

Bridging past and present

Lion dance a link to connect diverse cultures, foster respect

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Envoy to US calls on youth to shape bilateral narrative

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Star power

Qinwen's debut at the China Open draws record crowds

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# CHINA DAILY

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## WORLD WATCH

By Gyorgy H. Matolcsy

### Financial cooperation of Beijing, Budapest bears fruit

Hot topics such as digitalization and sustainability clearly reflect the tremendous challenges of the 21st century. Economists, geopolitical analysts, politicians and journalists are trying to identify the ongoing and future patterns of the digital and green transition, as well as the impact on international relations and the world economy.

Finance is key for channeling resources toward 21st-century innovators and entrepreneurs who have strong visions about a sustainable, green and equitable growth model that provides shared benefits for the global community. According to a 2023 publication of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, until 2040, the world needs about \$84.5 trillion in infrastructure investment, including \$16 trillion in sustainable infrastructure financing. It is not just the volumes that matter. The story is more about innovative financial solutions and international cooperation, which are able to allocate and deliver the required funds to the right projects.

The financial cooperation between Hungary and China is a good example of such constructive actions. As we mark the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, it is time for our two countries to highlight the success of our thriving bilateral financial links over the past two decades. One of the first milestones was the Bank of China choosing the Hungarian capital, Budapest, as its regional headquarter in Central and Eastern Europe. Later, China Construction Bank also opened a branch in Budapest. Thanks to their activities, Hungary has become an important regional center for renminbi settlements and financial services, which added further links to the outstanding network of Hungary as a complex economic, financial, trade, logistical and intellectual hub.

China attaches great importance to cooperation with Central and Eastern European countries under the Belt and Road Initiative. In the same way, the Hungarian government and Magyar Nemzeti Bank, the central bank of Hungary, have also been taking decisive steps to foster the relationship between Hungary and China.

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#### TO OUR READERS

We wish our readers a Happy National Day. We will publish a special National Holiday edition from Oct 1-7. We will be back with our regular publication on Tuesday, Oct 8.

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President Xi Jinping and recipients of national medals and honorary titles arrive at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing for an award ceremony on Sunday. WANG YE / XINHUA

## Nation's highest honors bestowed

Xi pays tributes to heroes, role models, calls for forging ahead in unity to build strong nation

By XU WEI xuwei@chinadaily.com.cn



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President Xi Jinping led a grand tribute to heroes and role models in a medal presentation ceremony on Sunday, calling on the whole country to look to the heroes and forge ahead in unity to build a strong nation.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the presentation to the recipients of national medals as well as to the recipients of honorary titles, the nation's highest state honors. The ceremony was held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Sunday, two days before the People's Republic of China celebrates on Tuesday the 75th anniversary of its founding.

"A great era calls for heroes and gives rise to heroes. When heroes emerge in large numbers, the Party and the people's cause will thrive and endure," he told an audience of about 1,000 people, including previous recipients of national honors, senior officials, college students and people serving in the military.

Among those honored on Sunday were Huang Zongde, a recipient of the Medal of the Republic and a vet-

eran of China's revolutionary wars, and Dilma Rousseff, the recipient of the Friendship Medal and former president of Brazil.

In his speech, Xi said the CPC has united and led people from all ethnic backgrounds to achieve two remarkable milestones — rapid economic development and long-term social stability — over the past 75 years.

"This transformation has fundamentally reshaped our great nation, placing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on an irreversible historical trajectory," he said.

He lauded the heroes whose dedication and perseverance have significantly contributed to these milestones, noting that their stories will be etched in the annals of the PRC's history.

The president called on the whole nation to harbor aspirations

for a strong country, prioritizing national prosperity and the happiness of the people.

"With a patriotic spirit and a commitment to serving the country, we should integrate our individual goals with the larger national mission, realizing personal value and showcasing our lives through dedication to our nation and service to its people."

He encouraged the people to hone their expertise to build up national strength, highlighting the need to acquire new knowledge, master new skills and develop real competencies in response to the new requirements of the times.

"We should embrace our roles with passion and expertise, striving to become adept professionals and specialists in our fields," Xi said.

Furthermore, he called on the people to boldly contribute to national progress. "With a sense of urgency and a commitment to responsibility, we should pursue excellence and refine our efforts, achieving extraordinary results in ordinary positions."

He stressed the need to keep securing new progress in tackling developmental challenges, overcoming reform hurdles and maintaining social harmony and stability.

He also lauded the steadfast friends of China who have shared weal and woe with the Chinese peo-

ple over the past 75 years, saying that the Chinese people will never forget those who have made outstanding contributions to China's development and fostered friendships between the Chinese people and their counterparts around the globe.

"We are committed to joining hands with people worldwide to uphold peace, promote mutual development, work toward building a community with a shared future for mankind, and create a better future for all," he emphasized.

Huang, the veteran, who was helped from a wheelchair to speak at the podium on Sunday, could barely conceal his pride in a speech delivered at the ceremony.

"There are countless heroes who sacrificed their precious lives for national independence, people's liberation, and the prosperity of the country. They are the true heroes. Today, this noble honor also belongs to them," he said emotionally.

Wang Meng, one of the most revered literary figures in China and the winner of the People's Artist medal in 2019, said he was more than delighted to witness the nation's remarkable progress over the past five years.

The conferring of the medals at this critical historic juncture will help boost the nation's morale and enable greater strides in the development of various sectors going forward, he said.

### Spacesuit for lunar missions unveiled at forum

By ZHAO LEI zhaolei@chinadaily.com.cn

The China Manned Space Agency has unveiled the exterior design of the country's moon-landing spacesuit for the first time, soliciting its name from members of the public.

The white spacesuit with red stripes debuted on Saturday at the third Spacesuit Technology Forum in Chongqing.

The design incorporates exquisite traditional art and represents the spirit of bravery and exploration of the Chinese people, according to the agency.

The red stripes on the upper limbs are inspired by ribbons from the famous "flying apsaras" of Dunhuang art, while those on the lower limbs resemble rocket launch flames.

The agency said the spacesuit is made from protective materials, which can effectively shield astronauts from the complex environmental factors on the moon such as vacuum, extreme temperature, radiation and lunar dust.

The suit is equipped with a multi-functional integrated control panel that is easy to operate, as well as cameras for recording close-up and long-distance scenes. It also features flexible and reliable gloves, a panoramic glare-proof helmet visor, and joints adapted for low-gravity environments.

When wearing the special suits, the astronauts will be able to walk, climb, drive and conduct scientific tasks on the lunar surface, the agency said, adding that the suit is lightweight, compact, highly reliable and very safe.

China now has two types of spacesuits — one is used for activities inside the spacecraft and the other for extravehicular activities, commonly known as spacewalks.

The nation has announced its plan to conduct its first manned mission to the moon around 2030. To achieve the goal, it needs to develop a host of cutting-edge hardware, including a manned lunar lander, a new crew spaceship and a special suit that is suitable for lunar surface operations.

Yang Yuguang, a senior space industry observer and vice-chair of the International Astronautical Federation's Space Transportation Committee, said the new spacesuit will support astronauts' activities on the lunar surface that will likely last for several hours, so it must be lightweight and capable of resisting the impact of lunar dust.

"Preparing for a moonwalk will be sophisticated and will involve many steps. It is understandable that astronauts will stay as long as possible outside their landing craft during each extravehicular mission to execute their tasks. Therefore, designers must make the spacesuits as light as possible to reduce the physical burden of astronauts," Yang said.



China's first taikonaut Yang Liwei inaugurates the process of soliciting a name for the public for the newly unveiled spacesuit on Saturday. WANG QUANCHAO / XINHUA

## Former Brazilian leader hails ties, China's growth

By ZHOU JIN and XU WEI

Dilma Rousseff, the recipient of this year's Friendship Medal and the former president of Brazil, said she is honored to be part of the special ties between Brazil and China, reaffirming her commitment to continuing to strengthen the bilateral collaboration in the future.

Rousseff, now president of the New Development Bank, walked alongside President Xi Jinping and other recipients of the national medals and honorary titles as they entered the Golden Hall of the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Sunday morning for a grand award ceremony.

After Rousseff was presented the medal — the highest honorary medal of China bestowed on foreign nationals — by Xi, she lavish-

ed words of praise on Brazil-China relations and Xi's leadership.

The medal "signifies the solid bonds of friendly cooperation between the two countries and the two peoples", she said.

China and Brazil are friends and partners, sharing common interests in pushing for world peace, stability and prosperity, she said, pledging to do everything she can to enhance bilateral cooperation in areas including trade, education and culture.

"This medal fills me with pride, and I am honored to be part of this special relationship between Brazil and China, and hope to continue to strengthen our collaboration in the future," she said.

Since 2009, China has been Brazil's largest trading partner and a major source of investment, while Brazil is China's largest trading part-

ner in Latin America. Trade volume between China and Brazil reached \$181.53 billion in 2023.

Rousseff lauded China's remarkable growth over the past four decades, saying that the nation, with its accelerated economic transformation, technological innovation and extraordinary social development, has inspired the world "as a global powerhouse and a beacon of hope".

By adhering to reform and opening-up, China has not only lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty, but has also made significant contributions to global economic growth and stability, she added.

"President Xi Jinping, your tireless efforts in addressing significant global challenges such as climate change, promoting inclusive development, and maintaining

peace and security showcase your foresight as a great statesman for the future," she stressed.

Calling the Chinese president "a true champion of international cooperation and a strong defender of multilateralism", Rousseff said that Xi's leadership is crucial in advancing global governance to tackle common challenges and in promoting a more equitable and just international order.

Meanwhile, the three major initiatives proposed by Xi — the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative — demonstrate China's commitment to addressing international issues in a responsible and constructive manner, she said.

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## TOP NEWS

## Friendly contest



A team comprising diplomatic personnel from different countries celebrates on Saturday after competing with a local team in a village soccer tournament in Rongjiang county, Guizhou province. Twenty-four diplomats took part in the international friendly Cunchao tournament. TAO LIANG / XINHUA

## Kishida's foreign policy criticized at home and abroad

By CAI HONG  
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Fumio Kishida's trip to the United States in September wrapped up his diplomatic endeavors as Japanese prime minister. Other than delivering a speech at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, he met with the leaders of Australia, India and the US in President Joe Biden's hometown of Wilmington, Delaware.

Kishida will step down on Tuesday when the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's new leader Shigeru Ishiba is elected prime minister by Japanese lawmakers.

During his two-and-a-half-years in office, Kishida promoted late prime minister Shinzo Abe's vision for a more assertive and proactive security strategy, except the Russia policy.

Abe had set a new diplomatic and security trajectory for Japan by strengthening the alliance with the US, bolstering its defense capabilities and assuming a "leadership" role on the global stage.

Three new strategic documents are central to Kishida's foreign policy — the National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy and Defense Buildup Program — which were approved by his cabinet in December 2022. Japan decided to acquire the capability to strike "enemy bases", buy hundreds of long-range cruise missiles and field other weapons that marked a fundamental transition from a strictly defensive military to one that could effectively deter and defeat "threats".

Liu Qingbin, a former professor

at Yokohama National University's Institute of Advanced Sciences, said Kishida's primary focus was on deepening ties with the US to keep Japan solidly under the US security umbrella and double Japan's defense spending, a longtime policy preference of Washington.

"His policy clearly demonstrates that Japan follows Biden's strategy of building a global alliance, helping the US carry out the encirclement of China," Liu said.

Kishida closely follows Washington's restrictions on semiconductor exports to China as well.

"The Kishida administration did not devote much political capital to breaking the deadlock with China. Instead, it identified China as Japan's primary security threat to justify increased defense spending," Liu said.

During Kishida's tenure, Japan steadily stepped up its international defense role and military budget, with the country spending close to 2 percent of its gross domestic product on defense.

In an interview with Russian news agency Sputnik, Valery Kistanov, head of the Center for Japanese Studies at the Institute of Far Eastern Studies in the Russian Academy of Sciences, said the Russia-Japan relationship is in limbo with all contact cut, adding that as long as Japan's hard-line Russia policy remains, it is unlikely that bilateral ties will improve, and dialogue resume.

The Russian scholar held Kishida responsible for the dramatic deterioration in relations between Russia and Japan.

The Japanese prime minister supports Ukraine and has cooperated with the US by immediately following it on imposing sanctions on Russia, Kistanov said.

Kishida has created tension in the region by repeatedly stating at international forums that "Ukraine today may be East Asia tomorrow".

He has tried to use the so-called gains from the global stage to counterbalance domestic distress, Kistanov said.

He has moved Japan away from its postwar pacifist stance, easing the ban on lethal weapon exports to enable the co-development of next-generation fighter jets with Italy and the United Kingdom. Japan has also continued to engage more through regional initiatives such as the quadrilateral partnership between Australia, India, Japan and the United States, and the new trilateral cooperation between Japan, Republic of Korea and the US, in addition to penning numerous security-based investment deals with regional partners under its new Official Security Assistance framework.

The Tokyo Shimbun criticized the Kishida administration for undermining Japan's pacifist principles established after World War II. Another Japanese media outlet, Mainichi Shimbun, said in contrast with the "honeymoon" Japan is enjoying with the US and ROK, the country's relations with China has not improved. The possession of counterstrike capabilities deviates from Japan's long-held principle of exclusive self-defense. It could provoke

suspicion and distrust among neighboring countries, destabilizing the region, the newspaper said.

Hiroshi Shiratori, professor of political science at Hosei University, said Kishida has failed to build a forward-looking relationship with China. Under his leadership, bilateral ties have moved backward.

"Kishida should have used two important occasions — the 50th anniversary of the normalization of the China-Japan diplomatic relations in 2022 and the 45th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between China and Japan in 2023 — to improve ties with China," Shiratori said. "It is very disappointing that he did not hold on to the opportunities."

