-quality global expansion of Chinese electronics and home appliance companies by providing services in market insights, targeted customer acquisition, credit risk management, compliance and ESG disclosure and improvement.

On empowering Chinese home appliance companies seeking overseas expansion, Wu said, "Chinese companies have strong technical foundations and have built comprehensive local supply chains, which are advantageous in global market expansion."

However, they also face several challenges, including international trade barriers, and differing legal and regulatory requirements, he said.

For companies "going global", ensuring compliance with business qualifications is crucial. Understanding sanction regulations, blacklists and avoiding potential pitfalls can all be guided by data insights, Wu said.

Zhang said the chamber will fully utilize its industry resources and cooperation channels to provide companies with high-quality platforms for communication and promotion.

The chamber will also offer practical, effective and targeted professional services to help the electronics and home appliances sector explore international markets and achieve high-quality development, Zhang added.

## Shanghai sets ball rolling on offshore PVs

Metropolis aims for a minimum 1m kW by year end with 1st batch of projects

By LIU YUKUN  
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Shanghai will begin the first round of selections for offshore solar power generation projects with a minimum scale of 1 million kilowatts by the end of this year, according to the Shanghai Municipal Development and Reform Commission.

The move is part of the country's stepped-up efforts to promote the development of offshore solar energy.

The selected projects will have assured integration of solar power to the grid instead of trading in the electricity market.

Investors in such projects will be encouraged to deploy energy storage facilities as needed, the city's economic regulator said recently.

Offshore photovoltaics were first proposed by the National Energy Administration in April last year.

Experts said there is significant growth potential for offshore photovoltaics, which leverage vast ocean areas and abundant sunlight to overcome land limitations and provide a new platform for solar power generation.

Offshore photovoltaics also ease energy supply pressures in the eastern regions of China, and boost economic growth.

Recent advancements in offshore photovoltaic technology and decreasing installation costs have enhanced its competitiveness in the energy market, experts said.

With further policy support, offshore photovoltaics will have massive opportunities for development. Their integration with offshore wind power and marine ranching will lead to a diversified industrial development model, they added.

Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University, said China's photovoltaic industry is unevenly distributed, with most large-scale solar power generation stations concentrated in the resource-rich Northwest China, while eastern areas have intense demand for electricity where solar stations are few due to high

land costs and other resource limitations.

Given the intermittent nature of photovoltaic power, some grids are not yet capable of handling large-scale solar power, as they could cause turbulence in power loads due to varying levels of sunlight. In the past, most grids were optimized for the transmission of steady volumes of power derived from fossil fuels.

Coupled with the additional costs and energy losses from long-distance power transmission through the grid, offshore photovoltaics seems more appealing to coastal provinces. Offshore photovoltaics can utilize tidal flats, islands, nearshore areas and even deep-sea locations, helping to alleviate land resource constraints, Lin said.

Before Shanghai's initiative to develop offshore solar power, provinces like Shandong and Zhejiang had already introduced policies to promote the development of offshore photovoltaics.

Shandong province, for example, has encouraged the integrated development of pile-based offshore photovoltaic projects combined with activities such as marine ranching, salt fields and wind farms.

"There are positive developments in offshore photovoltaic projects in China. National policies have clarified four types of photovoltaic sea usage, leading to significant progress on relevant projects. Reports indicate that about 30 gigawatts of offshore photovoltaic projects have been announced or initiated recently," said Jiang Hua, deputy secretary-general of the China Photovoltaic Industry Association.

"Additionally, the industry's ongoing cost reductions and efficiency improvements have broadened its economic potential," he said.

Cui Lin, deputy secretary-general of the offshore photovoltaic professional committee of CPIA, said the rapid development of offshore solar power will give rise to emerging sectors like hydrogen production from seawater using offshore photovoltaics.

## Inner Mongolia goes the whole hog on agritech

By LI JIAYING and LIU ZHIHUA  
in Beijing, and YUAN HUI in Hohhot

Amid the global biotech innovation drive, the Inner Mongolia autonomous region is advancing its transition from a major livestock venue to a leading industrial powerhouse through technological innovation and industrial upgrades.

