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# CHINA DAILY

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XI'S VISION | COMMUNITY OF CHINESE NATION

## Lives of ethnic groups change for the better

Minority populations benefit from efforts by government to achieve common prosperity

By CUI JIA  
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A resident of Wengji village atop Jingmai Mountain in Yunnan province, Yu Xuan has been busy through the weeklong National Day Holiday that ended on Monday, showing around visitors and explaining to them how locals cultivate tea in the region under a canopy created by forests.

This unique method of growing tea, which helps filter sunlight and ensures enough moisture in the soil, has been in practice for generations, the 22-year-old from the Blang ethnic group said.

Today, thanks to improved road infrastructure and housing, access to the village is much easier than before. More accessibility has meant more opportunities for local residents to trade in tea especially with China determined to leave no ethnic group behind in advancing Chinese modernization and achieving common prosperity, Yu said.

"The country has put a tremendous amount of effort into improving the lives of people in areas with large ethnic populations, and the results are obvious because our life in the village has been transformed," said Yu, who is piloting new methods of cultivation that she learned at Yunnan Agricultural University to manage the family's tea plantation.

Ever since the cultural landscape of old tea forests of Jingmai Mountain in Pu'er was made a World Heritage Site in September last year, more and more people have been visiting the area, Yu said.

"Besides learning about each other's traditions and cultures, people now understand that we are all equal members of the community for the Chinese nation. I believe it's important for people from China's 56 ethnic groups to be united and work together to make the country stronger and our life even better."

Ethnic unity is greatly valued by President Xi Jinping. During a grand meeting held in Beijing on Sept 27 to honor role models for ethnic unity and progress, he once again called for consolidating and developing the unity of the Chinese nation.

"The country has put a tremendous amount of effort into improving the lives, ... and the results are obvious because our life in the village has been transformed."

Yu Xuan, a resident of Wengji village atop Jingmai Mountain in Yunnan province

Xi said at the meeting that the Communist Party of China has always attached great importance to ethnic affairs. Over the past more than a century, it has created the correct path of handling ethnic affairs with a distinctively Chinese approach.

Along this path, Xi said, the CPC has made new advances in developing ethnic relations of equality, solidarity, mutual assistance and harmony, and promoted economic and social development of ethnic areas and the lives of ethnic minority groups to register unprecedented progress.

Xi also highlighted key aspects of the path of handling ethnic affairs with a distinctively Chinese approach, which include maximizing cohesion among all ethnic groups, adhering to the principle of equality for all ethnic groups, opposing ethnic oppression and discrimination, and properly balancing the safeguarding of national unity with the implementation of regional ethnic autonomy.

Furthermore, he called for efforts to guide all ethnic groups toward firmly embracing the sense of a community for the Chinese nation — an important notion put forward by Xi in May 2014. Since then, he has on many occasions including meetings and visiting areas with large ethnic populations stated the profound implications and great significance of consolidating such a sense.

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## Caught in the conflict



Two children stand amid the rubble of a destroyed building in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, on Sunday. According to data released by the health department in Gaza on Sunday, Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip have killed nearly 42,000 Palestinians and injured more than 97,000 since the Palestinian-Israeli conflict began last year. RIZEK ABDELJAWAD/XINHUA See story, page 9

## A-share market set to further bolster confidence with stimulus measures

By SHI JING in Shanghai  
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Following the A-share market's recent robust recovery buoyed by a number of stronger-than-expected stimulative policies, increasingly confident investors are attaching more attention to the stock market, whose upward momentum can be further consolidated by more supportive measures and the ongoing optimization of China's economic growth, said industry experts.

Preparations were made during the National Day holiday, which ended on Monday. The Shanghai Stock Exchange announced on Sunday that it will add an extra five minutes, from 9:25 to 9:30 on each trading day, for designated transactions. The new policy will take effect on Tuesday, the first trading day after the holiday.

As explained by industry experts, a designated transaction is a step that an investor must take between opening a new stock account and commencing trading on the SSE. The latest adjustment at the SSE has been made to address the surging number of newly registered retail investors over the past few days and to facilitate trading efficiency once the market resumes, they said.

The market's upbeat sentiment can be felt at securities brokerages. Leading brokerages provided round-the-clock online account opening and consulting services during the holiday.

Sinolink Securities said the account opening appointments they received during the holiday jumped 150 percent from a month earlier. Minsheng Securities said the number of daily requests for opening stock accounts over the past seven days was four times the amount before the holiday.

To meet such surging demand, the securities account platform and identification information checking system at China Securities Depository and Clearing Co resumed operation on Sunday and Monday.

Investor confidence has been supported by the A-share market's recent strong rebound. Ever since the batch of incremental policies was introduced on Sept 24, the Shanghai Composite Index gained 20 percent by the end of September, with the Shenzhen Component Index up 29 percent. The combined trading value at the Shanghai and Shenzhen exchanges hit a new single-day record of 2.6 trillion yuan (\$370 billion) on Sept 30.

Laura Wang, chief China equity strategist at Morgan Stanley, said on Oct 3 that Chinese equities will gain another 10 to 15 percent on average if a new round of fiscal expenditure measures can be released in the following weeks.

At a news conference scheduled for Tuesday, officials from the National Development and Reform Commission, the country's top economic regulator, will explain their measures to better implement the range of supportive policies released in late September, in order to further advance economic growth and optimize China's economic structure.

Yang Delong, chief economist at First Seafont Fund, said the 140-trillion-yuan Chinese household savings will provide more capital for the A-share market after the National Day holiday, providing more upward impetus for the indexes.

The increase in the Hong Kong stock market has already overtaken that of the A-share market as the latter took more days off for the holiday, said experts at Shenwan Hongyuan Securities. Therefore, a continued rally can be expected from the A-share market in the short run to narrow the price gap with Hong Kong, they added.

Dai Kang, managing director of the development research center at GF Securities, said private equity investment funds have increased their exposure to the A-share market, which has just seen the strongest rebound in months. Chinese policymakers have smartly used the time window of interest rate cuts made by the US Federal Reserve to introduce stronger-than-expected supportive measures, he said.

Goldman Sachs upgraded its call on Chinese stocks to overweight, saying that recent stimulus measures have bolstered confidence, and Chinese equities' valuations are below historical averages while their earnings could further improve.

## WORLD WATCH

By Regina Ip

## Hong Kong's voice needs to be heard

The resolution of the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on further deepening reform and advancing Chinese modernization, to date the most comprehensive blueprint of China's development going forward, spells out strategic roles for the special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macao under the rubric of "pursuing high-standard opening-up."

The resolution lays out four expectations of the two special administrative regions.

They are to play an important role in optimizing China's plan for regional development to enhance coastal-interior interaction and the free trade experiment, as on Hainan Island; to harness the institutional strengths of the "one country, two systems" policy and further consolidate Hong Kong's position as a global financial, maritime and trading center and as a magnet for high-quality talent; to deepen cooperation within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area; and to improve high-quality implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative in diverse areas such as technology and innovation, green development, digital economy, artificial intelligence, energy, taxation and disaster mitigation.

These four expectations pinpoint precisely the roles the two SARs are to play in the master plan for the next stage of national rejuvenation. During a recent meeting with Hong Kong Financial Secretary Paul Chan Mo-po, Xia Baolong, head of the Hong Kong and Macao Work Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, urged Hong Kong to comprehend in-depth

See *SAR*, page 3

## Jumbo to the rescue



An elephant wades through flood waters on Sunday carrying relief supplies for villagers in Chiang Mai Province, Thailand. Flash floods have killed at least three people so far in the region, which witnessed torrential rain on Saturday night. WASON WANICHAKORN / AP

## FOUR YOUNG GUNS SHARE SECRETS TO SUCCESSFUL STARTUPS

Entrepreneurs fueled by dedication, fighting spirit, aided by supportive policies

By YU RAN in Shanghai  
For China Daily

At what age do people become entrepreneurs? A Harvard Business School study suggests that 42 is the magic age of successful startup founders.

In China, research by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences shows nearly 40 percent of entrepreneurs start their businesses



between the ages of 36 and 44.

"The younger generation is optimistic that the rapid technological advances offer them opportunities. They have more tools to lower costs and boost efficiency," said Ju Jin-

wen, an economist at the CASS.

China Daily talked with four successful entrepreneurs who started their businesses at a young age.

### Li Yueyue, 36

Li founded Botan, a jewelry company focusing on gemstone sourcing, custom design and finished product sales, in Shanghai in 2019.

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## PAGE TWO

"We must work harder and stay more focused than others. This spirit and determination give us greater ease when facing competition and challenges."

Yu Qun, founder of Jiangsu Jushang Private Fund Management Co



From page 1

After graduating with a master's degree in marketing from the University of Bath in the United Kingdom, Li worked at a Bank of Communications branch in Shanghai. She developed a passion for gemology when she was ordering her own wedding ring, and left her job in 2014 to take professional jewelry courses.

She opened her own business and began by purchasing accessories from Pandora, a Danish jewelry company, for her clients. She was handling more than 50 orders a day, buying and delivering Pandora accessories to her customers.

Li has since upgraded her business to offer a "one-stop" service: from sourcing raw stones at origin, to design and setting, and finished product sales.

She frequently visits mining areas in Australia, Thailand, and other locations to personally select high-quality gemstones such as rubies, emeralds, and Australian opals.

Her banking experience helps the business. "Banking has taught me to pay close attention to details and to develop a keen sensitivity to market shifts. Building and maintaining client trust is also extremely important," said Li.

She emphasized that her banking experience has helped her better manage finances and control risks, enabling her to make prudent decisions.

"Every decision needs to be carefully considered because it's not just about profit, it's also about reputation," said Li.

"When I started the business, I was eager for success and wanted to see results quickly. But as time went on, I realized that the success of a business is not something that can be achieved overnight, it requires slow and steady progress."

Looking to the future, she plans to further promote Australian opal customization services and expand the use of colored gemstones to enhance Botan's brand.

"Although we are not large in scale, I hope to create unique pieces through our designs and services, becoming a distinctive force in both domestic and international markets," said Li.

She believes that the success of the first generation of entrepreneurs is not about the size of the enterprise, but whether one can deeply engage in their chosen field and work meticulously to gain industry recognition.

#### Yu Qun, 40

In 2013, Yu founded Jiangsu Jushang Private Fund Management Co. The company specializes in investment consulting, asset management, fixed-income investments, and wealth management for high-net-worth individuals and families.

Yu graduated from Suzhou University of Science and Technology with a major in mathematics, and is currently pursuing an Executive MBA at the School of Management, Fudan University.

His strategy is to gradually establish a foothold in the industry through detailed market research and continuous adjustments.

In the early stages, the company rented a small office of just over 90 square meters, with several people crowded together working in a basic environment. But everyone was extremely dedicated.

His company seized the opportunities brought by new regulations on local government bond issuance.

When traditional financial institutions were still deliberating the pros and cons of these new procedures, Yu's team, with their decade of experience, quickly entered the market and benefited from the first wave.

By 2023, the company had achieved significant growth, with newly added fund management exceeding 2 billion yuan (\$285 million), demonstrating the firm's success in the competitive private fund sector.

"We really didn't think we could grow to this

# Startups: First generation forges new path

"Every decision needs to be carefully considered because it's not just about profit, it's also about reputation."

Li Yueyue, founder of Botan Jewelry



"My academic background has taught me that failures in research are often due to flaws in methods or theories, not personal shortcomings."

Gao Boting, founder of Shanghai Jobly AI



"Life is about continuous exploration and finding joy in new ventures. Every stage offers new opportunities to grow and reinvent oneself."

Qin Hao, co-founder of Jargee Group



Practice has shown that various policies introduced by the government in recent years, such as tax reductions, innovation support, and expanded financing channels, have had a positive impact on first-generation entrepreneurs."

Ju Jinwen, economist at Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

size at the beginning. We just felt that the market opportunities were right in front of us, and it would be a shame not to seize them," said Yu.

However, the difficulties faced during the entrepreneurial process were also apparent, especially in the financial industry, a field full of uncertainties.

"In the past decade, we've witnessed the fall of many peers. Some companies imploded due to product issues, while others failed due to blind speculation," said Yu.

To avoid these risks, Yu's team established its strict "Ten Rules" early on, which included adherence to compliance policies and cautious risk control. These rules not only helped them weather several market turbulences but also enabled the company to achieve long-term stable development in the industry.

"China's capital market has experienced long-term fluctuations and several years of downturn recently. In such an environment, how to deliver stable returns to investors is a question every fund company must face," he said.

Yu emphasized that the company's future development plan is still focused on stability, and concentrating on standardized bond investments, particularly in cooperation with local government bonds.

"Competition in the fund industry is fierce, but we believe that 'long-termism' is the key to survival. We don't chase short-term high returns but adhere to compliance and stability, ensuring long-term, stable returns for our investors," said Yu.

Regarding the difference between first-generation entrepreneurs and family business inheritors, Yu believes that the biggest advantage of the first generation lies in practical experience as well as a fighting spirit.

"We have no fallback. We must work harder and stay more focused than others. This spirit and determination give us greater ease when facing competition and challenges," said Yu.

#### Gao Boting, 28

Gao ventured into the AI industry by founding Shanghai Jobly AI in May this year.

According to the Global AI Entrepreneurship Report, the number of AI startups in China has increased by 30 percent over the past two years. In 2023, the market size of China's AI industry is expected to surpass 2.4 trillion yuan.

Born in Hubei province and raised in Guangdong province, Gao completed her bachelor's degree in psychology in Canada, followed by a master's degree in neuroscience in the UK.

"I was fascinated by how psychological theories and neuroscience could intersect with practical applications. My research on TRNS (transcranial random noise stimulation) therapy was at the cutting edge of brain science, which I believe has paved the way for my work in AI," said Gao.

Work experience gained at game and internet companies between 2020 and 2024 further enriched her understanding of user behavior and needs, shaping her approach to developing AI-driven solutions.

After it was founded, her company introduced an application called RuiJian, which simplifies the recruiting process for both jobseekers and employers. Describing the period as the "year of AI development," she aimed to revolutionize traditional recruitment methods.

"Starting a new venture in an emerging field like AI involves navigating numerous obstacles. I've had to address technical bugs, adapt to legal requirements, and continuously refine our technology," said Gao.

Despite these challenges, Gao remains committed to her vision. As a pioneer in the AI industry, she faces a lengthy trial-and-error process with few precedents to follow. However, this also means that the industry offers a larger scope for experimentation and freedom.

"Being in a burgeoning field, the competitive pressure is somewhat less intense since everyone is still in a stage of exploration and learning," said Gao.

According to a report by consultancy McKinsey & Co, "The State of AI in 2020: Tackling the Challenges and Seizing the Opportunities", the success rate for AI startups is relatively low, at only about 10 to 15 percent.

"Failure in research is part of the process, not a personal defeat. My academic background has taught me that failures in research are often due to flaws in methods or theories, not personal shortcomings," said Gao, who claims that returning to work in a company would not be a big deal.

The application will launch this month, targeting jobseekers with less than three years of work experience. In the second phase, the focus will be on developing an AI-powered recruitment platform.

"I hope to see AI become an integral part of various industries. In the long term, I want to explore how AI can enhance human capabilities and be managed responsibly as an efficient tool," said Gao.

#### Qin Hao, 38

Qin was a top salesperson at a large company. In 2010, he was persuaded by a friend who had built a client network to cofound a chemical trading company. In 2020, Qin decided to sell the company after

receiving an offer from a state-owned enterprise. His enthusiasm for the industry had waned during the COVID-19 pandemic, further influencing his decision.

"The sale of my company was a turning point. It gave me the chance to explore new industries and meet people from diverse backgrounds," he said.

Qin decided to leverage his knowledge and shift his focus to a completely different industry. In 2016, he joined the Jargee Group, a chain of claw-machine businesses operating in shopping malls, as a co-founder.

A claw machine is a coin-operated glass cabinet that has a joystick-controlled claw used to grab prizes.

Qin faced the challenge of adapting his experience from chemical trading to the entertainment sector. His approach involved understanding the unique aspects of the consumer and chain industries, refining management styles, and leveraging his previous knowledge to drive Jargee Group's success.

"Entering the claw-machine industry was a leap into the unknown. I had to quickly adapt my skills and knowledge to make a difference," said Qin.

By 2024, the Jargee Group had grown to have 230 outlets and over 1,000 employees, reflecting Qin's strategic vision and effective execution. The company's success can be attributed to his ability to apply lessons learned from his earlier career.

"My time in the chemical industry taught me the importance of understanding market needs and adapting strategies accordingly. The key to a successful business is to create one that is both innovative and capable of scaling efficiently," said Qin.

Over the years, Qin's perspective on success has evolved significantly after experiencing two entrepreneurial ventures. Initially driven by financial metrics and competitive comparisons, he now defines success through personal growth and meaningful achievements.

"Previously, I measured success by the numbers and surpassing others, but now, it's about reaching goals and enjoying the journey, regardless of monetary outcomes," said Qin.

In addition, his interests have shifted to broader life experiences, including learning psychology and understanding global economic impacts.

"Life is about continuous exploration and finding joy in new ventures. Every stage offers new opportunities to grow and reinvent oneself," said Qin.

#### Supportive environment

The Chinese government is creating a supportive environment for entrepreneurship, particularly for small and innovative enterprises.

In 2022, the Ministry of Finance and the State Administration of Taxation introduced an enhanced version of the R&D Super Deduction Policy for small and medium-sized enterprises in the tech industry. The ratio for the additional pre-tax deduction for R&D expenses for enterprises that were already eligible was raised from 75 percent to 100 percent.

"Practice has shown that various policies introduced by the government in recent years, such as tax reductions, innovation support, and expanded financing channels, have had a positive impact on first-generation entrepreneurs," said Ju.

The CASS economist added that key factors for first-generation entrepreneurs to succeed in today's competitive market include sharp market insights, strong conviction and courage, the right entrepreneurial strategy, extensive networking, sufficient knowledge, and adequate financial resources.

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## TOP NEWS



Passengers go through ticket barriers at Taiyuan South Railway Station in China's Shanxi province on Monday, the last day of the National Day holiday. An estimated 19.86 million passengers were expected to take trains for return travel during the day. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

## Mobile payment helps fuel holiday consumption

By CHENG YU  
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China's innovative mobile payment options fueled a new wave of inbound travel-related consumption during the National Day holiday period that ended on Monday, injecting more vitality into the global tourism industry, said industry experts.

Data from leading online payment platform Alipay showed that inbound visitors are increasingly embracing mobile payment methods while traveling across China, as their spending on the platform surged around 120 percent year-on-year during the first four days of the weeklong holiday.

The uptick in transactions was particularly pronounced among tourists from over 10 countries and regions that have been granted visa-free access to China since last year. Their Alipay usage saw a nearly threefold year-on-year increase, the platform said.

Meanwhile, Chinese businesses are also capitalizing on the growing influx of international consumers. The number of merchants using Alipay for foreign customers doubled during the first four days of the holiday compared with the same period in 2023.

## 120 Percent

is the year-on-year increase in spending by inbound visitors traveling across China on the leading online payment platform Alipay during the first four days of the weeklong National Day holiday.

The top services that foreign tourists used through Alipay during this year's National Day holiday were ride-hailing, bike-sharing, flight and train bookings, and food delivery.

Ouyang Rihui, assistant dean of the China Center for Internet Economy Research at Central University of Finance and Economics, said that visa-free access, flight recovery and convenient mobile payments are among key factors driving the rise of inbound tourism in China.

"This will not only boost domestic consumption, but will also inject fresh impetus into the global tourism industry," Ouyang added.

In a move to further facilitate transactions for foreigners, the State Administration for Market Regulation and the National Data Administration announced last week that eight cities will pilot a program designed to make it easier for individual business owners to adopt mobile payment platforms.

Individual businesses in cities including Suzhou in Jiangsu province, Hangzhou in Zhejiang province and Jinan in Shandong province will be supported in streamlining the procedure needed to handle payment codes for foreign credit cards, according to the two authorities.

They said that mobile payment platforms do not have access to the registration information of individual businesses and, therefore, the process of opening merchant payment codes was time-consuming.

The new move will make it easier for over 11 million individual business entities, which make up 9.3 percent of the total national businesses, to open such codes, the authorities said.

The nation has been making greater efforts to facilitate payment for foreign visitors.

In March, the State Council, China's Cabinet, released guidelines aimed at improving the accessibility of bank card payments, promoting the use of cash and expanding mobile payment options for travelers.

The Chinese mainland recorded an estimated 95 million trips made by foreign tourists in the first nine months of this year, up 55.4 percent year-on-year, according to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Luigi Gambardella, president of ChinaEU, an international association promoting digital and high-tech cooperation between Chinese and European companies, said that China's efforts to enhance mobile payment options for international users is a significant step forward.

"The transformation not only benefits individual travelers and merchants, but also strengthens China's position as a world leader in the adoption of mobile payments and a major contributor to global advancement in fintech," Gambardella said.