Wang Mengxue, assistant researcher at Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of International Studies, said while taking advantage of the QUAD, Kishida was trying to woo "like-minded" partners and countries in other parts of the world.

The Japanese prime minister expanded the so-called free and open framework by unveiling a new plan that includes massive new infrastructure and economic assistance program for countries in the Global South, Wang said.

"Following the US to upgrade Japan's military, Kishida's conservative foreign policy has not boosted Japan's international influence," Wang said. "On the contrary, it puts Japan in a more volatile security environment, making the country's national strategy less independent."

## Peace in world is 'most precious thing', UN told

China committed to playing constructive role in mediation, foreign minister says

By MINLU ZHANG  
at the United Nations  
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Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi elaborated on China's positions on key international and regional issues at the UN on Saturday, calling peace "the most precious thing in our world today".

"You may wonder if there is a path leading to peace. In fact, peace is the path. Without peace, development will not sustain; without peace, cooperation cannot happen. For the sake of peace, a single ray of hope is reason enough not to give up; the slightest chance deserves a hundredfold effort," Wang said.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, addressed China's positions during his speech at the general debate of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York on Saturday.

On the Ukrainian crisis, Wang said: "An end to the Ukraine crisis remains elusive."

The top priority is to commit to "no expansion of the battlefield, no escalation of fighting and no provocation by any party", and push for de-escalation of the situation as soon as possible.

He said China is committed to "playing a constructive role, engaging in shuttle mediation and promoting talks for peace, not throwing oil on the fire or exploiting the situation for selfish gains", adding that Brazil and other Global South countries have jointly launched the group of Friends for Peace.

Wang co-hosted a ministerial meeting with Brazil on Friday for the newly launched "Friends of Peace" platform on the Ukraine crisis.

Wang called the Palestinian question "the biggest wound to human conscience".

China "has always been a staunch supporter of the just cause of the Palestinian people to regain their legitimate national rights, and a staunch supporter of Palestine's

full UN membership", Wang said.

Wang noted that China has recently helped to bring about breakthroughs in intra-Palestine reconciliation, and he said China "will continue to work in concert with like-minded countries for a comprehensive and just settlement of the question of Palestine and durable peace and security in the Middle East".

On the issue of Afghanistan, Wang called for helping Afghanistan exercise prudent governance, fight terrorism effectively, improve people's lives and reinvestigate the economy, for opening up a better future for the Afghan people.

Wang also said that the Korean Peninsula should not experience war again.

"The important thing is to make persistent efforts for de-escalation, commit to seeking solutions through dialogue and consultation, realize a transition from the armistice to a peace mechanism, and safeguard peace and stability on the Peninsula," he said.

In today's world, the security of all countries is tied together; the development of all countries is deeply integrated; each civilization has its own strengths, and countries should all enjoy sovereign equality, Wang said.

In the face of uneven and inadequate global development, China's proposal is to put development at the top of the global agenda, focus on delivering the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN 2030 Agenda, increase input in development, and help developing countries better respond to different risks and challenges.

"In the face of unilateral, bullying acts such as sanctions and blockade, China firmly supports countries in defending their legitimate rights, upholding the equity and openness of the international system, making global development more coordinated and beneficial for all, and jointly opposing technology blockade and rejecting decoupling or severing supply chains," Wang said.

## After the storm



Residents check for flood damage in Biltmore village in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene on Saturday in Asheville, North Carolina, the United States. Hurricane Helene made landfall Thursday in Florida's Big Bend with winds up to 140 mph. SEAN RAYFORD / GETTY IMAGES / AFP

## Finance: Achievements pave way for tangible results

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In 2010, Hungary announced its Eastern Opening policy which resonates well with the aims of the BRI. The MNB launched its Central Bank Renminbi Program in 2015. Its results include the development of the RMB settlement infrastructure between Hungary and its partners; the buildup of an RMB-denominated portfolio within the central bank reserves; favorable arrangements for RMB liquidity management; and last but not least, a regular platform for professional dialogue about RMB-related topics, the Budapest Renminbi Initiative Conference organized annually by the MNB.

Recently, Hungary also tapped into the opportunities of green financing available in China. In 2021, Hungary was the first sovereign country to issue green panda bonds in the Chinese market. This 1 billion yuan issuance was followed by another one in 2022 (2 billion yuan), and in 2024, the government

announced plans to tap the market again. This decision is underpinned by the fact that according to some estimates, the EU needs to double its green investments compared to the pre-pandemic level to reach the 2050 carbon neutrality goal.

Hungary has accumulated significant experience in mobilizing Chinese funds for its development, both in the private and public sectors, as China has become one of the biggest foreign investors in our country. In 2023, Hungary overtook the United Kingdom, Germany and France as the biggest recipient of Chinese foreign direct investments in Europe. The share of Hungary in the total Chinese FDI in Europe was 44.1 percent last year, while the "Big Three" had 35.3 percent.

Great achievements must pave the way for stronger future accomplishments. Digital and green finance are priority areas where cooperation between China and Hungary can produce further tangible results.

China has been a pioneer in developing central bank digital currencies, and thanks to our regular exchanges with the Digital Currency Institute of the People's Bank of China, we can learn and share firsthand experience about the ongoing CBDC-related initiatives both in Hungary and China. The MNB has been granted an observer status in the Multiple CBDC Bridge Project, in which the PBOC and its partners have already reached the minimum viable product stage for a groundbreaking cross-border CBDC payment platform.

Looking ahead, CBDCs are likely to catalyze the deep changes in our century as they provide a good basis for smart contracts, quick and seamless international payments, and for sure, they will spark innovation. We will witness the rise of new financial products, new types of financial institutions and a new landscape of finance which integrates the emerging economies of the world. Thanks to our efforts,

Hungary is now an excellent test bed for financial innovation and is ready to forge ahead with international partnerships for "win-win" outcomes. We have understood the formula of success in the 21st century: the combination of talent, knowledge, technology and capital, which multiply each other if a conducive environment and the right incentives are provided.

Joint efforts in this respect are urgent, and our approach needs continuous refinement in order to achieve long-term sustainable development. So it is wise to learn from the great ancient Chinese strategist, Sun Tzu, who once said: "Do not repeat the tactics which have gained you one victory, but let your methods be regulated by the infinite variety of circumstances."

The author is governor of the Magyar Nemzeti Bank, the Central Bank of Hungary. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## Medal: China, Brazil see key moment for relations

From page 1

"In a world increasingly fragmented and filled with confrontations, it is encouraging to witness how, under your leadership, President Xi Jinping, China is gradually establishing a more united and harmonious international political order," Rousseff said.

She added that she takes particular pride in the fact that in 2014, during the meeting of BRICS leaders in Brazil, Xi and she jointly announced the decision to set up the New Development Bank.

Marcos Galvao, Brazil's ambassador to China, said on the sidelines of the ceremony that Rousseff's

receiving of the medal was a very significant moment for relations between Brazil and China.

"I'm sure she's very touched by this. And so is Brazil. And this is really a very relevant expression of our friendship," the ambassador said.

The Friendship Medal is one of the national medals to honor foreign nationals who have made outstanding contributions to China's socialist modernization and the promotion of exchange and cooperation between China and foreign countries, as well as to the protection of world peace.

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# CHINA



President Xi Jinping, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, and other Party and State leaders pose for a group photo with recipients of national medals and national honorary titles at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Sunday, ahead of the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. LI XUEREN / XINHUA

## NATION HONORS HEROES, ROLE MODELS



President Xi awards Dilma Rousseff, former Brazilian president and president of the New Development Bank, with the Friendship Medal. The medal is the highest honor that China awards to foreign friends. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY



President Xi presents Huang Zongde, a war hero, with the Medal of the Republic, which honors people who have made exceptional contributions to the development of the PRC. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY



**Clockwise from above:** Lu Shengmei, a recipient of the title of People's Health Worker, arrives at the Great Hall of the People on Sunday. Lu, a retired doctor, worked in Jiaxian county hospital, Shaanxi province, for more than 50 years after graduating from a medical college in Beijing in 1968. ZHAI JIANLAN / XINHUA  
Recipients of national honorary titles arrive at the Great Hall of the People as part of a motorcade on Sunday. LIU BIN / XINHUA  
Members of the Chinese Young Pioneers salute the recipients of national medals and national honorary titles at the award ceremony on Sunday. YUE YUEWEI / XINHUA



Guards of honor escort honorary medals to the venue of the presentation ceremony on Sunday. During the ceremony in Beijing, 15 individuals were awarded China's national medals and national honorary titles. SHEN HONG / XINHUA

## CHINA

## Move toward modernization



Visitors view an exhibition called the *CPC's Thirteen Years in Yan'an and Chinese Modernization* at the Tongzhou district campus of the Renmin University of China in Beijing on Saturday. The exhibition was held to mark the upcoming 75th founding anniversary of the People's Republic of China. It comprehensively showcases the history of the Communist Party of China in Yan'an, Shaanxi province, and the nation's path to modernization through historical materials and precious artifacts. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

## Visitors praise Xizang's beauty

By DAQIONG in Lhasa and PENG CHAO

A four-day visit to the Xizang autonomous region left a group of Generation Z travelers with profound and positive impressions of the area's cultural and natural beauty.

Invited by Chinese embassies, 12 young visitors from 10 countries, including the United Kingdom, India, Sri Lanka and South Korea, explored cultural and natural landmarks in Nyingchi and Lhasa such as the Potala Palace, Jokhang Temple, the University of Xizang Medicine, Yani National Wetland Park and a *thangka* painting academy.

The visit gave participants a fresh understanding of Xizang's development, ecological conservation and rich cultural heritage.

Moon Shin-ho, a visitor from South Korea who speaks fluent Chinese, was particularly struck by Tibetan Opera and other traditional arts. Moon, who has traveled extensively, said he was excited to explore Xizang for the first time.

"The local culture here is unlike anywhere else in the world," he said. "It's a unique culture that has been passed down through generations and is full of vitality."

He said he was also captivated by Xizang's natural beauty. "The clouds seem to hang so low here, creating a breathtaking scene against the blue sky," he added.

Mimi Templar Gay, from the United Kingdom, described the trip as "amazing," praising both the region's natural and cultural splendor, as well as the warmth of its people. She was particularly moved by the opera *Princess Wencheng*, which recounts the story of the princess of Tang Dynasty (618-907) who traveled to marry the Tibetan ruler Songtsen Gampo over 1,300 years ago.

"The storytelling and the local involvement in the performance were truly wonderful," Gay said.

Gay also expressed a deep interest in Tibetan medicine, having received health advice from Tibetan medical expert Samdrub Choipel.

Shafiya Nawzer, from Sri Lanka, echoed her fellow travelers' sentiments. "The experience here is something you don't get every day," Nawzer said, adding that she was deeply touched by the kindness and hospitality of the people she met.

Palden Nyima contributed to this story.

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## Confucius Institutes celebrate 20 years of language promotion

By ZHAO YIMENG  
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The 20th anniversary of the founding of Confucius Institutes was celebrated Friday in Beijing, marking two decades of promoting Chinese language and culture worldwide.

Yu Yunfeng, director of the Center for Language Education and Cooperation at China's Ministry of Education, reaffirmed the country's commitment to the institutes and the expansion of international Chinese education during the event.

"We are focused on improving curriculum development, teacher training and educational resources to provide better services for those interested in learning Chinese and understanding China," Yu said.

This year, 33 Confucius Institute directors who have served for more than a decade were awarded commemorative medals, bringing the total number of recipients to 159.

Among the honorees was Saodat Nasirova, director of the Confucius Institute at the Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies in Uzbekistan, which was the first Confucius Institute established overseas in 2004. Nasirova noted significant

growth at the institute during her tenure, with the number of students rising from fewer than 200 a decade ago to over 800 today.

"Previously, our students ranged from 6 to 45 years old, but now we even have students as old as 65," Nasirova said.

She attributed the increased interest in learning Chinese to Uzbekistan's growing economic ties with China. The country is home to around 2,800 joint ventures, and many Uzbeks view Chinese language skills as a fast track to opportunities in these companies.

In response to the demand, the institute has launched Chinese business language courses over the last three years that focus on speaking and listening rather than reading and writing characters. Nasirova said these courses have attracted students looking to pursue further education in China after attending the institute.

While some Confucius Institute graduates opt to stay in China, an increasing number have returned to Uzbekistan in recent years to find well-paying jobs aligned with their qualifications.

The Tashkent institute collaborates with Lanzhou University in China's Gansu province, which has

provided Chinese teachers and volunteers. Four graduates from the institute have also stayed on as instructors.

As interest in learning Uzbek grows among Chinese nationals working in joint ventures, the institute has expanded its offerings. Last year, it organized a three-month Uzbek language training course for 25 students, including employees of Chinese tech giant Huawei.

Looking ahead, Nasirova said the institute aims to train more interpreters for specialized industries and government roles, as demand for skilled language professionals continues to rise with the deepening ties between China and Uzbekistan.

"The need for interpreters, particularly those versed in specialized terminology, is growing across various sectors. Developing a new generation of interpreters will be key to our future success," she said.

The Chinese International Education Foundation, which organized the anniversary event, said Confucius Institutes are currently operating in more than 100 countries. Ten new institutes were established this year in Belarus, Russia, Kiribati, Lesotho, Malaysia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Spain, Hungary and Indonesia.

## Ethnic sports foster unity in Chongqing

By TAN YINGZI and DENG RUI  
in Chongqing

In a vibrant village in Chongqing's Pengshui Miao and Tujia autonomous county, a bamboo-woven spherical ball bounced between teammates during a recent match, its tinkling bell echoing through the air. The bamboo ring ball match was one of the highlights of the 14th Ethnic Unity and Progress Promotion Week.

The annual weeklong event aims to promote interaction and unity among the region's diverse ethnic communities, while also serving as a prelude to China's National Day Holiday, which starts on Tuesday, local authorities said.

