

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

## CHINA WATCH

CHINA DAILY 中国日报

## RANCHES AT SEA

PIONEERS COMBINE FISH AND WIND IN NEW INDUSTRY SOCIETY, PAGE 2

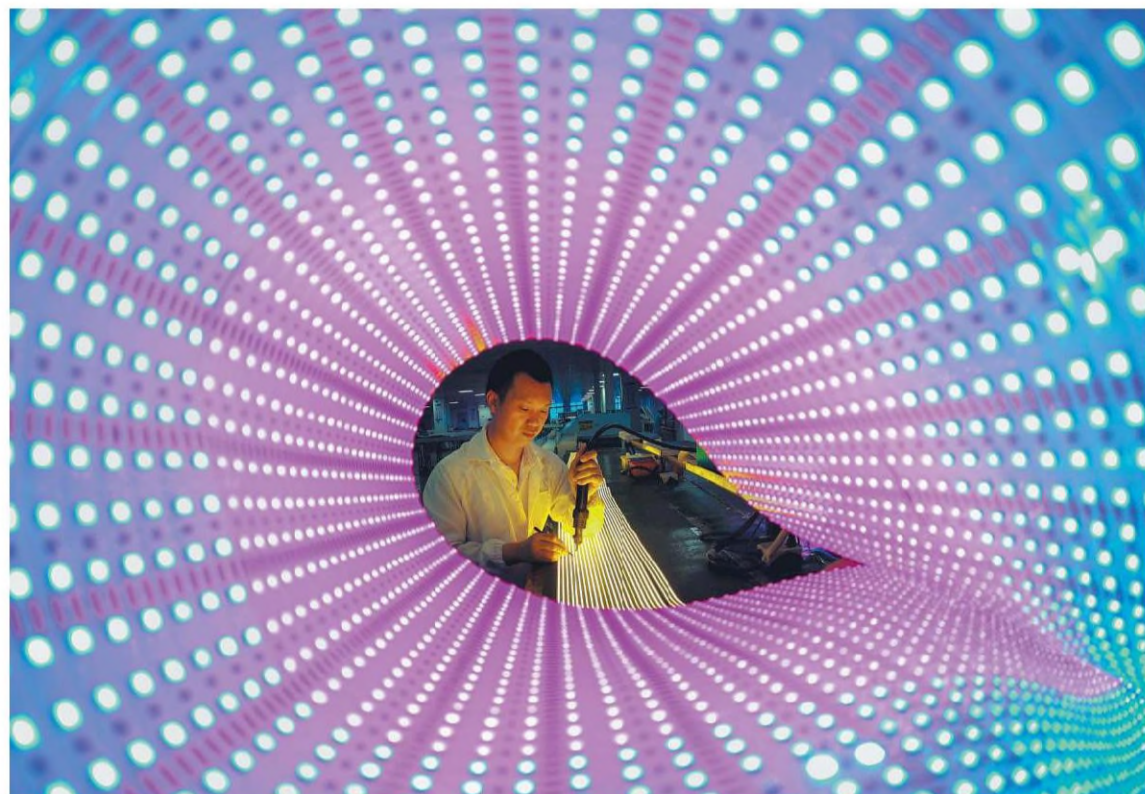


## JASMINE SISTERS

PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP SYMBOLIZED BY TEA CITY DANCE, PAGE 4



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An employee tests LED lights at a technology company in Ruichang, Jiangxi province. WEI DONGSHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Tigers fought fiercely for friends in time of need

The granddaughter of United States General Claire Lee Chennault, the founder of the World War II-era Flying Tigers, said he remained in China because he "heard the cries for help."

Chennault decided to offer his services to China as an adviser to the Chinese Air Force in 1937 despite being asked by the U.S. government to return home, said his granddaughter Nell Calloway, director of the Chennault Aviation and Military Museum in Monroe, Louisiana.

Calloway recalled her grandfather's story at a recent gathering of the new generation of Flying Tigers, formerly known as the American Volunteer Group, during the 45th Anniversary of U.S.-China Diplomatic Relations Forum hosted by Flying Tigers-friendly organizations. The celebration was held in Whittier, Los Angeles County.

Chennault arrived in China on June 1, 1937, having to overcome the obstacles of poor hearing and having next to no knowledge of Chinese.

"He stayed because he heard the cries for help from a people in desperate need," Calloway said. "He did not let cultural differences, political affiliation or ideology stand in the way of his humanity or serving his fellow man."

