



## Bumper harvest

Research on cash crops reaps rich dividends in Xizang **READ, PAGE 6**



## Movie magic

Projectionist brings delights of the silver screen to rural residents **IMAGE, PAGE 7**

# CHINA DAILY

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## Xi, Kim hail China-DPRK friendly ties

Leaders exchange messages to mark 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations

By ZHAO JIA  
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President Xi Jinping on Sunday exchanged congratulatory messages with Kim Jong-un, top leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, on the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties, underscoring the commitment to further develop the traditional friendship between the two neighbors.

China and the DPRK officially established diplomatic relations on Oct 6, 1949, five days after the founding of the People's Republic of China, which Xi said in the message opened a new chapter in the history of bilateral relations and is of epoch-making significance.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, said that over the past 75 years, the two countries have supported each other in consolidating people's power and safeguarding national sovereignty, strengthening exchanges and cooperation and advancing social-list construction. They have also worked closely to promote regional peace and stability and safeguard international equity and justice.

The traditional friendship between China and the DPRK has stood the test of changing times and global challenges, becoming a valuable asset for both countries and their people, he added.

Xi stressed that he highly values the development of bilateral relations and has jointly guided and promoted the development of China-DPRK relations with Kim, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea and president of the State Affairs of the DPRK.

In recent years, the two leaders have held five historic meetings and maintained close communication through letters and messages. Kim sent a message of congratulations to Xi last week on the occasion of the 75th founding anniversary of New China and last month Xi sent a congratulatory

message to Kim on the 76th anniversary of the DPRK's founding.

The two leaders also exchanged messages of New Year greetings at the beginning of the year and jointly announced the designation of 2024 as the China-DPRK Friendship Year and launched a series of activities.

Under the new circumstances of the new era, Xi said in Sunday's message that China is willing to work with the DPRK to take the 75th anniversary as an opportunity to strengthen strategic communication and coordination, deepen friendly exchanges and cooperation, and continue to write new chapters in the China-DPRK traditional friendship, in order to jointly promote the steady and long-term development of the two countries' socialist cause and bring more benefits to their people.

In his message, Kim said that 75 years ago, the DPRK and China officially established diplomatic relations, and bilateral friendly relations have since entered a new stage of historical development.

Over the past 75 years, the two parties and countries have upheld their firm belief in the legitimacy of their causes, overcoming various tests and challenges, and advancing courageously on the path of socialism, Kim said.

It is in the fundamental interests of both countries to continuously carry forward and develop the DPRK-China friendship with a time-honored history and fine tradition, he added.

The DPRK's party and government will continue to make efforts to consolidate and develop friendly and cooperative relations with China as required by the new era, Kim said.

Kim also expressed his wish that the Chinese people, under the leadership of the CPC with Xi at its core, will continue to make new achievements in building a modern socialist country in all respects.

Xinhua contributed to this story.



A foreign couple take a selfie at a scenic spot in Beijing on Tuesday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Record surge seen in domestic, foreign tourists during holiday

By ZHAO YIMENG  
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The National Day holiday has sparked a travel boom nationwide, reflected by data showing domestic tourism reaching record levels and a significant increase in foreign visitors.

According to the national railway operator China State Railway Group, the railways on Sunday alone were expected to experience a return travel peak, as the number of passengers is expected to reach 18.73 million on that day, with 1,432 additional trains planned by the operator.

Saturday saw 17.88 million travelers nationwide, marking over 17 million passengers for the sixth consecutive day, since the holiday travel started on Sept 29, the group said.

As of Sunday, more than 155 million tickets for holiday train trips have been sold on the national ticket sales system. The numbers are expected to stay high through the holiday, driven by a mix of tourism, family visits and student travel. The national railway operates an average of over 12,000 trains daily, the operator said.

Dai Bin, head of the China Tourism Academy, told China Central Television that based on the travel patterns, booking indices and local preparations for the holiday season, the number of travelers during this year's National Day holiday is expected to hit a record high.

Hsieh Yi-ting, a tourist from Taiwan, visited the Tianshan Mountains in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region during the holiday. "We drove to an ethnic village recently. The food here is something I've never tried before in my hometown. I love the scenery and food in Xinjiang," she said.

In metropolises such as Shanghai, transit systems enhanced safety measures during the holiday. The Shanghai Metro has extended service hours and limited access to certain stations at popular scenic spots during peak times to manage the influx of shoppers and revelers.

Inbound tourism has also experienced a resurgence during the week-long holiday. For example, at Beijing's Silk Street Market, the number of foreign visitors during the holiday increased over 50 percent year-on-year, with sales doubling from the previous year, CCTV reported.

The Central Axis of Beijing, the newly recognized UNESCO World Heritage Site, has also seen a notable increase in sales of its cultural products and silk garments, it added.

Chen Linan, a public relations manager at travel agency Trip.com Group, said trip orders from overseas tourists during the holiday have surged more than 60 percent, with many extending traveling days in China to more than a week.

Thanks to measures facilitating foreign tourists' entry to China, such as an expanded 144-hour visa-

free transit policy for 54 countries, a wave of foreign social media influencers has flocked to the country since this summer to share their travel experiences.

A British family of five shared their trip to Southwest China's Chongqing during the holiday on short video platform Douyin. In videos posted by "The Hutchinsons", the family experienced the night view of Hongyadong and tried the spicy hotpot.

"We came out on the busiest day of the year; the National Day, and this is an incredible experience," the father of the family said in a video, describing that in scenic spots, there are "people mountain people sea" — a localized English expression in China to describe the massive crowds.

Walking around the streets in Chongqing, the father said he noticed that many loudspeakers can be found lying on the floor or sticking in a shop, repeating words that he could not understand. After knowing the devices are often used to effectively highlight some information such as discounts at scenic spots or stores in China, the vlogger said in his video: "This is something I've never seen in other countries. But I guess if you want to get your message across, it's a great way."

Before National Day, the Ministry of Transport estimated that 1.94 billion people would travel across regions during the holiday, a 0.7 percent year-on-year increase and a 19.4 percent rise from 2019.

## Former Irish PM stresses key role of diplomacy

By XING YI in London  
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Diplomacy and people-to-people exchanges can play a big role in securing global stability amid geopolitical and trade tensions, said former Irish prime minister Bertie Ahern.

Responding to a question about the European Commission's additional tariffs on made-in-China electric vehicles, the former Irish prime minister, who was in office from 1997 to 2008, said: "I know that at times it is a bit difficult, but I think it's important that people keep talking, keep diplomacy, keep working, keep explaining each other's positions, and hopefully that (China-Europe relations) can be enhanced and can grow."

The EU voted on Friday to impose punitive tariffs on electric vehicles imported from China.

Ahern said he will visit Beijing this week to attend the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries.

"The best way of dealing with things is through friendship, dialogue and understanding of our different positions. The association is really good at doing that, and I'm very supportive of their good work," he said.

Recalling when he led Ireland's biggest trade delegation to China in 2005, Ahern said Ireland is a great believer in diplomacy, exchanges of people, and trade. "Hopefully, we can continue to develop that and to grow into the years ahead," he said.

After Ahern left the Irish parliament in 2011, he joined the InterAction Council, an independent organization that brings together former leaders to provide recommendations on global issues, and he encouraged the experts of the council to form joint groups with their Chinese colleagues to study development problems, such as poverty alleviation, public health and climate change.

A frequent visitor to China, Ahern has witnessed the development in the country. "Since I started going to China in the late 1990s, I've seen the technological, cultural and educational achievements — it's been a remarkable success story for China," he said.

Applauding the unilateral visa-free policy that China applied to Ireland in January, Ahern said it was warmly welcomed by the Irish public, and that people-to-people exchanges and cooperation hold the key for nations with different backgrounds to develop relations.

"It allowed more and more Irish people to travel directly to China and allowed us to build our contacts and relationships," he said. "There are many Chinese people studying and working in Ireland now. And I've always been very supportive of Chinese business coming to Ireland and Irish doing business in China."

Ahern also praised China's positive role in the world by contributing Chinese wisdom to promote peace and development.

"China has put forward many excellent proposals and initiatives," said Ahern.

"Tremendous advancements and progress have been made over these decades in China ... I congratulate the country's people and its leaders for what it has achieved," he said.

## Sport events help drive consumption

By WANG ZHUOQIONG  
and SUN XIAOCHEN

During this year's National Day holiday, sports events across China, including those in Beijing and Shanghai, have been seen igniting public enthusiasm and spurring local consumption, reflected by ticket sales and retail figures from the tourism and catering sectors.

The "Village Super League" soccer tournament in Guizhou province and the three-day Jinshajiang

River Regatta held in Yunnan province drew large crowds, further igniting public interest in sports. The World Table Tennis China Smash was held between Sept 26 and Sunday in Beijing, with ticket sales standing at some 60 million yuan (\$8.5 million).

Among the standout events was the China Open, an ATP 500 and WTA 1000 hard court tennis tournament held in Beijing, which began on Sept 23.

This year, the China Open

attracted around 300,000 visitors, a 50 percent increase compared to last year.

The event generated over 80 million yuan in ticket sales revenue, up 60 percent year-on-year. By Tuesday, all tickets for the event had been sold out, and more than 29,000 attendees showed up on Wednesday alone.

The event also attracted about 140,000 tennis fans from outside Beijing and over 13,000 international visitors.

The tournament's success has been fueled by the rising prominence of Chinese tennis players, including 21-year-old Zheng Qinwen, who made history at the Paris Games as the first Chinese athlete to win an Olympic women's singles gold medal.

At the China Open 2024, Buyunchaokete became the first Chinese man to reach the semifinals, further boosting national interest in the sport.

Tennis legend Novak Djokovic, who returned to the Rolex Shanghai Masters after five years, praised the growing success of Chinese tennis players during a visit to support Chinese junior players from the ASICS Junior Tennis Tour.



Visitors gather outside the World Table Tennis China Smash venue in Beijing on Sunday. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

## JINJIANG PIONEER IN PRIVATE FIRM DIGITAL UPGRADE

Fujian city home to several leading retail sector brands

By LIU ZIZHENG  
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Jinjiang, a county-level city in Fujian province, is home to some of the country's most renowned private companies such as Panpan Foods, Anta Group and 361 Degrees.

As the competition in traditional industries continues to intensify, such companies have embarked on a path of digital and intelligent transition in recent years, so as to pursue sustainable growth.

In a production workshop at Panpan, freshly baked rolls are neatly arranged on a conveyor belt, giving off a sweet aroma. After cooling, they will be automatically transported to packaging machines.

A worker surnamed Lu told China Daily that the company has promoted smart manufacturing for more than four years, and now all the bakery workshops have been equipped with smart devices.

"The move has brought us so much convenience. In the past, we had to put flour, sugar and other ingredients into the molds ourselves, but now the devices take care of all these tasks. The uniformity of production has been significantly improved," said Lu.

Lu also said that after each stage of production there will be devices to test the quality of the baked goods, as well as to remove defective output, so as to minimize waste of materials.

Meanwhile, all the smart devices have been connected to an online platform, through which workers can get a clear picture of workshop production progress, energy consumption and temperature.

"When electrical hazards or other accidents occur, the platform can also send out prompt alarm messages," said Lu.

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## NATION

## Big salute



Chinese Ambassador to South Sudan Ma Qiang (second left) honors the 10th peacekeeping infantry battalion from China to Juba with the United Nations Peace Medal of Honor on Thursday, for their contributions to peace and stability in the region. The battalion under the United Nations Mission in South Sudan has completed over 150 authorized tasks since its deployment in December. They have actively engaged in humanitarian activities such as medical outreach and welfare programs. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Efforts upgrading TV, IPTV services bear fruit

By XU FAN  
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Fueled by the potential of the domestic market, China witnessed an increase in revenue from television, radio and online audiovisual services in the first half of this year, according to the industry's top regulator.

The revenue increased to 668.3 billion yuan (\$95.2 billion) from January to June, surging 7 percent year-on-year, making it a bigger contributor to the country's economic development, said Zhu Yonglei, deputy director of the National Radio and Television Administration, during a recent news conference.

Zhu said that a total of 148 TV series and online dramas obtained release permits between January and August, presenting a diverse array of genres and themes.

Notable among these are popular and critically acclaimed programs such as *Blossoms Shanghai*, a nostalgic revisit to the 1990s Shanghai; *She and Her Girls*, a biographical drama about Zhang Guimei, a devoted teacher who has assisted over 2,000 rural girls; and *To the Wonder*, a poetic depiction of local life in Altay prefecture of the

## 668.3 billion yuan

revenue from television, radio and online audiovisual services in China in the first half of this year

Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, according to the administration.

Marking the country's latest effort to curb fee stacking and simplify navigation for television services, more than 80 percent of family subscribers with cable TV or internet protocol television devices can now access live-streamed programs on their devices, added Zhu.

Besides, both cable TV and IPTV services have eliminated start-up advertisements, allowing audiences to directly access their preferred programs without being interrupted by commercials. The latest available figures showed that the audience for watching live-streamed programs rose 10 percent in August compared to the same period last year, marking the highest such increase in three years, added Zhu.

In addition to making TV viewing more convenient, Chinese audiences will find that they can watch

TV shows in a more immersive and high-definition manner.

Yang Guorui, also a deputy director of the administration, said that by the end of 2025, China will have over 20 TV channels broadcasting ultra-high definition content, which is four times the resolution of the currently prevalent high-definition devices. Furthermore, the number of such channels will increase by an additional 11 in 2026.

Yang added that ultra-high definition programs released on major streaming platforms like iQiyi and Youku will comprise more than half of all new shows, driving ultra-high definition to emerge as the primary viewing format for Chinese audiences in the future.

In recent years, more and more Chinese dramas won popularity overseas, demonstrating that they could serve as important mediums to promote Chinese stories abroad, Yang told China Daily.

For example, the sci-fi drama *Three-Body*, adapted from the work of Hugo Award-winning novelist Liu Cixin, has received acclaim in Europe and North America. *Minning Town*, a popular TV drama depicting the battle against poverty in the rural

Ningxia Hui autonomous region, has been broadcast in over 50 countries and regions.

Yang said that these programs could enhance the foreign audience's comprehension of China while also highlighting shared emotions that transcend borders, culture and races.

Last year, the domestic market size of micro-dramas reached 37.39 billion yuan (\$5.31 billion), marking a sizable surge of 267.65 percent year-on-year, according to a survey released by the market consultancy iMedia Research earlier this year.

Dong Xin, another deputy director of the administration, said that with social and economic advancements and the progress of information technology, micro-dramas, as an emerging artistic category, have gained significant momentum in their development.

He revealed that the administration will work toward establishing a common entertainment format in the future, where exceptional micro-dramas can be released on both TV screens and smaller screens on mobile devices, as well as endeavoring to promote the production of micro-drama franchises.

## Colleges call on students to stay on in education

Ministry says 4.38 million applicants taking part in this year's entrance test

By ZOU SHUO in Changsha  
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Many universities nationwide are encouraging undergraduate students to prepare for postgraduate exams as early as possible, as extra academic degrees are becoming a requirement to boost their competitiveness in the tough job market.