## Inside

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## Terror attack in Karachi condemned

Two Chinese citizens were killed and one injured in the bombing targeting a convoy

By WANG QINGYUN  
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Beijing has strongly condemned a terrorist attack that killed two Chinese nationals in Karachi, a port city in Pakistan, urging Islamabad to conduct a thorough investigation into the incident and bring the perpetrators to justice.

The bombing that took place around 11 pm on Sunday targeted a convoy carrying Chinese staff of the Port Qasim Electric Power Co near Jinnah International Airport.

Two Chinese citizens were killed and one was injured in the attack, the Chinese embassy in Pakistan said in a statement on Monday, adding that there were also Pakistani casualties and that it is working with the Pakistani side to handle the situation.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the embassy, which initiated emergency response immediately after the attack, have requested the Pakistani side to make all-out efforts to treat the injured, investigate the incident and impose harsh punishment on the perpetrators.

In a statement issued on Monday, a spokesperson for the ministry called on Pakistan to effectively plug security loopholes and take more targeted measures to ensure the safety of Chinese nationals, projects and institutions. "Terrorism is a common

enemy of all humanity. The terrorist forces' attempt to undermine mutual trust and cooperation between China and Pakistan, as well as the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, will not succeed," the spokesperson said.

China will continue to support Pakistan in advancing its counter-terrorism actions, and will work with Pakistan to thwart all attempts to disrupt relations between the two countries, the spokesperson added.

The Chinese embassy in Pakistan urged Chinese citizens and companies in Pakistan to stay vigilant, follow the local security situation closely and strengthen security measures.

According to Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, an investigation is underway to identify the perpetrators of the attack. "Pakistan stands committed to safeguarding our Chinese friends. We will leave no stone unturned to ensure their security and well-being," he said in a statement.

Sharif said he is "deeply shocked and saddened" by the attack, and offers his "heartfelt condolences" to the people of China, especially the families of the victims.

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## SAR: Strengthening of 'two systems' key to success

From page 1

the spirit of the third plenary session, grasp the opportunity, implement decisive reform, and take the initiative to speed up Hong Kong's economic recovery. Reiterating that Hong Kong must keep refurbishing its "shop signs writ in gold" (that is, Hong Kong's position as a global financial, maritime and trading hub), Xia's remarks underscored the gravity of the central government's concerns about Hong Kong and the need for the city to act swiftly to implement reform.

Hong Kong's traditional strengths in finance, shipping and trading face unprecedented challenges. The liquidity crunch and the reshaping of the global supply chain, arising from misunderstandings about the Chinese mainland, rising protectionism in the West and conflicts raging in Ukraine and the Middle East, have sapped Hong Kong's long-held advantage in these areas. Hong Kong must take decisive measures to boost liquidity and confidence in the city's stock market and restore its function as a linchpin between the Chinese mainland and international capital markets.

A study of the long-term future of Hong Kong's container ports is long overdue. With rising competition from nearby container ports and a likely decrease in port calls, it is imperative for the HKSAR government to formulate long-term plans for enhancing Hong Kong's competitiveness as a global maritime

center, whether through consolidation with ports in the Greater Bay Area or repositioning Hong Kong as "shipless shipping center." Establishing a statutory maritime and ports authority, on the lines of the Airport Authority, to take charge of longer range planning would be a step in the right direction.

Thanks to its superb geographical location, Hong Kong has thrived on trade. Under the leadership of Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu, Hong Kong is doubling down on its efforts to strengthen trade relationships with partners other than those from the Chinese mainland, and Europe and North America. Lee's recent visit to three ASEAN countries — Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia — is a case in point.

Integration with GBA cities has surged in the past two years, helped by the completion of transport infrastructure that turned a "one-hour living circle" between Hong Kong and mainland GBA cities into a startling reality. During every weekend or holiday, tidal waves of Hong Kong residents, both locals and expatriates, flood into Shenzhen and other GBA cities to have a good time. Cooperation in residential care for the elderly and healthcare, such as a recent case of transfer of cord blood stem cells from the mainland for treatment of a child patient, demonstrates how closer social and medical collaboration between the mainland and Hong Kong can improve lives on both sides of the boundary. Progress being made for

exchange of medical data and collaboration in medical and life science research is a good example of how integration with the GBA cities in the mainland is a win-win story.

Hong Kong has been an active participant in the BRI since its launch in 2013. Hong Kong's fire services set a good example in assisting disaster mitigation in the aftermath of the earthquake in Türkiye in February 2023. Other than assisting in building the "hard power" of Belt and Road participating countries such as the digital economy, Hong Kong can help bring hearts and minds together by initiating and hosting a "Belt and Road Games" along with other GBA cities. Sports have proved to be a powerful unifier and forceful tool for nation-building on many occasions. With an excellent transport infrastructure and abundant world-class sports facilities in the GBA, Belt and Road Games could go a long way toward cementing ties and enhancing friendship among BRI participants.

The key to Hong Kong's success in attracting world-class, international talents, and supporting the continuous opening-up of Chinese mainland's economy lies in strengthening Hong Kong's "two systems" characteristics, including its common law system, its adherence to protection of fundamental rights and freedoms as provided in the Basic Law, and its international environment.

Many of Chinese mainland's most successful private enterprises have established strongholds over-

seas, but smaller ones that have their sights set on international markets can benefit from Hong Kong's experience of doing business with international partners.

Like it or not, sallies into overseas markets risk collision with the values and norms of the Western world, or sleepwalking into legal and procedural quagmires. In his keynote speech at a meeting celebrating the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the motherland in July 2022, President Xi Jinping commended Hong Kong for being "a pioneer riding the wave of our country's great cause of reform and opening-up". Hong Kong has never stopped playing the role of window and bridge between the Chinese mainland and the rest of the world. The evolving geopolitical environment calls for Hong Kong to fine-tune this role. Hong Kong is well-positioned to tell the true story of China to the world — organize messages that are more acceptable to the West, renew ties with old friends, build common ground wherever possible, and venture into new areas to make new friends. Let Hong Kong's voice be heard by the world. The possibilities for Hong Kong to showcase the success of "one country, two systems" despite trying circumstances are infinite.

The author is convener of the Executive Council and a legislator. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## Unity: Xi calls for strong sense of community in all

From page 1

At the 19th CPC National Congress in October 2017, the idea was officially written into the Party's Constitution.

As early as the 18th National Congress of the CPC in 2012, Xi emphasized the importance of building an interconnected social structure and community environment and creating social conditions for people from all ethnic groups to live, study, work and enjoy themselves in.

In December, Xi visited Panlong community in Nanning, capital of the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. The community has a permanent population of 27,000, about one third of which are from ethnic groups such as the Zhuang, Yao and Miao.

To fulfill the residents' needs for different cultural activities, the community arranges an array of events for residents from different ethnic backgrounds, covering everything from the Mid-Autumn Festival to "Sanyuesan," a traditional festival of the Zhuang ethnic group, which literally means the third day of the third month in the

Chinese lunar calendar.

"As people of all ethnic groups sing and dance together, live and work together, the Chinese nation is closely united, like pomegranate seeds, which stick together," Xi said during the inspection.

Liu Jian, a resident of the community, said she enjoys the atmosphere of the community.

"The residents from different ethnic groups here are like one big family," Liu said.

Xi also said that Guangxi's efforts to build a demonstration zone for forging a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation should start at the community level.

In June, Xi visited a multi-ethnic residential community in Yinchuan, capital of the Ningxia Hui autonomous region. Of over 18,000 residents in the community in Jinfeng district, 38 percent belong to ethnic groups such as Hui, Manchu, Mongolian and Tibetan.

"The Chinese nation is a big family," Xi said to the residents, calling for continued efforts to foster a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation and pool strength from all sectors to advance Chinese modernization.

## CHINA

# Device to help paralyzed walk again developed

With breakthrough implant, patients can regain control of leg muscles

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai  
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By implanting electrodes in the brain and spinal cord to build a "nerve bypass" system between the two body parts, scientists from Fudan University in Shanghai have reached a breakthrough in brain-spine interface research, creating a device that could enable paralyzed people to walk again.

Using the device, people who are paralyzed due to spinal cord injuries could regain control of the muscles in their lower limbs so that they can stand and walk, said the researchers from the Institute of Science and Technology for Brain-Inspired Intelligence of Fudan University.

Jia Fumin, the lead researcher, said that clinical trials are expected to kick off at a domestic tertiary hospital later this year.

The spinal cord functions as a high-speed channel connecting the brain and the peripheral nervous system. If the spinal cord is damaged, instructions from the brain telling muscles to move can't be transmitted, causing paralysis. Since nerve injury is irreversible, current treatments for such patients are limited.

A national report released by a number of institutions, including the China Association of Persons with Physical Disability, last September showed that there were 3.74 million patients with spinal cord injuries in China, and there are about 90,000 new cases in the country each year.

Last year, a research team from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne carried out brain-spinal interface research on paralyzed patients.

By collecting and decoding brain signals, electrically stimulating relevant areas of the lower limbs, and connecting the brain and spinal cord nerve pathways, they were able to help paralyzed patients with spinal cord injuries regain control of their muscles and walk.

However, challenges remained, including decoding electrical activi-

ty in the brain, reconstructing spinal cord nerve roots, and facilitating system integration and clinical application.

"In response to these problems, we devised a new generation of devices that allow the brain-spinal interface to be highly precise, and they come with high throughput and low latency," Jia said.

For example, the device can precisely stimulate the nerve roots of the spinal cord and alternately activate the corresponding muscle groups of the lower limbs so that a patient can walk more naturally.

Moreover, to ensure a smooth walking process, the device makes real-time adjustments of the stimulation parameters acting on the spinal cord according to a patient's posture and movements of their lower limbs.

"Integrating multimodal technologies, such as infrared motion capture, electromyography, inertial sensors and plantar pressure pads, our team constructed a data set of healthy walking postures as well as a variety of abnormal postures, and established an algorithm model, so that we achieved high-performance tracking of continuous walking postures," Jia said.

Compared with the Swiss team's research, which required patients to have three devices implanted in their brain hemispheres for brain signal collection and spinal cord stimulation, Jia's team integrated the devices into one single tiny device implanted in the brain to reduce the number of postoperative wounds.

Such a solution can also shift the decoding process from outside the body to within the body, which can improve the stability and efficiency of brain signal collection and achieve a decoding speed of brain signals and stimulation instruction output that are similar to that of a normal ambulatory person, the researchers said.

"This means that in the future, the walking postures of patients with spinal cord injuries will be more natural and smooth," Jia said.

## Hitched in Hangzhou



Couples participate in a group wedding at West Lake in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Sunday. One hundred couples from various provinces and municipalities across the country tied the knot in Hangzhou. WU HUANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## CULTURAL JOURNEY

# 'Infrastructure', technologies aid recovery of Yellow River wetland

By YAN DONGJIE  
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China has constructed thousands of square kilometers of "infrastructure" for the world's largest migratory bird passage in recent years, not only returning many fish ponds and industrial areas to wetlands, but also using technologies such as field monitoring systems to accelerate the restoration of wetland ecosystems, according to the nature reserves.

At the mouth of the Yellow River in Dongying, Shandong province, vast expanses of saline-alkali land have turned red in early autumn, which is an indicator that the ecosystem is healthy. Along the water's edge, several oil pumps stand out.

"In recent years, over 300 oil pumps have been shut down, and strict parameters have been imposed on the remaining wells to protect the ecological environment of the Yellow River Delta wetlands and find a balance between production and conservation," said Zhou Licheng, director of the Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve's planning and construction department.

The Yellow River Delta is rich in oil and gas resources, with the renowned Shengli Oilfield discovered here in 1961. Apart from closing some oil pumps, Dongying has made efforts to control the invasive species of reed sweetgrass.

Zhou explained that with its strong vitality and robust roots, the species can outcompete other plants, including the saline-alkali vegetation, thereby impacting birds and other wildlife.

"Researchers have explored several effective control methods, such as enclosing tidal water during high tide to drown the reed sweetgrass or crushing the roots and clearing them with machines," Zhou said.

Currently, the reserve has cleared out over 8,700 hectares of reed sweetgrass and restored more than 20,000 hectares of wetlands. In January, remote sensing imag-

ery indicated that the total area of the Yellow River Delta bird habitat had increased from around 56,000 hectares several years ago to approximately 88,000 hectares.

On July 26, at the 46th World Heritage Committee meeting in India, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Heritage Committee approved the inclusion of the Migratory Bird Sanctuaries along the Coast of the Yellow Sea-Bohai Gulf of China (Phase II) in the World Heritage List. The Yellow River Delta bird habitat encompasses three-fifths of the expanded heritage site.

Since 2021, the Yellow River Delta has also been designated as a national park. National parks are a major initiative of the National Forestry and Grassland Administration. The Yellow River Delta is among the second batch of national parks under construction.

According to the administration, in 2021, China established the first batch of five national parks, including the Sanjiangyuan and Giant Panda national parks, covering nearly 30 percent of the country's terrestrial key protected wildlife species.

Zhang Zhengwang, a professor at Beijing Normal University and head of the World Heritage application technical team, said that there are thousands of bird species worldwide that migrate along nine major global migration routes each year.

"The East Asia-Australasia Flyway is the largest migratory pathway for birds, spanning 22 countries from the Arctic through Southeast Asia to Oceania. The Yellow Sea-Bohai Gulf migratory bird habitats in China are crucial stop-over and breeding grounds for migratory birds," he said.

With the support of more than 30 research institutions, including the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Dongying has established eight field monitoring and research teaching platforms and developed an integrated monitoring system,

enabling scientific and systematic monitoring of wetland bird species.

According to bird monitoring data this year, the wintering populations of key species have steadily increased. The breeding population of black-headed gulls has stabilized at around 10,000 individuals, while 526 oriental stork fledglings and 20 crested ibis fledglings have been observed.

Over the past 30 years, the number of bird species in the Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve has doubled, increasing from 187 to the current 373 species.

Similar to the wetlands in Dongying, the Snake Island-Laotieshan National Nature Reserve in Dalian, Liaoning province; the Yalu River Estuary bird habitat in Dandong, Liaoning; the Chongming Dongtan Birds National Nature Reserve in Shanghai; and the Nandagang Wetland in Cangzhou, Hebei province, are also included in the World Heritage List.

At the southern tip of the Liaodong Peninsula, the Dalian Snake Island-Laotieshan National Nature Reserve is a crucial passage for migratory raptors flying toward the Shandong Peninsula. It is also known as the "first sacred land for raptor observation on the Chinese mainland."

On Sept 23, more than 11,000 raptors were observed taking off for their southward migration, marking the first "10,000 Raptors Day" on the Chinese mainland.

What makes this bird migration site unique is the presence of around 20,000 snakes on the island. These vipers prey on small birds, forming a distinctive food chain in the area. Boasting the various snake and bird species, the Snake Island-Laotieshan National Nature Reserve welcomes thousands of visitors each year.

Each site of the Migratory Bird Sanctuaries along the Coast of the Yellow Sea-Bohai Gulf of China has its own educational center, which introduces visitors to the diverse wetland ecosystems.

# Severe penalties issued for food safety violations

By CAO YIN  
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China's top judicial bodies have directed authorities to fully leverage the rule of law to safeguard people's rights to life and health, issuing severe penalties for those harming agricultural products.

The Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate reaffirmed the mandate at the end of last month, detailing several cases to address public concerns about food safety and demonstrating their commitment to fighting related crimes.

In one case, a court in Jiangsu province sentenced a man, identified only by his surname Sun, to 11 years in prison and fined him 3 million yuan (\$427,410) for using industrial formaldehyde to preserve whitebait — a violation classified as producing and selling harmful food.

Sun ran the whitebait business in Kunshan from 2018 to March 2021, knowingly using the toxic chemical to prolong the shelf life of the fish at room temperature. He earned more than 1.29 million yuan in profits by selling the fish to vendors. In 2020, he appointed another man, surnamed Liu, to assist in soaking and selling the fish. Liu was sentenced to five years in prison and fined 200,000 yuan.

## 16,070 criminal cases

related to food safety violations have been concluded in the country over the past three years.

Industrial formaldehyde, a toxic substance included on a list of nonedible substances and illegal additives issued by the State Council, is classified as a harmful raw material under China's Criminal Law.

"The two defendants should be severely punished, as they endangered the lives and health of consumers," the court said.

In another case, a farmer surnamed Li from Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, was imprisoned and fined for selling nearly 10,000 Sanhuang chickens containing drug residue after failing to adhere to feeding guidelines.

Sanhuang chicken is a common poultry product, and breeders are expected to follow proper feeding practices to ensure the safety of edible agricultural goods, the court said.

China has ramped up efforts to improve food safety in recent years, including revisions to judicial interpretations.

A nationwide campaign launched three years ago has led to 4,545 indictments for endangering agricultural product safety, according to data from top judicial authorities.

Over the past three years, Chinese courts have concluded 16,070 criminal cases related to food safety violations, including 1,429 cases involving edible agricultural products.

## High-yielding rice



Farmers harvest high-altitude glutinous rice in Dashun village in Sanjiang Dong autonomous county, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, on Sunday. The specialty rice industry has helped farmers achieve continuous income growth in recent years. GONG FUKANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

# Wedding debacle sparks online debate on bride-price practice

By LI LEI  
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Authorities in a rural part of Henan province successfully intervened in a highly publicized wedding debacle during the National Day holiday, in which the bride's relatives attempted to prevent her from leaving her home for the wedding due to disputes over the bride-price, turning the event into a farce.

In an official statement on Monday, an investigation task force from Huaibin county said that villagers Huang and Chen, identified only by their surnames, were to be married in Gudui township on Oct 1, a popular date for weddings among young

couples. Upon Huang's arrival at the bride's residence, he transferred 188,000 yuan (\$26,700) to Chen's personal bank account to meet the bride-price that was agreed upon between the two families.

But his in-laws insisted that the money should have been transferred to the family's bank account, leading them to halt the wedding proceedings.

In widely circulated video clips online, Chen's brother was observed preventing the wedding procession vehicles from leaving by throwing himself onto one of the cars.

Police swiftly intervened, ensuring the couple's departure from the bride's home so they could proceed

with the wedding, the statement said.

"Local Party authorities and the county government attached great importance to the incident," the statement said.

It noted that the police reprimanded the bride's brother for his actions and facilitated a resolution between Huang and his in-laws. He agreed to pay 30,000 yuan directly to Chen's family to settle the matter.

The incident in Henan has garnered significant online attention due to the contentious issue of exorbitant bride-prices, which have been scorned because they make it difficult for rural men struggling financially to find spouses.

Many internet users said that Chen's brother overreacted because he would benefit most from Huang's bride-price, as it is common practice for parents in rural areas to give the money to their sons.

Other comments criticizing the practice said it was like parents who do it are selling daughters.

Several hashtags related to the incident trended on the microblogging platform Sina Weibo on Monday.

One hashtag, "Bridegroom reached an agreement with in-laws," garnered over 30 million views and thousands of comments. Another hashtag, "Should the

bride-price be given to the bride?" received 34 million views and approximately 5,000 comments.

One Weibo user said, "The bride-price should be given directly to the bride herself as it serves as the initial capital for the new couple's small family."

Another disagreed, saying, "The bride-price symbolizes a form of gratitude to the wife's parents for their upbringing."

The heightened attention prompted the county to mobilize the investigation task force — which comprises the local publicity, civil affairs and public security bureaus — to address the situation.

On Sunday, Huaibin county held a special meeting to advocate for more reforms to prevent the recurrence of similar bride-price disputes.

Hefty bride-prices, which have burdened tens of millions of rural families, have come into the crosshairs of authorities who are encouraging villagers to kick the cultural habit.

Giving money as a gift to a bride's family, together with expectations that the suitor owns an apartment and a car, has become a major stumbling block to many men's matrimonial aspirations.

In rural areas, where men outnumber women by a steep margin and professional matchmakers make good money, competition for wives has seen bride-prices as high as 300,000 yuan.

## CHINA

# Barber creates stylish new looks in Xizang

Hairdressing culture leads fashionable trend in male grooming on plateau

By **PALDEN NYIMA** in Lhasa  
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Rapid social transformation and improved standards of living are prompting many men to pay closer attention to their external appearance, making a fashionable barber in Lhasa in the Xizang autonomous region increasingly popular.

Barber culture found its home in the plateau city only four to five years ago. Unlike ubiquitous hairdresser shops in Lhasa's streets, barbershops were rare.

Hailing from the city of Shigatse in the region, Ngakwang Jigdrak graduated from Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications in 2020. After three years working at China Mobile, he established Jin's Barber-shop last year.

Ngakwang Jigdrak developed a passion for barber culture during his college years and underwent training at a barbershop named All-city in Beijing.

"I didn't attend many classes in my third year of college, which allowed me to take barber lessons. I primarily apprenticed under an experienced barber to learn basic skills and the cultural aspects of barbering," Ngakwang Jigdrak said.

After mastering hairdressing techniques, he initially practiced on his classmates without charge. As his expertise grew, more students sought his services offering to pay or provide him with free meals.

Despite many of his former classmates opting for civil service careers, Ngakwang Jigdrak used an investment of 50,000 yuan (\$6,900) to open his first barbershop in Lhasa last year.