"The sport looks simple, but it requires a lot of skill and physical strength," said Mao Fuchuan, a 38-year-old accomplished bamboo ring ballplayer from the village.

Bamboo ring ball, known in Chinese as *zhulingqiu*, is one of a variety of traditional ethnic games — including elephant-tug-of-war, board shoes racing and cockfighting — that are being featured at the event, which is also staging performances showcasing intangible cultural heritage traditions such as Taiyuan folk songs, bullfighting and pole lion dancing.

"These ethnic sports are excellent for preserving cultures and fostering ethnic unity," said Wen Zhenhua, Party secretary of the local



People engage in a bamboo ring ball match during the 14th Ethnic Unity and Progress Promotion Week in Chongqing's Pengshui Miao and Tujia autonomous county on Wednesday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ethnic and religious affairs committee. "By engaging in competitions, we encourage young people to carry forward these traditions."

Located in southeastern Chongqing, Pengshui is home to 318,000 Miao people, who make up 45.4 percent of the county's population. It has the highest concentration of Miao people of all ethnic minority counties in China, according to local officials.

In recent years, Pengshui has breathed life into a wide array of intangible cultural heritage traditions, including Miao crossbow craftsmanship, and has integrated ethnic cultural elements into daily

life through artistic products, study tours and scenic attractions.

"These activities deepen understanding of different ethnic customs and foster a strong sense of community," Wen said.

Pengshui's rich heritage has also become a draw for tourists. Each year, on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month, a Chiyou sacrificial ceremony is held at a stone totem pillar in Chiyou Jiuli Town, a Miao-themed architectural site. The ceremony attracts around 1.5 million visitors annually.

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## Experts report big boom in summer travel

China's tourism sees a surge in domestic and international trips

By CHENG SI  
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China's tourism market rebounded strongly this summer, with travel experts reporting significant growth in passenger numbers, spending, and both inbound and outbound trips as the country continues to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Domestically, travel surged during the summer holiday, which typically runs from early July to late August. The Civil Aviation Administration reported that domestic airlines transported 117 million passengers from July 1 to Aug 20.

Meanwhile, China Railway Group said it handled 887 million passengers from July 1 to Aug 31, a 6.7 percent increase year-on-year.

"Summer is always peak season for domestic tourism, but this year, tourists showed more interest in lesser-known destinations and traveled with more reasonable budgets," said a spokesperson for Tuniu, a travel portal. The domestic tourism market performed more evenly throughout the summer, with demand peaking in mid-July and lasting through the end of August.

Long-distance tours and family trips were the most popular choices — in fact, over half Tuniu's summer bookings were for far-flung destinations. Besides traditional tourist hot spots like Beijing and Shanghai, smaller destinations such as Yanbian Korean autonomous prefecture in Jilin province, Datong in Shanxi province and Chengde in Hebei province gained popularity for their cultural offerings and cooler climates.

"I took my 6-year-old daughter to Yanji in late July," said Ye Xiao, a 31-year-old teacher from Beijing,

speaking of the county-level city that serves as the seat of Yanbian. "The weather was pleasant, and we enjoyed exploring the Korean ethnic culture. It was a memorable trip with fewer tourists and great food at reasonable prices."

China's inbound tourism also experienced robust growth, buoyed by relaxed visa policies, including the 144-hour transit policy for citizens of 54 countries and the "ChinaTravel" topics that trended on international social media platforms.

And the 2024 Paris Olympics provided an additional boost to outbound travel, with LY.com reporting a 300 percent increase in hotel bookings in Paris and neighboring areas and an 80 percent surge in flight bookings from China's major cities to the French capital.

Qunar, another travel portal, noted that bookings for domestic flights by travelers using non-Chinese passports were 1.8 times higher compared to last year. Trip.com Group reported a 70 percent year-on-year increase in mainland tourism bookings, with South Korea, Thailand, Singapore, and the United States contributing the most visitors. Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou were the top destinations for international tourists.

Southeast Asia remained the top choice for Chinese traveling overseas due to cheaper flights, affordable hotels and favorable visa policies.

Dai Bin, president of the China Tourism Academy, told China Central Television that this summer marked the highest level of travel enthusiasm in recent years, with increases in the number of travelers, tourism spending and cross-border trips.

## Macao's CE candidate outlines his objectives

By WU KUNLING in Hong Kong  
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Sam Hou-fai, the sole candidate in Macao's upcoming chief executive election, has pledged to improve the lives of residents and uphold the "one country, two systems" principle.

The 62-year-old former president of Macao's Court of Final Appeal outlined his policy platform on Saturday.

Sam, who will be considered for the city's leadership role by the Chief Executive Election Committee on Oct 13, emphasized the importance of efficient governance and leveraging Macao's unique position to foster ties between China and Portuguese-speaking regions.

"I will do my utmost to meet the aspirations of Macao's residents for a better life," Sam said, stressing that the core of his governance would be strict adherence to the "one country, two systems" principle.

In his policy platform, Sam pledged to safeguard China's sovereignty, security and development interests while driving Macao's economic diversification and further integrating the city into national development plans. He outlined plans to improve governance, administrative efficiency and transparency while committing to a mechanism for ongoing dialogue with the public.

Sam also vowed to protect the customs and rights of residents of Portuguese descent, a group with deep historical roots in the city. Key initiatives include accelerating economic diversification, bolstering education and technology, and enhancing Macao's role as a commercial platform

between China and Portuguese-speaking countries. He proposed setting up government-held companies to promote technology transfers and innovation between Macao and Lusophone nations.

He also highlighted plans to boost Macao's innovation sector, apply for more national scientific funds and attract high-tech talent. He emphasized the importance of national research collaboration and announced plans to increase subsidies for Macao's national-level laboratories.

Sam's platform also addressed pressing local concerns such as supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, promoting the healthy development of the gaming industry and positioning Macao as an international tourism and leisure hub.

Election committee members praised Sam's clear responses during the policy session. Kevin Ho King-lun, a committee member and deputy to the National People's Congress, said many of Sam's proposals would tackle Macao's challenges.

Lawmaker Jose Pereira Coutinho commended Sam's commitment to improving executive-legislative communication, viewing it as a vital step in addressing socioeconomic issues.

Sam is the only eligible candidate in the race, having secured over 95 percent of the election committee's nominations. Born in 1962 in Zhongshan, Guangdong province, he relocated to Macao in the 1980s and was among the city's first group of judicial auditors in 1995. He served as president of the Court of Final Appeal for nearly 25 years before stepping down in August.

## BUSINESS

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## Silver lining showing for A-share market

CSRC reiterates importance of improving quality of A-share firms

By SHI JING in Shanghai  
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With active transactions, upbeat market sentiment, cyclically stronger consumption, and more often than not, economic stimulus packages, the well-known expression "Gold September and Silver October" has often been used to describe the vibrant Chinese property and capital markets in early autumn each year.

The rule seems to be working this time, at least seen from the strong performance of A shares last week, when the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index surged to over 3087 points on Friday, reversing, at least partially, sentiment among investors that had been dampened after the Shanghai index slid below 2700 points on Sept 18, the lowest since Feb 6. Last week marked the index's biggest gain in 16 years.

Even without the strong rally, experts are not very disheartened. The turnover rate of A shares in terms of free float market cap is around 1.5 percent. Chen Guo, chief strategist at China Securities, said this has approached the level when the A-share market reached historic lows.

Listed banks, the market heavyweights, had seen their share prices plummet by 8 percent over the two weeks ended Sept 20. The drastic price decline of banks, which takes place after the drop of other A-share sectors, usually signals the end of the market adjustment, according to Chen.

"The A-share market is ready for bottoming out given companies' profitability, average valuation and trading characteristics," he said.

Positive news is heard in external markets.

The US Federal Reserve announced on Sept 19 (Beijing time) a 50-basis-point cut on its policy rates, the first time since March 2020.

The start of an easing cycle in the US will help to improve A-share liquidity in the short term as pressure on the RMB's foreign exchange rate will be alleviated, opening up room for China's monetary policy, said Wu Xinkun, chief strategist at Haitong Securities.

Foreign capital may flow back into the A-share market over the short run, also improving A-share liquidity at the micro level. Public financial service providers as well as food and beverage companies may benefit in such a scenario, said Wu.

But Wu stressed that a more sustainable rebound in the stock market is determined by company fundamentals. If successive supportive economic policies can help propel China's economic recovery, an upward momentum will be more firmly baked into the A-share market, he added.

According to strategists from Shenwan Hongyuan Securities, a flat renminbi, avoiding further depreciation, is the logic for A-share market's rebound at the macro-level.

If China can also further loosen its monetary policy, keeping a similar pace with the major economies, its stock market can expect a rebound. But if the scale of China's monetary relaxing is limited, even its influence is weaker than expected, a stock market rebound will be short-lived and investors' concern over medium-term economic growth may pick up, they said.

There is also a silver lining showing after the recent deep stock market adjustments in China.

Pan Gongsheng, governor of the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, said on Sept 24 that a 50-basis-point cut for the reserve requirement ratio will be made in the near term. This will introduce about 1 trillion yuan of long-term capital inflow into the



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

financial market, he said.

He also announced on Sept 24 the launch of a swap program, under which securities firms, asset managers and insurers can obtain liquidity from the central bank through collateralization of their financial assets such as bonds and stock exchange traded funds. The funds obtained from the program can only be used to invest in the stock market. The first phase of the program is set at 500 billion yuan, which scale is open for expansion, according to Pan.

Wu Qing, chairman of China Securities Regulatory Commission, the country's top securities watchdog, said on Sept 24 that they will come up with a guideline to introduce more medium- to long-term capital into the capital market.

The State Council rolled out in April a guideline made up of nine detailed measures to advance the high-quality development of the Chinese capital market. Supervision over initial public offerings, dividend payments and delistings has been emphasized. In this way, the quality of listed companies can be improved, bringing higher returns to investors, the country's Cabinet said in the guideline.

CSRC has also reiterated the importance of improving the quality of A-share companies. It has introduced a set of policies to take a tighter grip over IPOs and step up supervision of listed companies.

According to Nie Wuyi, a strategy researcher from China Galaxy Securities, high-quality listed companies are the ultimate sources of confidence to investors.

"The equity market matures in progressive waves. It is a process during which quality companies stand out and the lousy ones are eliminated. This can be proven by the past 30 years of the Chinese stock market. Less competitive companies or those making fraudulent disclosure were screened out when the market underwent drastic volatility. But it was also during this period when quality companies won the hearts of long-term investors," he said.

A quality listed company should see its growth path in line with China's economic development trajectory. A clear development strategy, complete corporate governance, a strong talent pool, stress on long-term and stable management, and importance attached to safeguarding shareholders' interests are crucial to make a quality company, said Nie.

Zheng Guangwen, chairman of Shenyang Fortune Precision Equipment, understands that technological innovation is now key to improving the quality of companies and they need to grow their unique competitiveness in terms of strategy, business models, development concepts or the grasp of core technologies so that

the capital can be more patient, willing to grow with the companies for longer terms.

On the other hand, a right understanding of IPO should be more deeply rooted among Chinese companies, said Pi Haizhou, an independent financial analyst.

The idea of profiteering from the stock market should be uprooted. While issuance prices used to soar, it was partly pushed up by sponsors, who could seek more commission from higher IPO prices. This somehow was in line with the interest of some actual controllers, major stakeholders and board members, who would like to cash in by reducing their shares shortly after the company's IPO. All these have largely impaired investors' interests and jeopardized the sustainable development of the Chinese stock market, explained Pi.

Such mindset should therefore be eradicated. A complete mechanism will help to achieve the goal, preventing profiteering at the very beginning and making room for the real quality companies in the stock market, he added.

It is good news that the A-share market is already undergoing structural transformation under which investors are taking central stage, said Fang Dongming, head of China Global Markets at UBS.

Efforts are being made to usher in more medium- to long-term cap-

ital into the A-share market. While the digital economy, high-end manufacturing and new energy are the drivers of China's high-quality development, corresponding financial support should be stepped up. A complete and more effective secondary market can benefit innovative companies, said Fang.

The sound development of the Chinese capital market over the longer term is inseparable from a larger market size and bigger appeal to investors, said Fan Hua, head of global asset management giant BlackRock in China.

Overseas capital will of course come when the market size is big enough and its returns are lucrative. Domestic institutions can also be more active in expanding their overseas footprints. In this way, two-way capital flow can be smoother, which is also conducive to the sustainable development of the Chinese capital market, she said.

Greg Yu, general manager of JP Morgan Securities (China) Co Ltd, suggested that more long-term asset management firms such as pension fund managers, overseas hedge funds and insurers should be allowed to access the Chinese stock market. This will increase the trading value, lift market liquidity and improve market vitality. These institutions can also serve as market stabilizers, he said.

## Beginning of a slow but sure recovery

REPORTER'S LOG

By Shi Jing

"Garbage time of history" has somehow become the catch phrase among Chinese A-share investors lately.

Bearing a similar connotation to the metaphor of "chicken ribs" more familiar to most Chinese, indicating the doldrums in the stock market and investors' unwillingness to scatter the stock holdings in a "chop chop" manner, the new buzz phrase was claimed to be attributed to Ludwig von Mises, leader of the Austrian School of Economics.

According to information on the internet, von Mises defines "garbage time of history" as a period of time violating basic economic laws. But individuals cannot make any changes during this period and are doomed for failure.

But this seemingly "gilded" theory, which can somehow make A-share investors feel better when the stock market is indeed sullen, is fake. Wang Wen, executive director of Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China, wrote in a column in early July that the phrase is nothing but academic cheating. By going through every book of von Mises, the presence of this phrase is zero, according to Wang.

Maybe we can take it as a white lie invented by some clever investor to give himself some comfort after going through all the downturns so far this year. To make him feel even better, the phrase has become so popular these days that it can be said that this clever jargon inventor is not the only one having a hard time in terms of equity investment.