Experts said such moves are also part of their efforts to boost universities' employment record, as in China, enrolling to postgraduate studies also constitutes finding jobs for undergraduate students. The universities need high employment numbers for evaluation from education authorities and student enrollment.

Postgraduate studies may not be suitable for all students, they added. Only those who are enthusiastic about academic research should choose to further their studies.

Taishan University in Shandong province is one such institution that encourages its schools and departments to boost students' passion for the exam.

The vice-president of the university, Wei Xinjiang, said that the university campus will facilitate various events for postgraduate studies. Departments and schools will also offer effective and tailor-made guidance for students to choose their major and university for master's education, Wei added.

Xu Peilin, an official at the School of Marxism at Taizhou University in Zhejiang province, said every student should value the chance of taking the postgraduate exam and view it as an important part of their undergraduate studies.

Xu said students should set a goal, make plans and take action as soon as possible. The school will offer all-round support for students to take the exam, he added.

The enthusiasm of universities and students to pursue postgraduate studies comes amid the intense pressure in the job market and the ever-increasing number of college graduates in the country. The number of college graduates is expected to reach a new record of 11.79 million this year and that of applicants for the national postgraduate entrance exam to reach 4.38 million, according to the Ministry of Education.

Meanwhile, the unemployment

rate of young people aged between 16 and 24, excluding students, stood at 18.8 percent in August, setting a nine-month record, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

Headlines that claimed the number of postgraduate students is exceeding that of the undergraduates in some famous universities have ignited a fierce debate online about whether a good academic background is becoming less useful in finding better jobs.

According to China Newsweek, there are 28 top universities with more postgraduate students than undergraduate ones.

A teacher surnamed Liang at a university in Nanchang, Jiangxi province, said almost all universities are encouraging their undergraduate students to pursue postgraduate degrees.

As a teacher in material sciences, Liang said the number of graduates from the major has been "really big" and the direct impact of economic headwinds means that some of them cannot get a job, weighing down on the employment rate of the university.

"If a university has a low employment rate, education authorities will cut its enrollment quota, parents and students will be reluctant to apply to the school and it cannot get high scores in teaching evaluation from education authorities," he said, adding that some 40 percent of undergraduate students on the campus have chosen to take the exam.

Wu Peng, dean of the Jiangsu University Overseas Education College, attributes such a phenomenon to the encouragement of universities and students' low expectations of the job market.

For research-oriented universities, they should encourage undergraduate students to continue their studies, but for vocational universities, it is not practical and goes against the purpose of vocational education to encourage students to take the exam, Wu said.

"I firmly oppose encouraging students to pursue postgraduate studies just to avoid entering the job market or increase the employment rate of the university. Postgraduate studies are for realizing academic ideals and goals, not for burnishing the job performance of university administrators."

## Lego upbeat about market prospects in China

By WANG ZHUOQIONG  
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Lego Group remains optimistic about its long-term growth in the Chinese market, focusing on innovation and local relevance, said top official of the global building blocks maker.

The company's CEO Niels B. Christiansen made the comments during a recent trip to Shanghai, and said Lego will continue its investment in the Chinese market.

Over the past decade, the group has achieved significant market share and rapid growth in China — one of its most important markets. The group has opened more than 500 stores in China.

"We have experienced a fantastic journey of growth here, and we strongly believe in the future of the market. There are still many children and families who haven't had the opportunity to experience Lego," Christiansen said, adding that he

What matters most is our commitment to the Chinese market and our confidence that we will achieve growth again in China."

Niels B. Christiansen, CEO of Lego Group

has confidence in the company's ability to get back on growth track.

"What matters most is our commitment to the Chinese market and our confidence that we will achieve growth again in China."

To secure future growth, the group plans to continue to expand its operations in China.

A key strategy is the development of culturally relevant products,

such as the Lego Monk Kid series, inspired by the classic Chinese legend *Journey to the West*.

Christiansen said, "Monk Kid is unique to the Chinese market and reflects our commitment to ensuring the Lego brand resonates with local consumers. We're proud that Monk Kid has been well-received in China and we plan to continue developing products that speak to local culture."

The company is also gearing up for the new items for the Chinese New Year, although specific details have not yet been disclosed.

Lego is expanding its physical and digital presence in China. The company has recently added investment in its factory in Jiaxing, Zhejiang province, with the opening of a new processing line, a molding center and two high-bay warehouses, to bolster its supply chain and support future growth.

Retail remains a crucial pillar. The company plans to open more

stores, upgrade existing ones and relocate some to better locations to improve customer experiences, said the CEO.

"Stores will continue to play an important role for us, but they'll be complemented by digital and online experiences," Christiansen said.

The company's digital innovation center in Shanghai is not only focusing on the Chinese market, but also contributing to the group's global operations, he added.

The opening of Legoland Shanghai next summer is expected to be a key driver of the company's growth in China. The park is set to be one of the largest and most modern Legoland parks globally.

Globally, the Lego Group has outperformed the broader toy industry globally over the past five to six years, growing at an average 13 to 14 percent, compared to the industry's two percent growth. The company introduced more than 300 new products in the first half of this year alone.

## Hebei-Iowa connection



Students from Shijiazhuang Foreign Language School in Hebei province visit the Sino-US Friendship House in Muscatine, Iowa, on Friday. The North China province and the US Midwestern state forged a sister state-province relationship in 1983.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DISCOVERMUSCATINE.COM

## Trend: Tournament gains popularity among consumers

From page 1

"I've been on the tour for more than 20 years, and Chinese women's tennis players have always been successful globally," Djokovic said. "It's great to see Chinese men's tennis emerging, and I'm enjoying this new trend."

Beyond tennis, the China Open

also spurred the local retail and catering industries.

Mo Tianfei, manager of the tournament's official retail store, said it had sold over 10,000 products on Tuesday alone.

"Some items sold out, and we had to rush production to meet demand," Mo said.

Sales of the tournament's new mascot — Azhong — were particularly strong, which increased 50 percent compared to last year.

Catering at the event also saw a significant uptick. Catering sales exceeded 10 million yuan by Friday, with a 30-40 percent increase in on-site revenue.

The China Open continues to gain popularity among younger audiences, with most fans under 40, including 800 to 1,000 international visitors daily.

Liang Xi, a local fan, spent 1,800 yuan on tickets for her family. "We came to support my 13-year-old son, Li Liangxinqi, who served as a

ball kid last year. This year, he's excited to watch his favorite players like Jannik Sinner and Zhang Zhizhen."

Jiang Yiyi, deputy dean of the School of Sports, Leisure and Tourism at Beijing Sport University, highlighted the broader economic impact of sports events.

"Sports events play a key role in driving tourism consumption and enhancing a city's global image," Jiang said. "Building strong

events, teams and players is essential to sustaining this momentum."

The eighth ATP Masters 1000 event of 2024 at the Rolex Shanghai Masters is being held from Wednesday through Oct 13 in Shanghai, including top-ranking players Jannik Sinner, Carlos Alcaraz and Alexander Zverev.

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## COVER

## JINJIANG: City leads intelligent transition

From page 1

Based on the data collected by the platform, Panpan has continued to optimize its production model and gradually applied smart devices to the production of other goods such as beverages and other baked goods.

Cai Jinchai, president of Panpan Foods, said this transition is crucial for the company to reduce costs and increase production efficiency.

The company has so far witnessed a nearly 40 percent drop in its labor costs. Workers needn't undergo long-term training anymore and three days are enough for them to become familiar with operation of the devices.

In addition, the timeliness of order fulfillment and product qualification rates have increased by 15 percent and 18 percent, respectively.

Cai said Panpan will continue to increase investment in innovation and give a bigger play to new quality productive forces.

"At a time when consumption is relatively weak, traditional companies like us must better utilize emerging technologies to empower industrial transformation and upgrading," said Cai.

Similarly, sportswear giant 361 Degrees has introduced a smart garment production system. Not only did the company make its production equipment — such as irons and sewing machines — easier to operate, but it also placed a roller chain above the workers.

"We have hung a lot of hangers on the roller chain. When a worker finishes a step, they only need to put the garment back on the hanger and press the control button. The roller chain will automatically transfer the garment to the next operation station," said a person in charge.

She said all the hangers have been equipped with smart chips, which record both the progress of garment production and the workload of employees. As a result, there has been a significant decline in the company's management costs.

In addition to empowering manufacturing, Jinjiang-based companies have also utilized smart devices to carry out product testing and shorten the product development life cycle.

Anta Group is among them. A variety of test laboratories have been set up in the company to test the performance of its clothing and footwear products.

A spokesman for the company said these labs not only import advanced devices from abroad, but also develop new devices themselves.

"For example, we recently launched a device that could test the effect of sneakers on running performance, marking a major breakthrough in the sector," said the spokesman.

He said the device can simulate different running forms and gather a number of key data points, such as sole deformation and stress distribution. Researchers can also easily change the testing parameters by



Shoppers look at sportswear made by Anta Group at a department store in Beijing. A variety of test laboratories have been set up in the company to test the performance of its clothing and footwear products. JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

Technologies ... enable private companies to quickly obtain market data, better tap into new markets and develop more diversified products and services."

Liu Chunsheng, associate professor at Central University of Finance and Economics

adjusting temperature, humidity and running surfaces.

The smart devices have helped the company develop many iconic products, such as weight-lifting shoes and "Anta Membrane" — a high-performance waterproof material.

"We are currently building a new

research and development center, which will be put into use in 2027. We will be able to conduct more diverse product testing by then," he added.

The company invested more than 1.6 billion yuan (\$225.25 million) in R&D last year, and by 2030, the cumulative investment is expected to surpass 20 billion yuan.

Their moves conform to China's action plan for digital transition of manufacturing, which was reviewed and approved by the State Council, the country's Cabinet, in May.

According to the action plan, the digital transition of the manufacturing sector is crucial for China to promote new industrialization and build a modern industrial system.

The country will step up the development and application of core technologies, as well as further improve industry standards. Efforts will also be intensified to advance equipment upgrading in factories.

Meanwhile, the action plan said China will strive to optimize its public service platforms and carry out a long-term mechanism to advance

the digital transition of small and medium-sized companies.

Based on the characteristics of different subsectors of manufacturing, the country also plans to develop a series of more customized and specific measures.

Xiao Fangzu, deputy director of Jinjiang's development and reform bureau, said the city is giving sound support for the digital and intelligent transition of traditional private companies.

"Large companies have the ability to develop or introduce cutting-edge technologies on their own, but SMEs usually lack such ability and don't have enough money for innovation," said Xiao.

Therefore, the local government has worked with famous universities such as Hong Kong Polytechnic University to build scientific research platforms, aimed at providing SMEs with more talent and smart devices.

"We expect the city's traditional industries to further embrace innovation, and we will continue to transform scientific research results into practical applications," he added.

Liu Chunsheng, an associate professor at Central University of Finance and Economics' school of international trade and economics, said it is of great significance for traditional private firms to pursue digital transition.

Liu said digital transition could help such companies optimize their production process and improve key indicators, including production efficiency. Meanwhile, both the companies' management and resource allocation are expected to be further refined.

"Technologies such as big data and artificial intelligence enable private companies to quickly obtain market data, better tap into new markets and develop more diversified products and services. As a result, both their customer satisfaction and loyalty could be significantly enhanced," said Liu.

However, there still exist some challenges that hinder private firms from carrying out digital transition.

Liu said one major problem is that some private companies lack a proper understanding of digital

transition and are thus not very willing to make such changes. In addition, they sometimes lack the necessary funds, talent and technologies.

"Therefore, local governments should provide companies with more financial subsidies and tax incentives. Special service platforms should also be in place to offer technical consultation and cultivate talent for them," said Liu, adding that Jinjiang has set a good example in this regard.

Private companies also need to formulate long-term plans for digital transition, so as to accomplish their objectives in an orderly manner.

In addition, digital transition will inevitably result in the reduction of traditional jobs, but it will also create multiple new jobs, such as data analysts and AI engineers.

Companies should strengthen employee training and help them adapt to new positions, while local governments must pay more attention to nurturing students' digital skills in vocational schools, Liu added.

## SHUA making workouts more user-friendly

By LIU ZIZHENG

SHUA Fitness, a Jinjiang, Fujian province-based fitness equipment supplier, has stepped up the upgrade of its products by giving full play to emerging technologies — from ergonomic engineering to the internet of things — aimed at continuously increasing its market share.

A spokesman for SHUA Fitness told China Daily that the company began developing intelligent technologies in 2014 and has actively utilized them to improve its fitness equipment. Roughly 3 million yuan (\$421,517) to 5 million yuan is invested in this type of research each year.

For example, one of the company's new treadmills could monitor user's physical condition in real-time and adjust parameters accordingly.

"Users need to wear a running armband, through which the treadmill can obtain their age, heart rate and other key data. Meanwhile, the treadmill can automatically adjust its speed and incline, so as to ensure that oxygen consumption

remains at optimal levels and users can achieve the best possible results from workouts," said the spokesman.

Tan Jiahao, a running enthusiast in Beijing, said he looks forward to trying out the equipment, which he believes will bring a lot of convenience.

Tan said most runners can only occasionally check their sports bracelets to monitor heart rates, and when they get too fast, they have to spend time adjusting treadmill settings, which is neither safe nor convenient.

"Therefore, I think it is of great significance to develop such smart equipment. It will be even better if the company could make the treadmills more compact," said Tan.

In addition to seeking innovation in home fitness equipment, SHUA Fitness has launched a variety of "outdoor fitness stations", which are not only equipped with smart fitness equipment, but also have large electronic screens.

"By simply standing in front of the screen and scanning faces, residents can learn about their work-



A view of the booth of SHUA Fitness during an expo in Shanghai. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

out history and how much exercise they need every day, because the fitness equipment can transmit data to an online platform to create a large database," the spokesman said.

The fitness stations have been set up in many provinces across the country, such as Fujian, Zhejiang and Henan, which has significantly improved the livelihoods of seniors and provides residents with more

entertainment options.

Eying further breakthroughs, SHUA Fitness will cooperate with professional associations and universities — such as the China Sport Science Society and Shanghai University of Sport — to carry out more research on new technologies, materials and products.

Zhou Mi, a researcher at the Beijing-based Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said SHUA Fitness has provided customers with more professional and customized services through product innovation.

"In the past, fitness enthusiasts had to hire a personal trainer if they wanted customized services, and the prices were relatively high. The smart fitness equipment can serve as a good solution to this problem," said Zhou.

Meanwhile, Zhou said if the company wants to further improve its fitness equipment, it must increase both the size and diversity of research samples.

"Customers have different expectations of exercise results, and their exercise environments could also

vary a lot. Only after analyzing a large number of samples can smart equipment accurately customize exercise plans for each user," he said.

While striving to develop new products, the company also has to keep a close eye on after-sales services, so as to improve customer satisfaction and further advance market expansion, he added.

Lin Shen, an associate research fellow at the Institute of World Economics and Politics of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, also recognized the role of emerging technologies in helping companies improve product competitiveness.

Lin said companies must carry out appropriate assessment and planning before introducing new technologies. Efforts are also needed to advance cooperation with professional technology suppliers.