"For me, being a barber is a pas-

sion. That's why I chose this profession," Ngakwang Jigdrak said, emphasizing the importance of pursuing what one loves to make life more meaningful and interesting.

Starting a business presented challenges, including parental opposition, inadequate investment, and a lack of experience.

However, his unwavering determination to realize his dream bolstered him through initial setbacks, leading to the successful establishment of his business.

Encouraged by government initiatives for university graduates in entrepreneurship through policies and financial aid, Ngakwang Jigdrak applied to the Lhasa Social Security Bureau for additional support.

Despite the initial scarcity of customers due to the barbershop's remote location, strategic promotion on short-video platforms such as Douyin and Kuaishou gradually expanded his customer base. Most patrons, including government officials, prefer weekend or lunchtime visits, with the shop typically closed on Mondays.

In addition to officials, the shop is also frequented by college students, elderly individuals and tourists. Through his adept use of new media for promotion, Ngakwang Jigdrak has cultivated a loyal customer base, with over 20 regular clients visiting monthly.

Ngakwang Jigdrak explained that a barber differs from regular hairdressers in several ways. For example, in a typical hairdressing salon, a customer is passed from one staff member to another for different services, whereas in a men's barbershop, a barber serves the customer throughout the entire process.



Ngakwang Jigdrak shaves a customer at his barbershop in Lhasa in the Xizang autonomous region. PALDEN NYIMA / CHINA DAILY

"A barber places a strong emphasis on communication with customers, focusing on maintaining a continuous dialogue throughout the service, from hair washing to the customer's departure," he said.

If a customer is a repeat visitor, the barber can continue the previous conversation during the next visit, fostering a friendly and personal relationship beyond a transactional one.

According to him, barbers also pay close attention to details, requiring customers to make appointments in advance and adhere to scheduled times. Therefore, the profession of a barber is not just about cutting hair but is closely related to disciplines such as sociology, anthropology and education.

"For instance, when a customer is unhappy, the barber must learn to comfort them and help them forget their worries, resulting in some customers becoming his friends," he said.

"I am more interested in the culture embedded within the profession of barbering, which is why I chose

this job. I also aim to promote the culture of male barbers on the snowy plateau," he added.

Currently, there are more than a dozen men's barbershops in Lhasa, with most operated by owners from other provinces.

To better serve customers, Ngakwang Jigdrak ensures he has sufficient rest in order to be in a spirited state when attending to clients.

Compared to other coastal cities and regions in China, the concept of a barber and its cultural significance developed relatively late in Xizang. As a result, many residents are still unfamiliar with it.

Witnessing the transformation of unkempt hair into a work of art brings Ngakwang Jigdrak pride and joy, especially when he sees the satisfied smiles on his customers' faces.

Discussing his plans, Ngakwang Jigdrak expressed his intention to operate a larger men's barbershop in a more favorable location in Lhasa.

"Additionally, I hope to recruit apprentices to pass on my skills and further enhance my own expertise," he added.

## Bus opens farmers up to city market

WUHAN — Before sunrise, more than a dozen farmers with baskets and bags filled with fresh seasonal fruit and vegetables gather at suburban Hezhan in Wuhan, Hubei province, waiting for a special bus.

"People like eating fresh lotus seeds, so we pick them at around 3 am," said Tu Jixing, adding that he can earn more than 300 yuan (\$43) a day by selling about 10 kilograms of lotus seeds.

Tu is one of many passengers along the route who catch the bus every morning, carrying fresh food including peppers, tomatoes, fish and eggs.

By taking the dedicated bus, farmers are able to sell their products in a large wholesale market in an urban area of the city, more than 40 km from Hezhan, the departure point of the route. The bus fare is 5 yuan for a single trip.

"It's much more convenient now, and it doesn't cost much for a round trip," Tu said.

Tu recalled that in the past, various areas around his village were not covered by public transport.



Tu Jixing gets off No J202 Bus, a dedicated bus for vegetable farmers, and carries vegetables in bags to a market in Wuhan, Hubei province. WU ZHIZUN / XINHUA

Most people didn't want to rent vehicles or call a taxi to transport vegetables, as the cost was too high. So they would feed the surplus vegetables to livestock.

This attracted the attention of the

local public transportation company, which established a new bus route at the end of 2020 to meet villagers' needs.

The company arranged staff to provide assistance at the stations

where vegetable farmers gathered, and to clean the stains from soil, water and vegetables, so that other passengers would not be affected.

Hu Simin, a driver on the dedicated route, said it has become an important mode of transport for people living in about 30 surrounding villages.

"On average, over 100 villagers a day take the bus line to the urban area to sell vegetables," Hu said.

Hu has gradually become familiar with the farmers. Before the bus departs early in the morning, he always helps the elderly villagers move their goods, and sometimes farmers give him a handful of vegetables as a gift.

Some passengers have also become friends with each other. After selling their vegetables, they often hang out together in the urban area, then take the bus home and have a rest.

In China, many regions have opened bus routes to the suburbs in recent years, making it more convenient for farmers to commute between remote villages and urban areas, and making it easier for residents to buy fresh fruits and vegetables.

XINHUA

## Teacher dedicated to rural education changes lives

In the remote village of Pengjiagou, nestled between mountains and rivers in Hubei province, one man has been a constant presence for decades.

Often seen riding his motorcycle along treacherous mountain paths, the man is Peng Yusheng, a teacher at the village's primary school.

Over a period of 28 years, he has traveled over 30,000 kilometers through the mountains, visiting students in more than 1,000 families. He has personally helped over 40 financially needy students and convinced more than 50 dropouts to return to school.

To honor his contribution to rural education, the national title of model teacher was conferred on Peng as China celebrated its 40th Teacher's Day on Sept 10.

The 48-year-old has dedicated nearly three decades of his life to transforming the lives of rural children through education — a mission he embraced from the moment he graduated from teachers' college in 1996.

That year, Peng had to make a choice: take a coveted exam for a teaching position in the city or return to the village where he was raised. He chose the latter, taking on the role of teacher at the primary school of Pengjiagou, eventually becoming principal.

When transportation in the area was difficult, Peng bought a motorcycle and often rode over 10 km at night to visit students' homes after a day of teaching.

He always carried a flashlight, umbrella and Wellington boots with him. Due to the rough mountain roads, Peng kept tire-repair tools handy.

At the beginning of one fall semester, a student named Xiaoqin failed to return to school. Peng immediately set out to her home, only to be turned away by her parents. Undeterred, he returned again and again, walking up the narrow mountain trails, until Xiaoqin's father finally admitted that the family couldn't afford to send her to class.

"Your child must go to school," Peng insisted. "I'll cover all the costs."

Xiaoqin returned to her studies later with Peng's assistance.

This small school, which undertakes basic education for children from five neighboring villages, has nurtured more than 180 university graduates over the years — a remarkable achievement for a community where opportunities once seemed few and far between.

"Seeing one group of students after another leave the mountains and step into the wider world makes me feel happy," Peng said, his smile soft but proud.

Beyond keeping students in school, Peng also strives to create opportunities for rural children to keep pace with the world.

His teaching methods have changed the perception of rural education. The small school now offers courses like robotics, aviation modeling and creative arts. The works of rural children have even been showcased in cities such as Shanghai.

Over the years, he has raised more than 500,000 yuan (\$70,400) to fund everything from sports equipment to electronic readers and tablets.

The school now has a cloud classroom and a reading area. Peng also established a training program for teacher development,

Teaching, after all, is the same wherever you go. In the city, one more teacher might not make a difference, but here, I feel I'm making a real impact."

**Peng Yusheng**, principal of Pengjiagou primary school in Hubei province

and even teachers in their 50s use information technology with students.

Peng's classes extend far beyond the four walls of the school. Nature itself — mountains, rivers and the changing seasons — serves as his classroom. "Rural education offers a vast field, abundant resources, and simple, honest parents and community members — qualities unmatched by other places," he said.

His unconventional approach has not only helped children succeed academically but has transformed their confidence and outlook on life.

Many of his students, once shy and hesitant, have become bold, articulate and eager to take on the world.

"I feel joy because I love what I do," Peng explained when asked why he has stayed in the village all these years. "To me, it's not hardship — it's happiness."

The fate of Pengjiagou's children, many of whom once faced limited prospects, has been irrevocably changed. Peng has seen more than 10,000 students pass through the doors of his small village school, with some going on to prestigious universities across China.

One of his former students, Peng Jiusheng, was so inspired by his teacher that he returned to Pengjiagou's primary school after graduating, this time as a colleague.

"It was Mr Peng's help that led to my success," Jiusheng said. "I want to be like him and help more children from our hometown gain knowledge."

In 2004, Peng Yusheng became a member of the Communist Party of China, a role that has further empowered him to serve his community.

"Teaching, after all, is the same wherever you go," he said. "In the city, one more teacher might not make a difference, but here, I feel I'm making a real impact."

Over the years, a vast group of teachers in the most remote corners of China have illuminated the futures of rural children. With limited education resources, they provide students with knowledge and views of the world, and sometimes daily necessities. Rural teachers are not only educators but also friends, family members and guides for the children.

As the novel *The Village Teacher* by acclaimed Chinese author Liu Cixin suggests, it is teachers who pass on the flame of civilization, whether in bustling cities or remote villages. They serve as a bridge, connecting the past with the future, young minds with the world of science, and the earth beneath our feet with the vast sky above.

XINHUA

## Chinese cultural space launched at Indonesian mosque

JAKARTA — "It's such a great program! Incredible!" said Muhammad Kurtubi, a 25-year-old Indonesian national who was looking forward to learning Mandarin at a newly launched Chinese cultural space here in the Istiqlal Mosque, the country's largest mosque.

The cultural space was launched two weeks ago by the Chinese embassy in Indonesia in collaboration with the mosque, with more than 50 people from the Indonesian government, universities and media attending the ceremony.

Named China Space at Istiqlal, the project offers bilateral cultural and educational exchanges and cooperation between China and Indonesia. The classroom not only

displays the charm of traditional Chinese culture, such as silk paintings, porcelain and panda dolls, but also a number of Chinese technological achievements, represented by satellites and ship models, and miniature Jakarta-Bandung high-speed trains.

Kurtubi, a resident of Jakarta who frequently visits the mosque, has a plan to pursue a master's degree at a university in China next year. The availability of the project at the mosque was a blessing for him. He has harbored a long-standing dream of learning Chinese since his employment at a Chinese firm downtown two years ago.

"I chose Mandarin because it's one of the most widely spoken lan-

guages across the world. At the same time, pursuing a career in Chinese offers more opportunities," he told Xinhua recently. "Now, I can learn it before or after conducting my prayers at the mosque," he said.

Some of his friends were also going to take part in the language learning, Kurtubi said. "From now on it will be much more convenient for us to learn Mandarin and Chinese culture."

The project also impressed the mosque's Grand Imam Nasaruddin Umar, who said the China Space at Istiqlal Mosque was the first of its kind around the world.

"We are very excited with the progress achieved in China Space and we hope that many more collab-

orative agendas will be carried out in Istiqlal," he said in a statement.

Meanwhile, the Chinese embassy's Charge d' Affaires Zhou Kan said during the launch ceremony that the embassy was ready to take the opportunity to cooperate with the mosque and other Indonesian communities to build the China Space into an inclusive, shared and open space, making greater contributions to bilateral cultural, religious, and educational exchanges and cooperation.

He also highlighted that next year marks the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Indonesia.

XINHUA



An Indonesian woman, who participated the first Mandarin program in Jakarta, receives a diploma during the launch ceremony of China Space at the Istiqlal Mosque in the Indonesian capital on Sept 5. LI ZHIQUAN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Editor's note: China Daily is publishing a series illustrating the country's efforts to achieve its carbon peaking and carbon neutrality goals.

By YUAN HUI in Hohhot and HOU LIQIANG in Beijing

### CHINA'S LOW-CARBON JOURNEY

# Researchers work to reduce emissions in dairy industry

Genetic selection being used to lower sector's output of methane

With China's appetite for milk showing no signs of turning sour, a team of scientists has embarked on a groundbreaking mission in the Inner Mongolian autonomous region to create low-methane-emitting dairy cows.

Launched last year by Sk-xing, the largest cow breeding enterprise in China, the ambitious project aims to identify genes that contribute to high milk production, longevity and low emissions of methane, according to the company, headquartered in Inner Mongolia's capital Hohhot.

As the second most abundant global man-made greenhouse gas behind carbon dioxide, methane has more than 80 times the warming power of CO<sub>2</sub> over the first 20 years after it reaches the atmosphere.

According to the International Energy Agency, the flammable gas is responsible for about 30 percent of the rise in global temperatures since the industrial revolution.

An estimated 60 percent of the world's methane emissions are from human activities, with agriculture, fossil fuel extraction and consumption, and decomposition of landfill waste as the largest sources. Agriculture, including animal husbandry, is responsible for 40 percent of man-made methane emissions.

Li Xihe, a leading scientist at the company, shed light on the intricate, multi-phased research involved in achieving the mission's goal of decarbonizing the dairy cow sector.

The journey begins with measuring the methane emissions of individual cows using a special device resembling a feeding trough, he said.

This cleverly designed contraption not only attracts the cows but also monitors the gases they inhale and exhale, providing valuable data for analysis.

As a ruminant animal, cows, as well as sheep and goats, host millions of tiny microbes in their stomachs. While they aid in digestion and are helpful to the livestock's health, an unfortunate by-product of their functioning is the creation of methane gas, which is expelled into the atmosphere through the animal's mouth and rear end.

The team is using mid-infrared spectra to collect methane emission data and then utilizes machine and deep learning algorithms to build a predictive model for each cow's methane output, he continued.

"With the established model, the researchers can predict the methane emission level of each cow, serving as a crucial parameter for identifying low-emission candidates," he said.

To complete the selection process, they analyze the complete genome of each cow, ultimately selecting those with both low methane emissions and desirable genetic traits, the scientist added.

Li describes the research as a meticulous process that requires time and dedication.

Developing a reliable methane emission prediction model takes at least two years, he said.

Assessing the chosen cows' milk components and mid-infrared data requires another year. Selecting cows with both high milk production and longevity while maintaining low methane emissions takes an additional one to two years.

However, more research is still needed



**Above:** Dairy cows are milked at a smart ranch in Tumd Left Banner, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, in April. The ranch uses cutting-edge technologies to turn cattle excrement into fertilizer to lower carbon emissions. LIAN ZHEN / XINHUA  
**Inset:** Cattle graze on a grassland ranch in Xilin Gol League, Inner Mongolia, in July. LI ZHIPENG / XINHUA

after the low-carbon core herd is established, he stressed.

Scientists will meticulously monitor the herds' methane emissions, milk production and other vital parameters, to build a comprehensive database that confirms the low-methane status of these chosen cows.

"These exceptional cows will then form the foundation of a breeding program, producing low-methane embryos and facilitating large-scale herd expansion," he said. Li and his team are also exploring the ideal fodder and management practices for these cows, optimizing their living environment to ensure that they fully express their low-methane genetic potential.

Sun Wei, a leading scientist with the low-carbon cow program, said over the last year a 20-strong team has been monitoring methane emissions from 8,000 dairy cows at a ranch spanning approximately 30 hectares.

With only one device for methane monitoring, he said, the team often operates in two shifts around the clock to maximize the use of the facility so as to help expedite data collection and enlarge their data pool.

Currently, the team's capacity only allows them to collect emission data from 30 to 40 dairy cows daily, though they are actively seeking to acquire another device to further enhance their capabilities, he said.

What has challenged the team is also the lack of experience from both at home and abroad to serve as references, he added.

The work is still in its early stages in China, he said, and while the concept of low-carbon cows has been explored by some foreign institutions, their research has primarily focused on beef cattle.

Sun highlighted the groundbreaking nature of the team's research and emphasized its potential to decarbonize the dairy cow sector, saying dairy cows are a major contributor to methane emissions.

Some studies show that a single cow on average produces between 70 and 120 kg of methane per year. Considering the burgeoning appetite for milk in China, methane emissions from the country's dairy cow sector will keep increasing.

In a recent report, the Institute of Food and Nutrition Development, an affiliate of China's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, revealed that milk production in China surged to 42.8 million metric tons last year. This represents an annual average increase of 6.3 percent since 2018.

In 1980, the annual per capita milk consumption in China was only 1.2 kg. Last year, it had jumped to 42.5 kg, according to the institute. However, this is still only 37 percent of the global average, suggesting a vast potential for further growth.

According to Li Pengcheng, vice-president of Chinese dairy giant Mengniu, currently, the annual carbon emissions from China's dairy industry are approximately 60 million to 70 million tons. This accounts for around 20 percent of the total emissions from the country's animal husbandry sector and 10 percent of its total emissions from the agricultural sector.

In addition to cultivating low-methane-emitting dairy cows through genetic selection, he also noted the optimization of fodder, manure recycling and the integration of solar energy facilities into ranches as potential solutions to decarbonize the dairy sector.

He emphasized the crucial role of technological advancements in ultimately solving methane emissions from dairy cows.

"Addressing methane emissions in the dairy industry requires technological intervention," he asserted, highlighting utilizing new technological approaches to capture and treat methane as a potential solution.

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## More incentives needed to make coal mines greener

By HOU LIQIANG and ZHU XINGXIN

As China intensifies efforts to reduce methane emissions from coal mines, industry insiders are calling for mandatory extraction and utilization of low-concentration coal-bed methane, along with more incentives for its utilization.

Since initiating coal-bed methane extraction during the 11th Five-Year Plan (2006-10) period, China has made significant strides in this area.

In 2015, the country extracted roughly 13.6 billion cubic meters of the resource, with a utilization rate of about 35.3 percent, according to the National Energy Administration.

Extraction reached around 13 billion cubic meters in 2022, with the utilization rate climbing to approximately 45 percent, Liu Wenge, deputy head of the Ministry of Emergency Management's Information Institute was quoted as saying in a recent report by China Energy News.

Methane is more efficient at trapping heat than carbon dioxide. It is over 80 times more potent than CO<sub>2</sub> over the first 20 years after reaching the atmosphere. On a 100-year time scale, it has 28 times greater global warming potential.

Approximately 40 percent of China's

methane emissions stem from escaping gas during coal mining, making the sector a critical battleground for efforts to enhance control of the potent heat-trapping gas.

While utilizing coal-bed methane with a concentration exceeding 8 percent is economically and technologically feasible, it's not the case for the resource with lower concentrations, said Yan Heng, head of the production technology department at Shanxi Jinju Coal Electrification Co.

Coal-bed methane with a concentration exceeding 30 percent is finding its way into everyday applications — domestic consumption, and powering buses and taxis, Yan said. Coal-bed methane with a concentration of 8 to 30 percent can be used for power generation, which also proves profitable.

Yan highlighted the need for technological advancements and policy support to promote the use of the resource with lower concentration.

"Its utilization for power generation is costly with low returns," Yan said, noting that without mandatory controls, coal mines often discharge low-concentration methane directly to minimize costs.

Despite the challenges, China's potential for utilizing low-concentration coal-bed

methane is vast.

Ventilation air methane, which has a methane concentration of about 0.75 percent, accounts for 81 percent of the total methane in the country's coal mines, according to China Energy News.

The methane emitted every year at coal mines across China is equivalent to the annual gas transported via the country's huge west-east gas transmission project, the news outlet said. The greenhouse effects generated by the emission are substantial, equating to roughly 200 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>.

Shanxi Jinju Coal Electrification Co has called for greater incentives to encourage the utilization of low-concentration coal-bed methane considering its low returns but high environmental benefits.

The call has been echoed by the Institute for Global Decarbonization Progress, a non-profit think tank with offices in China and Europe.

Currently, incentives for coal-bed methane utilization across the country are provided without considering the differences in methane concentration, and thus fail to effectively motivate the utilization of the resource with low density, it said in a recent report.

The think tank has also called for the government to tap the potential of the China Certified Emission Reduction program, a voluntary mechanism in which participants can earn carbon credits to trade by taking actions for carbon emission reduction, in encouraging the use of the low-concentration resource.

The Ministry of Ecology and Environment made public in October last year methodologies for quantifying net emission reductions or removals for four types of projects: reforestation, solar thermal power, off-

shore wind power generation and mangrove revegetation.

According to Xu Huaqing, chief scientist with the National Center for Climate Change Strategy and International Cooperation, the center is supporting the ministry's department of climate change to proactively advance the establishment of the CCER methodology for coal-bed methane utilization.

"Hopefully, the next batch of methodologies to be published may include the voluntary emission reduction from coal-bed methane utilization," he said.



Workers monitor transportation vehicles via a smart system at a coal mine in Changji, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, in August. JIN LIANGKUI / XINHUA

# BUSINESS

## Holiday shift



A drone image shows the construction site of a railway bridge along the Yuhang-Deqing Railway in Zhejiang province. Builders of China Railway 24th Bureau Group Corp continued work on the bridge during the weeklong National Day holiday to ensure progress, as the project will play a key role in linking Yuhang district in Hangzhou and Deqing county in Huzhou and boost integrated development within the Yangtze River Delta region. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Shendong Coal ramps up green efforts

By LIU YUKUN  
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Shendong Coal Group, a major coal mining company under State-owned CHN Energy Investment Group, is stepping up innovative efforts in smart mining initiatives, creating carbon sink forests and building underground water reservoirs, forging a pattern that aligns its coal development with environmental preservation.