When the war was over, Chennault wrote in his 1949 memoir *Way of a Fighter*, "It is my fondest hope that the sign of the Flying Tiger remains aloft just as long as it is needed and that it will always be remembered on both shores of the Pacific as the symbol of two great peoples working toward a common goal in war and peace."

The legacy of the Flying Tigers shows how much the United States and China can accomplish together over the course of history, said U.S. Representative Judy Chu of California.

"I was so impressed that so many brave young men quit their jobs to volunteer to fight with the Chinese to protect China from her enemies," Chu told the audience. "And they weren't even an official part of the U.S. military because the U.S. was not yet at war with Japan, but these men were still willing to risk their lives for peace."

The Flying Tigers produced 39 U.S. aces during their brief combat history. The official tally of the American Volunteer Group at the time was 299 Japanese aircraft destroyed in seven months.

In March 1943 Chennault, then a major general, was made the commander of the 14th Air Force, formed out of the China Air Task Force.

When the U.S. eventually entered World War II, thousands more went on

to serve in both Asia and Europe, including another 20,000 Chinese Americans like Chu's father.

As the Flying Tigers fought alongside the Chinese to resist Japanese aggression, the Chinese were deeply

grateful for their contributions and went to great lengths to rescue and protect them.

Hundreds of Flying Tigers were saved, at the cost of thousands of Chinese soldiers and civilians who sacrificed their lives.

"This is a glorious and honorable chapter written by the people of our two great nations with flesh and blood in defending world peace and justice," said China's Consul General in Los Angeles Guo Shaochun.

"This year marks the 45th anniversary of the China-U.S. diplomatic relationship. We have every reason to carry on the friendship forged by the Flying Tigers, promote its spirit among the younger generation and inject youthful strength into China-U.S. relations."

—RENA LI



Nell Calloway, granddaughter of U.S. General Claire Lee Chennault, and Flying Tigers veteran Harry Moyer sing during a visit to Kunming Foreign Language School in Kunming, Yunnan province, last year.

WANG ANHAOWEI / XINHUA

## Modernization drive boosts confidence

China's recent decision to deepen economic structural reforms will significantly boost market confidence, revive growth momentum and facilitate the country's sustainable and high-quality development in the next few years, officials, experts and business people say.

China's economic activity will likely continue to pick up for the rest of the year, driven by reforms to tackle structural issues, improvement in domestic demand, resilient manufacturing activity and stimulus policy measures, they said.

However, they warned the economy is still facing challenges from ongoing disinflationary pressures, still-weak consumer confidence, and potential risks in local government debt and the real estate sector. Therefore, more efforts are needed to consolidate the foundation of the economic recovery, they said.

Their comments came after the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China held in July adopted a resolution on further deepening reform in a comprehensive way to advance Chinese modernization.

"Economic reforms in real estate, local government debt and initiatives to promote consumption and enhance social welfare are the three aspects that concern me the most. These economic reform measures are soon set to become new drivers of economic development."

LI DAOKUI

Li Daokui, director of the Academic Center for Chinese Economic Practice and Thinking of Tsinghua University in Beijing, said as China is set to adopt a slew of measures this year, it is on track for a steady recovery.

"Economic reforms in real estate, local government debt and initiatives to promote consumption and enhance social welfare are the three aspects that concern me the most," Li said.

"These economic reform

measures are soon set to become new drivers of economic development."

According to the resolution, China will establish a system for monitoring and regulating all local government debt as well as long-term mechanisms for preventing and defusing hidden debt risks. And it will refine long-term mechanisms for expanding consumption, reduce restrictions and boost public spending as necessary.

On the property front, the resolution said China will move faster to establish a housing system that supports both housing rentals and purchases, and foster a new development model for the real estate sector.

Notably, the resolution said municipal governments will be given greater decision-making powers to regulate the real estate market, and based on local conditions, some cities will be permitted to abolish or reduce restrictions on housing purchases and to scrap certain standards for ordinary and non-ordinary housing. The country will also carry out reforms to change the way real estate development is financed.

SEE GROWTH, PAGE 3

## THE VERY MODERN TELLS STORIES OF OLD

Clearly magnified oracle bone carvings are proving to be a big draw for the hundreds of thousands of visitors to the newly built Yinxu Museum in Anyang, Henan province.

Many have been amazed to see the intricate details of the strokes on the 16 oracle bones on display in the museum, which opened in February.

The 3,300-year-old Yinxu site, also known as the Yinxu Ruins, was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2006 and is the location of the remains of the ancient city of Yin, one of the capitals of the late Shang Dynasty (c. 16th century-11th century B.C.). Yin was the first capital in Chinese history to have been documented and also substantiated by archaeological evidence.