"In addition, companies should establish a complete system for data security management and utilize encryption, anonymization and other technical means to protect user privacy," Lin added.

## WORLD

## Thousands march for cease-fire

Calls demanding end to bloodshed in the Middle East grow as fighting rages on for a year

PARIS/WASHINGTON — Thousands of protesters took to the streets in major cities around the world over the weekend demanding an end to the bloodshed in Gaza and the wider Middle East ahead of the first anniversary of the outbreak of the Gaza conflict.

About 40,000 pro-Palestinian demonstrators marched through central London, while thousands gathered in Paris, Rome, Manila, Cape Town and New York City. Demonstrations were also held near the White House in Washington, protesting against US support for Israel in military campaigns in Gaza and Lebanon.

In Washington, more than a thousand protesters demonstrated outside the White House, demanding the United States, Israel's top military supplier, stop providing weapons and aid to Israel.

One man attempted to set himself on fire, Agence France-Presse journalists saw, succeeding in setting his left arm ablaze before bystanders and police extinguished the flames.

Pro-Palestinian demonstrators gathered at New York's Times Square to call for a cease-fire, chanting "Gaza!" to a drumbeat. Some wore keffiyeh scarves and waved Palestinian and Lebanese flags.

The fighting in Gaza was triggered when Hamas attacked southern Israel on Oct 7, 2023, killing 1,200 people and taking about 250 as hostages, according to Israeli tallies.

Israel's subsequent military assault on Gaza has killed nearly 42,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's health ministry. It has laid waste to the enclave, displacing nearly all of the 2.3 million population and causing a hunger crisis.

In Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, at least 1,000 pro-Palestinian protesters gathered on Sunday morning near the US embassy demanding that Washington stop supplying weapons to Israel.

In London on Saturday, counter-demonstrators waved Israeli flags as pro-Palestinian marchers walked by. There were 15 arrests on the sidelines of the protests, according to police, who did not specify whether those



Protesters rally in support of Gaza and Lebanon on Saturday in New York City. STEPHANIE KEITH / GETTY IMAGES

## Israeli strikes continue to hit northern Gaza, southern Beirut

At least 24 people were killed and 93 others wounded when Israeli air strikes targeted a mosque and a school sheltering displaced people in the Gaza Strip early on Sunday morning, the Hamas-run Gaza government media office said.

The strikes near the Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip, came as the fighting between Israel and Palestinian militant group Hamas in the enclave approaches its first anniversary.

In a statement, the Israeli military said it conducted "precise strikes on Hamas terrorists" who were operat-

ing within command and control centers embedded in Ibn Rushd School and the Shuhada Al-Aqsa Mosque in the area of Deir al-Balah. In southern Beirut, a huge fireball lit up the night sky and plumes of smoke rose over the city early on Sunday.

After a devastating yearlong conflict in Gaza, Israel has now turned its focus northward to Hezbollah. Lebanon's official National News Agency said the Hezbollah stronghold in southern Beirut was hit by more than 30 strikes.

The NNA said targets included a

petrol station and a warehouse for medical supplies.

"The strikes were like an earthquake," shopkeeper Mehdi Zetter, 60, said.

In the Sabra area, near the southern suburbs, dozens of people, some carrying bags on foot and others on motorbikes, fled one of the most intense bombardments of the conflict.

Hezbollah said it targeted Israeli forces with artillery after they tried to infiltrate toward Khalat Shuaib in Bli-da, in southern Lebanon.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

detained were from either group.

In Rome, police fired tear gas and water cannons after clashes broke out. About 6,000 protesters defied a ban to march in the city center ahead of the anniversary.

In Berlin, a protest drew about 1,000 demonstrators with Palestinian flags, who chanted: "One Year of Genocide." The conflict in Gaza has led to genocide allegations against Israel at the World Court, which Israel denies.

German demonstrators also criticized what they called police violence against pro-Palestinian protesters. Israel supporters in Berlin protested against rising anti-Semitism. Scuffles broke out between police and pro-Palestinian protesters.

Over the past year, the scale of the killing and destruction in Gaza has

drawn some of the biggest global demonstrations in years, including in the US, which saw weeks of pro-Palestinian college campus encampments.

Advocates have raised concerns over antisemitic and Islamophobic rhetoric in some protests and counter-protests related to the conflict. Rights advocates have warned about rising threats against Muslims and Jews around the world.

The United States and other allies have supported Israel's right to self-defense, but Israel has faced wide international condemnation over its actions in Gaza and now over its bombardment of Lebanon.

Israel has sharply escalated a campaign in recent weeks in Lebanon. Iran launched a barrage of missiles against Israel last week to which Israel vows to respond.

In Paris, Lebanese-French protester Houssam Houssein said: "We fear a regional war, because there are tensions with Iran at the moment, and perhaps with Iraq and Yemen." Houssein added: "We really need to stop the war because it's now become unbearable."

In Manila, activists clashed with anti-riot police after they were blocked from holding a demonstration in front of the US embassy in the Philippine capital against Washington's support for Israel.

International diplomacy backed by the US has so far failed to clinch a cease-fire deal in Gaza. Hamas wants an agreement that ends the conflict while Israel says fighting can end only when Hamas is eradicated.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## More greetings pour in on 75th anniversary of PRC

World leaders have recently sent messages or letters of congratulations to Chinese President Xi Jinping, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, on the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

French President Emmanuel Macron said that 2024 marks both the 75th anniversary of the founding of the PRC and the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between France and China, with Xi's state visit to France in May one of the highlights.

Macron said France is willing to maintain the positive momentum for the development of bilateral ties, promote Europe-China dialogue, seek common interests, advance world peace, and jointly address major challenges of our time, such as climate change.

US President Joe Biden said: "On behalf of the people of the United States, I send our congratulations to you and the people of the People's Republic of China as you celebrate the 75th anniversary of its founding. The American people and I convey our best wishes to the people of the People's Republic of China," a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said.

South African President and Leader of South Africa's ruling African National Congress Cyril Ramaphosa said his country looks forward to continuing to strengthen cooperation at all levels and supports China in playing a leading role on the global stage.

Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari said that China will certainly achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Pakistan will always be a trustworthy friend, an ironclad brother and a reliable partner of China.

Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn said that Thailand is willing to work with China to promote mutually beneficial cooperation in various fields, better serving the interests of both peoples and contributing to global peace and development.

Malaysian King Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar said that Malaysia is willing to unite and cooperate with China to achieve common goals.

Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu said that the Maldives firmly upholds the one-China principle and believes that the relationship between the Maldives and China will continue to develop and prosper.

Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov said the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Kyrgyzstan for a new era has reached an unprecedented level. Kyrgyzstan is willing to work with China to implement important consensus effectively, consolidate friendship and good-neighborliness and expand mutually beneficial cooperation.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said that the friendship between Iran and China has withstood the test of time. Iran is willing to work with China to achieve more progress in their comprehensive strategic partnership.

Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan said that Tanzania is committed to fully implementing the outcomes of the 2024 Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, deepening the all-weather friendship and cooperation in various fields between the two countries.

President of Seychelles Wavel Ramkalawan said that China has proposed a series of significant cooperation initiatives on global governance, multilateralism, and international collaboration, making positive contributions to achieving shared prosperity, sustainable development and lasting peace.

Polish President Andrzej Duda said that Poland and China have maintained stable, productive and close ties for a long time, yielding abundant cooperation results. Poland is willing to continue enhancing high-level exchanges with China to inject new momentum into the development of bilateral relations.

Finnish President Alexander Stubb said that Finland shares a long-standing friendship with China and stands ready to strengthen friendly cooperation in various fields. Finland wishes China prosperity and the well-being of its people.

Honduran President Xiomara Castro said that since Honduras and China established diplomatic ties, the two sides have witnessed productive cooperation, which has set Honduras on the right development path. Honduras will further deepen its relationship with China based on the adherence to the one-China principle.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres extended his warmest congratulations to China, noting that the UN is willing to celebrate this important occasion with the Chinese people and deepen solidarity and cooperation in advancing Sustainable Development Goals, creating a better future for the Chinese people and people around the world.

Those also sending congratulatory messages to Xi include: Brunei's Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah; Mongolian President Ukhnaa Khurelsukh; Nepali President Ram Chandra Poudel; Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake; Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili; Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev; Armenian President Vahagn Khachatryan; President of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan; King of Bahrain Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa; Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune; Zimbabwian President Emmerson Mnangagwa; Ghanaian President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo; Guinean President Mamady Doumbouya; Angolan President Joao Lourenco; Togolese President Faure Gnassingbe; Malawian President Lazarus Chakwera; Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen; Croatian President Zoran Milanovic; Slovenian President Nataša Pirc Musar; Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides; Vanuatu President Nikenike Vurobaravu; Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega and Vice President Rosario Murillo; Sao Tome and Principe's Prime Minister Patrice Trovoada; King Abdullah II of Jordan; Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tariq Al Said; Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Cheikh Ghazouani; President of the Libyan Presidency Council Mohamed al-Menfi; Ethiopian President Sahle-Work Zewde; Djiboutian President Ismail Omar Guelleh; Cameroonian President Paul Biya; President of Eritrea Isaias Afwerki; President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo Felix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo; Madagascar's President Andry Rajoelina; Ivorian President Alassane Ouattara; Beninese President Patrice Talon; President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe Carlos Vila Nova; Burkina Faso's transitional President Ibrahim Traore; Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky; Moldovan President Maia Sandu; Dutch King Willem-Alexander; President of Iceland Halda Tomassdottir; President of the Dominican Republic Luis Abinader; President of Trinidad and Tobago Christine Kangaloo; Guyanese President Irfaan Ali; Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif; UAE's Vice President and Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, ruler of Dubai; Bahraini Crown Prince and Prime Minister Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa; Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan; New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon; Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness; Bangladeshi interim government's Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus; First President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev; Chairman of the Belaya Rus Party of Belarus Oleg Romanov; Chairman of the Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus Oleg Gaidukevich; President of the African Party of Independence of Cape Verde Rui Semedo; Klaus Schwab, founder and executive chairman of the World Economic Forum.

XINHUA

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## Reach for the sky

Members of the "Colla Castellera Jove de Barcelona" build a human tower during the 29th "Castells" human tower competition on Saturday in Tarragona, Spain. The competition is the world's largest human tower show, held every two years on the first weekend of October.

DAVID RAMOS/GETTY IMAGES

## EU push for tariffs on Chinese EVs criticized

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

The European Union's vote on Friday to impose punitive tariffs on electric vehicles imported from China has drawn criticism for its protectionism and potential damage to the EU economies, according to officials, business leaders and scholars.

The vote on Friday was quite divided. Germany, the largest economy in the EU, along with Hungary, Malta, Slovakia and Slovenia, voted against the tariffs, while France and nine other countries voted in favor. A total of 12 member states abstained.

Under the EU rules, the divided vote still paves the way for tariffs of up to 35.3 percent on EVs imported from China after the European Commission launched an anti-subsidy investigation a year ago.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban blasted the move on Saturday in a message on X, formerly known as Twitter.

"The @EU\_Commission is set to impose tariffs on Chinese EVs — a huge blow for the European economy and for the automotive industry

in Germany. Germany and European industry can no longer convince the Commission to be reasonable. But then, who can?" he said.

Orban also warned on Friday that the EU's tendency toward economic protectionism would destroy the bloc's economy. "What the European Union is doing, is an economic cold war," he told state radio.

"This is the worst thing that can happen to Europe. ... If this continues, the European economy will die."

Hungary has been a major attraction for Chinese EV-related investment, from battery giant CATL to EV maker BYD.

The German Automotive Industry Association, or VDA, also called the vote a "further step away from global cooperation."

VDA President Hildegard Muller urged both sides to avoid an escalation and to "ideally stop the tariffs, or at least to avoid a trade war."

Elixabete Arrieta, a program assistant at the European Policy Center, said that back in July, 12 member states supported the provisional tariffs on Chinese EVs, but now it has dropped to 10 when it comes to a five-year extension of the duties. "This

reflects a pessimistic outlook for the EU, highlighting weak alignment among member states on how to compete with China," she said.

At a news briefing on Friday, a European Commission official said that the commission will decide whether the duties will come into force at the beginning of November. The commission expressed that the tariffs could be lifted if China addresses the EU's concerns.

China and the EU are expected to resume their negotiations on the dispute on Monday.

Ding Chun, director of the Center for European Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai, said while the vote gives the European Commission leverage in negotiations, it reflects the division among member states.

But he said the leeway left after the vote means that the EU also hopes to resolve the dispute through negotiations, not a trade war.

"China and the EU are facing tensions on many trade issues, a proper settlement of the EV dispute could pave the way for tackling other thorny issues," Ding told China Daily on Sunday.

## WORLD US

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco  
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Nestled along the scenic Highway 1, just north of the Big Sur and south of Carmel-by-the-Sea, lies a natural wonder that has captivated artists, photographers and nature lovers for generations.

Point Lobos State Natural Reserve, often called "the crown jewel of the California State Park System", is like a stunning canvas painted by nature itself.

As you step into the reserve, you are immediately surrounded by a world of cerulean seas, jagged rocks and contorted pine trees. The landscape is so striking that painter Francis McComas once declared it "the greatest meeting of land and water in the world". It is easy to see why this unique convergence of earth and ocean has served as a muse to countless artists over the years.

World-class photographers Edward Weston and Ansel Adams spent years exploring the woods and shores of Point Lobos, seeking to capture its essence through their lenses. Even the legendary Chinese artist Zhang Daqian found inspiration here during his time in nearby Carmel, incorporating the distinctive Monterey Cypress trees into his innovative landscape paintings.

But you do not need to be an artist to appreciate the raw beauty of Point Lobos. As you wander along the hiking trails, each turn reveals a new vista more spectacular than the last. Peer into the tide pools with abundant marine life, or simply stand in awe of the panoramic views of California's central coast. Every moment here is a reminder of nature's artistry.

Point Lobos is more than just a pretty picture. It is a vibrant ecosystem bustling with life. The reserve is home to more than 300 plant species and more than 250 different animals. The offshore area, part of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, is considered one of the richest underwater habitats in the world.

As you explore, keep your eyes and ears open for the reserve's most vocal residents — the California sea lions. Their raucous barks echo from the offshore rocks at Sea Lion Point, a sound so distinctive that it inspired the reserve's name. Early Spanish settlers likened their calls to wolves, dubbing the area "Punta de Lobos" or "Point of the Sea Wolves".

For many visitors, the highlight of a trip to Point Lobos is catching a glimpse of its most charming inhabitants — the southern sea otters. These adorable creatures can often be spotted floating on their backs in the kelp beds, grooming their thick fur or cracking open sea urchins or clams with a rock.

Sea otters eat one-fourth of their body weight every day to maintain their energy in the cold water. They have a special pocket of loose skin under their armpit to store both food and their favorite rock tool. Sea otters have the thickest fur of any animal. They depend on their dense, water-resistant fur to insulate them against the cold ocean.