Experts and executives said such efforts exemplified the coal industry's focus on green transition, as coal's pivotal role in the energy mix underscores the importance of clean extraction and effective use amid the country's push for green energy.

"Over the past 40 years of development in the Shendong mining area, we have reclaimed and treated about 580 square kilometers of quicksand areas and mining-induced subsidence areas. We have planted over 100 million trees and shrubs, increasing vegetation coverage in the mining area from 3 percent to over 64 percent," said Bai Zhengping, deputy general manager of Shendong.

While building green mines, Shendong Coal has also focused on smart mining advancement, setting up 29 automated and comprehensive

mining stations operating at an average automation rate of 84.7 percent and utilizing 229 robots.

"Automation can support the green development of coal mining by addressing its low-efficiency issues. It can also help liberate workers from dangerous and strenuous frontline scenarios, promote local ecological restoration, and improve residents' living conditions. In suitable mining areas, more wind and solar energy can also be utilized during the coal mining process," said Wang Guofa, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering.

Located near the Yellow River where ecology is relatively fragile with unstable water supply, protecting the local ecology while ensuring the water supply during coal resource extraction also poses a challenge to the company. Over the years, Shendong Coal has improved the theoretical framework and technological systems needed to build underground water reservoirs for coal mines and has constructed 35 reservoirs with a maximum storage capacity of 35 million cubic meters and an annual water supply of approximately 70 million cubic meters.

Last year, Shendong Coal utilized digital and information technology to establish a monitoring system for

coal mines' underground water reservoirs, enabling real-time monitoring and management. This year, the company launched a data management platform, allowing for real-time multidimensional analysis of data related to water production, storage, purification, utilization, and adjustment.

"Through a series of new technologies and operational models, Shendong has resolved the challenge of balancing coal mining with ecological protection in fragile areas," Bai said.

"In the process of advancing the transformation toward green and low-carbon energy, ensuring energy security and stable supply is paramount. This indicates that coal will continue to play a significant role in the energy system in the short term, as new energy sources, due to their instability and intermittency, can cause unstable power generation, necessitating coal's role as a supplementary energy source. Clean extraction and utilization of coal are important to China's decarbonization goals," Wang said.

Shendong Coal has produced a total of 3.882 billion metric tons of coal over the past 40 years, with a profit totaling 397.3 billion yuan (\$56.6 billion). Last year, it produced 193 million tons of coal, generating a profit of 34.4 billion yuan.

## Briefly

### Forex reserves up 0.86% in Sept

China's foreign exchange reserves totaled \$3.32 trillion at the end of September, up \$28.2 billion, or 0.86 percent, compared to the end of August, official data showed on Monday. The State Administration

of Foreign Exchange said that the US dollar index declined while global financial asset prices generally increased last month.

### 5,358 listed firms on stock markets

There were 5,358 companies listed on

the Chinese mainland bourses by the end of August, said the China Association for Public Companies. Shanghai, Shenzhen and Beijing bourses had 2,268, 2,839 and 251 listed firms, respectively, by the end of August, data from the association show.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

# Renminbi on track for stability against USD

Expert believes PBOC poised to secure yuan from excessive fluctuations

By ZHOU LANXU  
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The renminbi is still on track for overall stability with two-way fluctuations against the US dollar in the months ahead, and with limited risks of one-sided and substantial appreciation, said a leading currency expert.

After the Fed's rate cut and China's stimulus package fueled a rally in renminbi-denominated assets, with the offshore renminbi strengthening past the 7-per-dollar milestone in late September, talks about the possibility of a drastic renminbi appreciation have emerged.

Referring to this very issue, Guan Tao, global chief economist at BOCI China, said: "There's a possibility for everything. But, first and foremost, market forces dictate that the renminbi exchange rate would fluctuate in both directions amid uncertainties and instabilities internally and externally."

"Market expectations are constantly shifting between scenarios of a US economic soft landing, hard landing and even 'no landing' — which means the US economy stays overheated and sees a second wave of inflation. The Fed's monetary policy will adjust its pace accordingly."

"Meanwhile, the People's Bank of China, the central bank, seems always ready to prevent the renminbi exchange rate from over-

shooting, either excessive appreciation or depreciation. The central bank has arguably accumulated rich experience in this regard," Guan said in an exclusive interview with China Daily.

Pan Gongsheng, governor of the PBOC, said last month that the central bank adheres to the decisive role of market forces in exchange rate formation and will strengthen expectation management to avoid exchange rate overshooting.

According to Guan, who once served as head of the Balance of Payments Department at the State Administration of Foreign Exchange, a US economic soft landing remains the base case scenario following the Fed's 50-basis-point rate cut in September. In that case, as the Fed continues rate cuts, foreign institutions may continue to boost holdings in renminbi-denominated bonds.

By contrast, in a "no landing" scenario — which seems more likely than a hard landing, the Fed may resume tightening and dampen risk appetite, Guan said, adding it remains uncertain whether the renminbi will end stronger than the 7-per-dollar mark by the end of the year.

After US job gains in September beat market expectations last week, traders began to bet that the Fed will slow down rate cuts in the rest of the year, sending the US dollar index rebounding.

The offshore renminbi has

retreated to 7.06 against the greenback as of Monday evening, compared with the recent high of 6.97 in late September and 7.3 in early July when the renminbi started the rally.

Guan said the recent yuan rebound has helped shatter expectations that the yuan could perform relatively weaker against the dollar persistently, alleviated the pressure of capital outflows and expanded the scope for China's monetary policy to support the economy.

After cuts to the reserve requirement ratio and interest rates last month, Guan said the country's monetary policy is still within a conventional range and has room for maneuvering on the fronts of both quantity and price.

He also urged that fiscal policy should synergize with accommodative monetary moves. Measures such as expanding this year's government deficit to boost fiscal spending and optimizing the fiscal spending structure to improve people's livelihoods are necessary, especially given households' reluctance to consume and invest due to debt burdens.

Guan added that international gold prices still have room to rise in the cases of a US economic soft landing and hard landing, thanks to declining US yields and the demand for hedging against elevated inflation and geopolitical tensions.

It is possible for international gold prices to reach \$3,000 per ounce, Guan said, with global central banks' increased gold reserves contributing to the trend.

## State Grid ensures holiday power use

By ZHUANG QIANGE  
and PANG BO

In the prefecture-level city of Anyang in northern Henan province, ensuring ample electricity supply for the Shibanyan Scenic Area in Shibanyan town during the weeklong National Day holiday became the top priority for State Grid Anyang Power Supply Co, which took multiple measures to ensure that.

Shibanyan town has 17 administrative villages administering 228 natural villages with over 3,000 households. There are 459 guesthouses engaged in tourism.

As villagers in Shibanyan are scattered across a large area and some guesthouses sit in secluded regions deep in the Taihang Mountains, workers of the State Grid company launched a village-wide improvement program by visiting residents face-to-face to optimize services.

Aiming to spend two days in a village, each team member con-

ducted thorough inspections of all potential electrical hazards, formulated action plans on the first day and executed remedies on the second, so as to let residents even in the deep mountainous region enjoy a stable electricity supply.

Meanwhile, staff members of the local power company have built a robust power grid by perfecting transformer stations and utilizing high technology.

They have constructed and renovated three transformer stations to optimize the transmission network, and employed drones, infrared thermometers, data monitoring systems and other equipment for technological inspections of power lines deep in the forest.

"This enables the timely identification and handling of safety hazards, ensuring the normal operation of power facilities," said Wang Kefeng of State Grid Linzhou Power Supply Co.

"At the 48th switch on Shinan Line, the incoming switch temper-

atures are 40.2 C on phase A, 39.5 C on phase B, and 41.4 C on phase C. The foundation of the pole is normal," two staff members from the Shibanyan Power Supply Station told him after using drones to inspect the line.

By using "guesthouse power archives", the employees also focused on key areas to enhance the reliable electricity supply to villagers.

For each new guesthouse, the power workers would provide on-site services, guide the customer in upgrading power equipment and establish power archives.

During the holiday, State Grid Anyang Power Supply Co also added emergency generators and designed contingency plans for popular destinations such as the Gu Wenchang Memorial Hall and the Hongqiqu (Red Flag Canal) Grand Canyon, ensuring thorough preparedness.

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# BUSINESSFOCUS



People visit the 2024 China Culture and Tourism Industries Exposition in Tianjin in September. SUN FANYUE / XINHUA

## Country's smart tourism apps offer unique experiences

Digital technology enthuses foreign visitors, enhances products, services

TIANJIN — Wearing an elegant white dress, Umuhoza, a Rwandan businesswoman, took a photo in front of a smart photo device, which soon generated a photo depicting her as a valiant and chivalrous female with traditional Chinese features.

"When people travel to China, they really want to take memories back home. The device can take a picture of you and then transform you into a Chinese kind of person. I really love it," Umuhoza said.

Umuhoza runs a travel website and helps tourists from Asia travel to African countries, including Rwanda, Egypt and Tanzania. At the same time, her website has packages catering to travelers from Africa who want to visit China.

At the 2024 China Culture and Tourism Industries Exposition held in North China's Tianjin Municipality in September, many foreign visitors were overwhelmed by the novel technologies adopted by China's tourism sector.

"That's amazing. I am very interested in autonomous driving cars and many smart tourism scenes. Perhaps new trade cooperation can be carried out in the future," Umuhoza said.

### Telling more about China

Putting on a virtual reality head-

set, Elena Jitari-Parry, a full-time travel blogger from Moldova, was instantly drawn to various places as she experienced the magnificent landscapes of China's mountains and rivers.

"So beautiful. It felt so authentic," Jitari-Parry said.

At a booth provided by Midu, a company focusing on artificial intelligence and large language models, she also quickly learned about securing travel tips for exploring Tianjin via an intelligent tourism companion system that simply requires a person to ask questions.

"Traveling in China can be so easy for foreigners! The digitalization and intelligent services of Chinese tourist attractions have become a new trend, enabling foreigners like me to enjoy a more comfortable and convenient travel experience in China," Jitari-Parry said.

With the desire to further explore China, Jitari-Parry chose to be a full-time travel blogger, documenting her travels and experiences in China. "Foreigners are very interested in China's technological development. I always advise my audience to come to China and see something different."

The deep integration of technology and the cultural tourism sector not only creates a variety of experi-

ential consumption scenarios, but also meets people's new needs for personalized travel, immersive experiences and creative consumption.

Data showed that by the end of 2023, the scale of China's digital cultural tourism market had exceeded 1 trillion yuan (\$142.6 billion), accounting for more than 30 percent of the entire cultural tourism industry.

### Smart, convenient services

In the exhibition area of Meituan, one of China's leading online service platforms, high-end technologies such as drones and autonomous delivery vehicles became the focus of foreign bloggers' lenses.

Ruben Diaz Jr. from the United States was amazed by it. "Some of these things are brand new to me. Tourists can specify drones to deliver the items they need directly to the scenic areas, which is definitely more convenient," he said.

A staff member at the Meituan booth said that the company's drones are currently operating on more than 30 routes in cities such as Beijing, Shenzhen, Shanghai and Guangzhou, and have completed over 300,000 orders in total.

Thanks to the rapid development of smart tourism in China, tourists have become accustomed to using online payments, ticket purchases and guided tours during their travels.

Data from iResearch, an industry research and consulting institute, showed that in 2023, the total number of monthly uses and total usage time of online travel apps had grown by more than 30 percent year-on-year on average.

Some Chinese online travel service companies also use digital technologies to meet the growing travel needs of foreign visitors to China.

In May, Tongcheng Travel launched an international travel reservation platform named HopeGo, which supports payments in 16 global currencies via various operating languages.

Richard Santana, a product designer and blogger from the United States, said that with these online services, foreigners will be more willing to go to China, while their travels in China will also be more convenient.

Ma Yiliang, chief statistician of the China Tourism Academy, said that "digitalization plus cultural tourism" has become a developing trend.

As "China Travel" has surged to be a hot global social media topic, demand for inbound tourism to China has increased significantly.

"With smarter and more convenient experiences in China, foreign tourists can find a more open, more confident and safer China during their travels," said Ma.

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## New professions emerge amid Northwest China's desert travel boom

YINCHUAN — Sleeping in hotels under starry skies and sipping piping hot coffee have become tourism trends in the desert of Northwest China's Ningxia Hui autonomous region, contributing to a growing number of travelers to the region.

According to data from Meituan, one of China's leading online services platforms, searches for "Tengger Desert hotels" skyrocketed 470 percent and searches for "desert coffee" soared 518 percent year-on-year in early August.

This tourism boom has not only fueled the local economy, but also sparked the rise of new, unique professions such as desert baristas and stargazing guides.

"There was little coffee available in the desert in Ningxia before, but the influx of big-city tourists and their coffee-sipping habits changed that," said 24-year-old Li Qian, who is from Ningxia's Zhongwei.

After graduating from college, she started working part-time as a barista at a resort hotel in the Tengger Desert, which extends partially into Zhongwei. During the peak tourist season, Li and her fellow desert baristas brew up to 700 cups of coffee a day.

Her hometown, Zhongwei, was once plagued by sandstorms but has since undergone ecological transformation. Thanks to extensive desertification control efforts, the Tengger Desert has receded by 25 kilometers, turning once-barren land into greenery. Zhongwei has since become a tourist hotspot.

"Most of our customers come from Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen, and they love snapping photos to share on social media," she said. The increasing number of visitors has introduced coffee culture to the desert, creating new job opportunities for young locals like Li in their own hometowns.

To cater to tourists' fascination with the desert and its "starry starry nights", Li crafted a unique meteor shower coffee using latte art that mirrors the nocturnal firmament. This innovative brew quickly

became a hit with visitors.

"In Zhongwei, there's nothing like sipping coffee while stargazing," Li said, noting that the recent Perseid meteor shower lit up the night sky in the Northern Hemisphere from July 17 to Aug 24.

For those seeking deeper exploration of the night sky, a unique experience with expert guidance awaits. Jin Yanping, a stargazer from Ningxia who was born in the 1990s, works as a desert stargazing guide. He leads tourists across the desert to experience the vastness of the universe through the stars.

"As a child, I was always fascinated by the mysteries of the sky," Jin said. In 2021, he became a stargazing guide and has since become one of the most sought-after guides in the Tengger Desert.

But Jin's work goes beyond stargazing. He educates travelers about constellations, mythology and astronomy, enriching their appreciation of the night sky's wonders. In the Ningxia desert, visitors can recline on soft dunes, gaze up at the Milky Way and feel a deep connection with nature.

"When people look up at a sky full of stars, they often feel a rush of excitement and contentment," Jin said. "It's a moment that lets them escape the worries of everyday life, even if just for a little while."

Zhu Ying, a tourist from Shanghai, traveled to Ningxia in mid-August to witness the breathtaking Perseid meteor shower. "Lying in the desert and gazing at the stars, I felt a profound sense of tranquility. It was as if I became one with the universe, and all my worries simply melted away," she said, reflecting on the experience.

The desert tourism boom has also given rise to other emerging professions, including camel handlers, off-road vehicle guides and even desert DJs, creating fresh opportunities for local youths.

"This new profession not only creates new employment opportunities, but also lets us savor the beauty of life in the desert," said Li, the barista.

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A cup of meteor shower coffee crafted by barista Li Qian at a hotel in Zhongwei, Ningxia Hui autonomous region. XINHUA

## Highland industries drive high-quality development in Xizang's county

LHASA — In a bustling workshop, dozens of women manually operate looms, with thumping sounds abounding. At one loom, Namdrin, wearing colorful homemade Tibetan garb, shows a colleague how to weave.

Namdrin, from Rinbung county, Xizang autonomous region, is an inheritor of Yar Ther, a 1,200-year-old Tibetan wool-weaving skill listed as a city-level item of intangible cultural heritage.

"Compared with ordinary Tibetan wool products, Yar Ther cloth is more delicate, and more lustrous under sunlight, which is warm in winter and cool in summer," said the 36-year-old, adding that a handmade scarf can be sold for 600 yuan (\$86).

In 2013, she and her husband Tashi Dondrup, a former tailor, started a Yar Ther wool weaving cooperative, producing woolen monks' robes. Now, the cooperative has three workshops, producing 12 product types, such as Tibetan aprons, clothing and scarves. It has hired more than 200 locals as full-time and part-time weavers, tailors and other staff, generating annual



A worker weaves wool with a loom at a Yar Ther workshop in Rinbung county, Xizang autonomous region, in September. SUN RUIBO / XINHUA

sales revenue of around 15 million yuan in 2023.

Kelsang, a villager who lives nearby, has been a weaver in the workshop for three years, and now earns 160 yuan daily. "With this job at my doorstep, I can bring additional income without leaving my family

unattended," said Kelsang, aged 30.

Located on the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau, known as the "roof of the world", Xizang has been fostering special highland industries based on its specialties, such as sheep, yak and barley products, driving the region's high-quality develop-

ment and bringing more income to locals.

In Gyangze county, a major barley production base in the region, an automated processing line by Keyan Co has produced bread premixes made from modified barley flour — a technical breakthrough as traditional barley flour is unsuitable for making bread due to a lack of gluten. The premix helped Chinese bakers win an international baking award in Munich, Germany, in 2023, said Guo Wenhong, chairman of Keyan.

Guo said the barley is also made into canned porridge, noodles and dumplings, which are very popular among customers. He said the company will soon open two barley bakery shops in the county and Shanghai, respectively, and is optimistic about their market potential.

Hu Fawei, executive deputy head of the county government, said Gyangze now has three barley processing enterprises, including a barley beer producer, and the county government has been making efforts to develop industries to increase the added value of barley for farmers.

By the end of July, the county's GDP had expanded 6.8 percent year-on-year to 1.8 billion yuan this year.

According to a white paper issued in 2023, Xizang has built a large number of industrial bases for agriculture and animal husbandry adapted to local conditions, such as those used in the cultivation of high-quality highland barley, the production of edible oils, pollution-free vegetable planting, standardized dairy cattle scale farming, and Tibetan sheep and yak farming. In 2022, the total output value of farm and livestock products processing reached 6 billion yuan.

In a township in Saga county, some 4,000 meters above sea level, the quinoa crop has been introduced from a plateau area in South America at a similar altitude. The experimental plantation area reached 167 hectares in 2023 and 667 hectares this year.

As a trial project jointly developed by the government, the Chinese Academy of Sciences and a quinoa processing company, the nutritious crop was grown in barren wasteland without taking up

any barley farmland.

Shan Liming, general manager of the company that purchases the quinoa and processes it elsewhere into quinoa rice, noodles and other products, said that through further processing, the added value of the crop yield is expected to reach 50 million yuan this year.

Supported by the government, a processing line is being built in Saga county that is expected to become operational next year. In addition to the labor and machine leasing income from the quinoa fields, local farmers will be encouraged to grow quinoa in the future, earning at least five times the income from growing barley, Shan added.

Namgyal Lhadron, 68, Namdrin's mother who taught her Yar Ther wool weaving skills, is glad to see that the manually weaved clothing, which was once only affordable for nobility, is now popular among ordinary people, both young and old.

"I hope my daughter can continue to make efforts to pass on the skills and bring wealth to more people," she said.

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## WORLD

**Editor's note:** Monday marked one year since the outbreak of the devastating Palestine-Israel conflict, triggered by Hamas' Oct 7, 2023, attacks. Beyond the statistics, this page delves into the global implications of unchecked violence, Washington's controversial role, and the growing demand for justice.

# Israel, US blamed for prolonging Gaza conflict

As toll rises, intl calls for peace intensify amid protests against Washington's complicity in one of the century's gravest crises

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong  
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To many, Monday marked a somber anniversary: a year of Israeli killings of Palestinians and turning Gaza into uninhabitable ruins, in disregard of international law and UN resolutions. And the US, for its blind support of Israel, has been called complicit in the creation and prolongation of one of this century's worst humanitarian crises.

More than 41,900 Palestinians have been confirmed dead and about 100,000 injured, not only in strikes on military facilities but more frequently on residential buildings, hospitals, schools and even humanitarian aid convoys. Hundreds of journalists and UN workers have also been killed, and many more are believed to be buried in the rubble, which could take years to clear.

While the extreme Hamas attacks on Oct 7 last year, which claimed more than 1,250 Israeli and foreign lives and saw more than 200 people abducted, initially shocked the world, the yearlong Israeli military assault has since, to a certain extent, overshadowed those events.

Analysts said the White House has largely ignored the current alleged genocide — tearing out the once rules-based international order and sinking US moral prestige and credit.

In protest against Washington's backing of such daily attacks, US journalist Samuel Mena Jr set himself on fire outside the White House on Saturday, severely burning his left arm. Earlier on Feb 25, Aaron Bushnell, a young US Air Force serviceman, died after setting himself ablaze outside the Israeli embassy in Washington, while declaring he "will no longer be complicit in genocide".