But for the vast majority of A-share investors, it is a little bit too early to immerse themselves into sorrow and self doubt.

The stock market mirrors the real economy. China has undergone rapid growth for decades, double-digit for many years. Every rational and mature investor should understand that such growth cannot last forever, especially after considering the size of the Chinese economy. We should also get used to a slower but more sustained development speed when not only China, but also the world, has entered a new normal.

Look around. We can see Chinese companies making every effort to explore new opportunities, improve efficiency and fully embrace new technologies.

Patience should be given to the stock market. Investors and regulators are more aware of the very core of the stock market, which is the quality of listed companies. Changes are being made to basic market mechanisms and policies. Let's be fair, when the market is booming, people will somehow believe that everything is perfect. It is only when setbacks occur that people will realize the importance to consolidate the foundation. It is just human nature.

On the other hand, the A-share market is still very young. Look at the United States and Hong Kong, you can see the dark days they had been through all those years. Otherwise, phrases like "black swan" or "grey rhino", which are true market lingo — salute to that, would not have been invented. But the market matures during these difficult times. Investors also come to know that you should not put all your eggs in one basket and, more importantly, develop the ability to select the companies with true investment value.

But "garbage time of history" is not completely fraud. "Garbage time" does exist, and not strange to basketball aficionados, as they know it describes the end of a timed game when the outcome has already been decided.

It is definitely not the end of any trading in the Chinese equity market. On the contrary, it is fair to say that it is just the beginning of a slow but sure recovery. The lessons learned during the so-called "garbage time" will be of much value when "harvest time" comes. Just stay tuned.

# BUSINESS



Pedestrians walk past a cross-border financial advertising board in Hong Kong on Jan 20, 2022. ZHANG WEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

## Mainland investors' trend to allocate assets globally on rise

Higher yields, diversification of options seen as major motivators

By SHI JING in Shanghai  
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Chinese people's increasing interest in diversifying investments on a global scale has attracted rising attention from both policymakers and financial services providers.

An HSBC Group survey showed that Chinese mainland investors' willingness to allocate their assets globally has been on the rise this year compared to 12 months ago. About 52 percent of Chinese mainland interviewees said they will increase their investments in overseas markets.

Echoing HSBC's finding is Freeman Tsang, head of intermediaries at Pictet Asset Management Asia excluding Japan.

Chinese people's rising willingness to invest overseas can be seen in their surging distribution businesses over the past few months, said Tsang.

Qualified domestic institutional investors and qualified domestic limited partners, both of which link Chinese investors with overseas markets, provided more evidence of such a trend. Upon exhausting the previously approved quota, such applications have continued, he said.

Given the fact that China has been lowering interest rates, with the deposit rate currently slightly above

1 percent, people have been considering other opportunities offering higher yields, said Tsang.

As a result, Pictet has seen its cross-border wealth management and mutual recognition of funds (MRF) activity expand significantly over the past few months, he said.

The Cross-boundary Wealth Management Connect Scheme in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, which started in September 2021, was upgraded in February by lowering the threshold for retail investors, expanding the scope of investable products and lifting the allowable investment ceiling. Only four months after the upgrade, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority announced plans of another revision on available products, quotas and sales processes.

The Hong Kong financial regulator's ambition did not appear out of nowhere.

Tsang said market demand for Cross-boundary WMC, allowing GBA-based Chinese mainland investors to access the Hong Kong and Macao capital markets, was moderate at the very beginning. The program recorded a total 15.2 billion yuan (\$2.15 billion) of capital flow both at the northbound and southbound ends at the end of February,

according to the Guangdong provincial branch of the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank.

The number quickly spiked to 83.5 billion yuan as of the end of July, increasing by more than four-fold compared to the figure in February, with the majority of capital flows entering Hong Kong and Macao via the southbound leg.

One month after the upgrade, an additional 24,288 individual investors in the GBA signed up for the Cross-boundary WMC, surging 9.16-fold on a monthly basis, according to the PBOC's Guangdong branch.

International lenders have responded quickly. HSBC has provided over 100 funds under the southbound leg of the connect program, under which Chinese mainland investors can access overseas markets. Standard Chartered has introduced about 550 products under the southbound leg while DBS has launched over 220 wealth management products for Chinese mainland investors.

"The regulator will not discuss further opening-up of the institutional arrangement if there is no surging demand," said Tsang.

MRF, which was launched in July 2015, is another example.

Under MRF, Hong Kong-domiciled funds are available to Chinese mainland investors, and vice versa. According to the current regulations, a maximum 50 percent of

assets under management of funds sourced from Hong Kong can be sold to Chinese mainland investors. An identical cap has been set for the other direction of the MRF.

But the China Securities Regulatory Commission, the nation's top securities watchdog, released a draft version of the revised MRF regulations in June, planning to raise the limit to 80 percent. In this sense, Chinese mainland investors tapping into the Hong Kong capital market will be provided with more options.

Although the draft regulations are still awaiting finalization — which market mavens expect to take place in the fourth quarter — Pictet is already benefiting. With Tianhong Asset Management as its local partner on the Chinese mainland, the number of sub-distributors has tripled over the past three months, said Tsang.

International institutions plan to introduce more Hong Kong-domiciled products to benefit from the upgraded MRF arrangement, and Pictet is no exception, he added.

"We strengthened our investment team earlier this year by hiring a new senior investment manager in Hong Kong. Given the huge development potential of MRF, we also plan to introduce an Asian US dollar bond strategy fund to MRF. Meanwhile, we will continue to expand our Hong Kong-domiciled product range," Pictet said.

## Businesses see success in China's pet sector

NANJING — Shen Jing is a perfect example of the modern pet sector's target customer. At 23, the human resources worker devotes nearly a fifth of her monthly salary to pampering her golden retriever.

"I spend around 1,500 yuan (\$213) each month on everything from dog food and snacks to regular grooming sessions," Shen told Xinhua News Agency as she walked her dog in Suzhou, Jiangsu province. "He's like a child to me."

Shen is far from alone in her spending habits in China these days.

The growth of the middle-income group, rapid urbanization and shifting demographics — including an aging population and a growing number of people who are choosing to delay marriage and parenthood — have transformed China into one of the fastest-growing pet markets in the world.

According to an industry report, the urban pet (dogs and cats) market in China grew to 279.3 billion yuan in 2023, up 3.2 percent from 2022. It is projected to jump to 361.3 billion yuan by 2026.

This surge in Chinese demand bodes well for pet food and pet product companies, and for businesses ranging from dog grooming salons to luxury pet hotels.

At the production workshop of Jiangsu Weihong Pet Products Co Ltd in Huai'an, a fresh batch of dog chew treats had just been packaged and was ready for shipment when Xinhua reporters visited.

"Our pet snacks have consistently achieved over 10 percent annual growth," said Hu Zimeng, the company's general manager. "We're more confident than ever about expanding into new markets."

During China's mid-year "618" shopping festival, sales of smart pet drying boxes — handy after downpours or baths — on Taobao, Alibaba's e-commerce platform, soared 408 percent from last year, and sales of smart pet deodorizing devices rose 335 percent.

"The pet market in China has enormous potential, and consumer demand is becoming

increasingly diverse. This requires us, as industry professionals, to continually innovate," said He Yang, who manages the Pupurazzi pet chain brand in Chengdu, capital of Southwest China's Sichuan province.

Pupurazzi, the largest flagship pet store in Sichuan, saw its revenue hit 2.5 million yuan in its first month after opening on June 1, with daily foot traffic ranging from 2,000 to 5,000 visitors. "This far exceeded our expectations," said He.

Pet-friendly hotels are also in abundant supply. Shanghai resident Zhao Congyan often spends holidays with her dog at Blossom House, a hotel in Suzhou. The hotel offers facilities such as a vast lawn, pet-friendly dining areas and grooming services.

"It allows owners to relax with their pets," Zhao said.

Beyond pet services, pet health and wellness are gaining attention. Pet owners are increasingly focusing on preventive health care, including balanced nutrition and weight control.

Industry statistics show that the Chinese mainland pet healthcare market grew to approximately 70 billion yuan in 2023, accounting for roughly 24 percent of the overall pet industry.

Royal Canin, a France-based pet health and nutrition company, sees China's pet economy as more than a passing trend. Xu Juan, general manager of Royal Canin China, said that the surge in pet-related industries is a sign of social progress — one that could become a new driver for economic growth.

Xu's view is shared by Zhang Sining, a researcher at the Liaoning Academy of Social Sciences, who said that as modern society becomes more fast-paced and work-related pressure intensifies, many people are turning to pets to fulfill their emotional needs.

"This trend is opening up a blue ocean of opportunities across various sectors of the pet sector," Zhang said.

XINHUA



Customers shop with their pet at Marsmart pet store in THE BOX Youth Energy Center in Chaoyang district, Beijing, on Aug 16, 2023. ZHANG ZHAOQING / XINHUA

## Future calling

As we move on to even greener pastures, more farmers are reaping the benefits of digital technology. Internet-connected infrastructure and a future blossoming with opportunities for green growth. With the digital world at their fingertips, they can unleash the power of innovation to welcome a more bounteous harvest than ever before.

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## BUSINESSINSIGHT

## China grappling with weak consumer demand

## EAGLE EYE

By Sheng Songcheng

China's economy is grappling with the significant challenge of weak consumer demand. Data from second-quarter GDP growth show that gross capital formation, final consumption expenditure, and net exports contributed 1.9, 2.2, and 0.6 percentage points to economic growth, respectively.

Notably, the role of consumption in driving economic growth has waned, declining by 1.7 percentage points from the first quarter. This slowdown first emerged in the second quarter of last year and has been falling since.

From January to August of this year, total retail sales increased by only 3.4 percent year-on-year, a 0.1 percentage point decline from the January-to-July growth rate.

Although the consumer price index (CPI), rose by 0.6 percent year-on-year and 0.4 percent month-on-month in August, the year-on-year growth for the first eight months was only 0.2 percent.

A noteworthy trend is that since March, the CPI growth rate in urban areas has consistently been lower than in rural areas. This further confirmed the relatively weak purchasing power of urban residents and the persistent sluggishness of the consumer market.

The insufficient demand is also evident in the decline in capacity utilization. In the second quarter, China's capacity utilization rate dropped to 74.9 percent, which is noticeably lower than the pre-pandemic average of around 77 percent and lags behind that of international levels.

The root cause lies in the slow growth of household incomes, which is a key factor limiting consumption growth. In the first half, the per capita disposable income growth rate for urban residents was only 4.5 percent, significantly lower than the GDP growth rate for the same period.

Therefore, raising household incomes and driving consumption motivation is crucial to addressing the primary economic contradiction.

To boost consumer spending, tax reforms must be deepened. First, it is necessary to raise the personal income tax threshold. Currently, China's personal income tax threshold is set at 5,000 yuan (\$712). If we raise this threshold from 5,000 yuan to 8,000 yuan, it is estimated that the annual tax revenue could decrease by about 30 billion yuan, which makes up for just 0.17 percent of the total tax revenue last year and would have minimal impact on overall fiscal health.

But this change could yield significant socioeconomic benefits. It would directly benefit middle and lower-income earners by substantially increasing their disposable income, as this group is more sensitive to income changes, and any additional income is likely to be quickly spent.

Second, individuals with an annual income of below 350,000 yuan are the backbone of the consumer market, and their spending power plays a crucial role in driving economic growth. Thus, lowering the personal income tax rate for this income group could be considered.

If the tax rate for those who earn 100,000 to 200,000 yuan a year were reduced to 5



IMAGE GENERATED BY AI

percent from 10 percent, and the rate for the 200,000 to 350,000 yuan were reduced to 15 percent from 20 percent, it is estimated that annual tax revenue could decrease by around 100 billion yuan.

Third, there is still ample room for fiscal policy to stimulate demand. In July, China launched measures to promote large-scale equipment upgrades and the replacement of old consumer goods with new ones.

The measure includes an allocation of about 300 billion yuan in long-term special government bonds to facilitate this process, with approximately 150 billion yuan earmarked for local governments to support the replacement of old consumer goods.

Similar fiscal policies could be expanded to emerging sectors like telecommunications, electronic devices, and green products. Additionally, greater support can be launched to ensure the policy genuinely benefits a broader range of consumers.

Fourth, it is also important to boost local governments' incentives to promote consumer spending. Moving the consumption tax collection to local authorities is a signifi-

cant move of China's fiscal reform, which will profoundly impact local government revenue and local economies.

Traditionally, the consumption tax is collected at the production stage, which has weakened the incentives of local governments to promote consumption. For example, with goods like tobacco and alcohol, even if these items are consumed in different regions, the tax is collected at the production site, making it difficult for the local government where consumption occurs to benefit directly.

With such efforts, local governments will have a direct right in collecting consumption taxes, which will significantly enhance their motivation to stimulate and support their local consumer markets.

In addition, more efforts should be made to maximize financial support for consumer spending.

First, it is expected that the country could lower interest rates on existing mortgages to boost household purchasing power. China has implemented such adjustments twice before, in 2008 and 2023, both of which

effectively promoted economic recovery and growth.

Adjusting existing loan interest rates is not an easy task. Factors such as loan duration, interest rate levels, and market changes, make it challenging to precisely quantify the difference between rates on existing loans and new loans.

But a broad consensus is that lowering interest rates on existing loans could directly ease borrowers' repayment burdens, thereby unlocking consumer spending potential.

For example, if a household's monthly mortgage payment decreases from 2,000 yuan to 1,500 yuan, the extra 500 yuan could be redirected toward consumption.

Currently, interest rates on new loans have dropped significantly but rates on existing loans remain high, resulting in a substantial gap between the two. Given the relatively low deposit interest rates and higher rates on existing loans, many borrowers are opting to repay their loans early.