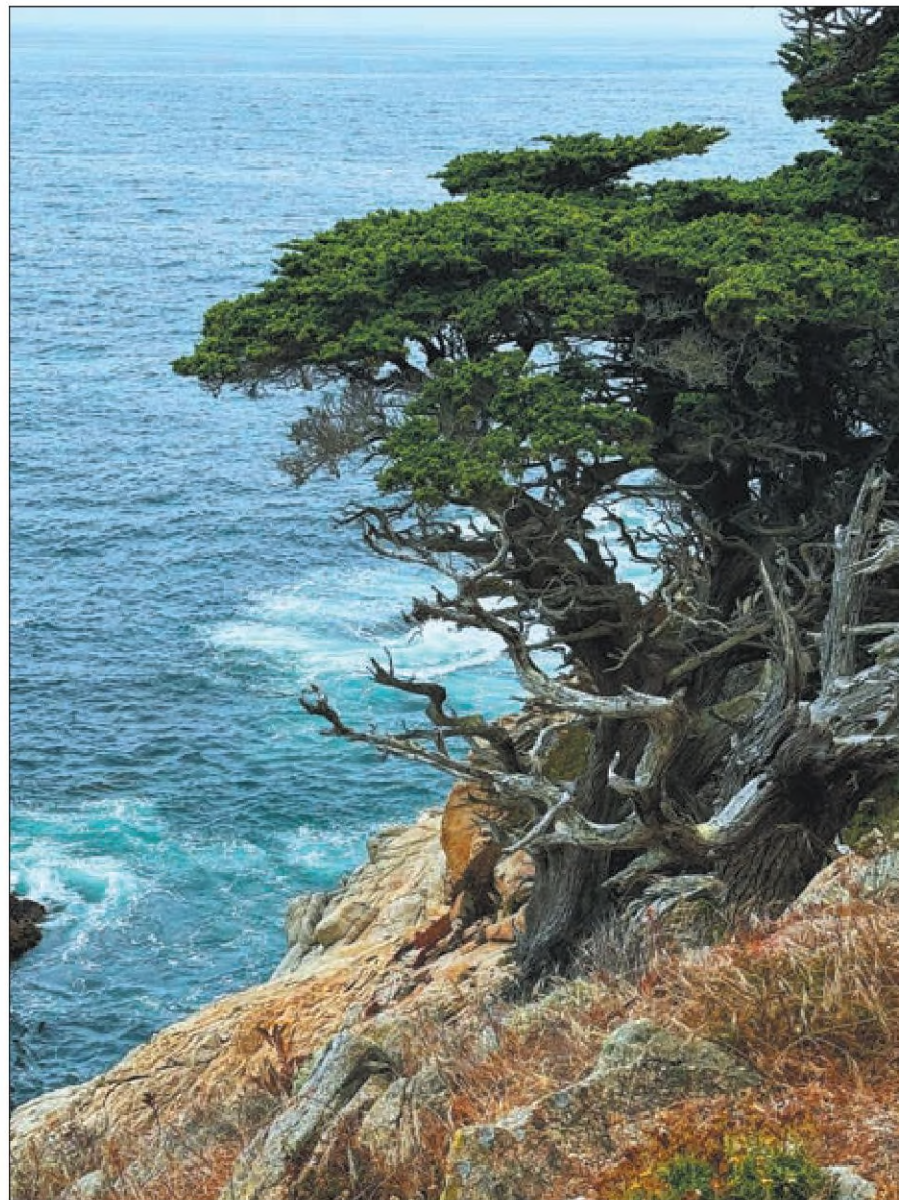
While sea otters are a year-round attraction, Point Lobos offers seasonal spectacles as well. From December to April, the reserve becomes a whale-watching spot as California gray whales make their 16,000-kilometer migration along the coast, the longest migration of any mammal on Earth. Standing on the cliffs, you might witness these majestic creatures spouting and breaching as they journey between Alaska and western Baja California of Mexico.

### Impressive species

Bird enthusiasts will find plenty to observe at Point Lobos. The Bird Island area is a nesting site for impressive species such as Black-crowned Night-Herons and brown pelicans. Keep an eye out for Anna's Hummingbirds, one of North America's tiniest birds, and if you are lucky, you might spot a California condor with its 2.7-meter wingspan, one of the largest birds in North America.

One of the most iconic features of Point Lobos is its grove of Monterey Cypress trees. These rare trees, which naturally grow in only two places in the world — Pebble Beach in California and Point Lobos, have adapted to thrive on the granite cliffs at the continent's edge.

Their wind-sculpted forms, clinging to rocky cliffs above the crashing waves, embody the struggle between land and sea. The living trees boast rich green foliage, while the deceased ones stand as stark, twisted silhouettes, bleached by the



Monterey Cypress trees, clinging to rocky cliffs above the crashing waves, feature distinctive wind-sculpted forms with twisted silhouettes. PHOTOS BY LIA ZHU / CHINA DAILY

## Nature's masterpiece along California coast

Discover amazing beauty, vibrant ecosystems of Point Lobos where land meets sea and creativity flourishes in every vista



The Bird Island area is a nesting site for impressive species such as Black-crowned Night-Herons and brown pelicans.



The Point Lobos reserve displays exhibits for visitors to learn how local wildlife thrive in this unique ecosystem.



China Cove, a secluded bay, offers a picturesque spot to watch seals basking in the sun.

sun and stained red with algae.

For a touch of tranquility, seek out China Cove, a hidden gem nestled within the reserve's rugged cliffs. This secluded bay, with its crystal clear waters and white sand beach, offers a picturesque spot to watch seals basking in the sun.

The cove's name pays homage to the once-thriving Chinese fishing village that flourished along the California coastline. More than 170 years ago, Point Lobos was home to one of California's first Chinese fishing settlements.

### Ecological recovery

What makes Point Lobos even more remarkable is its story of ecological recovery. Once the site of various industrial activities, including whaling operations, gravel quarries and abalone canneries, the area has been carefully protected since it was acquired by the state in 1933 and became an ecological reserve 40 years later.

For those who want to delve deeper into the marine world, Point Lobos is a haven for divers. As part of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, the underwater landscape is just as diverse and colorful as what's above the surface. In the towering kelp forests as high as 21 meters, divers can encounter a vibrant array of marine life, from rock fish to sea stars.

Even if you prefer to keep your feet on dry land, the intertidal zones offer a fascinating glimpse into life between the tides.

At Weston Beach, you can carefully explore tide pools filled with purple shore crabs, aggregated anemones and sometimes even black abalone. It is a hands-on nature lesson that brings out the curious child in every visitor.

Whether you are an artist seeking inspiration, a nature lover yearning for pristine wilderness or simply a traveler looking for a beautiful stop along Highway 1, Point Lobos State Natural Reserve offers an unforgettable experience.

## From vine to vision: Napa Valley's allure captivates travelers

By CHANG JUN in San Francisco  
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Whenever Jiang Dong, a writer from Jinan in Shandong province, considers going on a vacation abroad, Napa Valley in northern California always makes it to his short list.

Jiang, 58, first visited the "serene and seclusive" town in September 2008 during a business trip to the United States. "The host arranged a two-day tour there. Our packed schedule included several wine tastings at Robert Mondavi, Stags' Leap and Beaulieu Vineyard; historic sites exploration and sightseeing," Jiang recalled.

The stretching grape trellis, foliage of vibrant colors and top-notch wineries along the way left a lasting fond memory, which he describes as "picturesque and worth recalling again and again".

More importantly, Napa offers a much sought-after spiritual tranquility, Jiang said. "In Chinese culture, we believe a talented writer needs good wines and a cloister to avoid interruption to his ideas and creations. In Napa, fortunately, I have found both. Like a starving mouse falling into a cheese shop, I was tipsy while sipping wines and bathing in the aroma of vineyards."

Napa Valley, about 80 kilometers northeast of San Francisco, contains a cluster of diversified topography — mild mountains, windswept estuarine flats, a fast-flowing river and extended forests.

Nestled between the chilly Pacific Ocean and usually torrent Central Valley, the region, therefore, is blessed with a distinctive Mediterranean climate featuring warm, dry summers and sunny, lukewarm winters for its valley towns of Napa, Yountville, St. Helena and Calistoga.

"Think about it: Only 2 percent of the Earth's surface is covered by a Mediterranean climate," said Matthew Cook, an entrepreneur who grew up in the valley and is well-versed in its history. "The diverse soil and climate allow grapes to ripen slowly and evenly. This also makes Napa Valley a haven for grape planting and winemaking."

Synonymous with one of the world's premier wine regions, Napa Valley is home to 475 wineries, 90 tasting rooms and 150 exquisite restaurants, including several Michelin-starred fine-dining establishments. It ages and produces a wide range of wines — cabernet sauvignon, merlot, pinot noir, chardonnay, sauvignon blanc, zinfandel and cabernet franc, just to name a few.

### First saplings

According to Napa County archives, native Americans resided in the valley before 1839, when the first band of Spanish missionaries arrived, spreading Christian belief and planting the first grape saplings.

It was George Calvert Yount, the first settler, who decided to build a homestead in the area to expand grape plantations. Shortly after, John Patchett and Hamilton Walker Crabb helped introduce the first *Vitis vinifera* grape, also called the common grape vine, native to the Mediterranean region and central Europe.

"The flowering species are of

commercial significance for wine and table grape production," Cook said. "In other words, the pioneers started a new chapter of the wine industry in Napa."

In 1861, Charles Krug established the valley's first commercial winery, with many following suit. Despite protests from local residents, Napa merchants funded the construction of a railroad in 1868 that connected San Francisco to the valley. The influx of visitors and gold miners helped the town of Napa prosper, attracting the wealthy and ambitious to invest in real estate, the metal industry and winemaking. By 1889, there were already 140 wineries in operation.

However, it was not until 1976 that Napa Valley and its wines finally gained international recognition at the Paris Wine Tasting, also known as the Judgement of Paris.

In a blind tasting, renowned oenophiles and connoisseurs rated wines from Napa Valley alongside top brands from Bordeaux and Burgundy of France, following a set of criteria to assess sweetness, acidity, tannin, alcohol and body.

The results astonished industry insiders. In both the chardonnay and cabernet sauvignon categories, California wines outperformed their French counterparts, clinching top honors. "The Paris moment is historic," Cook said. "It also marks the end of the conventional belief that high-scale wines only originate from Europe."

"By the way, the champion wines were from Stag's Leap Wine Cellars 1973 and Chateau Montelena."

### Refining image

Now a major enotourism (wine tourism) destination, Napa Valley keeps refining its image and reshuffling its resources to woo international travelers like Jiang. This undertaking aims to help rejuvenate the region's economy, which was heavily hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to a study published by the local marketing organization for Napa County in August, about 3.7 million tourists visited the valley last year, spending more than \$2.5 billion, a 13 percent increase from 2018.

"They (tourists) directly impact Napa Valley residents' quality of life," said Emma Swain, chairwoman for Visit Napa Valley and CEO of St. Supery Estate Vineyards and Winery.

She added that the tax revenue would help local government fund public safety, libraries, parks and recreation, road repairs and more.

Su Tingting, a lifestyle influencer in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, is one among the 3.7 million visitors to Napa Valley.

"Beyond vineyard and wineries, I discovered many other aspects of Napa which are equally exciting," Su said. "Take for example, riding on a hot air balloon at 5 am over the valley veiled in morning mist, or checking arrangement of marble tiles at the century-old Cedar Gables and Churchill Manor."

Photos of these activities make for great social media content. Su said, "I need to make sure my clicks get maximum hits."

Swain said 95 percent of visitors indicated they are likely to return to Napa Valley. "Yes, definitely a yes for me," Jiang said.



Diners enjoy their meals under the warm Napa Valley sun at a restaurant nestled within its own vineyards and winery. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

# READ

**L**HASA — Jiang Lili is on an unprecedented six-year expedition at the foot of Mount Qomolangma. Unlike the many adventurers who look up and set out from there to climb the highest peak on Earth (also known as Mount Everest), she set her sights down on the barren land under her feet, aiming to find viable cash crops for the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau to improve livelihoods.

And Jiang has succeeded in her quest.

Jiang, an associate researcher of the Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research under the Chinese Academy of Sciences, has been leading a team, in collaboration with the CAS Kunming Institute of Botany, to cultivate high-quality and high-yield plant varieties in Southwest China's Xizang autonomous region, with the aim of addressing forage shortages in the region.

Her team has finally identified a viable option — a turnip, which is commonly known as "Tibetan radish" in Xizang.

This plant, which resembles a radish, is entirely edible, from its leaves to its roots. Crucially, it is a versatile source of food, medicine and animal feed.

Over the past six years, Jiang's team has successfully cultivated turnips in more than 10 locations in Xizang, including one at the town where the Mount Qomolangma base camp is situated at an altitude of 4,127 meters above sea level.

Jiang, after completing her post-doctoral research in 2012, joined the CAS Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research to study grassland ecology. During her extensive research efforts on the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau, she identified a bottleneck issue affecting the development of Xizang's animal husbandry, namely a shortage of forage.

Xizang, which is one of China's major pastoral regions, contains nearly one-third of the country's total grassland. According to 2021 data from the regional natural resources department, grassland is the dominant ecosystem in Xizang, covering over 1.2 billion mu (around 80 million hectares) and representing 30.2 percent of the national total.

Consequently, livestock farming is the primary source of income for local herders. However, the high altitude and low temperatures make it difficult to grow most forage grasses, such as alfalfa, throughout the region.

In 2018, Jiang led a team to undertake a CAS research project to tackle this forage challenge. After evaluating more than 60 potential options, her team selected oats, forage rapeseed, Dahurian wildrye, Siberian wildrye, barley and turnip for establishing artificial grasslands in northern Xizang. Turnip, especially, showed remarkable adaptability to the local environment.

"Turnip excels in terms of cold tolerance," Jiang explains. "Its seedlings can endure temperatures as low as -3 C to -5 C. In addition, alfalfa



Jiang Lili, an associate researcher of the Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research under the Chinese Academy of Sciences, displays the harvested turnips with pupils at the pilot field at the foot of Mount Qomolangma in Southwest China's Xizang autonomous region on Sept 5. PHOTOS BY ZHANG RUFENG / XINHUA

## Mountain turnip growers reach their summit

Bumper harvest rewards research and scientific approach into precious cash crops for the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau, reports **Yi Ling** from China Features.



**Left:** A turnip weighs more than 10 kilograms in Chusul county of Lhasa, capital of Southwest China's Xizang autonomous region, in August. **Right:** Jiang Lili (right) and a farmer compare varieties of turnips in Chusul.



seedlings would perish after just two rounds of hail, while turnips can survive even after four or five rounds.

"In Nagqu, where the average altitude exceeds 4,500 meters, when clouds come in summer, the temperature will drop by 10 C. Under these conditions, rain often falls as small

hail, and at times, heavy rain mixed with large hail," Jiang explains.

"But these turnips still survive despite the extreme conditions. They are the 'chosen ones' for the plateau," she notes.

*One year, four seasons, people eat, and horses feed.*

*In spring, we eat their seedlings, in summer, the leaves, in autumn, the core, and in winter, the roots.*

These are the lyrics of a folk song, which reflect the seasonal consumption of turnips. It is a song still sung by locals in Xizang today.