In recent weeks, cities worldwide have witnessed both pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian demonstrations demanding an immediate cease-fire and the release of hostages. The growing global outcry is also pushing for the United States — Israel's largest arms supplier — to halt its military support.

Since the conflict began, the US has enacted legislation providing at least \$12.5 billion in military aid to Israel, including \$3.8 billion from a bill in March and \$8.7 billion from a supplemental appropriations act in April, according to the US think tank Council on Foreign Relations.

US Representative Cori Bush of Missouri said so much of the violence could have been prevented "if our government had the moral foresight and clarity to invest in peace and diplomacy instead of violence and war".

She questioned US President Joe Biden on X last week regarding how many lives must be taken "for you to finally say no more".

Ayman Yousef, a professor of international relations at the Arab American University in Jenin, West Bank, lamented that despite a year of fighting in Gaza, the US position



**Counterclockwise from left:** Demonstrators hold candles during a pro-Palestinian vigil ahead of the anniversary of the Palestine-Israel conflict, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on Sunday. TOMAS CUESTA / AFP  
Demonstrators in Istanbul, Turkiye, pray at a protest on Sunday to express support for Palestinians in Gaza.

DILARA SENKAYA / REUTERS  
A yellow ribbon and the number 365, signifying the number of days since the Oct 7, 2023, attacks, is projected on the old city walls of Jerusalem on Sunday with pictures of the victims of the attacks.

AHMAD GHARABLI / AFP

Studies in Turkiye, blames the US political structure for being under Jewish lobby, including the evangelicals who "put Israel's interests ahead of those of the US" and consider it a "religious duty to serve Israel".

"We are witnessing that the rulers of Israel are also aware of this power they possess and that they are pushing their influence on the US to the limit," Oruc said.

However, the current "irrational relationship between the US and Israel is causing great damage to the global system and its institutions" because Israel has not complied with any UN resolutions nor injunctions issued by the International Court of Justice.

"Similarly, due to US pressure, the International Criminal Court has been unable to issue arrest warrants against Netanyahu and (Israeli Defense Minister) Yoav Gallant," Oruc said.

Yousef from Jenin said the one year of fighting in Gaza meant Israel has "failed to achieve its declared objectives in liberating its prisoners and hostages from Palestinian guerrilla fighters".

## Two-state solution

Iyad Eid, an assistant professor at the department of sociology and anthropology at the International Islamic University Malaysia, said the two-state solution remains a deeply important issue for Palestinians, who overwhelmingly support the establishment of their own state.

"However, they have encountered significant challenges, particularly from the Israeli side," said Eid, who is originally from Gaza and author of the upcoming book *Tufan Al-Aqsa: The Day Hamas Defeated Israel*.

He also recalled that just before Oct 7 last year, Netanyahu presented a map at the UN that "effectively rejected any engagement in peace talks with the Palestinians", undermining their prospects for statehood.

Additionally, several Israeli ministers, including Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, have publicly endorsed maps that envision an expanded Israel, encompassing territories from neighboring countries such as Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria, he said.

"This vision also includes the displacement of Palestinians from both Gaza and the West Bank. Most recently, the Israeli parliament voted to formally deny Palestinians the opportunity to establish their own state, despite the fact that more than 140 countries have already recognized Palestinian statehood."

Despite this, he said it was still possible to achieve a two-state solution "if Israelis would accept it".

"The new government has one plan. Just to control the whole land. This is why the two-state solution is a hope," he said.

Oruc said the US must "urgently end its support for Israel" or it would "not have any credibility or reliability".

"had been totally in favor of Israel inside of the occupation".

"Although the United States put some efforts (into) increasing some political settlement or political deal between (the) Palestinian resistance group and Israel, in actual sense, it has been supporting Israel in terms of military support, economic support and political support," Yousef told China Daily. "The government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has only a military agenda."

In his message to mark one year of the Palestine-Israel conflict, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said it is "time to silence the guns" and "stop the suffering that has engulfed the region". "Time for peace, international law and justice," he said.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs described the past year as one of "unimaginable suffering". According to the UN Satellite Centre, two-thirds of structures — a total of 163,778 buildings — in the Gaza Strip have sustained damage.

The center, in collaboration with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, also released an update on the health and density of cropland in the Gaza Strip. About 68 percent

of the permanent crop fields in the Gaza Strip "exhibited a significant decline in health and density" last month, it said.

## Embargo demand

French President Emmanuel Macron became the latest prominent Western figure to publicly call for an international arms embargo against Israel amid rising Middle East tensions despite overwhelming calls for a cease-fire.

However, Netanyahu hit back on Sunday with a video on X saying "shame" on Macron and other Western leaders who were calling for the arms embargo against Israel when his country was "defending itself on seven fronts" against "the enemies of civilization", referring to Gaza, Lebanon, the West Bank, Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Iran.

Last month, the British government announced it was suspending exports of some weapons to Israel over concerns they could be used to break international law.

Belen Fernandez, a columnist at Al Jazeera, noted in her article published on Wednesday that as Iran fired a barrage of missiles at Israel in

retaliation for the latter's assassination of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah on Sept 27, and the killing of Hamas' political chief Ismail Haniyeh in July, Biden instructed the US military to assist Israel in neutralizing the missiles.

While many an international observer "has sounded the alarm that the US could now be 'dragged' into a regional war", in reality, the US is "not really being 'dragged' anywhere" but rather, it is "in a position entirely of its own making", she said.

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute cited the US, Germany and Italy as major arms suppliers to Israel. In the years 2019 to 2023, the US accounted for 69 percent of Israel's arms imports, upon which the Israel Defense Forces heavily rely.

As Washington carries on with its military and political support while contradictorily calling for a cease-fire in the process, there have been some opportunities to reverse the dreaded course for the past 12 months, as advised by international courts and the UN.

In January, the International Court of Justice issued provisional measures in a Genocide Convention

case brought by South Africa in relation to the situation in Gaza.

The measures included Israel taking immediate steps to prevent its military from committing acts considered genocidal and to enable the provision of humanitarian assistance in Gaza.

In May, the court additionally ordered Israel to "immediately halt its military offensive" in the Rafah Governorate. The same month, International Criminal Court Prosecutor Karim Khan also sought arrest warrants for Israeli and Hamas leaders.

On Sept 18, the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted a resolution demanding Israel bring to an end without delay its unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory within 12 months.

The resolution also calls on states to cease the provision or transfer of arms, munitions and related equipment to Israel.

Despite some of these advisories and warnings, not much has changed and the US continues to prioritize Israel's right to "self-defense" despite security dangers spreading.

Haydar Oruc, a former researcher at the Center for Middle Eastern

## Peace still elusive as fears grow of another catastrophe

By PAN JIE  
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Negotiations have so far failed to produce peace one year after the conflict in the Gaza Strip broke out. Meanwhile, concerns have also been raised about Lebanon's future and whether the country could become another Gaza.

Hezbollah and Israel have exchanged nearly daily fires on the border area since the outbreak of this round of Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which started on Oct 7 last year. But the fighting has intensified since the Israeli military shifted its focus from the Gaza Strip to Lebanon.

Since Israel launched ground operations inside southern Lebanon on Sept 30, the Israeli military said on Saturday that its forces had killed more than 400 Hezbollah fighters, including 30 commanders of various ranks.

Amid escalating situations, world leaders, including United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and French President Emmanuel Macron, have warned against seeing Lebanon becoming a new Gaza.

Asked about whether it is a real possibility, Mohamad Bazzi, a Middle East studies expert at New York University, said in an interview with NPR that the tactics Israel employed in Lebanon resemble those in Gaza.

"We're seeing Israel using the same kind of brutal tactics it deployed in Gaza, massive bombardment of civilians, displacement of civilians. And we also see (Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu eviscerated one of the last supposed red lines that (United States) President (Joe) Biden had tried to impose on Israel, which was to prevent Israel from expanding the Gaza war into Lebanon," he said.

Li Xinggang, a researcher at the Institute for Studies on the Mediterranean Rim at Zhejiang International Studies University, told China Daily, "By saying 'another Gaza', it is more like a warning to Israel in not repeating a catastrophic humanitarian disaster in Lebanon."

The fighting in Lebanon is causing another humanitarian disaster, as the total number of displaced people in Lebanon because of Israeli airstrikes rose to nearly 1.2 million.



Syrian children sit in a makeshift camp in Beirut, Lebanon, on Sunday, after being displaced by Israeli airstrikes. CARL COURT VIA GETTY IMAGES

"The spillover of the Gaza crisis has caused a serious humanitarian tragedy; at the same time, it has sparked a reflection on the consequences of war for all humanity," said Zhang Yuan, a professor at the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University. "The global anti-war sentiment has a positive effect on ending fighting."

Over the weekend, thousands of protesters took to the streets in major cities around the world demanding an end to bloodshed in Gaza, Lebanon, and the wider Middle East.

For many people, especially in countries that experienced colonial rule, the West's perceived failure to defend the human rights of Palestinians has exposed its "hypocrisy", ana-

lyst Karim Bitar said in an interview with Agence France-Presse.

Experts also said the yearlong conflict reflects the challenges facing global governance as Israel repeatedly ignored calls from the international community and the UN for a cease-fire.

At a Security Council briefing on Sept 26, Fu Cong, China's permanent representative to the UN, said, "The Middle East cannot afford another war."

As a permanent member of the Security Council, China has always adhered to a fair position since the Gaza conflict broke out, actively participated in the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian issue, and contributed constructive efforts to promoting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, including internal reconciliation in Palestine, Fu said.

China's proposed resolution for conflict is with great respect for the sovereignty, security and national dignity of the countries involved, a primary difference from that of the West, Zhang said.

"Besides, the unity of the Islamic world, the unity of Arab countries and the unity within Palestine are all crucial for promoting the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks."

In July, in a vital step toward

strengthening internal unity within Palestine amid the conflict, Palestinian factions Hamas and Fatah signed a declaration in Beijing to end a long-standing rift.

Experts said the signing is an implementation of the China-proposed Global Security Initiative and a success of diplomacy in supporting Middle Eastern countries to strengthen strategic autonomy, unite and cooperate to resolve regional security issues.

In addition, the achievements of Chinese modernization have provided more development opportunities for the economic growth and national prosperity of countries in the Middle East, Zhang said.

"And that is why China-proposed initiatives gain support and welcome in the region," she said.

However, there is still a long way ahead in achieving a political solution to the Gaza conflict because of its complex nature, Li said, adding if the two-state solution cannot be implemented, the Gaza conflict cannot be resolved.

It requires the full cooperation of the international community to achieve regional economic recovery, maintain regional peace and stability, and ensure that people can live safely and with dignity, experts said.

## WORLDUS

## UN urges release of hostages, cease-fire

By MINLU ZHANG  
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A year after Hamas launched attacks on Israel, the United Nations on Monday reiterated calls for the release of all hostages and for an immediate cease-fire.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict that erupted since that day has expanded across the Middle East, affecting countries such as Lebanon, Yemen, Iran and Syria.

On Monday, the Israeli military announced airstrikes on Hamas positions in Gaza to mark the anniversary of the Oct 7, 2023, attacks. On that day, Hamas fighters infiltrated Israel in an attack that killed more than 1,100 people. More than 200 were taken hostage, with many of them still being held today.

Meanwhile, on Monday, heavy explosions rocked southern Beirut again, as Israeli forces continued to bombard the city. A Hezbollah rocket attack on Haifa, Israel, injured at least 10 people, according to Al Jazeera.

China calls for the "effective respect of the sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of all countries, opposes all acts that violate basic norms governing international relations, and condemns all violent attacks against civilians", Fu Cong, China's permanent representative to the United Nations, said Monday during the UN General Assembly on reforming the UN system.

"Palestine's long-held aspiration to establish an independent state should not be shunned anymore, and the historical injustice suffered by the Palestinian people should not be ignored any longer," Fu said.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Monday issued a video message calling on Hamas to release hostages.

"This is a day for the global community to repeat in the loudest voice our utter condemnation of the abhorrent acts of Hamas, including the taking of hostages," Guterres said.

"I demand once again the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. Until then, Hamas must allow the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit those hostages," he said.

The UN's top official did not criticize Israel in his statement, which led some reporters to describe it as "unbalanced" during the news conference.

Guterres' statement does not contradict what the secretary-general has said since, regarding the Palestinian people and Lebanon, said Stéphane Dujarric, the spokesperson for the secretary-general. It specifically condemned the Hamas attacks and does not imply any change in the secretary-general's stance, Dujarric said.

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz last week declared Guterres "persona non grata" in Israel and banned him from entering the country.

The Israeli mission to the UN held a memorial service for victims of the Oct 7 attacks at UN headquarters in New York on Monday, and did not invite the UN secretary-general.

Iran launched approximately 180 ballistic missiles at targets in Israel last week in what Tehran said was retaliation for the recent killings of top Hezbollah and Hamas officials.

Israel's Ambassador to the UN Danny Danon said on Monday that the nation is deciding when and where to retaliate against Iran for the missile barrage.

"It will happen ... it will take place," said Danon. "There will be a response," and Iran "will pay the price for their actions," he said.

UN General Assembly President Philemon Yang on Monday released a statement calling for "an immediate cease-fire, the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and a return to dialogue with a view to finding diplomatic solutions to the conflicts in the region".

"I call for all parties — Israel, Hamas, and Hezbollah — to abide by their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law. I also urgently call for the protection of civilians and the unimpeded access to the much-needed humanitarian assistance," Yang said.

According to data released by the Gaza Ministry of Health on Sunday, in the past 24 hours, the Israeli military operation has caused 46 deaths.

Since Oct 7, 2023, more than 40,000 people have been killed, the ministry said.

## US marks anniversary of Oct 7 attacks amid protests

By BELINDA ROBINSON  
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Thousands of Pro-Palestinian protesters including students from Columbia University and City University of New York (CUNY) and more than a dozen other New York universities walked out of class to march through the streets on Monday, the first anniversary of the Palestine-Israel conflict, started by the Oct 7, 2023 Hamas attacks.

Chanting slogans and holding placards saying "Free Palestine", the students, many wearing keffiyeh scarves, began marching at 4:30 pm from Lower Manhattan.

The protesters walked to Washington Square Park, Union Square and Wall Street. They unfurled a massive Palestinian flag in front of the New York Stock Exchange. They were met with pro-Israel counter protesters, and angry words were exchanged.

The protesters continued to Fifth Avenue, which snarled traffic, and near Times Square, where pro-Israel protesters carried large Israeli flags. The pro-Palestinian protesters then headed to Columbus Circle at 59th Street to join a large citywide protest.

Rabbi Asher from Brooklyn, New York, told China Daily: "Today I think of the hostages taken. What we need is peace. Then I feel hopeful for a better future. The way to have peace is through strength. We must help each other."

Muhammed, a pro-Palestinian student protester who declined to give his surname, told China Daily: "We must call an end to genocide. I'm here protesting for the Palestinian people. I'm not going to stop until they are free. Free Palestine!"

While the street protests were mainly peaceful, in the afternoon, red graffiti saying "Divest Now" and smashed windows were found at a CUNY building in Hamilton Heights.

At Columbia University in Manhattan, epicenter of the original anti-Israel protests, security barriers were erected. By midmorning, part of the school grounds were closed to visitors, and only those with IDs were allowed in.

A memorial for the victims displayed their pictures on large cardboard milk cartons, positioned where an anti-Israel encampment had been set up in the past academic year.

Interim Columbia University President Katrina Armstrong announced that heightened campus security and building restrictions would be in effect through Wednesday to prevent the "risk of violence to any member of our community".

In New York City, home to the largest Jewish population outside of Israel, the New York Police Department stepped up patrols and security measures. At least two people were arrested by the early evening, the NYPD said.

In the afternoon, protesters picketed the home of Rebecca Weiner, NYPD deputy commissioner of intelligence and counterterrorism. A picture of one of the signs held outside Weiner's house read: "Abolish NYPD Counter terrorism," an Instagram post by UnityofFields showed.

The group wrote on Instagram: "The movement for a free Palestine cannot and will not be locked behind or shut out by campus gates."

A candle-lighting ceremony was held by the Jewish community in the evening in Central Park, with some of the hostages' families attending. Mayor Eric Adams and New York Governor Kathy Hochul also attended.

Shai Davidai, an assistant professor at Columbia Business School, led a pro-Israeli protest. A "Flood Columbia" protest and "Columbia United Against Terror" rally were held outside campus grounds.



## Nobel moment

Victor Ambros (left), a winner of the 2024 Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine, awarded Monday, hugs his wife Rosalind Lee following a news conference at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester, Massachusetts. Ambros, a professor of natural science at the school, and Gary Ruvkun, a professor of genetics at Harvard Medical School, were awarded the prize for their work on the discovery of microRNA.

STEVEN SENNE / AP

## Courage under scrutiny cited

Chinese American scholars honored for bravery after being targeted by US initiative

By MAYZHOU in Houston  
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Four Chinese American scholars were honored recently in Washington with the American Courage Award for their bravery fighting for and proving their innocence after being targeted as national security threats.

On Oct 3, they received the American Courage Award, established in 1997 by the civil rights group Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAJC). The award honors an individual, company or organization that has shown extraordinary courage or commitment to civil rights.

The four recipients were among a group of professors, scientists and researchers who were targeted by the US government program China Initiative — which was ended in 2022 — based primarily on their ancestry rather than true suspected criminal activity, according to AAJC.

AAJC said the recipients were treated unfairly by the government but they have continued to try to rebuild their careers and rebound from the trauma they have suffered.

"For their extraordinary bravery and perseverance during the darkest times of their lives, we honor them with the American Courage Award," AACJ said in a statement.

The honorees include Gang Chen, an engineering professor at MIT. He was arrested in 2021, accused of being a spy and failing to disclose ties to Chinese institutions, but the

charges were later dismissed when the prosecutor's office admitted that it did not have sufficient evidence for a case.

Xiaoxing Xi, a physics professor at Temple University, was among the first targeted before the China Initiative was officially launched by the Trump administration in 2018.

In 2015, the FBI arrested Xi in his home while holding his family at gunpoint. He was accused of sharing confidential technology with China when he was discussing technology that had been public for years.

Anming Hu, an associate professor at the University of Tennessee, was the first academic to face trial under the China Initiative. After his arrest and trial, he was acquitted in September 2021, with the judge saying, "no rational jury could find him guilty."

Franklin Tao, who lost his tenured position at the University of Kansas because of government charges, was investigated by the FBI for espionage based on anonymous tips and arrested in 2019 on unrelated charges. Each charge has been dismissed for lack of evidence.

Xi said in a news release by the Asian American Scholar Forum that the group of American scientists and scholars were "victims of the government's discriminatory policies".

"The only way to prevent this, or even worse, like what the Japanese experienced in World War II, is for everyone to speak up and fight back. This is our right and our obligation," he said.



Sadly, some politicians choose to ignore history and disregard the truth, as seen in the current push by the House to relaunch the China Initiative. We must unite and stand against this."

Gang Chen, engineering professor at MIT

Chen called the recognition "bittersweet" because "it brings to mind the many scientists who have been wrongfully prosecuted by our government".

Tao called his experience "a significant prosecutorial overreach by the government, driven by racial profiling".

"After a legal battle lasting four to five years, I was fully exonerated in July 2024, with all charges found to be baseless and expunged," Tao said.

An analysis by the civil rights group Race, Racism and the Law showed that of the 148 defendants across 77 cases collected in the FBI database under the China Initiative, 130 were of Chinese heritage. Only 25 percent was convicted, and few of the convictions were related to espionage.

Despite the China Initiative having

received wide criticism and the Biden administration ending the program in 2022 — admitting it's not "the right approach to meet the threat in the coming years" said Assistant Attorney General for National Security Matthew Olson — the US Congress is working on legislation to reinstate the program.

"Sadly, some politicians choose to ignore history and disregard the truth, as seen in the current push by the House to relaunch the China Initiative," Chen said. "We must unite and stand against this."

The bill to reinstate the initiative was passed in early September when 25 China-related bills were passed in the House of Representatives in one week, earning the nickname "China Week".

On Oct 1, physics professors Steven Kivelson and Peter Michelson from Stanford University sent an open letter to the four top congressional leaders of both major parties in the two chambers to "strongly oppose" the move.

The two professors cited the 2024 National Academy of Sciences' Consensus Study Report that the influx of international talent has dropped since 2018, indicating that the United States is losing talent.

"The NAS consensus report concluded that the China Initiative was highly problematic, especially in its disproportionate focus on fundamental research in academia," the open letter said.

The two professors urged Congress "not to reinstate the China Initiative or initiatives that resemble it by passage of" new bills.

## Thangka artist Niangben holds exhibition

By MINGMEI LI in New York  
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Chinese Tibetan traditional thangka artist and cultural heritage inheritor Niangben continued his journey to promote and preserve Tibetan culture overseas with a special exhibition in New York.