As a key national producer of agricultural and livestock products, the high-quality development of Inner Mongolia's animal husbandry is inseparable from strong support for animal disease prevention and control, said Bao Xianhua, vice-chairman of Inner Mongolia.

"Inner Mongolia is a crucial base for the production of veterinary drugs in China. The region is blessed with abundant carbon sink and green power resources, rich starch supplies and a highly integrated animal vaccine supply chain," Bao said, adding that these advantages are pivotal as the region intensifies its focus on biotechnology to address the challenges facing the animal husbandry sector.

Animal epidemics remain the greatest threat to the livestock

industry, with annual losses due to livestock deaths and miscarriages amounting to about 15 billion yuan (\$2.1 billion) in the autonomous region.

With improved disease prevention capabilities, if the mortality and miscarriage rates were reduced by 50 percent, the sector in Inner Mongolia could see an enhancement in quality and efficiency worth around 7.5 billion yuan, local government data said.

According to global consultancy McKinsey, biotechnology innovations could generate an annual global economic growth of \$2 trillion to \$4 trillion over the next 10 to 20 years, with Inner Mongolia poised to seize the trend.

For example, Hohhot-based Jinyu Bio-Technology Co Ltd has partnered with several renowned universities and companies specializing in mRNA research and raw material supply. Together, they have invested 250 million yuan to establish the world's first animal mRNA vaccine production line, with an annual production capacity of 1 billion doses.

Jinyu Chairman Zhang Chongyu said that as the livestock and animal

health sectors are currently in need of further development, "every company is exploring how to make breakthroughs with technology to overcome the current challenges."

Over the past five years, Jinyu has invested an average of 200 million yuan annually in animal vaccine research and development, totaling 1.06 billion yuan. The company has also established an artificial intelligence-driven digital platform for vaccine and drug innovation, using computational models to guide R&D and design, Zhang said.

However, challenges still remain in the animal vaccine sector.

"Significant difficulties lie in developing vaccines for certain critical diseases, such as African swine fever and rabies, where technological barriers are high and cutting-edge technologies have an important role to play," said Li Jie, R&D director at Jinyu.

Li added that there is also a pressing need to reduce costs and ensure economic viability while preventing and controlling diseases, which poses new demands on process control and cost optimization.

"Promoting the use of effective

and quality assured vaccines remains elusive for many countries, especially low and lower-middle income countries," said Thanawat Tiensin, director of the animal production and health division at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

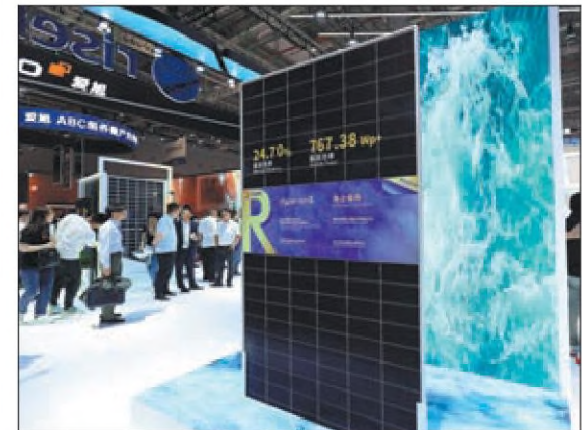
There is therefore an opportunity to both scale up the use of currently available vaccines and contribute to the innovation of the development of new vaccines against the most pressing animal diseases, Tiensin said.

Eyeing the innovation gap, Jinyu plans to leverage a biopharmaceutical innovation fund of 4.25 billion yuan over the next five years to drive projects worth hundreds of billions of yuan in the biopharmaceutical sector, the company said.

"In an era of great change, no company can afford to stand still," Zhang said. "Adaptation, quick response and proactive change are the inevitable choices for businesses today."

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Wu Peizhi contributed to this story.



An offshore PV company's booth is seen during a solar power expo in Shanghai in June. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## State Grid in Hangzhou delivers cool 'gift' through innovation

By ZHUANG QIANGHE  
and FANG BO

In the sweltering depths of summer in Fenkou, in Chun'an county, Zhejiang province, while most people were still asleep, some power workers from State Grid Co had arrived in rugged terrain near Jiawu village by 5:30 am on Aug 5.