A Tibetan farmer from Zada

county in Ngari prefecture expressed amazement to Zhao Weiwei, a graduate student from the CAS Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research, about the unusually large Tibetan radishes just unearthed from the pilot field.

"I have never seen such

big Tibetan radishes before," the middle-aged man told Zhao.

Zhao is part of Jiang's team, which traveled from Lhasa to assess the results of their yearlong experiment on a 7.33-hectare pilot field in Zada.

The results were promising, with the experimental field yielding over 5,000 kilograms of turnips per mu — and the largest individual turnip weighed no less than a hefty 11.67 kilograms. The team reserved some samples for further research and donated the rest of the harvest to local residents for use as food for both people and livestock.

Children were seen in the fields, cleaning the freshly harvested turnips with their sleeves, peeling them and then enjoying the juicy roots.

"Although they look similar to radishes, turnips contain more protein and sugar and they have a mild sweetness rather than spiciness," Zhao says.

Previously, local varieties of turnips in Xizang were limited and produced low yields.

"They were only the size of a child's fist, weighing about 250 grams," says the middle-aged Tibetan farmer, while demonstrating the plant's size with his thumb and index finger.

Jiang and her team have dedicated six years to identifying various turnip varieties that are suitable for different altitudes and ecological conditions in Xizang, transforming "little fists" into "big blocks".

Jiang emphasized that for every 1,000-meter increase in altitude in Xizang, the temperature decreases by 6 C, highlighting the need for selecting appropriate varieties and applying suitable techniques in pilot fields at varying altitudes, many of which were learned from local Tibetan farmers.

For instance, in Lhasa, turnips can be planted twice a year, starting in April or May, while in other regions, sowing should be postponed by a month, allowing for only one planting per year, says Jiang.

In August, they harvested the "king of turnips" in Chusul county of Lhasa. It was the largest known turnip for decades, weighing 12.04 kilograms. Despite the challenging environment of Nagchu, the biggest single turnip grown there weighed an impressive 4.8 kilograms.

Jiang has, therefore, been hailed by many as the "queen of turnips". The turnips produced by her team garnered significant attention at a recent event promoting new plant varieties in Chusul county. The regional catering association later introduced special dishes featuring turnips.

Looking to the future, Jiang expresses her intention to continue searching for improved turnip varieties and to investigate more advanced cultivation methods.

"My biggest dream is wild. I envision turnips being widely planted, even in the backyards of local Tibetans, providing them with more vegetable options for themselves and more feed for their livestock. Ultimately, this will lead to better incomes and a better life," she says.

XINHUA

## Bag town packing in global orders for its luggage

**SHIJIAZHUANG** — Despite the sluggish global economy, the Baigou new area in North China's Hebei province has been enjoying a steady increase in exports.

Baigou is one of China's largest bag production and marketing bases, accounting for about 28 percent of the country's domestic market. Selling products to 195 countries and regions in the world, the small town is particularly popular among traders from Eastern Europe and the Middle East, some of whom gather here all year round.

On a random morning recently, three different groups of foreign traders from Europe and the Middle East were seen in the lobby of a local hotel.

Among them was Hafiz Abubakar, a Pakistani businessman who now lives in London. "I spent more than \$60,000 in just five days," he says.

This was his first time in China, and he planned to make a "big investment" to sell wheeled luggage in the United Kingdom.

"This customer started to get in touch with us through Alibaba livestream," says Nancy Zhang, a salesperson with Omaska, one of the two local companies that Abubakar signed contracts with. "It's not our biggest order. Two months ago, an Indian buyer ordered 10 containers of products."

She adds that the total sales of her company this year are expected to exceed 200 million yuan (\$28.18 million), more than 30 percent higher than last year, and the majority of



**Left:** Iranian merchant Behnam Fadavi inquires about backpacks and women's bags at a company in Baigou new area in Hebei's Baoding city. **Right:** Pakistani businessman Hafiz Abubakar shares his experience in the sector at a luggage company in Baigou. PHOTOS BY WANG MEIQI / XINHUA



sales are from foreign trade orders.

With an area of only 50 square kilometers, Baigou has formed an industrial cluster that provides jobs for more than two million people nearby. Every year, in excess of 800 million bags and cases are sold to the world from this small town.

Despite the global economic slowdown, Baigou's total export figure for bags and cases in the first half of 2024 was 7 billion yuan, up over 17 percent year-on-year. Such figures have caused many to ponder the secret to the town's success.

Baigou's bag industry began in the

1970s when people sold handmade bags, along with toys and groceries, at fair stalls by the roadside. Over two decades, producers here tried to achieve mass sales by setting prices low. However, this path of development was unhealthy for the industry.

"Since we didn't attach much importance to branding and quality back then, it was difficult for small factories like us to make a profit as sales declined," says Wang Jinlong, founder of a leatherware company.

Things started to change in 2003. Over a period of five years, businesses in Baigou registered more than

1,400 brands. By building brands, this small town's influence in the bag market grew. With a household population of just 60,000, Baigou has formed a complete industrial chain for bag production, including raw-material supply, product design, manufacturing and sales.

In recent years, livestreaming commerce has grown rapidly in Baigou. Now nearly 10,000 live shopping events are held here every day, introducing products to customers from home and abroad through more than 20 languages.

The total output value of Bai-

gou's bags and cases increased from about 10 billion yuan in 2020 to 41.9 billion yuan in 2023, over 70 percent of which was achieved through online sales.

At a cross-border e-commerce enterprise in Baigou, workers are packing goods, analyzing customer preferences, and adding women's bags to online shops accordingly. This company sells products to nearly 50 countries around the world through about a dozen international platforms, such as Shein, Amazon and Shopee.

"It's easier to peak online sales by

providing quality goods that match the preferences of foreign buyers and the selling styles of international platforms," says the company's owner Wang Lei, who is also executive vice-president of the E-commerce Association of Baigou new area.

According to Wang Weinan, director of Baigou's bureau of investment promotion, led by the local government, a group of young Chinese entrepreneurs visited bag companies in seven countries last year to gain experience and seek larger overseas markets.

"We'll set off again immediately. We are heading to Japan and the Republic of Korea in September, and Indonesia and Malaysia in October," he adds.

Along with other 38 marketplaces, Baigou's bag market is part of China's market procurement trade mode pilot program.

Another foreign trader in the hotel lobby was Behnam Fadavi. This is the seventh year that the Iranian merchant and his brother have cooperated with Chinese companies. They mainly import backpacks and women's handbags from China to the United Arab Emirates.

Fadavi says that what he values most is good design. When asked how much he intended to spend in Baigou this time, the businessman says, "We don't have a purchasing limit, so long as the design is new and good."

XINHUA

# IMAGE

## Projectionist brings delights of the silver screen to villagers



The villagers watch the movie projected by Tang Dingde and his son Tang Xiaowei. PHOTOS BY SHI GANGZE / FOR CHINA DAILY

**T**ang Dingde is a film projectionist in Zhuting village of Yichun city of Jiangxi province. In 1984, Tang acquired his projectionist certificate and began his career as a film projectionist. At that time, to watch movies was one of the most popular forms of entertainment in rural areas, and Tang was appointed to screen films benefiting local villagers. As transportation conditions were tough and the roads were remote in townships and rural areas, Tang often took lots of time to get to the village to screen the films despite difficulties. Over the past four decades, Tang has organized tens of thousands of films for villagers and his son Tang Xiaowei also inherited the career as a film projectionist. He hopes that more youths will join in the career of film projectionist to bring the art of film to more villagers.

—CHINA DAILY



Tang Dingde (left) and Tang Xiaowei put away the projection curtain after the movie screening.



Tang Dingde shows his film screening certificate.



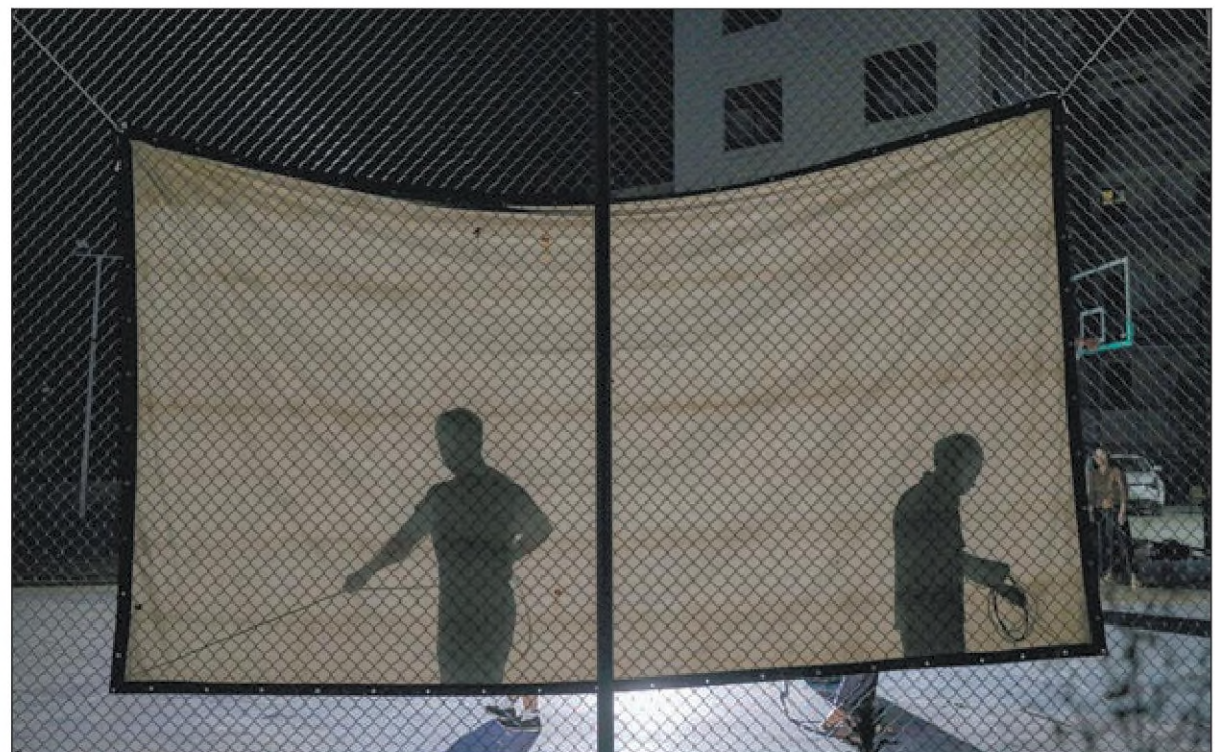
Over the past 40 years, Tang Dingde has organized more than 16,000 film screenings for villagers.



Tang Dingde (right) and his son Tang Xiaowei inspect the motion picture film strips.



Tang Dingde (left) and his son Tang Xiaowei come to Zhuting village in advance to assemble the projection equipment.



The big screen reflects the busy figures of Tang Dingde and Tang Xiaowei in Zhuting village of Yichun city, Jiangxi province.

## TREND



Gao Tangtang walks toward the desert-themed post office, dubbed as the "loneliest post office in the world", deep inside the Tengger Desert, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, in September. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Gao stands by a road sign showing the direction of the post office she operates in Inner Mongolia recently.

By YANG ZEKUN

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Every time Gao Tangtang mails a postcard and a small packet of sand from the post office deep inside the Tengger Desert in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, she hopes to reduce the recipient's anxiety and loneliness.

Since 2021, the 37-year-old has been running this desert-themed post office. Due to its remote location — difficult to access without a guide — netizens have dubbed it the "loneliest post office in the world".

"I am someone who easily feels down, yet I also have a strong sense of empathy. I often need products that stabilize my emotions, and I believe many others in society, too, need the same," Gao said.

Customers can place orders for postal services with the post office on online platforms such as Taobao. Since early 2022, when it started operations, the post office has dispatched more than 20,000 letters and postcards. "As the pace of life accelerates, more and more people need emotional support. People like buying things that may seem useless (to others) but are meaningful (to the purchaser)."

In May this year, the China Consumers Association released its "2023 Annual Report on Consumer Rights Protection", which said that in 2024, apart from cost-effectiveness, emotional value will continue to influence young consumers' decisions. This factor could become a new point of consumption in the future.

Besides, a report by McKinsey & Company on China's consumer trends in 2024 said 64 percent of consumers place a higher value on emotional consumption, with the figure being higher for younger people.

#### Solace from the desert

Gao, originally from Shanxi province, made several trips to the desert between 2016 and 2017 during a difficult period in her working life in Guangzhou, Guangdong province. During her trips to the desert, she realized her personal troubles were insignificant against the vastness of the desert, while walking in the desert allowed her to indulge in self-introspection.

In 2021, after learning from locals that a post office existed in the Teng-

## Online emotional support meets growing needs

The humdrum of daily life is prompting more people to seek solace in virtual world

ger Desert, she decided to turn into reality her long-held dream of opening a store to provide people with products and services that would ease their worries. She spent nearly 100,000 yuan (\$14,000) to rebuild a wooden house with a tin roof on the approximate spot where the old post office stood. She also set up a campsite about 5 kilometers from the post office.

Both the post office and campsite are simple structures, with all the necessities being transported from outside. People visiting the place bring some supplies. The rest is delivered once a week. However, from November to April, that is, during the harsh winter months, the supplies are delivered once a month. Gao's team consists of nine people. In the beginning, her friends didn't quite understand her endeavor. One of her friends once asked, "How are you going to run a post office? How will it make money?" Gao said that many brands are engaged in the "emotional healing" business, with most of them doing well, and she has collaborated with some of them to run joint campaigns. So she too can survive.

"This is my career now. While people talk about passion, doing what you love also needs to be commercially viable. Some succeed, some fail. Everyone faces their own challenges, but I feel luckier than most because I am doing something I love," she said.

The post office uses its own stamp, and the letters and postcards need to be transported from the desert to the nearest town to be mailed to the addressees through China Post. Most of the mails are sent as regular letters, passing through various postal stops, with the stamps marking the course of their journey —



Gao writes a postcard at the post office.

something Gao and the recipients of the letters find deeply meaningful.

In March 2022, the post office planted nearly 10,000 trees for the National Tree Planting Day (observed on March 12 every year) near the campsite as a way to celebrate Mother Nature. This prompted many people to come forward and place orders on Taobao to adopt a tree in the desert.

"These trees, with a lifespan of more than 100 years, will outlive the emotions they represent, establishing a lasting connection between their benefactors and the world," she said.

Sharing her story, the mother of a child who regularly communicates with Gao said she has been diagnosed with cancer, and her child is only about one year old. She adopted a tree and hoped her child would be able to visit it and feel her love maybe 10 years later. The tree has thus become an extension of her emotions.

Gao said that some people come to see the trees they've adopted, though their stories remain unknown. Some adopt trees in memory of friends

who have died. They see their friends in these trees. Couples, too, frequently plant trees together.

"From my school days to my work life, I've always made my own choices. I've always been an introvert, but I deeply empathize with people around me," Gao said. "I think many people in the world are like me — they need a place to speak. City dwellers might feel tense during the day and lonely at night. This place provides them with comfort."