Against this backdrop, calls for reducing interest rates on existing loans have intensi-

fied. Such a move would not only reduce consumers' repayment burdens and stimulate spending, but also curb the trend of early loan repayments, partially offsetting the loss of interest income for banks.

However, multiple factors should be considered when implementing this policy. With banks accounting for over 90 percent of China's financial sector assets, their stable operation is also crucial to the financial market's stability and the real economy's healthy development.

Therefore, while discussing the reduction of interest rates on existing loans, it's essential to fully understand the banking system's unique challenges and constraints, including its capacity to absorb changes, manage risk and support the real economy.

Currently, banks' net interest margins have dropped to a historic low of about 1.54 percent, indicating substantial pressure on profitability.

While exploring new drivers of consumer growth, innovation in consumer finance products has also become essential.

Aside from mortgage loans, consumer loans accounted for 24.7 percent of household debt in China in 2023, compared to 30 percent in the United States, which showed both structural differences in consumption and the potential for growth in non-housing consumer loans in China.

By leveraging big data analytics, financial institutions can more accurately identify consumer needs and design products that better align with public expectations. This approach not only broadens the reach of consumer credit, but also taps into deeper consumer demand, helping to unlock spending potential.

A high-level meeting on July 30 provided us with clear direction — China enhancing the consumption ability and willingness of middle and lower-income earners is crucial to expanding domestic demand and promoting economic circulation.

Service consumption, as a key driver of consumption expansion and upgrading, plays an important role in improving people's quality of life and fostering social harmony.

Financial institutions should actively respond to policy guidance, increasing support to these areas through innovative financial products and optimized services, thereby offering consumers more convenient and efficient financing solutions to help accelerate the development of the service consumption market.

Achieving steady growth in the consumer market is not an overnight process. It requires coordinated efforts on both the demand and supply sides.

On the demand side, fiscal and monetary policies must be implemented precisely to raise household income levels and boost consumer confidence.

On the supply side, continuous optimization of industrial structures, enhancement of product and service quality, and diversification of consumer offerings are needed to meet the increasingly varied consumer demand.

To conclude, only when supply and demand work together in a positive cycle can the consumer market stabilize and move toward higher-quality development.

*The writer is a professor at China Europe International Business School and former director-general of the PBOC's statistics and analysis department.*

*The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

## US protectionism disrupting global supply chains

## MAIN STREET

By Su Qingyi

From the 1990s to 2008, global industrial supply chains experienced a golden era.

However, due to the United States' adherence to the mindset of national competition and zero-sum game thinking, it has introduced various restrictive measures in recent years, leading to disruptions in the operation of those chains. Under such circumstances, rebuilding political trust and abandoning trade protectionism are necessary to ensure the long-term stability and growth of supply chains.

Markets have enjoyed rapid development from the vitality of global supply chains.

After China's reform and opening-up in 1978, the nation quickly integrated into global supply chains through processing trade, which refers to the activity of importing all, or part of, the required raw and auxiliary materials, and reexporting related finished products after processing or assembly by companies within China.

In the 1990s, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, Central and Eastern European countries

also began to participate in global supply chains. The period from this time until the 2008 global financial crisis was the golden era for the development of such chains.

This was due to three main factors. First, developing countries supplied a large amount of labor. Second, multinational corporations from developed economies allocated resources globally. Third, technological advancements reduced trade and transportation costs.

Fundamentally, political divisions between countries were dissolved and political barriers were removed, paving the way for the market to play a decisive role in supply chains. As a result, low-cost labor in developing economies was combined with the abundant capital of developed economies to produce goods that could easily cross borders multiple times. From a business perspective, this allowed multinational companies to allocate resources globally based on economic costs.

Government restrictions thus inevitably hinder the development of global supply chains.

The division of labor in supply chains has two distinct characteristics. First, from the perspective of production, countries are keen to find the optimal combination of factors, resulting in the lowest production costs. This requires the free flow of these factors. Second, from the perspective of trade, different stages of pro-

duction are placed in countries with the lowest costs, requiring the free flow of goods. This means that governments must reduce restrictions on the free flow of factors and goods. To achieve this, countries must build mutual trust, eliminating uncertainties that hinder businesses from participating in global industrial supply chain divisions. At the same time, countries need to establish international trade and investment rules that promote the liberalization and facilitation of trade through multilateral, regional and bilateral channels.

The logic of US participation in global supply chains has shifted from market competition to national competition.

The development of supply chains follows the logic of market competition. The essence of this is that companies allocate resources based on economic benefits and participate in market competition. All countries benefit by participating in supply chains and improving their overall welfare. However, the US feels that China has gained more benefits from global supply chains in recent years. Furthermore, rather than focusing on overall welfare improvement and benefiting the majority of its businesses and consumers, the US has become more concerned with the welfare loss of certain domestic groups. Even if it harms its own interests, the US pursues greater damage to China's interests. This has led to US

suppression of China in supply chains.

US intervention in supply chains has brought numerous adverse consequences.

The US' adoption of national competition logic means that it inevitably interferes with the operation of global supply chains. The US has used various policy tools to interfere in recent years, such as discriminatory subsidies, export controls, unilateral tariff hikes and the creation of exclusive industrial supply chain alliances.

Discriminatory subsidies refer to financial support provided by a government to its own industries or companies in a way that gives them an unfair advantage over foreign competitors, giving the recipients a competitive advantage, either in the domestic market or in international trade.

Discriminatory subsidies affect the efficient allocation of global resources by multinational corporations. Export controls restrict the free flow of goods, leading to disruptions in industrial supply chains. Unilateral tariff hikes not only harm other countries' economic interests, but also raise end-consumer prices and production costs for downstream manufacturers in the US. The creation of exclusive supply chain alliances directly violates the principle of market cooperation, artificially splitting the supply chains into US and non-US systems.

Removing restrictions is key to returning global industrial supply chains to prosperi-

ty. The history and theory of global industrial supply chain operations demonstrate that enabling the market to play a decisive role in the allocation of global resources is essential for fostering the ongoing development of supply chains worldwide. This demands efforts from two aspects — rebuilding political trust and abandoning trade protectionism.

First, certain countries must waive the mindset of national competition and rebuild political trust. They should focus on improving their own welfare rather than adhering to a zero-sum game mentality. All countries should strengthen dialogue and cooperation, resolve differences through communication, and create a positive political environment for businesses to participate in global industrial supply chains.

Second, it is critical for countries to uphold the authority of the multilateral trading system and abandon unilateral protectionism. The rules of the World Trade Organization are the institutional guarantee for the smooth operation of global industrial supply chains, and all countries should adhere to them.

On this basis, all involved parties should further promote trade liberalization, providing institutional and regulatory support for the free flow of goods and services.

*The writer is a senior fellow and deputy director of the department of international trade, institute of world economics and politics, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*

# WORLD

## Envoy: More 'storytellers' needed on ties

Increased exchanges can help 'bring hearts closer', China's ambassador to US tells event

By MINGMEI LI in New York  
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Younger generations of Chinese and Americans are encouraged to help shape the narrative between the two nations, China's top envoy to the United States said in a speech.

Chinese Ambassador to the US Xie Feng, speaking at the "Written in the Sky: My China Story" event in New York, said that the youth are needed to tell the stories of exchanges between the two countries.

"We encourage the younger generation to visit and interact with each other more often, so as to bring hearts closer and pull together," Xie said. "We hope there will be more letter writers and storytellers in our two countries. We will write new stories of friendships and cooperation together."

The event, co-hosted by China Media Group (CMG) and the Bank of China, celebrated the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and commemorates the 45th anniversary of China-US diplomatic relations.

Participants shared their experiences of engagement with China through

letters and stories, reflecting on past experiences and offering insights and visions for future generations.

"Hopefully, when we look back at our life, we will not regret having done nothing to prevent our two countries from sliding back into estrangement and confrontation, nor will we be ashamed of yielding to 'political correctness' and allowing the world to veer into another 'Cold War,'" Xie said. "And hopefully, when our future generation opens this chapter of history 50 years from now, they will feel fortunate that at such a historical juncture, China and the US have once again made the right choice."

Xie said that more than 10,000 American youths have visited China since President Xi Jinping proposed that 50,000 American young people go to China for exchanges and study programs over five years. Xi made the invitation during his summit with US President Joe Biden last November.

The ambassador welcomed more young Americans to become envoys of "goodwill of the new generation", as well as more US tourists to travel to China with the 144-hour-visa-free-transit policy.



Chinese Ambassador to the United States Xie Feng receives a gift basketball from Luke Rankin, a student at Tri-Cities Prep Catholic High School in Pasco, Washington, at a story-sharing event in New York on Saturday. LI ZHIWEI / PEOPLE'S DAILY

Kenneth Cryan and Luke Rankin, students at Tri-Cities Prep Catholic High School in Pasco, Washington, spoke of their recent trip to China.

Cryan told China Daily that he participated in the cultural and sports exchange event with Chinese students at Beijing No. 8 High School. He said playing basketball was a lot of fun and helped him make friends that he would stay in touch with. He also received a basketball with the Chinese students' signatures.

Rankin told the audience that his favorite food is hot pot, even though it is very spicy.

Throughout the past 45 years, Xie said that the people-to-people connections never stop. China and the US were once linked by ping-pong, and now the ball is larger with basketball. He said younger generations will

continue to connect the two countries through culture and sports.

"Any conflict or confrontation that begins will be our failure and a disaster for the world. Any return to distractions for antagonism would be a loss for both and a tragedy of history. What our two peoples want, and the world hopes for is a healthy stable and sustainable China-US relationship," he said.

At the event, Xie said he has received many letters from Americans since last year — children in California shared their excitement over the return of giant pandas to the San Diego Zoo; a farmer by the Mississippi River expressed his hope to sell more corn to China; and many fans of Chinese culture, sinologists and students of the Chinese language voiced their support for a stable China-US relationship.

The foundation for China-US goodwill and the impetus for our interactions remain as strong as ever, and there is "every reason" to stay optimistic and hopeful, he said.

Lamont Repollet, the president of Kean University in New Jersey, said that thousands of students have benefited from education exchanges. Kean is the only US public university that has a full campus with thousands of students in China.

Denis Simon, the former executive vice-chancellor of Duke Kunshan University in China, expressed how impressively China has changed since his first visit to the country in 1981.

He said that he hopes that the people of the two countries will to address global challenges such as climate change and public health.

## Thailand eyes jump in exports to China

By YANG WANLI in Bangkok  
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Thailand should capitalize on the growing e-commerce industry to sell more products in the Chinese market while strengthening cooperation with Beijing on exports, Thai Commerce Minister Pichai Nariphaphan says.

After a recent meeting with the Chinese ambassador to Thailand, Pichai emphasized the long-standing friendship between the two countries, saying economic collaboration will bring long-term benefits to both sides.

He dismissed concerns about the influx of Chinese goods, saying nearly 80 percent of China's exports to Thailand are capital and intermediate goods essential for manufacturing and exports.

"Those products are mostly exported from Thailand to other countries after further processing ... It boosts our economy and enhances employment," he said.

In addition, Chinese tourists contribute a lot to the kingdom's economic growth, with the government aiming for about 8 million arrivals this year, Pichai said.

Thai tropical fruits have also become a big draw among Chinese consumers, contributing significantly to the kingdom's annual income from fruit trade, he said.

"I call for a rational perspective from Thai media and public (on) our trade with China. E-commerce, which has swept the globe, may impact Thai small businesses, (but) it can create more opportunities for Thai products going outside."

At a recent international commerce expo, Thailand leveraged Chinese influencers for e-commerce livestreaming, generating about \$20 million baht (\$10 million) in transactions in just one day, he said.

Han Zhigang, China's ambassador to Thailand, said China will continue to help Thailand expand trade through both traditional channels and online platforms. "We are also happy to provide professional training to enhance the kingdom's e-commerce talent"

The so-called cheap Chinese goods, which have attracted significant public attention in Thailand, mainly consist of daily chemical products, food, etc, accounting for less than 10 percent of China's exports to Thailand, he said.

### Complying with laws

Beijing has always instructed Chinese companies to operate overseas in accordance with local laws, he said, adding China will continue to support efforts to strengthen supervision and address any rule violations.

China has been Thailand's largest trade partner for several years, with bilateral trade reaching \$126.3 billion last year and a trade surplus of \$25.1 billion for China, according to the Chinese embassy in Thailand.

"We don't see trade surplus to Thailand as our target; instead, we always welcome Thai products to enter China," Han said.

He cautioned that focusing solely on isolated cases without considering the overall context could harm the interests of both Chinese and Thai people, urging closer cooperation to foster a fair and healthy trading environment.

Narongsak Putthapornmongkol, president of the Thai-Chinese Chamber of Commerce, said Sino-Thai trade outcomes should not be overlooked.

He highlighted the Thai-Chinese Rayong Industrial Zone, which significantly boosted Thai exports last year and provided more than 55,000 jobs.

"Instead of taking jobs from Thais, Chinese enterprises have helped boost employment, as for every Chinese employee hired, the company must hire four Thais."

He urged government sectors to improve the competitiveness of Thai businesses in global trade and strengthen law enforcement against illegal activities, adding his chamber will assist Chinese companies by providing information on local laws.

## Reverse demand

People take part in a National Rejoice March at the Parliament Square in London on Saturday. The protest is in support of the United Kingdom rejoining the European Union. PA



## US audience treated to concert of traditional Chinese music

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco  
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A concert featuring traditional Chinese stringed instruments introduced an American audience to China's classical and folk music, in an effort to foster cultural exchange through the universal language of music.

The concert, titled *The Charm of Chinese Strings*, was hosted at the Chinese Consulate General in San Francisco on Thursday, where four accomplished musicians from the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing displayed the unique qualities of four traditional instruments: the *pipa*, *guzheng*, *sanxian* and *yangqin*.