Temperatures in the provincial capital Hangzhou have been soaring to over 40 C, and local people's demand for electricity has contin-

ued to climb, so power workers are meeting their demand in an innovative way.

Staff members of Team One at the Live Working Project Department of State Grid Hangzhou Power Supply Co were planning to upgrade the local rural grid by expanding the diameter of overhead power lines from 110 millimeters to 240 mm, thus elevating the lines' power supply capacity and boosting their reliability.

Fang Jingkan, a team mem-

ber, said as people's demand for electricity rises, the company is making innovations to maintain power supplies as the team conducts installation and renovation work.

Though temperatures at 5:30 am were close to 30 C, they began their outdoor work installing sectional line switches and finished the expansion work in about two hours.

Previously, in installing 240 mm conductors, Fang and his team

members had to cut off electricity to execute the task. But now they have made major breakthroughs in live-wire working technology, and successfully developed new live working tools and methods.

Fang said: "We have to work by wearing an insulating shawl every day, and it's normal for our clothes to get wet. As the power consumption is greater in the summer, we often have more work to do than usual."

Seeing that power upgrades had

been completed, villager Wang Chunhua was grateful, saying: "Now is the critical period of rice irrigation, and our electricity consumption is great. With your innovative work, I am so relieved."

Jiang Zhichun, chief safety officer at the Live Working Project Department, said: "At present, we are in a leading position among State Grid in the technology of lapping lead combination tools for ground potential live-wire work. Power workers from Fujian province,

Xizang autonomous region and Gansu province have come to visit us, trying to learn. For us electric power workers, 'no power outage is the best service', and we will continue to improve this innovative technology and contribute to the development of mountainous areas in Hangzhou."

With a history of over 5,000 years and now acting as a semi-provincial level city, Hangzhou administers 10 districts, one county-level city and two counties, including Chun'an.

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## BUSINESSFOCUS

CHINA UP-CLOSE

## Data as production factor come of age

Chinese manufacturers use digital technologies to enhance output, serve consumers better for competitive advantage

By FAN FEIFEI

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A workshop manufacturing home appliances in Tianjin offers consumers a chance to customize washing machines using their mobile phones remotely. When they place an order, intelligent equipment in internet-connected factory automatically reads the information and starts customized production in accordance with their preferences.

The digital information system and automated production line are empowered by COSMOPlat, an industrial internet platform developed by Chinese home appliance maker Haier Group.

Currently, manufacturers can customize products quickly and at scale by collecting and analyzing data collected from consumers, suppliers and factories with internet-connected sensors via their industrial internet platforms, while boosting productivity and cutting costs.

Haier's example offers a glimpse into Chinese manufacturing enterprises that leverage digital technologies, covering advanced data analysis, cloud computing and the internet of things, to transform and upgrade traditional industries. Data have become a new type of production factor and are playing an increasingly vital role in bolstering industrial digitalization.

China's emphasis on promoting the development and application of data resources, and building the basic systems for data, will help foster new growth drivers and inject fresh impetus into the effort for high-quality economic development, industry experts said.

Highlighting that data serve as the core element of the digital economy, they called for more efforts to accelerate the construction of digital infrastructure, promote sharing, circulation and trading of data elements, and expand the application scenarios of data in more fields, so as to unleash the value of massive data resources.

China will take further steps to promote reforms related to the market-oriented allocation of data elements and improve the basic systems for data, as part of its broader push to foster new quality productive forces, said Liu Liehong, head of the National Data Administration, at a recent news conference in Beijing.

Liu stressed efforts to speed up the formulation of policies concerning data property rights, circulation and transaction, revenue distribution and security governance. He also emphasized the need to nurture a nationwide integrated data market, and press ahead with the construction of data infrastructure like a national computing power network.

China will step up the push to bolster the development and utilization



**Top:** A robot (left) inspects operations at a net-zero emissions data center in Haidong, Qinghai province, in March. LI JUN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE **Above:** Technicians track server status at Zhejiang Lab in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, in June 2022. HUANG ZONGZHI / XINHUA

of public data and enterprise data, expand the application scenarios of data elements, as well as strengthen international cooperation in the digital economy domain, in order to cultivate new competitive advantages, Liu said.