#### New way to help people

Jiang Nan, 27, from Anhui province, has been running an online store since 2023, offering services like "wake-up calls" for people whose relationship has gone sour, and chatting with strangers to keep them "company". Before opening the store, he realized, while watching short videos, that virtual products, too, could be profitable. So he started his own business. Initially, his earnings were modest, but then he began offering chatting services to help customers feel better and relaxed.

Jiang has more than 200 customer

service representatives who work with him on a freelance basis. Many of them have full-time jobs, and whoever is available to attend to a customer takes the orders. The representatives chat with the customers via WeChat or QQ, and Jiang trains them to ensure customers feel the services offered are worth their money.

At first, the service was not available at night, but some representatives offered to work overnight, because many customers experience emotional upsurge at night and need help. In some cases, overseas students, due to the time difference, seek chat services during the day.

The majority of Jiang's customers are between 18 and 30 years old, and the service costs about 20 yuan (\$2.85) per session, with the pricing based on time. Customers often specify the topics they want to talk about, such as "counseling" after a breakup, casual chatting, or advice on studies, love matters or work. They are then paired with a representative who "specializes" in that field.

It is important to add a personal touch to the service, Jiang said. If the conversation is too compliant, it loses its meaning. For emotional subjects, the representatives who are older and have more life experience are assigned to offer guidance or help to lighten up the customer's mood.

In the earlier days, Jiang was asked by a customer to supervise a person's daily routine, and praise his drawings every day. Initially, he was not sure how to make the client happy, but after receiving daily drawings and praising them, both Jiang and the client grew in confidence. This continued for nearly three months.

Jiang started the business to earn some extra income, but as he contin-

ued helping people feel better, he realized it was a meaningful pursuit and decided to keep going. "This service isn't a necessity," he acknowledges. "Most people wouldn't search for it unless they really needed to share or outpour their emotions. Sometimes, customers don't feel comfortable sharing certain issues with people who are close to them, but they also don't want to keep things bottled up, so they turn to online chatting."

Jiang recalls a woman who was scared to be alone at night whenever her husband went on a business trip. She hired a female representative to stay on video call with her for one to two hours every night or until she fell asleep. The thought of being able to reach out to someone, even if virtually, whenever she wanted to gave her a sense of security.

Jiang, who receives tens of thousands of orders a year, said products with emotional value are becoming increasingly popular, with society gradually embracing "breakup support" services and other emotional offerings. Incidentally, most of his customers are women.

"Many people today prefer to not engage with others in the real world," he said. "They have their online world, their own little bubble. People working in big cities often don't have many friends, and fear that if they share their personal stories with someone, they could become the topic of gossip. But if you pay for a service online, you get what you need without worrying about privacy."

On Taobao, unusual products such as leaves and sand, even air bottled in containers high up in the mountains are gaining popularity. Jiang said this is because young people today live monotonous lives, with work and personal stress pushing them to seek solace online.

Jiang works for an e-commerce company in Shanghai, with his Taobao store being a side business that brings in about 10,000 yuan a month. He plans to marry his girlfriend next year. But the couple have no plans to buy property in Shanghai, because they don't want to live under pressure.

After hearing so many people's stories, Jiang hopes he and his loved ones can continue living happily.

Li Ren contributed to the story.

## Young entrepreneur offers supervision service

By YANG ZEKUN

The recognition of emotional value has become widespread. Sometimes it is derived from companionship; other times, people seek it in affirmation from others, says Hu Xueliang, who has been trying to build his business for nearly two years.

Emotional value is defined as the perceived utility derived from an alternative's capacity to arouse feelings or affective states, while functional value is defined as the perceived utility derived from an alternative's capacity for functional, utilitarian or physical performance. And many studies have argued that the source of competitiveness has shifted from functional value to emotional value.

The 25-year-old Hu is from Henan

province and runs a business that provides supervision and support for those who need them to stay focused on their studies. Society is full of distractions, with many people constantly talking about achievements like earning millions of yuan, buying homes or cars, or getting their children admitted to elite schools. On the other hand, many individuals feel lonely, guilty and "left out", perhaps because they lack direction or the self-discipline needed to pursue their goal, Hu said.

"That's where the value of these virtual services comes in. We offer companionship and affirmation," Hu said.

Hu majored in computer science with law being his other subject. After graduating in June 2022, he initially planned to pursue higher

studies and even created a chat group to prepare for the postgraduate entrance exam. The group had more than 200 individuals, who shared resources and study materials, in order to improve the group's knowledge base.

Despite failing his postgraduate entrance exam, Hu realized the study group idea might have commercial potential. He consulted the other group members, who agreed to launch paid services for providing guidance for students. This led to the creation of a premium study group which also offers "extra services" including providing study materials and mutual supervision.

Hu launched his business in December 2022 to provide supervision for studies through Taobao's e-commerce platform. "Many wanted to study but feared they wouldn't

be able to continue. They needed someone to guide them and hold them accountable for their failure. Random agreements with friends weren't very effective because there were no real consequences for failing, and often one party would simply give up," he said.

That's when Hu had the idea to formalize the arrangement with monetary incentives. He hired more than 300 supervisors, mostly students working part-time, to help the clients stay on track. The cost was kept low, about 2 yuan (\$0.3) per hour.

The supervisors don't just earn those 2 yuan per hour, they also benefit by holding themselves accountable for their failure while they supervise others, he said.

The supervisors and clients are required to turn on their phone or laptop cameras and study together

with their clients. The clients have a wide range of goals, from taking school entrance exams to clearing professional exams. Many students also take up part-time work while pursuing higher studies.

However, managing these supervision relationships isn't always easy. For instance, one supervisor had arranged a 7 am session with a client. But when the client was five minutes late, the supervisor went back to sleep. This prompted the client to lodge a complaint, asking, "Can't they wait for just five minutes for me?" Hu had to intervene to calm the client down and resolve the issue.

In another case, a supervisor initially warmly encouraged and provided special guidance to a client. But as time passed, the supervisor returned to the normal schedule, leaving the client feeling a sense of loss and forcing him to think that the quality of service had declined.

In the past year, Hu's supervision service has handled tens of thou-

sands of orders, ranging from hour-long sessions to packages of 10 hours or more.

"Today's youths, who grew up without worrying about basic needs such as food and shelter, tend to seek emotional or spiritual fulfillment instead," Hu said, while admitting that he, too, has struggled with self-discipline and is using this business to improve himself. "During my university days, I created gaming groups, studied psychology, and volunteered to care for people living with depression. My entrepreneurial journey is not just about proving my worth but also about fulfilling my social responsibility."

Hu is seeking financing for his business. "My family is willing to support me financially. But if I rely on my family for funds, the pressure might become too much to bear, because I don't know if my business will succeed in the long run. For now, my business earns enough to support my daily life, and that's enough."

## BIZ LIFE

# Aroma of Yunnan beans attracts coffee lovers in metropolis

Cooperation with Shanghai bringing consumers more premium products from mountainous plantations



By ZHU WENQIAN in Beijing and LI YINGQING in Kunming

With high-quality coffee beans, Southwest China's Yunnan province has jumped on opportunities to grow its coffee business in Shanghai — a metropolis that has the largest number of coffee shops globally.

Among the first batch of Yunnan coffee players to establish a presence in Shanghai, Baoshan Bestain Coffee Co Ltd has opened the second store in April in Shanghai. The store has become a popular gathering place among local coffee bean enthusiasts.

The company is more than a coffee bean retailer. Baoshan Bestain Coffee has evolved into a comprehensive enterprise integrating coffee planting, primary processing, deep processing, research, education and the promotion of coffee culture.

"The consumption market of premium coffee is not in Yunnan, but in Shanghai. We have the confidence to grow our business in the Shanghai market, and will continue to expand stores in the next few years," said Li Lihong, founder and president of Baoshan Bestain Coffee.

"In Shanghai, people can experience and appreciate global coffee cultures, including coffee varieties and production techniques from different countries and regions, as well as coffee-related lifestyles."

Yunnan, with a coffee planting history of over a century, has become a top origin in China and is known for high-quality coffee beans and large production. Located in the "coffee bean belt" — a certain geographic region where coffee plants thrive — Baoshan is found suitable for growing Arabica beans, which feature a less acidic taste.

Currently, Baoshan Bestain Coffee operates in the form of experience stores in Shanghai, mainly selling beans from major producing regions and plantations worldwide.

The company has established its East China headquarters in Jing'an district of Shanghai, and will create a business model that integrates flagship stores, coffee outlets and baking workshops.

The company also aims to offer



Top: Consumers try beans from Baoshan, Yunnan at a Baoshan Bestain Coffee store in Shanghai.

Above: The Baoshan Bestain Zhiziluo Coffee store in Shanghai. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

one-stop services for coffee shops, from coffee beans to coffee machines and even baristas.

In July last year, Baoshan Bestain Coffee made its debut in Jing'an district of Shanghai with its new brand named Baoshan Bestain Zhiziluo Coffee, riding on ties with the district branch of China Construction Bank.

Zhiziluo, a place in Fugong county, Yunnan, means "a good place given by heaven" in the Lisu ethnic language. It is located at the starting point and highest point of the local coffee bean belt. Leveraging a subtropical climate and a significant vertical climate difference, coffee beans planted there boast unique quality.

"The successful settlement of our company in Shanghai is an achievement of cooperation between the local governments of Shanghai and Yunnan, which features support from the government and financial institutions in Shanghai," Li said.

Shanghai has a social atmosphere for exchanging knowledge about premium coffee, and excellent entrepreneurs and consumers have been communicating and learning coffee cultures from each other, she added.

CCB's Jing'an branch said the flourishing coffee culture has injected a unique vitality to the city.

Supporting the growth of the coffee industry in Yunnan can also help drive rural vitalization, benefit

numerous small- and micro-sized businesses, effectively boost employment in both Shanghai and Yunnan, and stimulate urban consumption, the branch said.

Back in December 2022, Chen Jining, Party secretary of Shanghai, led a delegation to Yunnan, and Baoshan Bestain Coffee plantation was one of the stops during the trip.

Chen said the city encourages Yunnan businesses to expand their presence and tap into its vast market. The cooperation requires a platform and should align with the market trends.

As China becomes a major coffee consumer, the nation's coffee sector has witnessed remarkable growth in the past few years, with numerous domestic coffee brands emerging and a more upgraded industry chain.

Shanghai owns the largest number of coffee shops in the world and the highest number of bakeries in China. According to Business Information of Shanghai, a local market information collector, as of the end of 2023, Shanghai had 9,553 coffee shops, the number of which surged 12 percent over 2022.

Guangzhou ranks second with 6,186 stores last year. The city is followed by Beijing, Chengdu in Sichuan province, Shenzhen in Guangdong province and Hangzhou in Zhejiang province, the agency said.

The booming demand for coffee beans invigorates growers in Yunnan. Baoshan Bestain Zhiziluo Coffee has established close cooperative relationships with local farmers to ensure they grow the coffee beans in a sustainable manner and receive fair compensation. In addition to supporting farmers, the company is striving to protect the ecological balance while helping develop the local coffee industry.

"We have 670 hectares of coffee plantations in Yunnan. Coffee beans sold at a good price helped drive the income growth of farmers and significantly contributed to rural vitalization," Li said.

A coffee bean enthusiast herself, Li often visits plantations and helps farmers grow better coffee beans with the knowledge she collects from customers.

Qiao Yuguang, who is in charge of a cooperative in Lushui city neighboring Baoshan in Yunnan, has engaged in business related to coffee bean planting for more than 20 years. In earlier years of his career, he was mainly involved in planting, processing and sales of traditional coffee beans.

With experience and knowledge over the two decades, Qiao took bold moves to ramp up production and sales of coffee beans. Last year, the total income of the cooperative reached 12.6 million yuan (\$1.8 million).

Gaoligong Mountain in Nujiang Lisu autonomous prefecture boasts unique coffee bean planting advantages. Yet, due to the mountainous location and logistics limitations, transporting coffee beans from the mountain to the outside markets used to be a headache for the local growers.

Thanks to the cooperation between Shanghai and Yunnan, a direct sales store for Nujiang agricultural products has been opened in Pudong New Area in Shanghai, and a sales warehouse for Nujiang coffee products has been established, easing the woes faced by the growers and making it more convenient for Shanghai consumers to purchase Nujiang coffee products.

Contact the writers at zhuwenqian@chinadaily.com.cn

## Farmers in Southwest China province reap juicy gains from vegetable

By ZHU WENQIAN in Beijing and LI YINGQING in Kunming

Exports of organic vegetables have become an economic driver in Yunnan province, providing more opportunities for local vegetable retailers.

Yunnan Mr. Yunling Agricultural Development Co Ltd has been exporting vegetable products to markets including Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions and Singapore. With the demand rising in recent years, the company aims to develop itself into a top brand of high-end organic food.

The company provides vegetables for supermarket chains nationwide, such as Sam's Club, Freshippo, Vanguard and Yonghui Superstores. Last year, its products covered 77 cities, 12 more than the number of the previous year, it said.

The volume of vegetables exported from Yunnan accounted for more than 10 percent of the nation's total last year, and both the exporting value and volume of Yunnan ranked top in Southwest China, according to the provincial department of agriculture and rural affairs.

After years of development, vegetable planting in Yunnan has gradually transformed from a scale-oriented sector to a quality-oriented one. The sector helped Yunnan attain a credential of health, green and ecological vegetables, the department said.

With a subtropical climate and abundant sunshine, Yunnan can provide various high-quality vegetable products throughout the year.

Vegetables from the province are exported to global markets in Asia, Europe, Africa, North America and Oceania.

Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia stood as the top three countries that saw the highest import volume of vegetables from Yunnan last year, according to Kunming Customs.

In 2023, exporting volume of fresh vegetables and other derivative products, such as dried and canned vegetables, from Yunnan reached 1.04 million metric tons, growing 10.6 percent year-on-year. Export value came in at 4.94 billion yuan (\$704 million), accounting for 29.3 percent of the province's total agricultural product exports, Kunming Customs said.

Last year, vegetable planting area in the province reached 1.35 million hectares, up 1.8 percent year-on-year, with an output of 29.6 million tons, up 3.6 percent year-on-year. Output value of

Now, with the launch of the China-Laos Railway, more businesspersons have engaged in the foreign trade of vegetables (in Yunnan province)."

Zhang Xuxu, president of Tonghai Wanhe Import and Export Co Ltd

the entire industry chain came in at 221.65 billion yuan, growing 11.8 percent over the previous year, the agriculture department said.

In addition, 70 percent of vegetable products from the province have been sold to over 150 large and medium-sized cities nationwide, and over 40 markets worldwide.

By the end of last year, Yunnan had 924 companies involved in vegetable businesses, and more than 6,700 cold storage warehouses had been built. Supported by the local pre-cooling and refrigeration services, product circulation losses have been reduced, significantly improving efficiency, the local agricultural department said.

Tonghai Wanhe Import and Export Co Ltd, a Yuxi, Yunnan-based vegetable processor involved in foreign trade, has been in the sector for more than a decade.