The musicians, all of whom have achieved top honors in prestigious music competitions, were invited by Chinese Consul General Zhang Jianmin and his wife Zheng Xin, as part of their US tour, which also included a concert at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and performances in Oregon.

"These traditional Chinese instruments are each deeply intertwined with the rich tapestry of Chinese culture spanning thousands of years," Zheng told the audience members, who were mostly from art communities in the Bay Area. "They have been essential, not only in rituals and religious ceremonies, but also in folk celebrations and artistic expressions," she said.

The *pipa*, one of China's most beloved instruments, captivated listeners with its expressive range, while the *guzheng*, a 2,500-year-old plucked instrument, charmed the audience with its ethereal tones.

The *sanxian*, a three-stringed

plucked instrument, resonated with deep, sonorous notes, while the *yangqin*, a hammered dulcimer, demonstrated versatility in both delicate and powerful expressions.

The performers presented a selection of traditional Chinese masterpieces, including *The Music of the Ancient General* and *The Moon of the River on the Spring Night*. Those pieces, each "a treasure of China's musical heritage", not only showed the musicians' exceptional skills but also transported the audience through the songs and stories of ancient China, said Zheng.

In the audience was Gary Bukovnik, a San Francisco-based artist who has had numerous museum exhibitions in China. "I love this music. This is wonderful, and really super," Bukovnik told China Daily. "We don't have enough (Chinese music) in the United States, but I think Chinese musicians are getting to be more of interest to so many people."

Bukovnik, who has a deep appreciation for Chinese culture, shared his personal connection to *pingtan*, a traditional Chinese opera form he encountered during his time in Suzhou, a city in Jiangsu province.

He said that while Chinese folk music may seem unfamiliar to some in the West, there are underlying similarities between instruments like the *guzheng* and the Western zither.

Music, Bukovnik said, can bridge cultural differences and bring people together. "What seems so foreign turns out to be so familiar," he said, adding that such similarities can help people relate to unfamiliar musical traditions.

Conway B. Jones Jr, chairman of

the Calvin Simmons Center for the Performing Arts and a former president of the Oakland Youth Orchestra, echoed Bukovnik's sentiments.

"Music transcends everything. Music transcends all our differences, and music has the ability to bring us together as one in harmony," he said, sharing his observation of the exchange between US and Chinese youth musicians.

"Art is essential to culture. Art is one of the foundational pillars of culture. So cultural exchange through the arts is very important, and we hope that the message goes out to the larger community," said Jones.

He recalled an experience of cultural exchange in 2019 when about 100 musicians from the Oakland Symphony Youth Orchestra embarked on a performance tour of three Chinese cities. Jones described it as "an overwhelmingly positive experience", saying that the young musicians not only performed for Chinese audiences but also engaged in meaningful exchanges with their Chinese peers.

Jones said that a few years ago, the Oakland youth orchestra welcomed a delegation of young choral musicians from China, who performed for a week in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The exchanges have proven to have lasting impact.

"Young people getting together, living together, exchanging stories, fashion and culture like this, it was a very positive experience," Jones said. "I think they have continued to communicate with one another. The friendships that they made in that cultural exchange, I think, will endure throughout most of their lives, if not all their lives."

## 148 dead in Nepal floods

KATHMANDU — Residents of Nepal's flood-hit capital returned to their mud-caked homes on Sunday to survey the wreckage of devastating floods that have killed at least 148 people across the country.

Deadly rain-related floods and landslides are common across South Asia during the monsoon season from June to September, but experts say climate change is increasing their frequency and severity.

Entire neighborhoods in Kathmandu were inundated over the weekend with flash floods reported in rivers coursing through the capital and extensive damage to highways.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority said 148 people had been killed across the country with another 59 still missing.

Home Ministry spokesman Rishiram Tiwari told Agence France-Presse that bulldozers were being used to clear several highways that had been blocked by debris, cutting

Kathmandu off from the rest of the country.

"More than 3,000 people have been rescued," he added.

The valley in which the capital sits recorded 240 millimeters of rain in the 24 hours up to Saturday morning, the country's weather bureau told the Kathmandu Post.

It was the highest rainfall recorded in the capital since at least 1970, the report said.

Monsoon rains from June to September bring widespread death and destruction every year across South Asia, but the number of fatal floods and landslides has increased in recent years.

Experts say climate change has worsened their frequency and intensity.

More than 260 people have died in Nepal in rain-related disasters this year.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



Security forces use an inflatable raft to evacuate residents to safety in Kathmandu, Nepal, on Saturday. NAVESH CHITRAKAR / REUTERS

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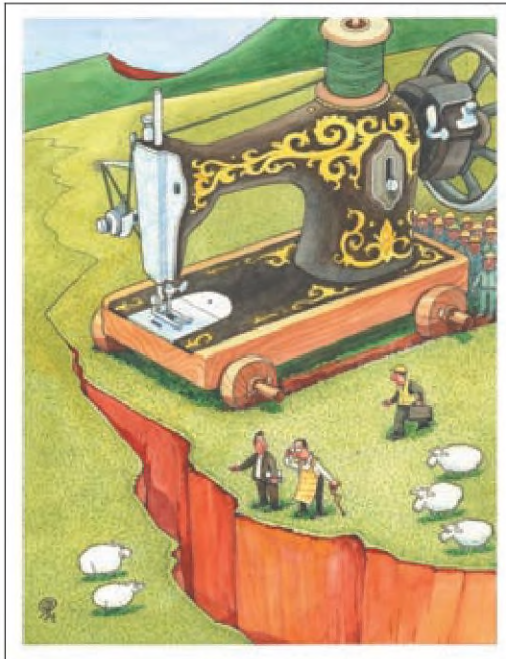
# WORLD

# EARTH IS THEIR CANVAS

**Editor's note:** In order to promote global cooperation to address climate change and protect biodiversity, China Daily and the Publicity Department of the CPC Ordos Municipal Committee have organized the International Cartoon and Illustration Exhibition on a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind 2024, with the theme "One Earth". Displayed below are award-winning pieces as well as outstanding works that demonstrate Ordos' achievements in environmental protection and showcase AI's potential.

### GOLD, SILVER, BRONZE PRIZES

#### SILVER PRIZE



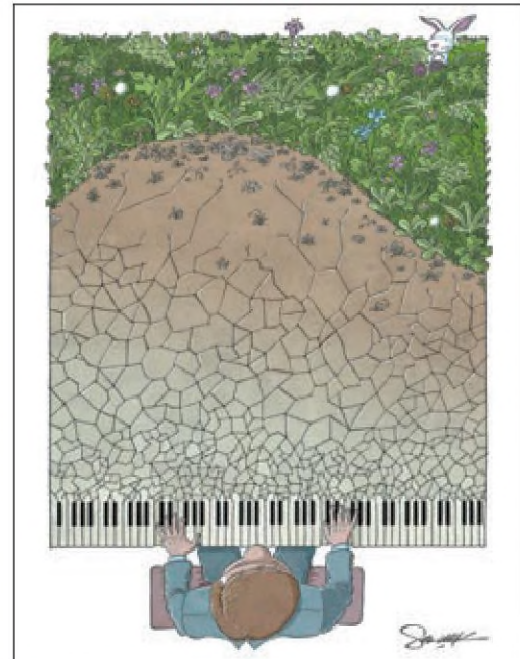
*Dilemma.* BA BILIG, CHINA

#### GOLD PRIZE



*Plastic Invasion.* DIEGO HERRERA, CANADA

#### SILVER PRIZE



*The Virtuoso.* ENGIN SELCUK, TURKIYE

#### BRONZE PRIZE



*Paying Tribute.* WANG KAIXIN, CHINA

The International Cartoon and Illustration Exhibition on a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind 2024, with the theme "One Earth", calls for global cooperation to address global warming and protect the environment.

Using art as a bridge, the exhibition invited cartoonists, illustrators, and art enthusiasts worldwide to depict a green, low-carbon lifestyle and harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature.

The exhibition received nearly 3,700 works, including more than 1,400 overseas entries, from about 60 countries and regions. The entries reflect deep thought and strong emotional impact, highlighting artists' shared recognition of the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind. The works, through artistic expression, focus on environmental issues, calling for international cooperation to protect our planet.

A total of 135 artworks were selected and showcased at the Ordos Art Museum in Ordos, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, including those that won the gold, silver and bronze prizes, the Prize of Excellence, the Eco-Friendly Ordos Prize, the Prize of Excellence for AI-Assisted Works, besides other shortlisted artworks.

#### BRONZE PRIZE



*Evolution.* SALAR ESHRATKHAH, IRAN

#### BRONZE PRIZE



*Zootopia (series).* LIN MINGRUN, CHINA

### PRIZE OF EXCELLENCE\*

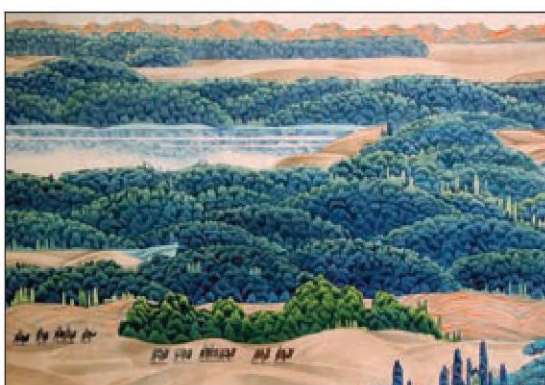


*Book's Fairy.* SITU LUOJIE, CHINA

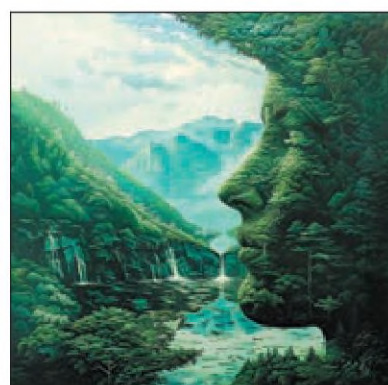


*Bridge.* SERGEY SICHENKO, ISRAEL

### ECO-FRIENDLY ORDOS PRIZE\* & PRIZE OF EXCELLENCE FOR AI-ASSISTED WORKS\*



*Magnificent Kubuqi.* YU MEI, CHINA



*A Dreamlike Symphony of Nature and Humans (series).* LIAO BINGYUE, CHINA



*Cleaning Up Ocean Trash.* YANG ZHEN, CHINA

This year's exhibition has instituted the Eco-Friendly Ordos Prize to highlight Ordos City's remarkable achievements in desertification control, environmental protection, and energy conservation. To reflect the growing influence of technology in art, the Prize of Excellence for AI-Assisted Works has also been introduced.

*\*(not the full list).*

## SPORTS

## TENNIS

## Zhang finds feet again on home turf

Resilient veteran snaps losing streak with three big wins on return to China Open



Wild-card veteran Zhang Shuai of China celebrates a point during her win against American McCartney Kessler at the China Open on Wednesday, snapping a painful run of 24 defeats. With three consecutive wins in five days at Beijing's National Tennis Center, Zhang has fought into the round of 16 at her home WTA1000 tournament for the first time in six years. XINHUA

By SUN XIAOCHEN  
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"I've failed over and over and over again ... And that is why I succeed."

Michael Jordan's inspiring 1997 TV commercial line has found a perfect embodiment in tennis with Chinese veteran Zhang Shuai's revival, twice from disheartening losing streaks, turning heads across the sport's community.

The 35-year-old stole the show at this year's China Open by snapping a 24-match losing streak, the longest in 52 years in the sport, with three straight wins over the past week at her home WTA1000 tournament, while rejuvenating a storied career that seemed almost done, even to some of her diehard supporters.

Anchoring Zhang's unexpected Beijing upturn was a straight-sets first-round win against 65th-ranked McCartney Kessler of the United States on Wednesday, which ended her grueling victory drought of 24 matches, spanning 603 days since the beginning of last season.

Zhang backed it up on Friday with a second-round upset of No 6 seed and US Open semifinalist Emma Navarro, also in straight sets, on the Lotus Court, lighting up the venue where she claimed her career first WTA win 15 years ago.

Then, on Sunday, she completed a homecoming hat-trick, straight-sets win over Belgium's Greet Minnen.

As an unheralded wild card in

2009, Zhang took the tennis world by storm at the age of 20, when in just her second WTA match on the China Open's former central court, she stunned then world No 1 Dinara Safina of Russia, following up her first professional win over retired Czech star Iveta Benesova in her tournament debut.

Now, fighting back to winning ways when people start to write her off, Zhang chooses to laugh it off, instead of hitting back at the doubters.

"Yeah, I like to give everybody a surprise. If I keep winning, everybody will feel like nothing is a surprise," said a smiling Zhang after her win against Navarro.

"When I'm standing on these two beautiful courts, a lot of good memories come flooding back. When I was 20 years old, 15 years ago, I could beat the world No 1 on these courts, why can't I do it once more?"

"After 15 years, I have a lot more experience. I've played a lot more matches ... I focus on myself. We train hard every day ... I just keep going for every point, be patient. Yeah, there's a good result coming."

"It's perfect timing. Maybe God has a plan," said the former world No 22, who entered this year's China Open at 595th in the WTA rankings.

Also, as a wild-card entry, and perhaps still an underdog in the draw, Zhang is approaching the prestigious home event with more ease than her younger self, after having experienced a roller coaster career that is defined by tenacity.



Zhang Shuai hits a return to Belgium's Greet Minnen during their China Open third-round match on Sunday in Beijing. Zhang won the match, 6-2, 6-3. CHINA OPEN 2024

“After 15 years, I have a lot more experience. I've played a lot more matches ... I focus on myself. We train hard every day ... I just keep going for every point, be patient. Yeah, there's a good result coming.”