In addition to its wealth of exquisite bronzes, the site has yielded a trove of oracle bones that were used to tell fortunes

and record events. The bones are considered to be the oldest-known Chinese writing system, highlighting the endurance of Chinese civilization.

Unlike other famous ancient writing systems, such as Egyptian hieroglyphs, Babylonian cuneiform and Mayan glyphs, the character precursors on oracle bones eventually evolved into modern characters over thousands of years.

In the museum's oracle bone gallery, visitors can manipulate high-precision 3D models of oracle bones on screen, vivid demonstrations that add depth to the overview of the Shang Dynasty provided by museum guides. Among them is Liu Mengke, who said that the Shang Dynasty was fond of divination, devoted to rituals and followed etiquette.

Some of the oracle bones from the Yinxu site turned out to be a kind of diary kept by a

son of the Shang Dynasty king Wu Ding.

"The bones are a vivid record of the son's daily activities and show that he resorted to divination whenever he was about to embark on something new," Liu said.

This included hosting sacrificial rituals, leading an army to war and organizing hunting expeditions, he said.

A digital poster outside the gallery enables visitors to further appreciate the culture of oracle bones, allowing them access to the detailed interpretations of oracle bone scripts and a short quiz to put their knowledge to the test.

The digitalization of ancient animal bones and turtle shells has been undertaken by the technology company Tencent, Anyang's cultural heritage bureau. Anyang Normal University's oracle bone script information processing labora-



Late Shang Dynasty (c. 16th century-11th century B.C.) oracle bones exhibited at the Yinxu Museum in Anyang of Henan province.

KAN LI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

tory and others since 2022. It is part of a joint initiative to promote human-machine collaboration to aid in the deciphering and vitalization of oracle bone scripts.

At the World AI Conference and High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance in Shanghai last month, the digital oracle bone co-creation center, set up by Anyang Normal University, Tencent, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and several other universities and research organi-

zations, announced the open-sourcing of the world's largest multimodal oracle bone script dataset.

This dataset includes rubbings, tracings and the positions of individual characters on more than 10,000 oracle bones, along with their corresponding contexts.

Researchers can use it to develop algorithms for oracle bone script detection, recognition, character matching and deciphering.

—YANG FEIYUE

## SOCIETY

# Sea breezes a windfall for fisheries

As the offshore wind industry booms in China, opportunities are also blooming beneath the whirring blades and churning turbines.

Eyeing massive marine resources, turbine manufacturers across the country are stepping up efforts to integrate new energy projects with aquaculture farms, where fish, lobsters and crabs coexist with wind turbines, blades and cable routes, further promoting marine biodiversity.

Longyuan Power, a subsidiary of CHN Energy Investment Group, the world's largest power producer and the top wind power developer in terms of installed capacity, recently put into operation the world's first wind-fishery integrated floating platform near Nanri Island off the coast of Fujian province, which will co-deploy floating turbines and deep-sea fish farming equipment.

The project, pioneering a new marine economic development model that combines underwater fish farming and above-water power generation in the field of floating offshore wind power, will take better advantage of surrounding marine resources, it said.

The floating platform includes a semi-submersible structure featuring three columns arranged in an equilateral triangle configuration, with a 4-megawatt offshore wind turbine perched on top.

Enclosed within this triangular framework is a net cage dedicated to aquaculture, using 353,000 cubic feet of water for fish farming.

It can generate 96,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity a day, enough to meet the daily electricity needs of about 42,000 households while boosting income from batches of fishery products, said Chen Yong, deputy director of Longyuan's Fujian subsidiary.

With its remote monitoring and unattended operation, the intelligent deep-sea aquaculture equipment allows remote and intuitive observation of the state of various forms of marine life, he said.

Longyuan said the electricity generated by the offshore wind turbine also ensures the safe and stable operation of the aquaculture equipment, solving the common problems of "insufficient power supply and unstable power supply" in traditional marine ranching.

Industry experts have voiced optimism about the integration of offshore wind and marine ranching, seeing the project, China's latest effort to combine offshore wind and fish farming, as a synergistic approach to sustainable development.

Combining wind power with aquaculture or ranching could benefit companies on both sides, leading to more resilient and diversified food systems, said Luo Zuoxian, head of



From top: The world's first wind-fishery integrated floating platform near Nanri Island off Fujian province. A technician operates systems when the mixed energy project was put into operation in June. PHOTOS BY CAI HAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

intelligence and research at the Sinopec Economics and Development Research Institute in Beijing.