"Our vegetables are mainly exported to Thailand and Malaysia, with daily shipments through cold chain transportation via land, rail and sea. Now, with the launch of the China-Laos Railway, more businesspersons have engaged in the foreign trade of vegetables," said Zhang Xuxu, president of the company.

The vegetable industry now stands as a pillar sector in Tonghai county, and local vegetable farmers are well aware of what products are in high demand in foreign markets. For instance, Thai consumers prefer imported cabbage with green leaves.

"The packaging requirement is also different. For example, Thailand calls for fresh packaging bags while Malaysia urges cardboard boxes. As long as we tell farmers what products the foreign markets need, they will select the products based on the requirements of those countries and package them for us," Zhang said.



Top: A farmer harvests celery at a plantation in Tonghai county, Yunnan province.

Above: Employees ready chilies for export at a facility in Tonghai county, Yunnan province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## PEOPLE



Mu Shijie treads down a rocky gully during an inspection trip in the reserve. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By YAN DONGJIE  
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Many still remember the devastating 8.0 magnitude earthquake that struck Wenchuan, Sichuan province, in 2008. The quake also damaged the breeding bases of the China Conservation and Research Center for the Giant Panda.

That year, part-time cleaner Mu Shijie, driven by his love for the national treasure, voluntarily dedicated himself to the restoration, reconstruction and relocation work at the panda base. After a month of effort, he was officially recruited as a caretaker.

Sixteen years later, Mu has evolved into an experienced trainer who helps giant pandas to be reintroduced into the wild.

"Giant panda reintroduction is about releasing bred giant pandas back into the wild after undergoing wilderness training to revitalize the wild giant panda population," Mu explained.

During the first stage of wilderness training, caretakers move a giant panda mother to a training enclosure at the base. These enclosures span thousands of square meters and are built on mountains, resembling natural environments.

To simulate living in the wild, caretakers ensure that cubs do not see humans. When feeding their mothers, they wear panda suits sprayed with the smell of panda urine.

"We must ensure that the cubs do not see us feeding their mother and do not come into contact with any artificial food. The main diet for giant pandas is bamboo. Feeding the mother ensures ample milk production because the cubs primarily rely on milk before bamboo," Mu said. "This approach maximizes the cubs' independence from humans. It ensures they will naturally avoid humans rather than seek them out."

When the cubs reach around one year old, they are transferred with their mothers to larger enclosures with more complex natural environments, gradually learning to feed on bamboo independently. Eventually, when the cubs are close to adulthood and possess the skills to survive in the wild, they are released back into their natural habitat.

Due to his work, Mu lives in the mountains year-round, descending every two weeks for supplies and brief rest. Mobile signal reception in the mountains is intermittent, and the comforts of modern life are sparse.

Mu described the wild environ-

# Panda caretaker embraces less to ensure conservation

The challenges and routines of reintroducing captive-bred offsprings into the wild



Mu Shijie guides a panda and checks its collar during its training to be reintroduced into the wild at the China Conservation and Research Center for the Giant Panda in Sichuan province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

I genuinely want to pass down these nurturing experiences for pandas through the generations. The methods passed down to me by my father, I, in turn, pass on to younger caretakers. With experience, our pandas can grow up healthy and strong."

Mu Changyu, son of panda wilderness trainer Mu Shijie

ment as challenging, with frequent extreme weather like heavy rain and hail. He starts his day by turning on a radio receiver to monitor the giant pandas' signals, then sets out with the mother panda's food, a walkie-talkie and a satellite phone to patrol the enclosures. He spends about four hours circling the enclosure each day, sometimes returning to the campsite close to nightfall.

"Daily monitoring of giant pandas in the wild is our routine work, twice a day," he said.

Due to years of traversing rugged terrain, Mu underwent knee surgery for severe meniscus wear. As soon as he began to recover, he returned to his post.

"The work of reintroducing giant pandas into the wild is more demanding than that of captive

caretakers. Wilderness trainers must establish a sense of familiarity and trust with the panda mothers to carry out tasks like fitting them with GPS collars and collecting and returning cubs," he explained.

Wilderness trainers also have a unique task. Once a month, they fit the giant panda mothers with recording devices for 72 hours of audio recording. "We analyze moth-

er-cub interactions, feeding behavior, nursing behavior and more by listening and recording," he said.

Mu recalled an incident involving a panda cub named Qin Xin, who, after being transferred to the wilderness enclosure at Tiantai Mountain, managed to escape five times by digging under the enclosure fence, each time venturing farther away. Mu relied on the recordings from the collar on Qin



Mu Shijie installs a device that monitors pandas in the wild. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Xin's mother, Shu Qin, to confirm the cub had returned to nurse at night.

"It was frustrating to climb mountains and wade through water to find and bring it back to the enclosure, only for it to escape again the next day from another spot under the fence. But it was also satisfying because this is the result we aim for in wilderness training — full of wild instincts, learning the skills for survival in the wild, and being capable of living independently in the wild," he said.

The memory of Mu's first successful giant panda cub reintroduction is etched clearly in his mind. From birth to release, Tao Tao's journey back to the wild spanned 26 months and seven days.

"Seeing it walk out of the enclosure, darting into the bamboo forest, it was a mix of feelings, very sad," Mu recalled.

He talked to himself as if talking to the giant panda: "Tao Tao, I wonder if we will ever meet again in this lifetime. We hope you will grow up safe and healthy in nature, utilizing all the skills your mother has imparted to you, establishing your own territory, finding a mate when you reach adulthood, and flourishing with offspring. We eagerly await your good news! Wishing you all the best! Goodbye!"

Mu's son, Mu Changyu, followed in his father's footsteps to become a giant panda caretaker.

"When I was young, accompanying my father to work allowed me to interact with many giant pandas, fostering a certain affection for them," he said.

"I genuinely want to pass down these nurturing experiences for pandas through the generations. The methods passed down to me by my father, I, in turn, pass on to younger caretakers. With experience, our pandas can grow up healthy and strong," he added.

In recent years, China's efforts in natural forest conservation, protection of wildlife and plants, and the establishment of the Giant Panda National Park have advanced the conservation of giant pandas and their habitats. The population of wild giant pandas has increased from around 1,100 in the 1980s to nearly 1,900.

Experts explain that reintroducing captive-bred giant pandas back into the wild after wilderness training helps enhance genetic diversity and reduce the risk of extinction within small populations, thereby aiding in the recovery and rebuilding of wild giant panda populations — a crucial step in giant panda conservation.

Li Ren contributed to this story.

By YAN DONGJIE

Caring for giant panda cubs sounds like an enviable job, and it certainly was in Liu Huaiting's first-hand experience.

In the lush, mist-covered mountains of Ya'an, Sichuan province, Liu has been a panda keeper at a China Conservation and Research Center for the Giant Panda base for a decade.

Liu first encountered giant panda cubs in 2017, a year that marked his transition from handling adult pandas to caring for their vulnerable offspring.

"Handling my first set of twin cubs was an unforgettable experience," he said. Nurturing the panda twins, Qiao Yi and Qiao Liang, was a challenging and rewarding change for Liu.

Caring for panda cubs is a complex task. Unlike their adult counterparts who primarily consume bamboo and supplementary food, cubs require specially tailored diets and constant vigilance due to their delicate health.

"Our job involves intricate details," Liu explained. "From feeding bottles to disinfecting equipment, every task

is crucial, no matter how trivial."

His daily responsibilities are multifaceted, ranging from monitoring growth data and feeding to managing a plethora of supplies and tools necessary for panda care.

Liu recalled his intense focus while caring for the twin cubs, He He and Mei Mei. "Their survival was critical because they were the first twins born through our wilderness reintroduction program, which means they have special genetic value," he said.

When the cubs were about half a month old, Liu noticed blood in their excrement. Keepers took turns caring for the cubs around the clock for three to four days until they regained their health.

Liu said that as giant pandas are a precious species, many rearing experiences do not have precedent; they are accumulated through meticulous daily observations and care.

Liu's commitment was tested in 2020 when he was dispatched to the



Cubs born in 2023 make their public debut with their caretakers in February at the China Conservation and Research Center for the Giant Panda in Sichuan province. LI CHUANYOU / FOR CHINA DAILY

Chongqing Zoo to assist with a delicate rescue mission. A newborn giant panda named Yu Ke, born to Er Shun, faced a life-threatening situation shortly after birth because the mother accidentally squeezed it. Liu and the team's quick response

and expertise saved the cub's life. "Thanks to our years of accumulated experience, the cub was rescued in time, but the situation was indeed critical. If we had discovered it any later, the outcome might have been irreversible," he said.

Liu has witnessed and contributed to advancements in giant panda conservation throughout his career. The species' population has grown, evolving from critically endangered to being classified as vulnerable.

"Seeing this progress is incredibly fulfilling," said Liu. "The increase in giant panda numbers and the development of our field reflect the hard work and innovation that has driven our mission."

One of the most notable achievements in recent years has been the introduction of captive-bred giant pandas back into their natural habitat. This groundbreaking work involves training pandas to survive in the wild and helping them integrate into wild populations. Liu takes pride in knowing that pandas released into the wild have successfully mated and contributed to genetic diversity.

In recent years, the center has expanded its giant panda conservation efforts by collaborating with

countries across the globe. The center provides technical support and training to assist these countries in enhancing their expertise and capabilities in the conservation and management of giant pandas.

As the journey of wildlife conservation continues, the center remains at the forefront of conservation efforts, integrating new technologies and methods to improve panda care.

"Our work has become more sophisticated," said Liu. "Now we can use real-time monitoring systems and share the data collected to ensure the best care for our pandas."

Having reached the target of increasing births over the past few years, the center has shifted towards optimizing genetic diversity and making the offspring healthier.

Reflecting on his experiences, Liu is humble and proud. "In the beginning, working with pandas made me feel happy and stress-free. Over time, it has become a profound responsibility. Now, all I ever want is for each of them to grow up safe and sound."

Li Ren contributed to this story.

## SPORTS

## SOCCER



Players take part in training for Greenland's national futsal men's team in Inussivik indoor sports hall in Nuuk on Aug 28. AFP



Mountains provide an impressive backdrop to the Nuuk Stadium's outdoor artificial pitch. AFP



Players take part in training for Greenland's national futsal men's team in Inussivik indoor sports hall in Nuuk on Aug 28. AFP

# Putting Greenland on the sporting map

Local officials make bid to join CONCACAF, as soccer-mad territory looks to compete on the international stage

NUUK — Despite being covered by ice and largely desolate, soccer is still king in Greenland, where the players want to compete with other nations. However, it remains a pipe dream until the Danish autonomous territory joins a continental federation.

Until now, soccer players in Greenland have mostly played among themselves, and the national team — made up of amateurs — has relied on the goodwill of opponents to organize matches.

The territory's soccer association, KAK, announced on May 28 that it had applied to join the Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF), since it was unable to join the European soccer association UEFA.

UEFA statutes stipulate that membership can only be granted to federations "based in a country which is recognized as an independent state by the majority of members of the United Nations".

"It's the only place on Earth right now that's not member of any soccer confederation," Greenland coach Morten Rutkjaer told reporters.

Nevertheless, soccer — and in particular the English Premier League — is very popular for the 57,000 or so inhabitants of the world's largest island, which covers an area of two million square kilometers.

In the streets of Greenland's towns and cities, many children play soccer in the summer, and, as soon as the weather permits, the pitches fill up — with one of the most eye-catching venues located in the northern village of Uummanaq, which lies in the shadow of nearby icebergs.

## 'The biggest sport'

"It's the biggest sport in Greenland," Ungaqaq Abelsen, secretary-general of KAK, said, adding that it is estimated that more than 10 percent of the population play.

"If we get into, for example, CONCACAF or FIFA in general, then we



Beached icebergs sit on the shore at Camp Kangiusaq in Nuuk Fjord, Greenland on Sept 1, 2024. It is a virtually uninhabited territory, covered mainly in ice, and yet, in Greenland, soccer is king and fans, in search of recognition, want to be able to measure themselves against other nations. AFP

can play in official tournaments and have a lot more matches against others," he added, explaining what counts is being able to join FIFA, which requires you to belong to a regional confederation.

Although it was not involved in the bid, the Danish Football Association (DBU) "strongly" supports it. "We are getting closer to our goal, to play more international matches and to show that Greenland is among those countries who can play football," Greenland captain Patrick Frederiksen said.

The 30-year-old has played just 10 friendlies since his first cap in 2017, most recently on June 1 against

Turkmenistan, a game which Greenland lost 5-0.

Like his teammates, Frederiksen is not a professional.

He works at a kindergarten and can only train after hours. For away tournaments, such as the Island Games in Guernsey in 2023, he has to take time off work.

For the federation, the aim is not to win the World Cup — not yet, anyway — in fact, Greenland does not seek to take part in the qualifying stages before the 2026 edition.

Instead, it wants to focus on playing more matches in order to improve, with the hope that it will not only benefit the national team,

but also clubs around the territory.

Due to the harsh arctic climate, the outdoor season only runs from May to August, and the local championship is only played over one week at the beginning of August.

But, the leaders of the project to go international are convinced they can make arrangements to play abroad on approved pitches.

In 1992, the Faroe Islands played a European Championship qualifier in Sweden because they lacked a suitable pitch, the Greenlanders claim.

## 'Childhood dream'

Most players and fans are far removed from such practical con-

siderations, and have already begun marveling at the prospect of a possible confederation membership.

"It will bring some joy; a proud feeling," Frederiksen said, adding that having a recognized international status would be a "childhood dream" come true.

"Somebody out in the world will know where Greenland is," said Robert Fuder, a fan who came to attend an indoor training session in Maniitsoq — a town with a population of 2,500.

For many it would also be an important step for the Greenlandic identity.

"It would mean very, very much to



Danish former soccer player Morten Rutkjaer, manager of Greenland's national men's team, says the territory is the only place on Earth right now that is not member of any soccer confederation. AFP

our country... it's a big part of our identity and helps a lot, in many ways, in personal development," Abelsen said.

For Rasmus Petersen, a 44-year-old plumber who coaches a youth team in the small Arctic town, the territory has "a bright future" in soccer.

To facilitate this, and in an effort to mobilize children, in Maniitsoq, the municipality subsidizes training so that everyone can play.

Joining a soccer confederation is "also about the youth", Rutkjaer noted.

"Because, now, when you live in Greenland, you have to have something to look forward to," he said.

As well as inspiring the next generation, membership would also create incentives to develop the country's sports infrastructure.

In the absence of a stadium that meets international standards, Abelsen said KAK was considering purchasing air domes — an inflatable structure that covers the pitch, protecting it from the elements.

AFP

## ICE HOCKEY

# Flyers hoping that Russian teen sensation will help them soar

Matvei Michkov's first dose of culture shock in American hockey hit the Russian teen sensation when he skated in the opening days of Philadelphia Flyers' training camp.

Flyers fans were already dressed in his No 39 jersey. Kids, adults — lots of them.

The Flyers open the doors to the public for most practices, and fans — who haven't had much to cheer for since 2010 — flocked to South Jersey to catch a glimpse of the talent whose buzz has already drawn comparisons to another franchise great, Eric Lindros.