He also emphasized the significance of promoting the smooth circulation and efficient allocation of data elements, which play a pivotal role in nurturing new industries, new business models and new growth drivers.

Liu's remarks came after the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party

of China adopted a resolution on further deepening reform comprehensively to advance Chinese modernization. The resolution called for efforts to improve the systems for promoting full integration between the real economy and the digital economy.

China will build and operate national data infrastructure to promote data sharing, and accelerate the establishment of a system for data property rights concerning ownership determination, market transaction, proceeds distribution and interest protection, the resolution said.

The country has unveiled a plan for the overall layout of the country's digital development, vowing to make important progress in the construction of a "Digital China" by 2025. By 2035, China will be at the global forefront of digital development.

Jiang Xiaojuan, a professor at the University of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said data have permeated all aspects of society and have an impact on the allocation of social resources as well as the logic of economic and social operations.

Noting that China, the world's largest data producer, has unique

advantages in accelerating the development of its digital economy, Jiang said it is of vital importance to give full play to the multiplier effects of data elements, create abundant applications in a wider range of sectors and promote the development and utilization of public data.

Statistics from the National Data Administration showed that China's total data output reached 32.85 zettabytes in 2023, up 22.4 percent year-on-year, while the added value of core digital economy industries accounted for 10 percent of GDP.

The top data governance regulator has unveiled a guideline to expand the application scenarios of data elements in 12 key fields such as industrial manufacturing, modern agriculture, trade circulation, transportation and financial services.

The country will create more than 300 typical application scenarios for data elements, double the scale of data transactions, and nurture a batch of data merchants with strong innovation capacities and third-party professional service organizations, according to the guideline.

"In the digital era, data elements have become a key and strategic resource driving economic growth. The in-depth integration of data with traditional industries will improve production efficiency, optimize the allocation of resources, and create novel business models and new social value," said Pan Helin, a member of the Expert Committee for Information and Communication Economy, which is under the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

For instance, enterprises can learn about market demand and consumer behavior more accurately through the analysis of large amounts of data, so as to optimize research and development, production and sale of products, Pan said.

Xu Ran, CEO of Chinese e-commerce giant JD, said the company has invested more than 100 billion yuan (\$14 billion) in basic science and technology R&D since 2017, and is committed to enhancing the resilience and safety of supply chains by leveraging digital technologies.

Looking ahead, JD will speed up the transformation and upgrade of traditional industries, promote the in-depth integration of the digital economy with the real economy, and make efforts to build a modern industrial system, Xu said.

The revenue of China's digital economy reached 50.2 trillion yuan in 2022, ranking second in the world and equivalent to 41.5 percent of the country's GDP, according to a report released by the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology.

Ouyang Rihui, assistant dean of

the China Center for Internet Economy Research at the Central University of Finance and Economics, said data are playing a pivotal part in promoting the transformation and upgrade of traditional industries, improving total factor productivity and giving birth to new industries, new models and new growth drivers.

Data have the attributes of commodities, which could be effectively allocated through market evaluation and trading, so as to create huge economic and social value, Ouyang noted.

He said more efforts are needed to promote the confirmation of data-related rights, explore a data pricing mechanism and value assessment system, and speed up the building of a unified domestic data elements market, in a bid to give full play to the value of data and boost the development of the country's digital economy.

The National Industrial Information Security Development Research Center said revenue derived from China's data elements market is projected to rise to 198.9 billion yuan in 2025, with the compound annual growth rate surpassing 25 percent during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25).

Wu Jianping, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering, said the emergence of innovative digital technologies like 5G, artificial intelligence and internet of things has laid a solid foundation for unleashing the huge value of data elements, while underlining the significance of safeguarding data security, which is a prerequisite to ensure orderly development of the data elements market.

China aims to increase the size of its data security market to over 150 billion yuan by 2025, with a CAGR of more than 30 percent, according to a government guideline.

"New cybersecurity challenges have appeared along with the rapid development of AI technology and the accelerated application of data elements in more scenarios," said Qi Xiangdong, chairman of Chinese cybersecurity company Qi-Anxin Technology Group.