Zhang Shuai, on her surprise resurgence at the China Open

In a similarly uncanny pattern, Zhang suffered an eight-year, 14-match first-round losing streak at the Slams, dating back to the

2008 US Open, and was considering retirement ahead of the 2016 Australian Open, where her career took a turnaround.

She broke the Grand Slam spell with a tournament upset of then-world No 2 Simona Halep of Romania, and fought all the way to the quarterfinals in Melbourne, kicking off an upswing that took her to two WTA singles titles (Guangzhou 2017 and Lyon 2022) and two major doubles trophies at the 2019 Australian Open and 2021 US Open (alongside Samantha Stosur).

However, the pandemic derailed Zhang's rise, with the physical and mental toll taken by constant travel without returning home due to COVID-19 restrictions proving too much to handle for Zhang.

And thus began her second long struggle, resulting in a winless skid that lasted over a year and a half.

In the Open era, only one player has lost more than 24 straight matches. That came in the early days of the tour, when Sweden's Madeleine Pegel lost her first 29 matches from 1968 to 1972.

Her first home return in five years at the China Open has given Zhang fresh impetus.

"I think the special thing is, I've not been back to China for any tournament in five years. I always play really well in China, Japan, (South) Korea — the whole Asian season," said Zhang, a native of Tianjin.

"The courts, the weather, the air, everything. I feel so comfortable. I play very naturally. I play Zhang Shuai tennis."

"I don't know how many opportunities I will have to play in the China

Open, but 15 years later I'm still here. It's already very good."

As one of the most affable players on the women's circuit, Zhang, who's enjoyed a good reputation in the locker rooms, said the reception she received from her fellow players after her wins last week was warm and inspiring.

"When I got back to the locker room, everybody was jumping," Zhang said on Friday. "C'mon, Shuai, I'm so happy for you!" They hugged me, even though they had been showering, and were (wearing) nothing, they were coming to congratulate me."

World No 6 and 2023 US Open winner Coco Gauff was doing her pre-tournament interviews when Zhang ended her losing streak on Wednesday, and the American prodigy had nothing but praise for her friend's resilience.

Gauff recalled receiving a pep talk from Zhang last year after losing in the quarterfinals at Roland Garros. By then, Zhang was already struggling with her own losing streak, but she still tried to comfort Gauff.

"She said: 'Don't worry Coco. You will win a Grand Slam. I have so much belief in you. I would bet my life on it,'" Gauff told WTA Insider. "And then I won US Open!"

"I never told her that, but it stuck with me for a long time, just that she had that belief in me. I think every player on tour likes her, so it's so great to see her win. I love her. She deserves everything."

## China's dancing 'Queen' delights record crowd

By SUN XIAOCHEN  
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Last year, even following her first major quarterfinal in New York, Zheng Qinwen made her China Open debut to a threadbare audience on the Diamond Court.

This year, though, her first match in Saturday's second round drew a tournament-record single-day attendance of 39,000, even with three days to go before the traditional holiday break.

The star power of "Queen Wen", unleashed by Zheng's monumental Olympic gold-medal run in Paris, is real and happening.

The National Tennis Center in northern Beijing is witnessing an unprecedented turnout, with legions of fans, young and old, swarming Zheng's practice sessions, even on work days. A security presence rarely seen for any other player was deployed at her pre-tournament promotional events.

A first-come-first-serve media ticketing policy, normally prepared

only for event finals, was activated for the first time for a second-round match on Saturday, due to high demand from a record number of journalists, photographers and broadcasters — exceeding 400 in number — covering the event on site.

The red-hot home favorite has lived up to her star billing by getting the first home outing in the wake of her Olympic triumph off to a flying start.

Serving aggressively and hitting hard to the loud roars of a capacity crowd, Zheng demolished Russian qualifier Kamilla Rakhimova 6-1, 6-1 in 75 minutes on Saturday night at the 15,000-seat Diamond Court. She advances, with ease, to a round-of-32 clash with Argentina's Nadia Podoroska on Monday.

The only thing that slowed Zheng down was a brief rain delay in the first set, during which the DJ played one of her favorite songs and the 21-year-old world No 7 couldn't help but groove to the beat.

After play resumed under a closed



Zheng Qinwen takes a selfie with the crowd after winning her China Open second-round match on Saturday. CHINA OPEN 2024

roof, Zheng went back firing on all cylinders, closing out the match in style with 22 winners to 10 unforced errors.

The national-hero status and high expectation from the crowd — normally a source of pressure for most

home favorites — seem to be suiting Zheng well, as she revels in it and invites it as a source of motivation.

"I don't think so," replied Zheng when asked if the fervent home support brought with it more pressure. "I might have felt that way when I

was 19, crumbling in front a cheering home crowd, but I've experienced enough ups and downs now at 21, so I consider it an advantage," added Zheng, who's racked up 17 wins out of her past 19 matches, including her successful title defense in Palermo, Italy, her gold finish in Paris and a second US Open quarterfinal earlier this month.

"Especially when I am feeling down, I see all the people supporting me. It's a big confidence boost that provides me some extra energy," she said.

Organizers of the China Open are doing their part to make Zheng's homecoming a successful one, scheduling prime-time practices and matches and playing the Zheng's favorite tunes.

"I try to be serious, but they were playing that music, I couldn't control myself," she said, referring to her light moment during Saturday's match.

"I had to move with the music, sing with the music, because they were playing the songs I love. I was

just curious why the audience wasn't dancing with me.

"I like traditional Chinese music. I listen to it a lot. I understand that the China Open played the song because of me."

Since her first-round loss at Wimbledon, Zheng has endured only two defeats over nearly three months, with the first to Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova in Cincinnati's second round, and then to world No 2 Aryna Sabalenka in New York.

"After the US Open, I've had quite a solid preparation for this tournament. I put a lot of work into my fitness. I have high expectations for myself on the China swing," said Zheng, whose best Grand Slam performance was a final appearance at this year's Australian Open.

"I made some mistakes after the Australian Open. I've learned that I need to stay focused and composed approaching every match. I'll keep doing that, and let's see if I can maintain a high level and be as consistent as possible."

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Committed to a higher cause in nation's pursuit for rejuvenation

The stories of the national medal and honorary title winners, most of them in their 80s with a few in their 90s, should inspire people across the country to contribute their bit to the development and prosperity of the country.

President Xi Jinping presented the medals to the 14 winners of national medals and honorary titles, the highest state honors, just a couple of days before the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

The award winners, all role models in their own fields, have one thing in common: they have ensured their work improves the lives of the people and contributes to the progress of the country.

Lu Shengmei, who was awarded the national honorary title, is a medical practitioner, who worked in Jiaxian county hospital, Shaanxi province, for more than 50 years since graduating from a medical college in Beijing in 1968. She retired in 1999 and could have returned to Beijing or joined another hospital as an expert and earned a handsome salary.

But she chose to stay in the county hospital and continue providing medical services for local residents. She continued treating patients three times a week for free till 2019 when she reached the age of 75. Such was her commitment to the medical profession and the passion to serve the people.

Li Zhensheng, 96, winner of the national medal, worked as a wheat geneticist throughout his long working life, making great contributions to the development of agriculture in China.

As Xi said in his speech at the medal conferring ceremony on Sunday, China can be proud of maintaining a high growth rate for decades while ensuring long-term political and social stability, but the country could not have become what it is today, the world's second-largest economy and a global manufacturing powerhouse, without the contributions of people who have devoted their life to a bigger cause just like the top national medal and honorary title winners have done.

A country needs role models in every field to motivate others to promote the development of the country. The contributions of the 14 outstanding figures who have devoted their life to their work, contributing to the development of the country in the process, should inspire others to follow in their footsteps.

China is going through a crucial period of building a great modern socialist country and achieving national rejuvenation through Chinese modernization. As Xi said, the Chinese people should strive for extraordinary achievements even while doing ordinary jobs and make contributions to overcome development and reform challenges, and safeguard social harmony and stability.

## Just solution needed, not more violence

In what is regarded as being the most damaging attacks Israel has carried out on the militant group since 2006, the Israel Defense Forces killed Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah on Friday.

The killing of Nasrallah, along with multiple others at the top of the Hezbollah leadership, who Israel says were legitimate targets under international law, is no doubt a heavy blow to a key regional foe of Israel. This along with the debilitating damage Israeli air strikes have done to Hezbollah infrastructure across Lebanon over the past week will certainly serve Tel Aviv's goal of significantly mitigating the security threat on Israel's northern border.

However, just as eliminating the top Hamas leaders doesn't equate to eradicating Hamas, quashing Hezbollah isn't as simple as wiping out its leading commanders. The United States' so-called war on terror and Israel's own history of violent exchanges with its regional foes have proved that, having been less than successful.

The Benjamin Netanyahu government is determined to use overwhelming force against Israel's regional enemies such as Hamas and Hezbollah. But if violence didn't work in the past, there is no reason to think it will work now or in the future.

Israel is trapped in a web of historical hostilities. Facing multiple enemies working in coordination, it is sinking deeper into the mire of violence in the mistaken belief that brute force is the only way it can guarantee its security.

But that is a false proposition. Nasrallah's killing, for instance, has only prompted pledges of resistance, from Hamas to the Houthis.

Hamas said in a statement that "crimes and assassination" by Israel will only increase the determination and the insistence of the resistance in Palestine and Lebanon.

The Houthis said in a statement: "The resistance will not be broken, and the Jihadist spirit of the Mujahideen brothers in Lebanon and on all fronts of support will grow stronger and bigger." In its own statement, Hezbollah vowed to "continue the holy war against the enemy and in support of Palestine".

To Israel, the world may appear to be a "safer place" without Nasrallah. But perhaps not for long. Because such an approach will hardly put an end to the organization.

As Israel exerts its military strength, it may want to look at the issue from a more strategic perspective as Beijing is urging all parties to do.

Expressing serious concern about the potential of the violence to convulse the entire Middle East, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Saturday said that "might cannot replace justice". He called for international efforts to maneuver an all-round cease-fire and then a security framework that takes into account all stakeholders' concerns.

Peace will not be achieved until the vicious circle of tit-for-tat violence is broken in the Middle East and the parties concerned accept that violence only begets violence.

## Uphold global vision to resolve Ukraine crisis

Foreign Minister Wang Yi made China's pro-peace stance on the Russia-Ukraine conflict unequivocally clear through a series of bilateral and multilateral meetings he held with foreign leaders and officials on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York over the past week.

In the meetings, the foreign leaders and officials of other peace-loving countries not only supported Beijing's stance but also pledged to work together to help resolve the Ukraine crisis through political means. That is conducive to countering the United States' disinformation campaign accusing China of being the "enabler" of Russia in the conflict.

In a ministerial meeting of the newly formed "Friends of Peace" platform on the Ukraine crisis he co-hosted with other officials at the UN Headquarters on Friday, Wang rightly pointed out that neither war nor hatred can help resolve the crisis, urging the world to choose peace over war, reconciliation over hatred, and dialogue over confrontation.

With the Russia-Ukraine conflict showing no signs of ending even after more than two and a half years, Wang urged the two parties to give peace a chance. The "Friends of Peace" platform is not about taking sides in the conflict or promoting bloc confrontation. Instead, it is meant to expose the US, which in the guise of "value diplomacy", has been prolonging the conflict by providing weapons, military equipment and material aid to Ukraine.

By doing so, the US aims to kill three birds with one stone — weaken Russia; tighten Washington's grip over Europe; and incriminate China. The US

doesn't want peace to be restored in Eurasia or European countries to feel secure, because it is the only party which stands to gain from the conflict commercially and strategically.

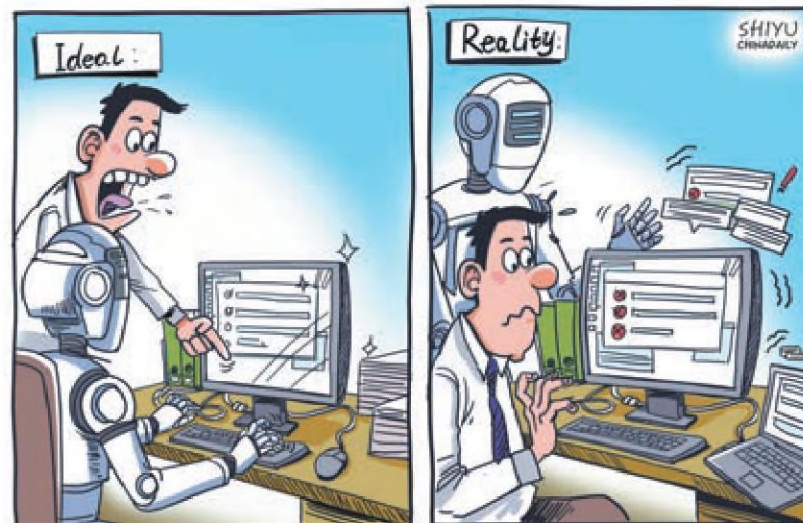
As a result, the US has been smearing pro-peace countries, including China, Brazil and other nations that have formed the "Friends of Peace" platform, while pretending to be neutral. That Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said that Kyiv values China's stance on the crisis and its efforts to help restore peace shows that Washington's smear campaign is divorced from reality and actually is a part of the US' overall China-containment strategy.

Just like in the Middle East crisis, the key to resolving the Ukraine crisis lies with the US. If Washington wanted to restore peace, it should not have ignored China's suggestions, especially because China has been, right from the beginning, advocating for peace and has maintained good relations with both Russia and Ukraine.

Since the world is divided on the Ukraine crisis, the UN Security Council should take the initiative to resolve the differences and contradictions between Moscow and Kyiv, as Wang said at a UN Security Council high-level meeting on the Russia-Ukraine conflict last week.

China did not start the Russia-Ukraine conflict nor is it a party to it. Any attempt to blame, attack or smear it for the conflict, therefore, would be an act of devilishness. As Wang said, the international community should join hands to uphold the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, and resist the exploitative attempts of some countries.

Shi Yu



## Opinion Line

## People's congresses will continue serving people like in past 70 years

In September 1949, shortly before the official announcement of the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the special session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference solemnly declared that New China will implement a system of people's congresses.