"While aquaculture firms can take advantage of turbine bases as a stable and sustainable environment to anchor fish cages or rope-and-raft systems for growing shellfish and kelp, any power needed to run the aquaculture farm or marine ranch could also be drawn directly from the turbines," Luo said.

"For the wind power firms, making fuller use of the site would reduce maintenance costs, and they can make extra money by selling the power generated to aquaculture firms."

By combining renewable energy with aquaculture, China is demonstrating a holistic approach to tackling environmental challenges, while the combination could also help China make better use of its ocean resources, he said.

Ocean resources now account for 7% of global GDP, and countries need to work together to promote sustainable development, said Beate Trankmann, the United Nations Development Programme's resident representative in China, adding that the blue economy is also important globally.

Li Ziyue, an analyst with BloombergNEF, said China's

offshore industry has a great future.

While China's offshore oil and gas production is expected to continue rising in the years to come, its continuous upstream investment and production commitment will also play a critical role in the country's energy supply security, she said.

Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University, Fujian province, said China's strategic focus on making the most of its marine resources represents a significant move toward sustainable economic growth and environmental stewardship.

By investing in offshore wind farms and other marine-based renewable energy projects, China can tap into vast energy potential while simultaneously fostering marine biodiversity, Lin said.

The creation of artificial reefs and habitats around these installations not only supports marine life but also promotes fisheries and tourism, thereby boosting local economies.

The holistic use of marine resources underscores the country's commitment to innovative sustainable practices that can drive long-term prosperity, Lin said.

— ZHENG XIN

## California looks to China for green push

In face of the recent record-setting heat wave that has tested California's power grid, experts have attributed the state's success to its commitment to renewable energy and called for collaboration with China to accelerate the path to a fully clean electricity grid.

California has set aggressive targets for renewable energy adoption, with state law requiring 90% of all retail electricity sales to come from renewable sources by 2035 and 100% by 2045. To meet those ambitious goals the state is turning its attention to offshore wind power.

"In California we have zero offshore wind today," said Daniel Kammen, a professor of energy at the University of California, Berkeley, and director of its Renewable and Appropriate Energy Laboratory.

"Offshore wind is exciting because it can be permitted more quickly and serves as a 'battery' for the grid."

Offshore wind can complement the production cycles of solar and on-land wind energy. It also offers flexibility in energy production, capable of generating electricity during peak demand and producing hydrogen or methanol when electricity prices are low. That flexibility presents huge opportunities to decarbonize sectors that have traditionally been difficult to switch to clean energy, Kammen said.

The state can directly apply some of China's practices, he said. "The best way to apply it is not just to read about it, but to actually get partners from China."

He highlighted his own partnerships with research colleagues at Tsinghua University and North China Electric Power University, as well as with Chinese companies such as the automobile maker Geely in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province.

Local collaboration between China and the United States has gained momentum recently.

"I think the conference may give you the best example," said Richard Dasher, director of the U.S.-Asia Technology Management Center at Stanford University, referring to the 2024 Global Green Development Summit at his university last month.

Kammen stressed the need for a combination of Silicon Valley's innovative thinking and the large-scale industrial capacity of entities such as State Grid of China and the country's State Grid Electric Vehicle Service.

He pointed to the productivity of new companies and university offshoots as evidence of the potential for collaborative innovation with Chinese companies.

— LIAZHU

## Storks find shelter in restored wetlands

On a sweltering late afternoon in June a tour bus navigated a private road flanked by verdant grass in the Shandong Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve. Towering reeds stood erect in the wetlands, which reflected the blue sky and its billowing white clouds.

The bus passed a power line pole, on top of which a nest was perched. The nest was sheltering two black and white birds, one standing and the other squatting.

"These two birds are oriental storks that enjoy first-level State protection," said Hu Yuwei, a tour guide in the nature reserve. "You're lucky to be on this bus, because the breeding season for this species will be over shortly. It runs from February to early July, and once the fledglings have learned to fly, they tend to favor wetlands in the central area rather than nest high up on power line poles, making them hard to spot."

The oriental stork, with red skin encircling its eyes — which some jokingly refer to as eyeliner — stands out from other stork species, she said.



Oriental storks at a wetland area in the Shandong Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve in Dongying, Shandong province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The number of oriental storks is severely depleted, mainly because of habitat loss and overhunting, and they are listed as endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List, but diligent conservation measures taken by the Shandong city of Dongying have resulted in the species now being frequently seen in an area in which it had once never set foot.

The area, in northeastern Dongying at the Yellow River estuary, was once seen as inhospitable for birds and other wildlife because water was scarce during the dry season

and overwhelming during the wet season, flooding the land, said Hu, a Dongying native.