*Inheritance and Beyond* (Sept 21-Oct 11) is on display at the Rockefeller State Park Preserve art gallery, where the thangka master brought 16 pieces of his artwork, featuring Tibetan Buddhism.

Niangben, 53, an artist from the Regong region of Huangnan Tibetan autonomous prefecture in southeastern Qinghai, is a prominent inheritor of thangka — an art form recognized as a national intangible cultural heritage, which was also recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Renowned for its distinct ethnic identity and artistic beauty, thangka has a history spanning hundreds of years and has become increasingly popular, particularly in Northwest China.

The painting of thangka is created with precious mineral pigments like gold, silver and cinnabar, along with natural dyes from plants such as saffron and gardenia, which can make the art last for decades.

"It's amazing to see how so many beautiful works have been preserved because artists used this type of mineral pigment. Take the murals at Dunhuang or in the Potala Palace, for example — they've stayed vibrant for hundreds of years without fading. That's really something



Niangben, a thangka master, introduces his artwork to visitors at the Rockefeller State Park Preserve art gallery in New York on Sunday.  
MINGMEI LI / CHINA DAILY

unique about our Eastern murals," Niangben told China Daily.

Thangka paintings also use mineral pigments, allowing them to last for millennia and giving them immense collectible value. He explained that this use of natural pigments makes the art form hard to replace with today's digital painting.

Thangka art has strict requirements for color mixing, outlining and more. It not only requires the meticulous techniques of traditional Chinese painting but also demands the artist's skill in grinding pigments and controlling temperature and humidity, he said.

Niangben began learning thangka painting at age 12 and has dedicated more than 40 years to mastering the craft. As a renowned artist, he has trained hundreds of young thangka artists at the Qinghai Huangnan Regong Painting Institute, which he established to teach impoverished children thangka

painting as a skill they can use to build a livelihood.

"It's my responsibility, and I hope this culture of China's Tibetan ethnic people can be preserved by more artists like me," he said. "Art knows no borders, and this painting technique is truly rare. We hope that thangka art can be appreciated and loved by more people in the US as well."

He said that bringing traditional thangka art overseas presents challenges, but his passion for sharing its beauty motivates him. He said he hopes that by showcasing thangka art, he can inspire more people to appreciate its unique allure and ultimately visit its place of origin, his hometown of Qinghai.

Members of the Rockefeller family support the exhibition. Steven Rockefeller has been promoting cultural exchanges in art between China and East Asia.

"The parallels of our dramatic natural landscapes can serve as symbolism to the harmony of all our

best efforts in cultural exchange," said Rockefeller, host of the exhibition, at a reception on Sunday.

He said that the beauty and unique geography of Xizang are reminiscent of the Hudson Valley, where Niangben's art is being exhibited — a region whose landscape also has been shaped over millennia by tectonic shifts and glacial melt.

Cindy Ye, curator of the Thangka Artistry exhibition of World Tibetan Thangka Research and Preservation Foundation, curated Niangben's exhibition.

Lang Lang, a famous Chinese pianist and a thangka enthusiast who is also a friend of Niangben, performed at the reception. He told attendees that culture, art and music bring together people from diverse backgrounds.

"Niangben has offered his most elevating springboard to the divine of nature for the tens of thousands who will trek from its center out into the enchantment of our parks, lilies and moss," said Lily Li, organizer of the event.

"Bringing Niangben's art to New York is a monumental occasion. This city, a global hub of art and culture, provides the perfect platform to introduce thangka to an eager new audience," she said. "It underscores the importance of preserving such traditions in our rapidly globalizing world, fostering a culture of sharing that enriches us all."

"This exhibition is more than a display of artistic mastery. It is a celebration of a man whose life's work bridges the gap between ancient traditions and the modern world," Li said.

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Fueling antagonism only intensifies spiral of violence in the Middle East

After the Oct 7 Hamas attacks on Israel last year, Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to eliminate the threat of terrorism.

At first, it was a war on Hamas, which killed 1,200 Israelis and took 250 others hostage in those attacks. Then, as the war in the Gaza Strip expanded, Israeli offensives have invoked counterattacks from Hezbollah in Lebanon, Houthis in Yemen, militia forces in Iraq, and finally Iran.

As Israeli military operations crossed the one year mark on Monday, there is no sign of the cross fire between the Israel Defense Forces and its regional foes nearing an end. Instead, as Fu Cong, China's permanent representative to the United Nations, has warned, the situation threatens to spiral out of control and is now "hanging by a thread".

Netanyahu's insistence on accomplishing his war aims is sinking Israel deeper into a vicious spiral of violent exchanges with hostile neighbors. If there is any lesson worth learning, it is the same old one many have correctly brought up: Violence is not the answer to any country's security concerns, including Israel's.

All the enemies Israel has targeted, from Hamas to Hezbollah and Iran, remain defiant. Ironically for the Israelis, the harder the Netanyahu government pushes to realize its set goals, the more threatened and isolated they are. The more Netanyahu sticks to his guns, the greater the humanitarian disasters being caused — Gaza has become "hell on Earth", as Fu said — and corresponding alienation of Israel within the international community.

Given Israel's unrivaled military strength across the Middle East, many, including Netanyahu and his Cabinet, seem to assume it is only a matter of time and resolve for the country to eliminate the outstanding security threats surrounding it. That is why Netanyahu has defied calls for restraint from his country's closest allies, from the United States to France. That is also why, despite repeated warnings against Israel escalating and expanding the conflicts, the Joe Biden administration has offered persistent support for the Israeli offensives.

Yet, in contrast to Netanyahu's repeated claim to be near to reaching that set goal, the continuously expanding military operations say something very different. After round after round of violent offensives in the Gaza Strip, the IDF seems to be repeating what it has done since October, revealing the simple fact that the overwhelming previous onslaughts didn't work as anticipated. The Israeli military on Saturday warned residents in parts of central Gaza to evacuate. An early Sunday air strike reportedly killed at least 21 people in central Gaza. The IDF's killing of Hamas official Saeed Atallah Ali and his family in a refugee camp in north Lebanon on Saturday is a fresh reminder of how broadly and deeply the militant group is spread and embedded across the region, not just Gaza.

The same is true of Hezbollah and the Israeli campaign against it. After killing its long-time leader, and a couple of his potential successors, the IDF has had to resort to "limited" ground operations against Hezbollah in Lebanon. Just as the war on Hamas in Gaza has been less than successful, the ground intrusion in Lebanon may not achieve as much as intended.

After all, Israel and Hezbollah and other regional enemies of Israel are still trading fire across the Israeli border. And while the enemies of Israel with target on their backs are eliminated one after another, countless innocent civilian lives are also being extinguished as "collateral damage". As the blaring rocket alert sirens in northern Israel indicate, the military operations have not brought peace, even to Israel.

Not to mention millions have been displaced since Israel launched its first military operations.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned "the broadening of the Middle East conflict, with escalation after escalation" on Tuesday, and appealed for the violence to end now.

As China has repeatedly said, a cease-fire is indeed the essential first step toward lasting peace in the region. But until the US stops using Israel as a battering ram to advance its own agenda in the region, an end to the violence seems to be ever more remote.

## Beware US helps none but itself

Indian Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo signed a memorandum of understanding during his visit to the United States last week, in order to strengthen cooperation in, and expand, diversify and strengthen, the supply chains of critical minerals such as lithium and cobalt, which are widely used in the electric vehicle and green product industries.

Although the US Commerce Department said in a statement that the MOU is aimed at building resilience in the sector for each country, it is clear which country the MOU is targeted at. "Priority areas of focus include identifying equipment, services, policies and best practices to facilitate the mutually beneficial commercial development of US and Indian critical minerals exploration, extraction, processing and refining, recycling and recovery," the US Commerce Department said in the statement.

On the other hand, speaking at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington after signing the MOU, Goyal claimed the US and India will need to include third countries in their engagement, including mineral-rich countries in Africa and South America. He also said the US-India multidimensional partnership would include open supply chains for materials, technology development and investment flows to promote green energy.

The content of the US-Vietnam cooperative agreements on rare earths, signed by the two countries during US President Joe Biden's visit to the Southeast Asian country in September last year, is similar. In fact, the agreements were inked shortly after China restricted the export of rare earths, which are used in EV battery, solar panel and semiconductor sectors.

The US, understandably, does not want to put all its eggs in one basket in the face of rising tensions with China. But it is the same group of strategists that are egging the US administration to sign mineral-related deals with Vietnam and India that are responsible for the souring of Sino-US economic and trade relations by urging the US to take protectionist measures, and use bullying tactics and long-arm jurisdiction, citing unfounded national security concerns, against China.

Yet neither India nor Vietnam has earned the US' trust for different reasons. The MOU between Washington and New Delhi falls far short of being a trade deal on critical minerals which would allow India to benefit from the US' \$7,500 EV tax credit that Japanese carmakers are entitled to thanks to a trade deal on critical minerals inked by Washington and Tokyo last year.

In Vietnam's case, even more than a year after Biden's visit, the US is still paying lip service to the deal, because it sees Vietnam as a source of cheap labor and critical minerals, which it can use to upgrade its industry and technology, and protect its environment.

Both India and Vietnam are key players in the region. But unlike Japan, India and Vietnam seek to uphold their respective strategic autonomy in dealing with major countries. India and Vietnam have also established stable relations with Russia, China and some other countries which the US sees as a thorn in its side.

The stepmotherly treatment the US reserves for some of its so-called ally countries should awaken them to the fact that it's always better to butter only one side of a bread, and always be aware that the US helps none but itself.

## CHINA DAILY WORLDWIDE

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Cai Meng



## Opinion Line

## Golden Week shows resilience and confidence of country's economy

Rosy economic data and people's increased spending during the just-concluded National Day holiday highlight China's huge economic potential and overall resilience.

Statistics show that in the first five days of the weeklong holiday, nearly 1.46 billion travelers had been made across the country, with a significant year-on-year increase in ticket sales at major scenic spots. Hong Kong welcomed nearly 1 million visitors from the Chinese mainland in the first five days of the holiday, a 35 percent rise over the same period last year. At movie theaters, as of 19:30 on the sixth day of the holiday, the total box office collection had exceeded 2 billion yuan (\$284 million). At the same time, the real estate market across China saw hot sales, with sales in first-tier cities particularly seeing a drastic surge.

Such rosy consumption statistics are proof of the vitality of the Chinese econo-

my, and once again prove that the fundamentals of China's economy are solid, its economic resilience strong, and the potential of its broad market huge.

In fact, the huge consumption potential became apparent even before the National Day holiday. On Sept 24, the authorities rolled out a number of policies, including the reduction of commercial banks' reserve requirement ratio, interest rate cuts, and the reduction of mortgage rates for homebuyers. Two days later, the central authorities made specific arrangements on how to accelerate the countercyclical adjustment of fiscal and monetary policies, help enterprises tide over difficulties, and improve people's livelihoods. As a result, on Sept 30, a day before the National Day holiday, China's A-share market saw a huge surge, with turnover exceeding 2.6 trillion yuan.

The same optimism and signs of recovery and prosperity were seen in ordinary

residents' spending trends, be it in travel, shopping, watching movies and home-buying. Moreover, even local governments did not sit idle during the National Day holiday, introducing various policies to boost consumption. Not long ago, Goldman Sachs, UBS, Morgan Stanley and other foreign institutions upgraded their rating for Chinese stocks, casting a vote of confidence in the Chinese economy.

Given that some new situations and problems have emerged in China's economic operation, it is necessary to maintain policy consistency to help China's economy tide over the difficulties. The recent intensive introduction of policies will help stabilize China's economic growth and expectations. The country still has sufficient fiscal, monetary and financial policy space, and its future macro policy is expected to intensify, further consolidating the foundations of economic recovery.

— WU YIXUE, CHINA DAILY

## Lesson in dockworkers' strike for developing nations

Some 45,000 dockworkers from Maine to Texas were on strike for three days, from Oct 1 to 3, but by bringing work to a standstill on the East and Gulf coast ports in the United States they sent a clear warning about the need to find a balance between advanced technology and jobs.

Apart from demanding more pay, the workers were also demanding a ban on automation in ports, which they see as a threat to their jobs.

The International Longshoremen's Association, which was representing the 45,000 striking dockworkers, said they had reached a tentative deal to suspend the strike until Jan 15 to provide time to negotiate a new contract. The two sides have

arrived at a consensus on raising pay for the workers but the issue of ban on automation remains to be addressed. Since this is about whether certain jobs will continue to exist, which is more important than how much the workers are paid, a compromise seems unlikely by Jan 15.

While technological innovation always raises efficiency, it sometimes makes human labor irrelevant. The loss of jobs in one sector is sometimes balanced with the emergence of new jobs in emerging sectors, but not everyone gains from such transitions.

For a developed economy such as the US, it's hard to contain so many vested interests, which is why the strike hap-

pened. It was ultimately called off, but in all likelihood there will be another strike soon if the problems are not addressed.

China and other developing economies must prepare in advance for scenarios such as the dockworkers' strike in the US. It's necessary to take jobs into consideration when introducing new technology such as artificial intelligence.

Also, employees in the sectors that are most likely to see job losses require subsidized skills training and more support to stay employable, so that strikes such as the one by the US dockworkers do not happen elsewhere.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

## What They Say

## Pakistan should do more to combat terrorism

A terrorist attack in Pakistan's southern port city of Karachi on Sunday killed several people, including two Chinese nationals, and left dozens of people, including a Chinese national, injured. The terrorists attacked a convoy of vehicles from the Port Qasim Electric Power Company near Jinnah International Airport in Karachi around 11:00 pm on Sunday.

The banned Balochistan Liberation Army issued a statement through social media, claiming responsibility for the attack, but the Pakistani authorities have not confirmed it.

This is the second time in seven months that Chinese nationals have been killed in terrorist attacks in Pakistan. On March 26, five Chinese nationals and their Pakistani driver were killed in a suicide terror attack at the China-invested Dasu

hydropower project in the northwestern province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Although the Pakistani authorities announced in May that they had arrested 11 Islamist militants said to have been involved in the suicide bombing in March, the Sunday attack should prompt them to do more to improve the security situation in the country.

The latest attack happened less than five months after Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar's visit to Beijing during which the Pakistani side pledged to hunt down the perpetrators of the March attack and bring them to justice, and better protect Chinese nationals, projects and institutions in Pakistan.

But Pakistan's counterterrorism measures have not been able to prevent terrorist attacks, with terrorist outfits continuing to threaten the projects of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a key part of the Belt and Road Initiative. The

CPEC projects are of strategic significance and will help Pakistan boost its economic growth, improve Pakistani people's livelihoods and promote green development.

As such, China and Pakistan should further strengthen counterterrorism and security cooperation. Schadenfreude is what anti-China forces feel when terrorists attack CPEC projects in Pakistan.

China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperative partners, and their "ironclad" friendship has stood the test of time. In a volatile and fast-changing world, a sound and stable China-Pakistan relationship is very important to maintain regional peace and promote prosperity. So the two sides have every reason to remain committed to advancing their all-round practical cooperation through joint projects while ensuring the security of those projects and the people working on them.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

## COMMENT



China and the World Roundtable | China's Tourism

**Editor's note:** As more and more foreign tourists are flocking to China recently, popular tourist attractions in the country are swarming with international tourists. Behind the increasing number of tourists are China's efforts in improving its visa-free policy and creating more favorable conditions to the needs of international travelers. Three experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

Mario Cavolo

## Visa-free policy boosts tourists' footfalls

The remarkable surge in the number of foreign visitors to China over the past months shows the Chinese government's 144-hour visa-free transit policy for nationals of 54 countries is a brilliant move for several reasons. The introduction of this policy as a friendly way of opening up the country to the outside world has not only increased overseas tourists' footfalls in China but also given foreigners a wonderful opportunity to experience the country's rich culture and history.

I excitedly tell friends visiting me in Shenyang, Liaoning province, about the many wonders to visit in and around the city, and other parts of Liaoning. Few foreigners realize how central this northeast region of China is to China's history. This is the land of origin of the last ruling dynasty, the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). The Revolution of 1911 brought an end to the Qing Dynasty and, along with it, about 2,000 years of imperial rule. The People's Republic of China was founded 38 years later, in 1949.

Besides the stunning countryside, some of the world's finest ice wine vineyards, and relics of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) are found in Northeast China.

Of course China's other regions and cities offer their own unique history and culture, and breathtaking landscapes and natural sceneries. These are but only a few wonders that foreign tourists can experience.

The 144-hour visa-free transit policy means that if you are making a stop in China while on way to another country or destination, and if you are a national of any of the 54 designated countries, you can avail of the policy at 37 ports across China, and stay in the country for up to six days without a visa. The policy covers major Chinese cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Chengdu, making it easier for tourists to explore a variety of "can't miss" tourist spots along the way.

One of the most compelling aspects of the policy is the spread of authentic stories about China through travelers' postings on social media platforms, including X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook, and even foreigners' accounts on Chinese social media platforms such as Bilibili, Douyin and Weibo.

From visiting the Great Wall to indulging in culinary adventures in bustling cities but also the countryside, these personal accounts have painted a vivid picture of the real China, which can be considered one of the greatest achievements of the policy. Travelers have praised the Chinese

people's hospitality, traditional Chinese culture, and modern infrastructure. These stories have resonated with audiences worldwide, giving lie to the anti-China propaganda circulating in Western media and society.

Despite the ridiculous accusations by some people that the tourists praising China and the Chinese people are "paid propagandists", the foreign travelers have continued to post wonderful stories about China on social media. Those critics and skeptics, too, should visit China to experience firsthand how incredibly safe Chinese cities are. And I'm sure, they too will be overwhelmed by the hospitality and amiability of the Chinese people.



The author is a non-resident senior fellow at the Center for China & Globalization.

When tourists share their experiences of other countries, they are rarely, if ever, accused of having ulterior motives. But if they share their experiences of China, they are branded "propagandists". Such double standard is reprehensible.

The reality is that the 144-hour visa-free transit policy has provided an opportunity for people across the world to hear the stories about China from foreign visitors via their posting on social media platforms.

As someone with a Chinese family and who has lived in China for 25 years, I feel proud when I see our foreign friends sharing the real story about China.

Yet traveling can be taxing and stressful, especially if you are visiting a country where the lan-

guage barrier could make communication difficult. So people visiting China, after they land at any of the 37 designated ports, should simply approach the dedicated visa-free transit counter at the ports, present your documents and explain that they are applying for the 144-hour visa-free transit.

China's visa-free entry policy is a masterpiece in international relations and an innovative and traveler-friendly way of boosting the tourism sector, as well as expanding people-to-people exchanges and improving mutual understanding.

Whether it's exploring ancient temples, countryside farms or villages, or enjoying world-class shopping in dream-like malls, visitors leave China with a deeper appreciation of the country's contributions to the global community.

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



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

Yang Jinsong

## Creative tourism trend of the future

The immensely popular Chinese video game *Black Myth: Wukong* has, of all things, helped boost domestic tourism because it features 36 ancient architectural sites in the country. Local tourism departments, inspired by the video game, have devised crossover projects to successfully attract an increasing number of tourists.

Thanks to the increase in Chinese people's disposable income, along with the advancement of technology, people's demands are becoming increasingly diversified along with the rapidly changing social trends. On its part, the tourism industry has been striving to meet tourists' demands, in order to realize its own high-quality development. An apt example of this is the decision of a number of local tourism departments to leverage the popularity of *Black Myth: Wukong* to boost local tourism.

China today is the world's biggest domestic tourism market, the largest source of international tourists and a major destination for foreign tourists. In 2023, China recorded 4.89 billion domestic passenger trips, marking a staggering 93.3 percent year-on-year increase.

Moreover, in 2023 domestic travelers spent more than 4.91 trillion yuan (\$691 billion), an increase of a staggering 140.3 percent year-on-year.

Also, China received 82.03 million inbound trips last year as it further opened up the economy to the outside world.

China's tourism sector has become a strategic pillar industry, contributing to the well-being of the people. Many local cultural and tourism departments are striving to blaze a trail in the high-quality development of the tourism sector, in order to promote their brand image and tourism-related products.

The "tourism plus" model has not only improved coordination among related industries and increased resource sharing but also intensified the competition among tourism destinations.

Some regions and cities have tapped the potential of history and culture using their own attractions to advantage. For example, Harbin, capital of Heilongjiang province, integrates the art of making ice and snow sculptures with music to create the annual Harbin International Ice and Snow Festival. Artists from around the world come to the city every win-



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ter to create the ice and snow sculptures, which attract a huge number of tourists. Harbin also holds many cultural events to meet the increasingly variegated demands of tourists to improve its international image.

The port city of Quanzhou in Fujian province, which was the starting point of the ancient Maritime Silk Road, holds a number of cultural events to bring to life history, and encourages young people to create history-related artworks to improve the city's attractiveness.

As for Chongqing, it has been using its picturesque mountains and urban attractions to develop an array of unique tourism products. The municipality's geographical features have become its promotional image on social media platforms, attracting a large number of young travelers.