Qi said Qi-Anxin has rolled out a large language model targeting the cybersecurity industry to ensure the safe operation of networks, enhance cybersecurity response capabilities and fend off potential cyberattacks.

Qi said cybersecurity and AI are inextricably linked, while AI has greatly lowered the threshold of cyberattacks and raised some concerns about data leakage and malicious misuse of data. He said data security is more important than ever, and called for efforts to invest more in the training of high-caliber cybersecurity talent.

## Guizhou's ambitious computing infra dream becoming reality

By FAN FEIFEI in Beijing and YANG JUN in Guiyang

Southwest China's Guizhou province is ramping up efforts to accelerate the construction of computing infrastructure, including intelligent computing centers and data centers, as part of its broader drive to improve efficiency in the use of computing resources and inject fresh impetus into the country's digital economy.

Computing power, which serves as a core productive force in the digital economy era, has become an important engine driving China's economic growth and unleashing the potential of data as a factor of production, experts said.

They further said the demand for computing power has been surging ever since US-based research firm OpenAI launched its chatbot ChatGPT in late 2022, taking the world by storm.

Jing Yaping, director of the Big Data Development Administration of Guizhou, said the province will take steps to bolster the construction of intelligent computing centers, expand the application scenarios of large language models

or LLMs in more vertical industries, and attract more enterprises engaged in data annotation, governance and training to Guizhou.

She noted that at present, demand for computing capacity, especially intelligent computing, is witnessing explosive growth along with technological breakthroughs in artificial intelligence-powered LLMs.

That apart, the province has made great efforts to improve the basic systems for data by introducing a series of policy measures, promote the circulation and trading of data, and build up data center clusters so as to unleash the massive value of data elements, Jing said.

It has established the country's first big data exchange, the Global Big Data Exchange, in Guiyang, to bolster the flow and transaction of data resources across the country, and to make data transactions more regulated and market-oriented. The annual turnover of data circulation and transactions in the province is expected to surpass 10 billion yuan (\$1.4 billion) by the end of 2025.

Often dubbed China's big data hub, the mountainous province of



An aerial view of an intelligent computing center in Gui'an New Area, Guizhou province, in June. LIU XU / XINHUA

Guizhou is China's first national big data comprehensive pilot zone. It has been promoting the big data industry as the backbone of its high-quality social and economic development in recent years.

China has launched a megaproject involving the construction of

eight national computing hubs and 10 national data center clusters, indicating that its work to channel more computing resources from the country's eastern regions to less developed yet resource-rich western regions is in full swing. Guizhou is among eight national computing

hubs, with Gui'an New Area in the provincial capital Guiyang, included in the 10 national data centers.

Tech companies from home and abroad, such as China's three telecom giants — China Mobile, China Unicom and China Telecom — Apple Inc, Huawei Technologies Co and Tencent Holdings Ltd have all established their data centers in Gui'an New Area.

These data centers store companies' crucial data resources and provide stable computing power support. So far, Gui'an New Area boasts 20 intelligent computing centers, with 10 data centers put into operation.

China has unveiled an implementation plan to accelerate the construction of a national computing power network. The plan, jointly released by the National Data Administration and four other central government departments, said the country will form a preliminary comprehensive computing power infrastructure system by the end of 2025.

Most of China's computing infrastructure is distributed in the eastern regions, while the western regions have the potential to foster

the development of data centers and meet the needs of data computing in the eastern regions, said Yu Xiaohui, head of the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology.

Yu said the implementation of the east-data-west-computing project is conducive to optimizing the allocation of national computing power, utilizing green energy in the western regions, improving the energy efficiency of data centers and nurturing emerging digital industries.

"With the rapid development and the commercial application of 5G, the internet of things, AI and the industrial internet, demand for data processing is increasing, which has driven the construction of computing power infrastructure," said Xiang Ligang, director-general of the Information Consumption Alliance, a telecom industry association.

He noted building a national computing power network will enable the western regions to handle and store data transmitted from the eastern areas, and resolve excessive data surges and imbalances in regional computing capacity, adding that Chinese high-tech companies should utilize innovative technologies to improve data centers' operational efficiency and cut power and energy consumption.