Recognizing its ecological, geographical and societal significance, the city established a nature reserve in 1990, which has since grown to 378,000 acres. The reserve received national-level status and became known as the Shandong Yellow River Delta National Nature Reserve two years later.

Toward the end of the decade the oriental stork began appearing there.

"The oriental stork is particularly sensitive about its living environment and is con-

sidered an indicator of how healthy wetlands are," said Zhao Yajie, deputy director of the ecological monitoring center in the nature reserve. "In fact, it had never been seen in the nature reserve before the late 1990s."

The migratory birds mainly inhabit marshes, wetlands and pond shores.

"In the autumn of 1997, the reserve's first oriental stork was observed pausing here on its journey southward, using the location as a temporary stopover," Zhao said.

"In 2003 a group of the storks nested here for the first time, coinciding with the wetland conservation project in the nature reserve that was occurring at the time and underscoring the project's success."

The first successful hatching of the species occurred in 2005, she said.

Following years of wetland restoration efforts, there are now more than 49,400 acres of freshwater wetlands in the reserve. The expansion has led to the oriental stork establishing itself as a regular resident of Dongying, where it lives from February to November, she said.

— LI MENGHAN

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## BUSINESS



A Boeing cargo plane after landing at the international airport in Haikou, Hainan province. SU BIKUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

# China still a magnet for foreign firms

China's constantly improving business environment is becoming more attractive to multinational companies, something borne out by the increasing number planning to expand their presence in the world's second-largest economy, trade promotion officials say.

A report published by the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade in Beijing recently said that of 400 foreign companies it surveyed in the second quarter operating in China, the number saying they plan to increase investment by 20% rose 6.73 percentage points over the first quarter. And 15% of them said they plan to increase their investment in China this year, it said.

Nearly half of the companies said they expected their profit margins to increase in the next five years, with businesses from the United States being the most optimistic about future operations in China.

More than 40% of the U.S. companies surveyed said the potential for the Chinese market's growth this year is good and that it is becoming more attractive, the report said.

Of the companies surveyed, 43% were from developed economies such as the U.S. and Europe.

Despite the uncertain times, the world's second-largest

economy remains a widely acknowledged investment hot spot, the council said.

"Foreign enterprises were overall satisfied with China's business environment during the survey period," said Wang Linjie, a spokeswoman for the council.

"They said they remain bullish on the Chinese market, and their confidence in expanding investment in the country has been growing."

Facing downward pressure in the global economy, China's economy showed its resilience, and the country's 1.4 billion people constitute a huge market attractive to foreign companies, said Fu Yifu, a researcher at the Star Atlas Institute of Finance.

"China has been ramping up efforts to promote high-standard opening-up to the world and optimizing its business environment to attract more multinationals in the past few years. For foreign companies, investing in China can help them share the dividends of China's economic growth and achieve better business growth."

The European aircraft manufacturer Airbus said it is optimistic about the business environment in China, its largest single-country market, and is committed to investing in this thriving market for the long term.

The company delivered its 700th A320 family aircraft

assembled at its final assembly line in Tianjin last month. The Tianjin factory, its first assembly line outside Europe, opened more than 15 years ago.

"The aircraft delivered from Tianjin are a microcosm of the cooperation between Airbus and the Chinese aviation industry," said George Xu, Airbus executive vice-president and Airbus China chief executive. "Airbus remains dedicated to strengthening its collaboration with China."

The aircraft maker Boeing Co. said that driven by economic growth well above the global average and increasing demand for domestic air travel, China will need 8,560 new aircraft over the next 20 years, accounting for one-fifth of the world's airplane deliveries. China's domestic aviation market will also become the largest globally by the end of the forecast period.

The French luxury jewelry brand Van Cleef & Arpels said China, as one of its three largest markets, is a key one for the company and that the company will continue to open more boutiques in the country.

There are well-off and sophisticated consumers all over China, and they are younger than consumers in some developed markets, said Laura Lai, managing director of Van Cleef & Arpels China.

— ZHU WENQIAN

## AI puts Games viewers on winners' rostrum

As China's national diving team won gold medals at the Olympic Games in Paris, its artificial intelligence training system made a big splash in the field of sports innovations.

The system, developed by the Chinese technology company Baidu, has "sharp eyes and a strong brain", said Lu Feixiang, a senior engineer in the company's research institute.

The system captures intricate details of diving movements that traditional video systems cannot, provides immediate feedback and real-time analysis, and allows performances to be compared with the previous best one.