Actually, the integration of cultural, creative products such as video games and movies with tourism is becoming increasingly appealing to the people. Such services and products provide new economic growth points, enrich tourists' experience and improve the brand image of tourist spots. For instance, elements of a video game have been added to an urban cultural route in Xi'an, Shaanxi province; they include a light and sound show based on the theme of the ancient city wall. Xi'an has also developed a series of

game-related cultural products to attract more young tourists.

Besides, Chengdu in Sichuan province cooperated with a game developer to create a role-playing mobile game, in which players can feed and clean virtual baby pandas, and get vital information on the treasured animals.

The demand for and supply of tourism-related services and products have been constantly changing thanks to the advancement of technology. Travelers, the tourism sector and administrative departments all are adapting to the rapid changes brought about by the development of advanced technology. Therefore, the tourism sector should seize the opportunities created by the advancement of technology and offer better services to tourists, so as to attract more tourists in the future.

In fact, local tourism departments have been keeping pace with the changing trends, promoting the development of the tourism industry with a more open and innovative attitude. Their efforts have helped create a vibrant pattern of cooperation and healthy competition in the tourism sector. As such, more crossover interactions can be expected in the future to provide special, customized services and products for tourists.

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

Song Rui

## Time-traveling via museums echoes sounds of history

Museums are echoes of history that transcend time — and space. They preserve invaluable historical, educational treasures, and a platform for connecting the past, present and the future. No wonder they have been attracting an increasing number of people of late, people who are eager to experience culture firsthand. To meet the diverse and customized needs of visitors, some new approaches, models and content have emerged, leading to a surge in "museum tourism".

The widespread application of digital technology has not only reduced the maintenance costs of cultural artifacts but also drastically reduced the geographical and material limitations of cultural resources, providing visitors with enriched experience. For example, the Silk Road Online Museum has brought together digital collections, exhibitions, knowledge and cloud curation, facilitating the sharing of resources among countries and institutions.

Technologies like naked-eye 3D and XR glasses are becoming primary entry points for interaction, in order to enrich museum visitors' experience. In July, the Shandong Art Museum held the "Infinite Sea" immersive AI digital art exhibition, the first marine-themed art exhibition in China, to adopt a new AI-generated content-user-generated content model, offering a multidimensional immersive experience.

Travel for young people is becoming increasingly personalized, as they prioritize not only the travel destination but also the purpose of the journey, making "why travel" more important than "where to travel". For instance, "dopamine travel" has gained in popularity, and concepts such as "brave people enjoy the world first", finding eye-catching exhibits in museums, collecting stamps, and capturing "life photos" show that emotional fulfillment is becoming a dominant factor in making travel decisions.

The recent success of *Black Myth: Wukong* has sparked a tourism craze, with visitors becoming the "chosen ones" and embarking on journeys through historical and cultural sites. The Datong Museum in Shanxi province has capitalized on this trend by blending modernity with nostalgia, and art with history, creating a unique cultural product series called "Buddha Companion", which merges the solemnity of ancient caves with the beauty of modern dolls.

Most museums rely on human and/or electronic guides. While human guides are engaging and dynamic, they can be costly. Electronic guides, on the other hand, lack excitement and the "human touch". Hence, some museums have begun experimenting with "digital-human" guides, who can provide map navigation, and introduce or explain the exhibits, guide visitors through history, assume the role of brand ambassadors, and blend the historical atmosphere with modern elements.

In July, Shanghai Museum introduced its first digital AI guide to tell the story behind every artifact with natural flair and fluid expression, even creating and performing live rap on the Egyptian civilization and antiquities to provide an immersive experience.

The digital-human guide is an innovative approach, to prompt the audience to shift from passive listening to active interaction, thus adding a high-tech touch to cultural exchanges.

"Red culture" in museums represents not just history but the spirit of the Communist Party of China as well. To help audiences understand the historical value of "red artifacts", museums are adopting "culture + technology" models, applying digital technology to invigorate "red resources" and advance the study of red culture.

For instance, this year the First National Congress of the Communist Party of China Memorial Hall launched the country's first LBE VR immersive red culture exhibition — the "Digital First National Congress of CPC: Journey of Original Aspiration". This exhibition breaks the barriers between the virtual and real worlds, transcending time and space, and creates a unique red immersive experience through exploration.

Museums act as windows to cultural exchanges, paving the way to better understanding of different countries, regions and ethnic groups. In 2023, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative, the Shanghai Museum held the "Immortal Jade Armor — Han Dynasty Cultural Relics Exhibition" in Hungary. The exhibition featured exquisite artifacts such as gold-threaded jade garments, the masks of northern and western tribes in ancient China and hollow bricks with a dragon pattern, presenting to global audiences the panorama of daily life during the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220).

Also, in April, the Prado Museum's "Ages of Splendor" exhibition, which opened in Shanghai, was aimed at promoting cultural exchanges between China and Spain while showcasing Spanish cultural tourism. These international exhibitions are not only visual feasts but also emotional journeys, telling the stories of cultural exchanges and interactions between the East and the West through the language of art.

By applying advanced technology and strengthening global collaboration, the museums are fast becoming dynamic platforms offering deeper, more interactive cultural experiences. By merging tradition with modernization, museums are not only preserving history but also shaping the future of cultural engagement. As China's global influence expands, its museums serve as vital cultural bridges, fostering better understanding and dialogue across borders, while ensuring the richness of Chinese civilization remains vibrant and accessible to all.

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



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# GLOBAL VIEWS

DING XIAOXING

## Security blanket

The SCO is a stabilizer for the region amid the ongoing global turbulence

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, an organization aimed at safeguarding regional development and security, faces both important opportunities and major challenges amid the stalling global economy and disorder in global governance.

There are primarily three opportunities for the SCO's further development.



First, the international situation is undergoing turmoil amid major changes, with intensifying competition among major countries and frequent regional conflicts. In such a turbulent world, the Shanghai Spirit upheld by the SCO — namely, mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for diversity of civilizations and pursuit of common development — is in line with the trend of the times and has been widely recognized and praised by the international community. With the world in turmoil, the Shanghai Spirit is all the more relevant.

Second, the SCO member countries have an increased need for maintaining regional security. Security challenges in the SCO region are increasing, with traditional and non-traditional security challenges intertwined. The SCO member states have an increased need for security cooperation to jointly safeguard regional security and resolve differences and disputes through dialogue.

Third, there is greater momentum for common development. In recent years, the combined impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, regional conflicts and global economic downturn have posed grave challenges to all countries, and there is a strong desire for common development.

The SCO region covers more than 40 percent of the world's population and one-fourth of the world economy. The region has abundant resources and huge potential for development, with the economies of the member states being highly complementary.

At the same time, Belt and Road

cooperation over the past more than 10 years has created new development opportunities for all SCO member countries. At present, across the SCO region, connectivity projects are booming, the construction of North-South and East-West transport corridors is accelerating, and the desire of all countries to bolster economic cooperation has grown.

But the SCO is faced with many challenges.

First, coordination within the SCO has become more difficult. The SCO currently has a three-tier cooperation structure consisting of 10 member states, two observer states and 14 dialogue partners, creating an SCO family of 26 countries. The more member states there are, the more difficult it is to coordinate within the SCO. In addition, the relations between some member states are fairly complicated. The principle of "making decisions based on consensus" must be upheld, which has to a certain extent undermined the efficiency of SCO cooperation. Thus, SCO institutional reforms have been put on the agenda.

Second, the risk of bloc confrontation has been on the rise. Particularly, in the wake of two major conflicts, the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the relations between three SCO member states, namely Russia, Iran and Belarus, and the West are in a serious state of confrontation,

with the three countries under a broad and unprecedented range of sanctions imposed by the West.

The US-led West has intensified efforts to suppress and contain China in recent years, and the long-term strategic competition between China and the US is bound to continue. However, unlike the military alliance during the Cold War, the SCO is an open and cooperative international organization that does not target any third party. The SCO does not seek confrontation with the West and it wants to avoid getting involved in bloc confrontation.

Third, multilateral economic cooperation under the SCO framework remains a daunting task. When the organization was created, the primary objective was to maintain security. Despite the member

states' growing desire to bolster economic cooperation, multilateral economic cooperation is very difficult and economic cooperation outcomes over the years have been less than satisfactory.

Finally, the security challenges are increasingly complex. The economic difficulties faced by some countries, coupled with the fact that terrorism is increasingly difficult to prevent because of the internet, mean that the fight against terrorism has become more complicated. In addition to the Afghan issue, the security challenges facing the SCO region remain serious.

To promote the further development of the SCO, the role of the SCO should be more clearly defined.

Over the past 20 years, the SCO's role and functions have undergone

several changes. First, the organization enhanced military mutual trust in the border areas. Later, the SCO member states strengthened security cooperation to combat the "three evil forces" of terrorism, extremism and separatism, and gradually expanded cooperation to economic and cultural fields. To date, security, economy, culture and foreign exchanges have become the four major areas of SCO cooperation.

In light of the new international situation, the SCO should hold high the banner of the Shanghai Spirit, practice multilateralism, and build an SCO community with a shared future. It should seek to promote security, economic and cultural collaboration in the SCO region. It should implement the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative proposed by China. The organization should strive to safeguard security and development of the surrounding areas of the Eurasian continent with Central Asia as the core, and safeguard world peace and stability at large.

The SCO should also promote the expansion of its membership process in an orderly manner. The SCO currently has 10 member countries. Mongolia has been hesitant to become a full member, but if Mongolia has a desire to become a full member, the SCO can consider

accepting it. Some SCO dialogue partners are willing to be promoted to observer nations, in preparation for joining the SCO. As the number of SCO member states grows, coordination within the SCO has become more and more difficult. An expulsion mechanism should be considered for those member states that clearly violate the Shanghai Spirit and do not abide by the SCO charter.

Institutional reforms are needed to improve the SCO's efficiency. When serving as the rotating chair, China should prompt the SCO to speed up institutional reforms. The efficiency of the counterterrorism agencies needs to be improved as well, and SCO cooperation should continue to focus on security, which has been and should always be the top priority of SCO cooperation.

In the economic field, it is imperative to prioritize the formulation of rules. Project cooperation should be carried out on the premise that it is on an equal and voluntary basis. Small-scale multilateral cooperation should be promoted to advance projects that not all member states agree on or participate in. For example, other SCO member countries should also be encouraged to participate in the construction of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway, an important strategic project for the future.

Last, cultural exchanges should be promoted under the SCO framework. The other members should sign mutual visa-free agreements with China or extend a unilateral visa-free policy, and advance cooperation in tourism and education, especially in sports and culture. Since Russia, Belarus and Iran are all under sanctions and cannot participate in some important international events, the other SCO member states should extend their support to Russia and Belarus hosting international sporting events.

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SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

B. R. DEEPAK

## Pillar of dialogues

People-to-people exchanges key to building a community with a shared future for mankind

The United States rolled out its "Pivot to Asia" strategy in 2011. The pivot in its second phase, from 2015 onwards, strengthened the alliances between the US and Japan and between the US and the Republic of Korea, and implemented the deployment of 60 percent of the US naval fleet in the Asia-Pacific. The Donald Trump administration which designated China as a "strategic competitor" renamed the "Pivot to Asia" as the "Indo-Pacific" strategy in various documents issued since 2017. China has been positioned as a "revisionist power" seeking to displace the US in the "Indo-Pacific" region and to shape a world antithetical to US values and interests.



The US has also aggressively promoted its regional groupings such as the Quad and AUKUS, Blue Dot Network, and the "Indo-Pacific" Economic Framework for Prosperity with the aim of curtailing China's global influence. The "strategic competition" now extends to the Taiwan question and the South China Sea, cyber security, trade and technology, as well as ideology, and interference in China's internal affairs such as issues related to human rights.

China has responded to the US challenge in a constructive and non-confrontational manner by offering an array of global public goods under the overarching framework of building a community with a shared future for mankind and the provision of cooperative platforms such as the Belt and Road Initiative, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Silk

**People-to-people exchanges are the pillar of all the dialogues between civilizations. Were it not for the scholar-monks from India and China, we would not have had Chinese Buddhism, not to mention the entire repository of Buddhist literature in East Asia.**

Road Fund and BRICS New Development Bank, and its own opening-up initiatives in the form of the Hainan Free Trade Port, Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, China International Import Expo, and a series of free trade agreements with its global partners.

In the so-called Lost Decade of the US, China gradually built the larger framework of its foreign policy around the two pillars of building a community with a shared future for mankind and a new type of international relations. The former is rooted in the Chinese traditional philosophy of the "World is one Family", synonymous with India's *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. The concept upholds that since the interests, aspirations and destinies of peoples are intertwined, therefore, challenges are common and require common solutions. It envis-

ages a world of lasting peace, universal security, common prosperity, openness and inclusiveness, and ecological beauty.

It is also owing to the paradigm of the "World is one Family" that the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation can be integrated with the dreams of other nations, especially the developing countries that wish to turn around their destinies.

The latter takes a new approach to developing state-to-state relations with major powers and developing countries based on mutual respect, fairness, justice and win-win cooperation. China has proposed the Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative and Global Civilization Initiative as the means to forge a new type of international relations that can pave the way for a community with a shared future for mankind.

The GDI aims to facilitate the United Nations to achieve its 2030 sustainable development goals such as poverty alleviation, food security, financing for development, climate change, green development, industrialization, digital economy and connectivity. The GSI, which castigates the Cold War mentality, formation of blocs, small cliques and the zero-sum mindset, calls for common security as security is the prerequisite for development. China, on its part, pledges not to seek hegemony and fosters a new vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security.

As regards the GCI, China has put forth "four advocacies" that largely explain the concept — respect for the diversity of civilizations, the common values of humanity, the importance of inheritance and innovation of civilizations, and robust international



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. All these initiatives complement each other and uphold the principles of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness among civilizations. The four advocacies of the GCI uphold the principles of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness among civilizations, and refrain from imposing particular values or models on others.

From the "inheritance and innovation of civilizations" perspective, the history of mankind is interconnected by way of the circulatory movement of ideas, people, technologies and commodities. This is also a pointer to the fact that cul-

tures evolve continuously, and the process of fusion is uniquely complex — there is exchange, confluence, assimilation, resistance, absorption and rejection too. It is this process that creates wonderful cultures and civilizations, as both India and China have witnessed it for centuries. Contrary to Huntington's thesis of a "clash of civilizations", it is about dialogue among civilizations not about creating divisions, confrontations, and conflicts.

People-to-people exchanges are the pillar of all the dialogues between civilizations. Were it not for the scholar-monks from India and China, we would not have had

Chinese Buddhism, not to mention the entire repository of Buddhist literature in East Asia. In the present context, when relations among countries are frayed, countries must ensure there are robust people-to-people exchanges. And there is huge potential to strengthen and broaden their scope.

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## LIFE

As the stage lights dim, a soft, ethereal melody fills the air, setting the atmosphere for the evening. The audience, nestled in the plush seats of the grand theater, feels an unspoken anticipation. They are about to witness a tale that had transcended centuries, a Chinese dance drama, *A Dream of Red Mansions*, that encapsulated the intricate tapestry of love and loss.

The dance drama, commissioned by the Jiangsu Centre for the Performing Arts, made its debut at the Esplanade — Theatres on the Bay in Singapore last month, attracting an audience of about 7,000, as it started its first tour outside China.

At the center of the stage, a large silk curtain hung, shimmering like a portal to another world. As it slowly drew back, the scene unfolded: a meticulously crafted presentation of the Jia family, adorned with traditional Chinese architecture, immersing the audience in the grandeur of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). Jia Baoyu, the leading character, clad in red, appeared onstage, and the fates of the "12 beauties" began to unravel.

*A Dream of Red Mansions*, written by Cao Xueqin of the Qing Dynasty, one of the four ancient Chinese literature classics, has been a constant inspiration for artists. It has been adapted into various art forms, such as TV dramas, movies and traditional Chinese operas.

Premiering in 2021, the dance drama, directed and choreographed by Li Xing and Li Chao, has gained wide popularity and has been staged nationwide for more than 250 shows.

"As a pinnacle of Chinese classical literature, *A Dream of Red Mansions* carries rich historical, cultural and artistic value. We want to present this classic work on the international stage through the form of a dance drama, allowing more people to understand the profound depth of traditional Chinese culture and better promote cultural exchanges between China and Singapore, acting as a cultural bridge," says Liao Yi, general manager of the Jiangsu Centre for the Performing Arts.

"The theater was filled to capacity, and throughout the performance, the audience was deeply captivated by the stunning displays, erupting in enthusiastic applause at times. They seemed to be transported into Cao's text, experiencing the joys and sorrows of the characters alongside them," he adds.

The entire dance drama reflects on the life journeys of the "12 beauties", a term referring to the 12 pretty women portrayed in the novel, including Lin Daiyu, a beautiful and sentimental woman, through the eyes of Jia, a rebellious and pampered young man. When Lin and Jia fall in love with each other, they have to face the fact that the family prefers Xue Baochai, one of Jia's cousins, to be his future wife. Jia and Lin are destined by fate to be apart.

The organizers of the dance drama's shows in Singapore had also arranged an exhibition, *Into the Dream: Exploring the Beauty of A Dream of Red Mansions*, outside the theater, featuring the plot and cast introductions. Moreover, various costumes and exquisite products related to the drama attracted many attendees, who paused to take photos.

"Every moment of the entire performance is gripping. This is truly a feast for the eyes and ears," exclaimed Low Eng Teong, Chief Executive Officer of the National Arts Council, Singapore, who highly praised the show. "The unique interpretation of this drama, combining dance, music, and the design of the stage, lighting, and costumes, vividly showcases the

# Tapestry of longing and love transcends borders

Chinese classic, *A Dream of Red Mansions*, staged in Singapore as more foreign destinations beckon, **Chen Nan** reports.



**Clockwise from top:** Dancers of the Jiangsu Centre for the Performing Arts thank the audience after staging *A Dream of Red Mansions* last month in Singapore. A scene featuring the "12 beauties" in the drama. Performers greet the audience amid a flowery setting. Audience members at a related exhibition before the show. Another scene from the drama. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

essence of the novel."

According to Liao, there's a significant Chinese community in Singapore, and "many audience members were familiar with the novel and their expectations for this classic were met by the production."

Before the performances, the creative team had meetings with the audience, and one young woman impressed them, Liao says. "She recited an excerpt from the novel and told us that she has read the novel more than 30 times," he recalls.

The shows in Singapore were said to be a vivid representation of the results of cultural exchanges between China and Singapore. With more shows to be staged abroad, Liao says, he believes that it will further strengthen the cultural ties and enhance mutual understanding.

The company is making plans for the dance drama's tour abroad, and next year, it will be staged in Japan, the United States and Europe, he adds.

The idea of creating the dance drama started in 2019 and the company launched its own dancing team for the production. What makes the dance drama successful is the young creative team, who transformed the original text into a great expression on stage, according to Liao.

In the dance drama, Li Xing and Li Chao highlighted the number 12, from the 12 beauties, 12 bouquets of flowers, to 12 high-back chairs and 12 colors. They also created the 12 dance pieces with each having its own titles, which are independent of one another, but can be pieced together.

The dance progressed through various scenes from the characters' lives in the Jia family's mansion, such as the fleeting moments of joy at the garden, the pain of misunderstandings, and the sorrow of impending separation.

The audience was captivated as the 12 young women danced in harmony, their movements flowing together like a river, each expressing their unique stories of love, ambition and sacrifice.

The stage scenery, designed and inspired by the idea of mutualism of blankness and fullness, in traditional Chinese ink paintings, with China-featured classical symbols used in multiple locations, boasts an artful combination of the curtain, folding screen, tables, chairs and lights, making it possible to create a space for imagination.

"We presented contrasts in this dance drama, in terms of time and space, the comparison between women from over 200 years ago and modern women, and the parallels between the 12 beauties and flowers, all helping us transition from literary qualities to theatrical expressions," says Li Xing.

"It was the first time that we brought our own creation to perform overseas, which is important for us as young artists," says Li Chao, who has performed with Li Xing as dancers in Singapore. "In our creative process, we don't want to keep our aesthetics confined; we should be open, vibrant and raw. Besides the exquisite details, we wanted to touch on human experiences and the destinies behind those individuals in the novel."

After shows in Singapore, the dance drama was staged in more Chinese cities, including Shenyang, northeastern Liaoning province, and Hohhot, capital of North China's Inner Mongolia autonomous region. The dance drama is being staged at Beijing's Tianqiao Performing Arts Center until Sunday.

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## Sign language speaks volumes, conveying care in Hong Kong

HONG KONG — "Hello! My name is Wanzly. I'm a cat lover," sign language interpreter Wanzly Lo says, placing three fingers horizontally on her face when introducing herself.

This hand gesture represents cat whiskers and the "W" in Wanzly, forming Lo's name in sign language.

Lo, Sign Language Officer of the Hong Kong Society for the Deaf, participated in teaching the public to create their own names in sign language during an activity to promote the communication method late last month.

Sign language interpreters of the Hong Kong Society for the Deaf not only convey word meanings accurately but also capture the essence of the messages to increase "readability".

This April, Lo and one of her colleagues were invited to serve as sign

language interpreters at the Hong Kong Film Awards.