"It's an unbelievable feeling to see the fans already showing up," Michkov said through a translator. "It helps go through the hard training. Sometimes, we're doing it for the fans and it helps overall."

The 19-year-old Russian also noted he'd never seen so many fans wearing his jersey before.

He better get used to the early fame. In a sports-mad city loaded with some of the nation's biggest-name athletes — from the Phillies' Bryce Harper to the 76ers' Joel Embiid and the Eagles' Jalen Hurts — the once-mighty Flyers have languished in

obscurity, with rosters filled with mostly indistinguishable skaters.

Michkov could be the breakthrough star the Flyers desperately craved as they make the climb back into the playoffs — and relevancy.

The hype comes with one critical caveat, per coach John Tortorella. "It's not going to be the Michkov show, because I think it's unfair to him," Tortorella said. "I'm going to watch that very closely, because I want to give him every opportunity to get his feet planted in here and go about it the right way."

The Flyers are even still amazed Michkov is in the States to help push the team into the playoffs for the first time since 2020, and in the 50th anniversary season of their last Stanley Cup championship.

His slick playmaking had scouts projecting Michkov might have been drafted right behind Chicago's Connor Bedard in 2023, had he not been tangled in a long-term deal with his team in Russia's Kontinental Hockey League.

General manager Danny Briere preached patience when the Flyers selected Michkov with the seventh pick in the 2023 draft, knowing he had three years left on his KHL con-



Matvei Michkov tries on a Philadelphia Flyers hat after being picked by the team during the NHL draft on June 28, 2023. AP

tract. After tricky negotiations, SKA St Petersburg instead let Michkov out of his contract over the summer, paving the way for the 178-centimeter, 80-kilogram right wing to arrive in Philadelphia ahead of schedule.

The early returns have impressed the Flyers.

"You could tell he has a lot of confidence, he'll try some stuff that most guys won't," Flyers goalie Samuel Ersson said. "I know that, in the scrimmages we had here a little bit

before camp, he scored some nifty goals on me. So it's kind of like, alright, I've got to be ready for everything here when he comes in."

With opening night not until Oct 11 in Vancouver, the Flyers have experimented with line combinations. Morgan Frost, a first-round pick in the 2017 draft, has centered a line that included Michkov and Owen Tippett.

They've let their play do the talking, as Michkov, who turns 20 in

December, crams to learn English.

"I think sometimes it's a little harder for him to say what he wants to say," Frost said. "I think everyone's trying to make him welcome, and he seems to have a great attitude and he has fun out there."

Michkov's transition to America has been eased somewhat with the Flyers use of a steady translator — who sat with Michkov in the Phillies dugout before a recent first pitch — and playing with Russian teammates Egor Zamula and Ivan Fedotov.

Michkov, who is from the city of Perm, at the foot of Russia's Ural Mountains, is just one of the boys in the locker room. Before a recent practice, Michkov was left a message at his locker — written in both English and Russian, just so nothing was lost in translation.

"Did you already find a US woman?" Zamula said, laughing. "I'm like: 'Right away? It's too soon guys, focus on hockey!'"

Teammate Erik Johnson was the instigator, just a little fun to loosen up the training camp grind.

"I'm going to help him as much as I can, joke with him, have fun with him," Johnson said. "Maybe try and teach him some new words. I don't

know what those will be, but we'll see. I'll try and help him on a day-to-day basis. Maybe do some trivia, I don't know, just little stuff to kind of make it fun and help him with his English."

He needed little help in Russia with his hockey. Michkov was the property of SKA St Petersburg, where he appeared in one game before being loaned to HC Sochi for the remainder of the season. He had 19 goals and 22 assists for 41 points in 47 games. He recorded 11 multi-point games, and finished the season with five goals and eight points in his last nine games.

"He's got some personality," Tortorella said. "Sometimes it goes the wrong way with a coach and a player, but at least it's personality. I think it's boring, sometimes, in this league, where there's no personality with the guys. He has some. You can see the puck follows him. He's skilled, you can see that."

Philadelphia is just now coming out of a rebuild, deftly orchestrated by Briere and beginning to transition into a contender.

Who knows? The missing piece just might be a teenager out of Russia.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



# BREAKING NEW GROUND

The Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps is modernizing local agriculture and industrial capabilities of border areas

**From left:** An employee at the Seventh Division of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps picks a special kind of pumpkin. MA YUQIONG / FOR CHINA DAILY Staff members at the XPCC's Second Division drive machinery to pick tomatoes. HAN JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

By HAO NAN

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The Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps has experienced rapid industrial growth in recent years, driven by the remarkable development of several of its enterprises such as Tianye, Tianfu and Terun. These companies have emerged as leaders in various sectors within the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

Terun is a major dairy producer in China and this year marks the 10th anniversary of Terun's expansion into markets outside Xinjiang. "From the initial mobile milk stations to nearly 1,000 specialty stores nationwide, the company's influence in markets outside Xinjiang has been firmly established," said Lu Yuzhong, deputy general manager of the company.

When the XPCC was established 70 years ago, mechanized industry in Xinjiang was almost non-existent. Despite numerous challenges such as insufficient funding, equipment and talent, the XPCC achieved many "firsts" in the region, including the first modern grain and oil industrial enterprise and the first large-scale cotton textile joint enterprise. These achievements laid the foundation for the industrial development of both Xinjiang and the XPCC.

Over the years, the XPCC has continuously strengthened its top-level design, actively promoted the deep integration of industrialization and informatization, and coordinated the optimization and upgrading of the production and processing of agricultural products and leading industries in the region such as cotton, textile and apparel, new materials, new energy, and equipment manufacturing.

The XPCC aims to further enhance the local industrial capabilities and modernize the



**From left:** Employees air tomatoes at the XPCC's Second Division. LI JIACHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY Fields of wheat at the XPCC's Sixth Division. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

industry chains, gradually building a modern industrial system with the XPCC's unique features. During the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20), the average annual growth rate of the XPCC's industrial added value was 0.7 percentage points higher than the national average. And, in the first half of this year, the industrial added value of its enterprises above designated size increased by 9.5 percent year-on-year. In July, northern Xinjiang is characterized by sunlight and lush green farm fields. The agricultural production of the XPCC has undergone a transformation, evolving from the use of traditional iron farming tools and hand-pulled plows to modern machinery such as tractors and combine harvesters, transitioning from "sweat-driven" to "smart-driven" methods.

In the harsh conditions of the past, the kantuman was the most versatile tool for reclaiming barren lands. It could dig ditches, build dams, loosen soil, weed, serve as a plate, and even be heated to bake bread,

making it a favorite among soldiers.

To improve production efficiency, the XPCC introduced a fleet of tractors. In August 1955, Jin Maofang became the XPCC's first female tractor driver, setting a record by sowing 8 hectares in one day and completing 20 years' worth of tasks in just seven years.

Agriculture has remained the foundation for the development of the XPCC, with mechanization playing a crucial role. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China convened in 2012, the XPCC has capitalized on the national push for agricultural mechanization, deeply advancing supply-side structural reforms in this area.

By increasing the effective supply of agricultural machinery, the XPCC has continuously improved the level of agricultural mechanization. Today, the comprehensive mechanization rate for its crop cultivation and harvesting exceeds 95 percent.

In addition to introducing agricultural machinery, the XPCC has vigorously promot-

ed the intelligent manufacturing of high-end agricultural equipment. This includes the development of modern machinery with independent intellectual property rights, such as advanced cotton pickers, seeders equipped with satellite remote sensing technology and plant protection drones.

With one-fourth of the nation's cotton planting area, the XPCC now produces over one-third of the nation's cotton, establishing itself as a key commodity cotton production base in China. In 2023, Xinjiang's cotton output reached 5.11 million metric tons, ranking first in the country for 29 consecutive years.

Also, the XPCC's cotton surpasses the average levels in China for the six quality indicators, with four leading the nation.

Behind these remarkable achievements lies the crucial role played by high-quality cotton seed research and development.

Seeds are often referred to as the "chips" of modern agriculture. The Xinjiang Academy of Agricultural and Reclamation Science, affiliat-

ed with the XPCC, has developed varieties specifically suited for machine harvesting, such as "Xinluzao No 33" and "Xinluzao No 45".

It has also innovated cotton planting techniques that incorporate precise water and fertilizer control via film drip irrigation, and continuously optimized the management model for cotton growth periods. Today, cotton stands as a pillar industry of the XPCC, attracting groups of large textile enterprises. In addition to its success with cotton, the XPCC has achieved the highest per-unit yield of wheat nationally in demonstration fields spanning hundreds of hectares under arid and low-rainfall conditions.

Adhering to the principle of "not encroaching on people's farmland", the XPCC chose to settle on the edges of deserts and border areas unsuitable for farming. It has developed its high-standard farmland through extensive afforestation and the enhancement of water conservancy facilities.

Since 2001, the XPCC has been promoting large-scale and efficient water-saving drip irrigation technology. This initiative has enabled it to gradually form a comprehensive technical chain that integrates water and fertilizer management, seed breeding and mechanized operations, providing a platform for improving agricultural quality and efficiency.

The transformed farmland is characterized by flat terrain, complete water-saving facilities and wide field roads. The drip irrigation technology delivers water and fertilizer directly to the roots of wheat, ensuring optimal growth.

Through several generations of efforts, the XPCC has consistently enhanced scientific and technological guidance, established a number of high-yield wheat demonstration bases, and achieved significant economic and social benefits, making substantial contributions to national food security.

By WANG JINHUI

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In recent years, the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps has continuously improved people's livelihoods, focusing on pressing issues in areas such as housing, infrastructure, urban renovation, employment and transport.

Today, the XPCC boasts vast fields with crisscrossing paths and factories dotting the vast desert. The distinctive urban system of the XPCC has begun to take shape, and workers and residents are experiencing significant changes in their way of life.

A herder from the Beitashan ranch of the Sixth Division under the XPCC has maintained a stable income since the transfer of land. The herder has a cleaning job at the ranch, which provides a fixed salary, and raises 20 sheep, two horses and four cows.

The spacious, well-lit kitchen and bathroom, complete with furniture and appliances such as a sofa, TV, and water heater, is the new home of a resident of the 51st Regiment of the Third Division under the XPCC. The resident said that running water and natural gas is available in the new house and "life is great".

When talking about the changes brought by the renovation of old residential communities, Wujiaqu city resident Xun Xiangping was full of praise.

"The exterior walls of the community have been repainted, and there are gardens and green spaces right outside the door. It's so convenient and comfortable to live here," said Xun.

Xun lives in the Yijingyuan community of Wujiaqu, which used to suffer from old underground pipelines and cramped spaces, causing many inconveniences. Wujiaqu, managed by the XPCC, merged several communities for comprehensive renovation, greatly improving residents' quality of life.

To address housing issues for workers and residents, the XPCC has also made progress in the construction of affordable housing projects, implemented public rental housing projects and carried out renovation projects for shantytowns, old residential areas, and dilapidated rural houses.

To date, more than 20,200 units of affordable housing have been built, and more than 137,000 units have been renovated. From 2021 to 2023, the XPCC renovated 253 old urban communities, benefiting 117,000 households.

As the XPCC accelerates new urbanization, city management is shifting from extensive development to an era of refined



## Esprit de corps builds a desert economy



**Clockwise from top left:** An ecological landscape park in the XPCC's Alaer city. CHEN YANG / FOR CHINA DAILY Visitors enjoy a sea of flowers at the Yanming Lake sports park in the XPCC's Tiemenguan city. LI WEIPING / FOR CHINA DAILY The picturesque scenery in Tiemenguan. LI JIACHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

management. Through the internet of things and big data technology, cities managed by the XPCC are creating digital lifestyles that enhance residents' sense of happiness.

For example, Cocodala city has introduced more than 40 mobile services, including government services, convenience services and transportation. Shihezi city has built a "one-network management" platform for city governance, connecting 76 departments, enabling seamless data sharing and collaborative service delivery.

Transportation also has a significant effect on urban development and residents' happiness. In the past year, the XPCC implemented 56 key road projects, completing about 1,069 kilometers of new roads. They also advanced

the construction of nine railways, and built or renovated 1,001 km of rural roads.

In 2023, the per capita disposable income of all XPCC residents reached 40,339 yuan (\$5,762), surpassing the 40,000 yuan for the first time, with a year-on-year increase of 6.4 percent. Urban residents had an average disposable income of 46,485 yuan, up 5.5 percent from 2022, while residents in the brigades saw a 7.5 percent increase, with an average disposable income of 30,565 yuan.

The XPCC has also made efforts to improve the ecological environment to benefit local people in recent years. On the edge of the reclamation area in the Tarim Desert, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, poplar trees and tamarisks are thriving with lush,

verdant foliage, forming an ecological protective forest that stretches nearly 200 km, and creating a green barrier that effectively prevents the merging of the Taklamakan and Kumtag deserts.

"In the past, sandstorms occurred every few days, and you couldn't see people within 30 to 50 meters. We tried planting trees to control the sand, but the survival rate was very low," said Wang Xianhua, a retired worker from the 31st Regiment of the Second Division under the XPCC.

The 31st, 33rd and 34th regiments of the Second Division under the XPCC are situated on the northeastern edge of the Taklamakan Desert and the southeastern edge of the Kumtag Desert. The narrowest point

between these two deserts is less than 3 km. This area is arid with little rainfall and low vegetation coverage.

In 2000, the 31st regiment began afforestation, converting farmland back to forest, and in the gap between the two deserts, they planted a 1.1-km-long, 200-meter-wide shelter belt to control the wind and stabilize the sand. Subsequently, the 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 37th and 38th regiments continued greening efforts along national highways 218 and 315.

Over the years, workers and residents in the Tarim reclamation area have employed a three-tiered afforestation method combining trees, shrubs and grasses, creating a networked system of shelter belts. Around the regiments, they established a four-tiered ecological protection system, starting from the outer edge of the oasis and moving inward, consisting of desert ecological forests, windbreak and sand-stabilizing shelter belts, internal oasis farmland shelter belts, and specialized economic forests and residential area greenery.

Song Caifu, a staff member of the agricultural development service center in the 31st regiment, is one of the forest rangers involved in the construction and maintenance of the ecological barrier.

"Watching the desert turn green is my greatest source of pride. We must ensure that future generations don't suffer from the onslaught of sand and wind," Song said.

Song recalled replanting saplings in 2019. "I had to walk over 30,000 steps in the desert each day to inspect pipes and install drip irrigation systems. But no matter how hard or exhausting it was, seeing this oasis grow day by day made all the effort worthwhile."

Today, while protecting against wind and sand and improving the ecological environment, workers and residents have also developed a desert economy as a key strategy for integrating ecological protection with rural revitalization.

They have cultivated economic crops such as black goji, salsaul, and fragrant pears based on local conditions, combining sand control with the development of specialty forestry and fruit industries.

In the lands of the various brigades of the 34th regiment, tens of thousands of nearly 3-meter-tall salsaul trees stand neatly arranged, protecting workers' farmlands and homes. Salsaul trees form extremely well-developed root systems, with a single tree's roots spreading over dozens of square meters underground, providing excellent windbreak and sand-stabilizing effects.