The technology is just one example of how AI permeated the Games, which some called the first AI Olympics because of the extensive use of AI in training, refereeing, broadcasting and even anti-doping measures.

"Diving involves executing complex movements within a brief 1.8-second window, from the jump to entering the water," Lu said.

"Perfecting every detail is crucial for Chinese athletes' famed splash-less dives."

Traditional video recording falls short in capturing rapid sequences, and the subsequent data analysis is time-consuming and less immediate.

The AI system, based on Baidu's ChatGPT-like product and the large language model Ernie Bot, deals with these challenges by offering clear, accurate, comprehensive insights, advancing data quantification and analyzing the dives, Lu said.

"The AI system allows for timely playback and scoring, and I use it to refine my technique," Quan Hongchan, who won the women's synchronized 10-meter platform diving event with her teammate Chen Yuxi, said before the competition.

"AI can break down movement details, helping me master the nuances of timing and entry control," Chen said.

AI and technology innovations transformed the Paris

Games with applications ranging from training athletes to new broadcasting techniques to efficient energy management.

The International Olympic Committee recognized the transformative potential of AI in a report published in April. It set out a list of AI goals focusing on improving the Games, detecting talent and reducing human bias. Many of these applications were tested for the first time in Paris.

The value of the market for use of AI in sport is projected to grow from \$6 billion this year to \$21 billion by 2029, according to the Indian market research company Mordor Intelligence.

The growth potential was reflected in Paris, where Chinese technology companies used their cloud computing and AI tools to improve live broadcasting and athletes' performances.

Alibaba Cloud replaced traditional satellite methods by using advanced technologies to support more than two-thirds of the event's broadcasts. These technologies improved internal workflows, improved viewer experience,

enriched storytelling and helped better explain some sports.

The Chinese AI pioneer SenseTime supported the Chinese basketball teams by providing AI-driven sports data analysis and advice on game strategies.

The company's AI technology was used to analyze data such as Chinese players' movements, a basketball's trajectory and training efficiency.

Wang Peng, a researcher at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, said: "As AI technology continues to evolve, the Paris 2024 Olympics serve as a testament to its potential to revolutionize sports. The integration of AI in various aspects of sports demonstrates its capability to enhance the athletic experience, both for participants and viewers."

— MA SI

"The integration of AI in various aspects of sports demonstrates its capability to enhance the athletic experience, both for participants and viewers."

WANG PENG

## Growth: Greater demand seen as key

From page 1

The real estate sector will remain a "pillar industry" over the next 15 to 20 years, Li said, because about 350 million people, including those now living in rural areas and migrant workers living in cities, will probably buy residential properties in cities.

"There may be excess construction in the short term in certain cities and regions, resulting in a surplus of housing. However, after this period, likely within one to two years, the overall real estate market is likely to rebound and return to an expansionary phase."

The National Bureau of Statistics says property investment in China fell 10.1% in the first half of this year from a year earlier, flat with the figure in the first five months, as policymakers' efforts to support the ailing sector took time to revive demand.

Han Wenxiu, executive deputy director of the Office of the Central Committee for Financial and Economic Affairs, said more should be done to speed up the building of a new development model for the sector, better meet residents' needs for basic housing and improved housing, and establish corresponding systems for financing, fiscal and tax policies, land and sales.

The urbanization process

will offer considerable space for high-quality development in the real estate industry, he said.

Han, highlighting China's deepening reform, said the country aims to drive the transition from its traditional growth drivers to new ones, providing robust support for high-quality development.

Top priority should be given to promoting the healthy development of the property sector and accelerating the development of emerging sectors and future industries, he said.

He emphasized the need to foster new quality productive forces in line with local conditions, saying more should be done to spur emerging industries, develop future industries, upgrade traditional sectors and promote the advanced, smart and green development of manufacturing.

He also highlighted the need to expand domestic demand, notably consumer demand, saying the country needs to fully unleash the potential of domestic demand to prop up the world's second-largest economy.

In its latest efforts to spur domestic demand, China said late last month that it would allocate about 300 billion yuan in ultra-long-term special treasury bonds to support the program of driving large-scale

equipment upgrades and trade-in deals for consumer goods.

According to a document jointly published by the National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Finance, about half of the bond funds will be used to support trade-in deals for consumer goods, and most of the rest will be used to drive large-scale equipment upgrades.

Earlier this year China announced plans to issue 1 trillion yuan worth of ultra-long-term treasury bonds for major national strategies and build up security capacity in key areas this year.