This was Lo's first time interpreting sign language for an entertainment-oriented live broadcast program. She strived for excellence despite feeling the pressure.

"Film is an art. When interpreting, it's not just about rigidly conveying information to the audience but also expressing the emotions," Lo says.

When handling singing performances and touching speeches, she would exaggerate her facial expressions to make the deaf audience more engaged.

Nearly 10 years ago, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government and the Legislative Council began introducing instant sign language interpretation for important meetings, with the Hong Kong Society for the Deaf

playing a pioneering role.

Sign language interpretation is challenging, especially in live programs, which require quick responses and rapid delivery. Interpreters must pay attention to various information in their daily lives.

Lo emphasized that whether translating text or interpreting sign language, one must possess a broad knowledge base to do the job well.

To date, there are nine full-time sign language interpreters in the society and their schedules are always packed.

Demand for sign language interpretation services in Hong Kong is quite high. Between 2023 and 2024, the society provided over 82,000 sign language interpretation services.

According to the "List of Sign Language Interpreters in Hong Kong"

set up by local welfare organizations, there are currently more than 50 sign language interpreters in the special administrative region who meet the basic requirements.

Timmy Chan, head of the Sign Language Center of the Hong Kong Society for the Deaf, says that although people with hearing impairments can communicate through writing or mobile phone messaging apps, face-to-face sign language remains the ideal method for them.

"Sign language interpreters are an important bridge between the hearing impaired and the outside world," Chan says, hoping that more people will join the ranks of sign language interpretation so that those with hearing disabilities can benefit.



Timmy Chan (right), head of the Sign Language Center of the Hong Kong Society for the Deaf, uses sign language to communicate with Wanzly Lo (left), Sign Language Officer of the society, in Hong Kong. ZHU WEI / XINHUA

XINHUA

## LIFE



# Music festival harmonizes past and present

National orchestra concerts highlight classical pieces from East and West, bringing together world renowned musicians, **Chen Nan** reports.

Under the baton of Tan Dun, cellist Wang Jian and violinist Lu Wei play Mozart's *Symphonie Concertante in E-flat Major, K 364*, during the opening concert of the 27th Beijing Music Festival held at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing on Saturday. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The Beijing Music Festival opened on Saturday with a stunning fusion of the East and the West. As dusk settled over the capital city, the National Centre for the Performing Arts concert hall glowed against the cool autumn evening, inviting the audience into a world where music and nature seemed to harmonize.

The China National Symphony Orchestra and composer-conductor Tan Dun opened the concert with the Golden Bell Chimes (*bianzhong*) of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), a remarkable artifact housed at the Palace Museum in Beijing.

The opening piece *Ancient Bells of Peking's Central Axis* is composed by Tan and features *pipa* (four-stringed Chinese lute) player Zhao Cong.

The music piece was inspired by Beijing's Central Axis — the 7.8-kilometer north-south line through the capital's historical center, inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List on July 27.

As Zhao's fingers move across the strings of the *pipa*, the instrument's ancient timbre felt as timeless as the city itself, invoking images of iconic buildings from the past, such as the Forbidden City, China's imperial palace from 1420 to 1911, now known as the Palace Museum, Jingshan Park and the Bell and Drum Towers, blending seamlessly with the contemporary orchestral sounds behind her.

An old friend of the Beijing Music Festival, the annual classical music event launched in 1998 by maestro Yu Long, Tan made his

debut at the festival in 2001, performing his Oscar-winning music piece *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, a film score Tan composed for director Ang Lee's 2001 film of the same name.

"I have performed at the festival many times and every time it feels like a reunion with old friends," says Tan a day before the concert in Beijing. "Music is like a flowing river; a continuous, ever-evolving force that transcends time. Just as a river never stops moving, music flows from generation to generation, carrying the contributions of countless musicians across eras."

"The Beijing Music Festival, over nearly 30 years, carries stories, emotions and historical contexts, acting as a bridge between the past and the present, the East and the West. Many great musicians from around the world perform during the festival. Just like a river connecting different lands and people, the festival connects generations of cultures," Tan says.

During the first half of the concert, Tan also led the China National Symphony Orchestra to perform his music piece *Passacaglia: Secret of Wind and Birds*, during which the orchestra members held up their phones to play the recordings of birds chirping to traditional Chinese instruments.

Young Chinese *suona* player Liu Wenwen, a first-time performer at the Beijing festival, shared the stage with the orchestra and Tan, performing the famous *suona* piece *Hundreds of Birds Paying Homage to Phoenix*. As the nation's first student in a doctoral



Music is like a flowing river; a continuous, ever-evolving force that transcends time."

Tan Dun,  
composer and conductor

program for the *suona* at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, Liu, a 13th-generation *suona* player, is also one of the most active young players in China.

"We had many discussions about programs for the opening concert for this year's Beijing Music Festival. Thanks to Tan, we presented Chinese music works during the first half of the concert and Western music pieces in the second half, bringing a sonic journey that bridges Chinese heritage with Western traditions," says Zou Shuang, artistic director of the Beijing festival, from Oct 5 to 13, with nine concerts by international musicians.

One of the highlights during the second half of the concert was cellist Wang Jian and violinist Lu Wei playing Mozart's *Symphonie Concertante in E-flat Major, K 364* under Tan's baton.

Composed in 1779, the piece, one of

Mozart's most famous works written specifically for the violin, the viola and the orchestra, is played in three movements, showcasing the interplay between the violin and viola supported by a full orchestra.

"If a cellist were to attempt to play the viola part, there would be both technical and musical challenges. The highly skilled cellist Wang Jian did a great job," says Yu, an old friend of Wang who first invited the cellist to perform at the Beijing Music Festival in 1999.

"How hard is it for the cellist to interpret the viola part? Just imagine star tennis player Zheng Qinwen playing ping-pong using a tennis racket and winning," adds Yu.

"The viola's range sits higher than a cello, which can be physically demanding and requires mastery of the thumb position and fluent shifting. Mozart's style calls for light, delicate articulation, especially in the interplay between the violin and viola," he says. "The cellist would need to overcome challenges in range, articulation, tone production, and ensemble balance to maintain the integrity of Mozart's delicate and intricate writing."

Considered a child prodigy, Wang was enrolled in the primary school affiliated to the Shanghai Conservatory of Music at 9.

In 1979, celebrated violinist Isaac Stern made a historic visit to China with a documentary crew. In 1981, the documentary about Stern's visit titled *From Mao to Mozart: Isaac Stern in China* was released, winning an Oscar for Best Documentary.

Wang became known internationally as the child prodigy in the film who played the cello with seriousness.

In 1985, Wang entered the Yale School of Music. The following year, he made his debut at Carnegie Hall. Since then, he has embarked on an international career.

"When I first performed at the Beijing Music Festival in 1999, I had lived and toured abroad for decades. The festival's atmosphere created an intimate connection between the performers and the audience, which impressed me and allowed me to frequently return to my home country," says Wang, 56. "The festival has made great contributions to the country's booming classical music scene."

Tan says he will embark on a trip to France with the China National Symphony Orchestra from Wednesday to Oct 15, performing in Toulouse, Aix-en-Provence and Paris to celebrate the 60th anniversary of China-France diplomatic relations.

They will bring the same programs as the Beijing concert, which also include French composer Maurice Ravel's famous *Bolero* and Russian composer Igor Stravinsky's *The Firebird*.

"The concert celebrates musical diversity and cultural fusion. It is a powerful reminder of music's ability to transcend boundaries, inspiring us for the upcoming performances in France," says Tan.

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Left: The China National Symphony Orchestra and composer-conductor Tan Dun at the concert in Beijing on Saturday. Right: (From left) Maestro Yu Long, violinist Lu Wei, cellist Wang Jian, Zou Shuang, the artistic director of the Beijing Music Festival, Tan, Zhou Yu, the Party Secretary of the orchestra, *pipa* player Zhao Cong and *suona* player Liu Wenwen at a news conference.



## Bittersweet elixir: TCM meets modern milk tea

CHONGQING — The adage "good medicine tastes bitter" may no longer hold in the country where it was born and believed.

Xi Linjie, a 20-year-old college student, sought help for fatigue at a traditional Chinese medicine hospital in Southwest China's Chongqing municipality and was pleasantly surprised by a cup of sweet milk tea.

"The milk tea is infused with TCM ingredients such as tapioca and dried tangerine peel, yet it tastes delightful. It's less sweet than regular milk tea and has a subtle herbal fragrance," she says. "Most importantly, it's beneficial to health."

This innovative milk tea is crafted by the

nutrition department of Chongqing Jiangbei Hospital of TCM. Since 2023, the hospital has blended TCM processing techniques with contemporary food production to attract a younger demographic.

"Milk tea is a favorite among young people. We hope it can act as a bridge for them to gain more knowledge about TCM and gradually accept it," says Liao Changying, director of the hospital's nutrition department. She notes that almost everyone who tried the milk tea shared the special experience with their family and friends.

The hospital has employed various modern technologies to maximize the efficacy of TCM while improving the taste. For

instance, to reduce astringency, pharmacists substitute rose petals with rose essential oil; to optimize the effect and flavor of ginseng, they utilize ultrafine grinding and fluid extraction technologies.

The hospital also innovates by incorporating TCM into candies, cakes and canned products.

"Behind the TCM milk tea are numerous experiments and optimizations. It represents the integration of TCM, modern medicine, nutrition and more. Our goal is to help people prevent and manage diseases while enjoying delicious food and drinks," Liao explains.

The TCM milk tea exemplifies how tra-

ditional medicine is appealing to the younger generation in a relatable and approachable manner. Nowadays, one doesn't even need to visit a hospital to experience TCM in China.

In Chongqing's Wansheng economic development zone, a TCM night market is held every weekend. Several TCM practitioners offer pulse readings at roadside stalls.

"At these diverse stalls, we can enjoy free diagnoses and acupuncture and purchase TCM sachets and beverages," says Yang Jian, a 24-year-old resident. "I never realized TCM could be so close to our daily lives."

Professor Wang Huiwu from the Second

Affiliated Hospital of Chongqing Medical University, who attended the night market, is pleased to see many young visitors seeking professional health advice on physical conditioning.

"Over half of the visitors are young people interested in health consultations for body conditioning, which indicates that the younger generation has confidence in TCM," Wang says.

He also suggested that more efforts should be made to integrate TCM with other fields that interest young people, adding, "TCM is becoming a new trend among the youth."

XINHUA

## LIFE



Zhu Siwei repairs wheelchairs during the recent Paris Paralympics. It's his third stint as a technician at the Games. PHOTOS BY WANG PENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## 'Wheelchair doctor' offers a sporting chance

Expertise and knowledge acquired over years keep the Paralympians going in the arena, **Li Yingxue** reports.

If a wheelchair malfunctions, it's like a body catching a cold. For Zhu Siwei, a "wheelchair doctor", diagnosing these issues has become second nature. Using techniques — observation, listening, questioning, and examination — he's spent the past decade honing his craft, fixing wheelchairs one by one.

At 33, Zhu brought his expertise to the world stage this summer at the Paris Paralympics, where he worked in the repair centers at both the Paralympic Village and competition venues.

His role was crucial. Much like the medical care provided to athletes, wheelchair repair is an essential part of Paralympic support, ensuring athletes can compete and live comfortably. As part of a technical team, Zhu offered free repairs to athletes and officials from around the globe, keeping their equipment in top shape.

"Every day is different," Zhu says. "Sometimes it's a simple issue, like a loose screw or a rusted part, but other times it requires a detailed examination to figure out what's wrong. Some repairs take half an hour; others can stretch to two or three hours."

The smallest issues can have a major impact. "On the field, athletes rely on their devices to compete. Off the field, these devices help them live comfortably and move freely in the Paralympic Village," Zhu says.

At the assistive device repair center in the Paralympic Village, Zhu spent most of his time working. All the technicians there were invited by Ottobock, an international medical technology company.

According to Jennifer Duke, a staff member of Ottobock who worked at the front desk of the repair center, there were about 180 technicians from across the globe including China, Canada, France, and the Netherlands. "They work in early and late shifts at the Paralympic Village and the competition venues," she explains.

During the Paris Paralympics, the team of prosthetists, orthotists, wheelchair specialists, and other technicians completed around 2,700 repairs — a higher demand than ever before at the Paralympics. About 55 percent of those repairs were on wheelchairs.

In addition to wheelchair repairs, athletes and officials with disabilities could also have their



Zhu (center) and a colleague with an athlete during the Paris Paralympics. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

prostheses and other assistive devices fixed. They would first visit the front desk to describe their needs, and the staff would assign a technician accordingly.

During the Paralympics, he recalls fixing a wheelchair for a Ukrainian athlete. "It wasn't a major problem," Zhu says. "When he sat down, the side panel would brush against the wheel, making it uncomfortable to use."

Zhu's fix was straightforward: He added spacers to the inside of the wheel, pushing it slightly outward so it no longer rubbed against the panel. He and the athlete went through several rounds of adjustments to find the perfect balance.

Athletes typically wait in a nearby lounge while Zhu works, then test their wheelchairs once he's done. If further tweaks are needed, Zhu does them on the spot.

"Some athletes have their own ideas about how their wheelchairs should be fine-tuned, and some have even customized them in ways that don't follow standard

manufacturing practices," Zhu explains. "These cases are more challenging because I need to figure out the logic behind their modifications and make adjustments that align with their thinking."

Zhu describes how each technician on the team brings their own expertise — some specialize in sewing, others in welding. Some focus on wheelchairs, while others repair prostheses.

"Many of the technicians from other countries have years of experience and a deep understanding of wheelchair repair," Zhu says. "It's a rare and valuable opportunity to work alongside them."

In the Paralympic Village, Zhu sometimes found himself going beyond his official duties. When a motorized suitcase that an athlete was using for mobility wouldn't charge, even though it wasn't his responsibility, Zhu stepped in to help solve the problem.

He could sense the athletes' appreciation after fixing their wheelchairs, their gratitude unmistakable in their eyes. Some

even gave him pins as mementos, tokens of thanks for his help.

At this year's Paris Paralympics, Zhu's work extended beyond the Paralympic Village. He provided on-site support at the table tennis and wheelchair tennis venues, marking his third stint as a technician at the Games — and his first at a Summer Paralympics.

Zhu's journey began in 2018, when he was selected as one of two Chinese technicians for wheelchair maintenance at the Pyeongchang Winter Paralympics. He returned for the 2022 Beijing Winter Paralympics, and by the time Paris rolled around, his expertise earned him an invitation to join the technician team once again.

"The Summer Paralympics are busier, with more events and athletes, and a greater variety of wheelchairs," Zhu says. He explains that wheelchairs differ depending on the sport, requiring specific repairs based on how they're used.

"For example, wheelchair basketball is intense, so there's a lot of

wear and tear from collisions. On the other hand, some swimmers' wheelchairs take more damage from constant exposure to pool-side conditions," Zhu says.

When working on the battered wheelchairs of basketball players, Zhu could feel the intensity of the competition, with every dent and scrape telling a story of the physicality on the court.

### Helping more

After graduation, Zhu, a mechanical engineering major, found himself at a crossroads in his career. While many of his classmates pursued traditional paths in the mechanical industry, he chose a different route: dedicating his expertise to serving individuals with disabilities.

"When I selected this profession, I saw it as an opportunity to enhance the lives of people with disabilities," he says. "Witnessing their resilience, especially among para athletes, inspires me. It's an honor to assist them both in their daily lives and in competitions."

With a decade of experience in wheelchair repair, Zhu has observed the continual evolution of the equipment used by disabled individuals. "Initially, most wheelchairs were made of aluminum. Now, many are crafted from carbon fiber, which offers a lighter alternative but is more prone to wear and tear," he explains.

"The latest designs emphasize user-friendliness and comfort, aligning closely with human biomechanics," Zhu adds. "As technology advances, the design of wheelchairs will only get better."

As the wheelchairs change, Zhu recognizes the importance of improving his repair skills alongside them. "The key to effective repair lies in experience. It's crucial to grasp how these devices operate, identify issues, and devise solutions. Adaptability is vital, as is listening to the needs of the users," he says.

Wang Tiegang, Zhu's colleague at the repair center during the Paris Paralympics, has dedicated 22 years to wheelchair welding and has also witnessed firsthand the advancements in equipment for people with disabilities.

"We're gradually moving toward high-tech solutions," Wang says. "This year, we've integrated 3D printing technology on-site, and new wheelchairs are becoming lighter. The demands on welding techniques are also growing, so we're committed to ongoing learning."

This year, Zhu has taken on a new initiative aimed at empowering individuals with disabilities by training them to repair their own wheelchairs and fostering a sense of community support.

"When a wheelchair breaks down, it's often much more challenging for someone with a disability to go out and find a repair shop compared to able-bodied individuals. They also tend to have their own circles," Zhu explains. "We aim to teach them simple repair techniques, enabling them to assist one another with basic fixes."

He shares that this project, which began as a pilot program in Beijing this year, has already completed two training sessions. The participants have begun providing volunteer repair services in their communities, fostering both independence and collaboration among those they serve.

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## Articulating and debating the view of 'good' art

Wanting to travel to Datong in northern Shanxi province for the Mid-Autumn Festival earlier last month, I made the mistake of booking it late and so, with millions of others traveling to visit family and friends, I barely managed to get a train ticket leaving Beijing on the Sunday evening before the festival.



**Padraig Maxwell**  
Second Thoughts

I hadn't planned on going anywhere but when a friend gave me a mooncake from Yunnan province, I decided that a festival that produces cakes this good deserves to be celebrated. I looked at a map of China and spotted Datong — one of the "nine ancient capitals of China", a city with a history of conquest and creativity stretching back more than 2,000 years, reputedly visited by Marco Polo.

Colorful gift boxes cluttered the walkways, seats and overhead shelves of the train as people settled in for the journey. I could see the landscape and the weather change as we rolled by fields of solar panels, cliff faces and hills and, eventually, wind farms. By the time we got to Datong station, there was a drizzle in the air that gave the impression it hadn't been dry here for a number of centuries. The place was cool and dank and I immediately loved it.

On Sunday night, I wandered about the old town, stepping into the vast reconstructed city walls, feeling like I would get lost for weeks inside them. I finally stepped out of the dark to the sight of kids being carried home by the hand, in arms or on shoulders.

On the train to Datong, I read about the Yungang Grottoes, a 1-kilometer-long stretch of 51,000 Buddha carvings ranging from 2

centimeters to 17 meters in height. It is estimated that up to 40,000 craftsmen worked on the rock carvings over centuries, bringing touches of Central Asian, Indian, Greek and Persian culture to mingle with indigenous art forms.

When I went to see them the next day, I felt as I often do when I'm in the presence of art like that, grasping for a reference point — you know what you're looking at is "good" but you seem incapable of comprehending why it's good.

On the way back from the caves, I shared a taxi with a father and son from Guangzhou, Guangdong province, who'd come north for a holiday. Haoyang, the son, was in his early 30s and spoke good English. I asked him what he had thought of the grottoes, "One Buddha, two Buddhas, three Buddhas... Once you've seen four Buddha statues, you've seen them all," was his considered view.

I laughed, not wanting to agree, but unable to find adequate words for a debate. There was what must have been awe rising from the pit of my stomach when I first saw the great outdoor Buddha, but what I was looking for were technical, rigorous words, not feelings.

On his phone, Haoyang showed me a photo of a 2,500-year-old wine goblet in Beijing's Palace Museum, or Forbidden City, which he'd visited the day before.

"Now, that's impressive," he said. It was. Some young men must have grown old crafting the intricate dragon forms that sprouted from each corner atop the now-green copper goblet.

"Impressive," I agreed, nodding and feeling impressed, but again lacking words beyond parroting Haoyang's.

And so we moved on to food. "The food is better in Guangzhou," my

new mate said, and I thought of my Datong lunch, which was also impressive; but unsure of what I'd eaten, I couldn't counter, and asked him whether the cuisine in his hometown was very spicy.

He talked of food as concern gradually rose in his face. We were on the wrong side of the road and had been for a couple of minutes. It was rush hour and oncoming cars made some serious noise as they approached our taxi. Our driver sounded his horn in return and remained in the lane he had claimed. Haoyang asked him what he was doing, and the driver said something to soothe his nerves while facing down the next oncoming car.

As a former taxi driver, I could only admire the man's self-assurance. Instinctively, I trusted him and, anyway, I was relieved to be off the subject of trying to adequately debate art. But when I exited the car

and said goodbye to a relieved Haoyang and his father, I realized I was still frustrated.

My frustration rose as I walked through crowds of moon harvest revelers on Daxi Street, but eventually Bertolt Brecht came to my rescue. *A Worker Reads History* — that's what I needed.

I looked for it on my phone later that night and thought of those 40,000 craftsmen, plus the two or three who may have worked on the goblet, as I read, "The books are filled with names of kings."

"Was it the kings who hauled the craggy blocks of stone? In which of Lima's houses, that city glittering with gold, lived those who built it?"

"In the evening when the Chinese wall was finished, where did the masons go?"

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