Zhou Maohua, a researcher at China Everbright Bank in Beijing, said China's domestic demand and consumption will probably continue to pick up in the second half of the year, with the implementation of the latest measures to promote the trade-in program, issuance of treasury bonds and policies on stabilizing the real estate industry taking effect gradually.

Global business people hailed China's efforts to deepen reforms and opening-up, saying the country's pursuit of high-quality development will create fresh opportunities for global stakeholders.

U.S. smart building solutions provider Johnson Controls said



Visitors at Johnson Controls' booth during the 6th China International Import Expo in Shanghai in November last year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

it is optimistic about China's economic prospects. The company said it has seen a number of growth opportunities arising from the country's pursuit of new quality productive forces.

"China has done a lot to create a better business environment for domestic players and their foreign counterparts, including shortening the negative list for foreign investments," said Anu Rathninde, president of Johnson Controls Asia-Pacific.

"We wouldn't have been as successful as we are today if that business environment didn't allow us to grow, which is a testimony to the support that we get from the government and the business environment."

China is one of the most

important markets for Johnson Controls and the company will continue to enlarge its presence in the market, he said.

"We will continue to expand our manufacturing and R&D capabilities. That's our commitment to China — to do business in China and grow as the Chinese market grows."

Zhang Ying, managing director of Dassault Systemes Greater China, said the software company, whose parent company is in France, has significantly benefited from China's business environment in recent years.

The company will continue to increase investment in the China market, scale up production and boost innovation and R&D, he said.

— OUYANG SHUIA



# Hands across the water

It's a relationship forged by history, geography and trade — among other things — and symbolized by a certain fragrance and the way it is produced.

That fragrance emanates from the process of scenting jasmine tea, an intangible cultural heritage of China and a specialty of the city of Fuzhou, Fujian province.

Fuzhou's jasmine tea is a delicate blend of green tea leaves and jasmine blossoms, and scenting the tea involves mixing jasmine buds with tea leaves overnight. In the morning the flowers are removed and the leaves dried. This process is repeated up to nine times to achieve a rich, fragrant jasmine tea.

When Victoria Woodards, mayor of Tacoma, Washington, visited Fuzhou in June, she was invited to witness for herself part of this exquisite process.

"If you think about it, the scenting process symbolizes building a friendship again and again because you can't just do it once, as it doesn't last," Woodards said. "If you continue to do it over and over again, then the bond is stronger, just like the fragrance gets stronger."

This marriage of taste and fragrance in tea is as serendipitous as the Pacific Ocean currents that play a role in bringing Fuzhou and Tacoma together despite the more than 6200 miles that separate them. In fact, so kindred are the two cities' spirits that 30 years ago the two decided to formalize their relationship by becoming sister cities.

One of those who contributed to establishing that relationship was Connie Bacon, a former commissioner for the Port of Tacoma and a former executive director of the World Trade Center Tacoma. And it was she who in October 1993 welcomed to the city a visiting delegation from Fuzhou.

One member of that delegation was then Fuzhou's Party Secretary Xi Jinping, and Bacon invited him to her home for dinner.

That visit, including the close personal relationships it cultivated, bore fruit a year later when Bacon signed the sister-city agreement with Fuzhou on behalf of Tacoma. In the years since then the two cities have engaged closely with each other, with about 100 delegations sent to each other between the two sides. Their collaboration covers many areas, including culture, education, sports and trade.

It is the last of these that has been a cornerstone of the relationship, with both cities being important ports for their countries.

"For Tacoma, a leading U.S. seaport for international trade, China is a very important trading partner and has been our No. 1 trading partner by volume and value for many years," said Tong Zhu, chief commercial and strategy officer for the Port of Tacoma and Northwest Seaport Alliance.



Tacoma Mayor Victoria Woodards (second from left) sings with students from the Affiliated High School of Fuzhou Institute of Education and visiting students from Tacoma on June 26. HU MEIDONG / CHINA DAILY

Trade ties between the two cities became stronger in 2008 with the establishment of a trade project aimed at helping Tacoma businesses attract Chinese investment and aiding Chinese companies in expanding to the U.S.

"Working in partnership with the city of Fuzhou and the city of Tacoma, we developed a program based on the sister-city relationship that ultimately led to an exchange of personnel to promote and drive tangible international trade transactions," Zhu said. "Activities later expanded into attracting inbound foreign direct investment from Fuzhou and China at large to the Tacoma area."

This year, the Asia Pacific Cultural Center in Tacoma signed an agreement with a tea company in Fuzhou to promote jasmine tea in the U.S., the type of collaboration that "offers an economic development opportunity for us," Tacoma Mayor Woodards said.

"From an economic development standpoint, we are really focused on technological innovation and collaboration among



Above and below: Students from Fuzhou and Tacoma write to each other on postcards on June 26.

Two students show their handmade paper-cutting.

PHOTOS BY WANG ZHENGXING / CHINA DAILY



## Journey to the West that sent a young adventurer in the opposite direction

For Greg Youtz, friendship between the East and West is a matter of the highest importance.

"Many people in Tacoma and many people in Fuzhou value our friendship very strongly," Youtz, chairman of the Tacoma-Fuzhou Sister City Committee, said. "It's very important for individuals in both the U.S. and China to remain positive and interested in each other."

His interest in China began in the 1960s when his parents returned from a seminar on China with books in hand. One of them was the classic Chinese tale *Journey to the West*, which Youtz read, leading to his lifelong fascination with Chinese philosophy and culture.

Youtz has visited many Chinese cities and said he considers China his second home. On his first trip to the country in 1991, he was part of a faculty delegation from Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma

to visit Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, Guangdong province.

In 2008, with support from an organization called The Freeman Foundation, Youtz conducted educational projects and student exchanges, enriching teachers' understanding of China through visits to Beijing, Xi'an, Chengdu and Shanghai.

"It's essential for teachers to effectively share their experiences and knowledge about China with their students, fostering a deeper appreciation and understanding of the country," he said.

As with Youtz, Michael Fowler's connection with China spans decades. "I first visited China in 1979," said Fowler, managing director of the World Trade Center Tacoma, who has worked on China-U.S. economic collaboration for many years. "Since then I am surprised by the nation's development."

cities to support more green jobs and low-carbon sustainable development in our communities."

In addition to trade, educational exchanges have flourished between the sister cities, fostering long-lasting connections among young people in China and the U.S.

On Sept 23, 2015, during his first state visit to the U.S. as China's president, Xi returned to Tacoma. Lincoln High School was selected as the venue, partly because of the sister-city ties and the sister-school relationship between the school and the Affiliated High School of Fuzhou Institute of Education.

At the school, Xi spoke to students, brought a ping-pong table and books on China, and later sent a personal invitation for 100 students to visit China the following year.

"I feel incredibly lucky and grateful for being selected for that trip," said Rigel Adams, now 23, who was a member of the Lincoln High School group that traveled to China in 2016.

"We did so much in those days, meet-

ing other Chinese students, visiting different schools and getting to truly experience Chinese culture. It was the experience of a lifetime. After I visited in 2016, I just fell in love with the people and the culture in China. Everyone is caring and polite, and it's much more community-focused. It's very different from the U.S., and I like it."

Since that trip, Adams, who recently graduated from university with a bachelor's degree in science and economics, has been back to China six times and visited many Chinese cities.

"During those trips, I was able to build some personal as well as professional relationships. My hope is to continue expanding those relationships and maybe to one day (turn that) into a business relationship."

Since 2016, Lincoln High School has frequently arranged visits to China, and the Affiliated High School of Fuzhou Institute of Education also sent students to attend summer camp exchange activities at Lincoln High School every year before the pandemic.

During the pandemic, the offline exchange programs between the two cities had to be put on hold, but many initiatives demonstrated how close the cities had become to one another. Fuzhou and Tacoma began setting up relationships between schools, facilitating exchanges between Chinese students studying English and Tacoma students studying Chinese.

"From 2020 to 2024, our school exchanged letters with Lincoln High School over 50 times," said Wei Jian, head of the Affiliated High School of Fuzhou Institute of Education.

"In 2023, we relaunched our Pen Pal project with Lincoln High School, pairing 35 of our high school freshmen and sophomores with 38 students from Lincoln High School studying Chinese."

The school hosted a Tacoma student group led by Woodards in June and another U.S. student group in July.

"So often our young people live in their communities and they don't know about the entire world," Woodards said. "I think when they get out of their surroundings and have an opportunity to travel across the world and meet other young people who are just like them, it makes not only our cities a better place, but it makes our world a better place."

The sister-cities program is about promoting peace through people, and the idea is that the more people know about communities worldwide, the more they understand that we are more alike than we are different, she said.

— YANG RAN, HU MEIDONG AND LINDA DENG



Online Watch the video by scanning the code.



Left and center: Teachers and students from Fuzhou and Tacoma enjoy paper-cutting and calligraphy. PHOTOS BY HU MEIDONG / CHINA DAILY A teacher of the Tacoma visiting group shows a postcard that was destined for students in Fuzhou. QIN JIAHE / CHINA DAILY