In 1954, the first session of the National People's Congress passed the Constitution, marking the establishment of a system of people's congresses as the fundamental political system of the country. This system is a form of democracy with Chinese characteristics. The past 70 years have proven that the system suits China's conditions and reality, reflects the nature of a socialist country, and ensures that the people are masters of the country.

According to statistics, there are currently over 2.77 million deputies of the people's congresses, at various levels, representing a broad cross-section of society. The deputies give a voice to major public concerns

and introduce legislative practices and policies that can benefit every household.

Democratic rights are not just exercised through elections. In 2023, the NPC website solicited opinions on 17 draft laws, receiving about 180,000 suggestions from various quarters; currently, the Legislative Affairs Commission of the Standing Committee of the NPC has established 45 grassroots legislative contact points, 7,300 provincial and municipal-level legislative contact points, promoting full-process people's democracy; and more than 200,000 deputy contact stations at the grassroots level actively play their roles under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, enabling deputies to widely connect with the masses.

A few years after the founding of New China, the NPC adopted the Constitution and several important laws such as those on organizing the Supreme People's Court.

With the reform and opening-up, the NPC passed more essential laws including the Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure Law and by 2010 a legal system consisting of laws, administrative regulations and local regulations had been formed as scheduled. As of now, China has over 300 laws and approximately 600 administrative regulations along with over 14,000 local regulations.

Particularly noteworthy is the Civil Code passed in 2020, which serves as a basic law for the market economy in the country.

Looking back at the past 70 years, the system of people's congresses has adapted to the trends of the times and responded to public calls, providing crucial institutional guarantees for rapid economic development and long-term social stability. This system will continue to play an important role as the nation's fundamental political system.

— BEIJING NEWS

## Improving sky eye to ace scientific competition

The construction of the prototype of the core array of the Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical Radio Telescope, commonly known as "China Sky Eye", officially began on Wednesday. The plan is to harness the electromagnetic wave environment within a 5-kilometer radius surrounding FAST to build 24 telescopes of 40-meter aperture each, forming a core array that is expected to effectively enhance FAST's resolution, precise positioning, and detailed mapping capabilities.

The upgrading coincides with FAST's eighth anniversary. In the 1990s, when China's largest radio telescope had an aperture of less than 30 meters, Chinese astronomers proposed the construction of the "China Sky Eye", with the aim of

surpassing the then world's largest Arecibo Observatory in Puerto Rico, which had a diameter of 305 meters when made operational in the 1960s and later expanded to 350 m. Site-selection for FAST began in 1994, the project received approval in 2007, construction commenced in 2011, it was made operational in September 2016, and, on passing national acceptance tests, became operational in 2020.

Since then, FAST has crossed many milestones to become the world's No 1 in the sector. Although FAST has high sensitivity, it lacks good resolution. Globally, the first phase of the construction of the Square Kilometer Array Observatory, split across South Africa and Australia, is likely to see completion

in 2029, while the next generation Very Large Array observatory in the United States is scheduled for completion in 2035. They will have an edge over FAST in both resolution and sensitivity. It is for this reason that FAST is constructing the core array, which will enable it to see farther and more clearly.

The latest upgrading involves a low-cost and rapid implementation plan for building radio telescope arrays, which shows that top-level planning is essential for constructing large science devices. By setting outstanding goals and targeting real needs, China can build high-quality equipment to seize the commanding heights of international scientific competition.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

## What They Say

## RRR cut to boost real economy, facilitate growth

The People's Bank of China cut the reserve requirement ratio by 0.5 percentage points for all financial institutions, except those that have implemented a 5 percent reserve ratio, on Friday, and adjusted the interest rate for its open market seven-day reverse repurchase operation from 1.7 percent to 1.5 percent.

The move, according to China's central bank, would free up to 1 trillion yuan (\$142.44 billion) for new lending, and leaves the door open to another cut later this year.

Given the rising macroeconomic growth pressure, high financing costs of the real economy, and the lack of market confidence, the central bank's move to cut the RRR and lower the interest rate will have positive implications.

Cutting the RRR, along with lowering the interest rate for medium-term lending facility, and using other monetary tools, can further lower interest rates.

The significant reduction in policy interest rates reflects supportive monetary policy characteristics and intentions, and is aimed at reducing the financing costs of the real economy.

The central bank's move sends a positive signal to the market, which will help boost market players' confidence and reduce potential market risks, stabilizing growth.

Thanks to the cumulative effects of multiple policies, China's A-share market rebounded recently, leading to a growth of both the stocks and foreign exchange markets. The Shanghai Composite Index has

crossed the 3,000-point mark, with the midpoint price of the renminbi against the US dollar approaching 7. With continued release of policy dividends, along with the steady recovery of market confidence, investment is expected to stabilize. That in turn will help stabilize the operation and healthy development of the capital market.

Consequently, the A-share market is expected to play its due role in resource allocation, promoting the development of the real economy, thus justifying the cutting of RRR and lowering of interest rates. With the authorities planning to issue bonds worth about 2 trillion yuan this year to promote growth, macroeconomic policy will have a more profound impact on China's economy.

— 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS HERALD

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## COMMENT



China and the World Roundtable | National Day Celebrations

**Editor's note:** This year marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Five experts share their perspectives on the far-reaching impact of New China's accomplishments.

## 75 years' progress vital for China and world

### China a key driver of global growth

Recent years have seen some international pundits first claim the Chinese economy is a global inflation threat, and then allege it is a global deflation threat. When proved wrong, they claimed the Chinese economy would collapse amid its recovery.

After centuries of colonialism and half a century of the Cold War, the economic gap between Western countries and the Global South further widened, because of the

West's inherently unequal economic policy. What has changed that equation is the rise of China.

In 1949, China accounted for a mere 4 percent of the global economy. But, thanks to its unprecedented economic rise, China today accounts for almost 19 percent of the global GDP.

Till the 1990s, the developing world was dependent on the West for many things. But by 2007, large emerging economies, spearheaded by China, were driving global growth, while the advanced Western economies' growth had slowed down. As a result, the impact of the Chinese economy on low- and middle-income economies soared, with development projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative and multilateral financial institutions supported by countries including China such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and New Development Bank helping boost growth in many emerging and developing economies. In this way, China has been fueling global growth. However, China's development project faces a serious threat.

Through much of this year, trade has driven China's growth. Unsurprisingly, China's two fastest-growing export sectors — electronics and electric vehicles — have been targeted by the United States and the European Union. And yet Chinese automaker BYD's lowest-priced car will be the least expensive in the US market, even with a 100 percent tariff.

Looking ahead, as research group Rhodium cautions, "sanctions are likely to remain a key risk for global investors as scrutiny of Chinese companies expands into new areas."

US policies are invariably aimed at reducing imports and bolstering domestic production, marked by the expansion of the "Buy American" provisions, which has resulted in the "increasing cost of buying American." This means ordinary Americans pay the bill for their government's tariff and sanctions wars. Many in the EU would soon be doing the same.

Before the former Donald Trump administration launched the trade wars, China replaced the US as the main driver of the global economy. Over the past decade, China has contributed more than 30 percent to global growth. This means the biggest threat to global recovery is not China, but the West's poisonous mix of protectionism, sanctions and geopolitics.

*Dan Steinbock is the founder of Difference Group and has served at the India, China and America Institute (US), Shanghai Institute for International Studies (China) and the EU Centre (Singapore).*

### China an opportunity, not a threat

China has become the low-hanging fruit for US politicians, especially US presidential candidates. Rather than engaging in a race to the bottom, US leaders should have the courage to work together to achieve win-win results.

It doesn't have to be this way. In fact, if the US were serious about dealing with global existential challenges such as climate change, environmental degradation, the artificial intelligence "Armageddon", pandemics, and "black swan" and "gray rhino" events, it would have

shown the political courage to steer Sino-US relations in a win-win direction. This is exactly what President Xi Jinping did when he proposed a new model of major country relations to former US president Barack Obama in Sunnylands, California, in 2013, which paved the way for both countries helping the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris to adopt the 2015 Paris Agreement, from which Trump withdrew in January 2017.

Oct 1 this year will mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. In the 45 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the United States, the trade volume has increased by more than 200 times, with bilateral investments reaching over \$260 billion. The mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries has supported approximately 2.6 million jobs in the US and generated annual profits exceeding \$50 billion for over 70,000 American companies operating in China.

The US vice-presidential debate is scheduled for Oct 1 and could be determinative. With the US election set for Nov 5, the outcome remains highly uncertain. It is crucial that the US presidential race focuses on substantive issues rather than resorting to China bashing or targeting other nations, as well as avoiding trivial distractions.

*Harvey Dzinin is a senior fellow at the Center for China and Globalization.*

### Tech progress worth celebrating

Heraclitus, the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher, declared more than 2,500 years ago that change is the only constant. In much less time, China has dramatically changed, rather transformed, itself — from a backward country in the 19th century to a modern, high-tech power. It has not only caught up with advanced European countries and the US in key industrial technologies, but also surpassed them in certain areas, such as electric vehicles and 5G technology.

The process, however, has been anything but smooth. But after late leader Deng Xiaoping introduced reform and opening-up in 1978, China has not looked back, becoming a global economic power first and more recently a global leader in high-tech. To top it all, it eradicated extreme poverty in 2020, a full dec-

ade ahead of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development's target.

By 2025, China is poised to achieve most of the ambitious high-tech goals outlined in the "Made in China 2025" policy. These are monumental accomplishments worthy of celebration, especially as the nation prepares to mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

Initially, China's economic and technological achievements unfolded within a liberal international political environment characterized by broad cooperation with the European Union, the United States and Japan. But as China shifted from manufacturing and assembling goods to producing core components, it has become increasingly indispensable to the global supply chains.

Yet that cooperative environment has recently become vitiated thanks to the US-led West's geopolitical games. Many Western powers have shifted from "just-in-time" supply chains that prioritize efficiency to "just-in-case" supply chains that prioritize security. This securitization of trade and investment has become enshrined in legislation and national security strategies.

As a result, China faces a much more adversarial external environment. While the Global South does not espouse the level of economic protectionism found in the US, its market size and investment capacity cannot fully make up for the loss of Western markets and capital.

However, a slowdown in China's growth does not necessarily alter the overall growth differentials between the Chinese and US economies. Provided that it avoids domestic policy errors, China will continue to outperform the G7 countries. Consequently, the global

economic center of gravity will continue shifting from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Therefore, the West's efforts to decouple or "de-risk" from the Chinese economy will not substantively shift the overall power dynamics. Instead, it may lead to a scenario where all players receive lower payoffs. While economic security should concern prudent policymakers, an enlightened view of national interest requires a more nuanced approach to economic statecraft — balancing cooperation with competition. By adopting this balanced approach, all sides can reap the rewards.

China has become more stable and prosperous, delivering affordable goods and sharing innovations with other countries that have helped improve the well-being of people worldwide. By integrating into the global economy, China has contributed to a more interconnected and, in many ways, more stable world.

*Vasilis Trigkas is a visiting assistant professor of Global Affairs at the Schwarzman College, Tsinghua University.*

### Digital cultural products telling true story

Innumerable platform-based digital cultural enterprises have emerged in China since the turn of the century, especially in the new era, thanks to the advancement of digital technology. By providing a large number of digital cultural works, they have cultivated a huge group of consumers, earned handsome profits and sharpened their market competitiveness.

Chinese digital cultural products, including online games and dramas, and internet literature, have achieved gratifying results even in overseas markets. For example, a series of Chinese video games, including *Black Myth: Wukong*, have become immensely popular around the world. As a matter of

fact, the download volumes and usage time of, and payments for, Chinese digital games are increasing in overseas markets.

Chinese internet literature has transformed from only content to models of creation and operation. The internet literature platforms have developed a localized operation model in other countries, and creators of online literature have become a new force in the industry.

Thousands of Chinese TV dramas and movies have been broadcast globally through various platforms, elevating the image of a "cultural China" worldwide. China's cultural industry is embracing digital culture, which in turn is exporting Chinese culture to the world in the form of popular culture.

Cultural exchanges among countries can be divided into three categories: political cultural exchanges among governments, academic exchanges within academia, and people-to-people exchanges of popular culture.

Digital culture has certain advantages when it comes to boosting exchanges of popular culture among different countries. Exchanges of popular culture promote mutual learning because they can quickly and effectively spread cultural awareness and lay the foundation for political and academic exchanges worldwide.

Therefore, China should give full play to the role of digital culture and intensify the development of digital technology to promote exchanges and mutual learning between China and other countries. Hence, traditional Chinese culture and the story of modern China can be showcased around the world through high-level digital products.

*Hui Ming is associated with the Cultural Research Center of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.*

### An apt model for ecological civilization

According to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, globally 75 percent of the land surface has been significantly altered, 66 percent of the oceans are feeling the increasing cumulative impacts of climate change and human activities, with more than

85 percent of the wetlands having been lost. While the rate of forest loss has slowed down globally since 2000, this is distributed unequally.

China's Grain for Green Program is an unprecedented ecological restoration project, which is aimed at curbing forest loss. It was piloted in 1999 (on a trial basis) and implemented in the 2000s across the country. In the two decades' implementation, China has reclaimed and restored 515 million *mu* (more than 34 million hectares) of land for forestry and grassland. The total ecological benefits generated from the national reclamation and restoration efforts amount to 1.38 trillion yuan (\$196.82 billion). Approximately 41 million farming households across the country have participated in the reclamation and restoration projects, directly benefiting 158 million farmers.

The farmers and the government have co-created reforestation programs and carried out poverty alleviation work in areas vulnerable to soil erosion. The improved terrestrial system has also increased carbon storage and reduced greenhouse gas emissions, offering a cost-effective way of mitigating climate change.

Compared with forests, water management is a more complicated affair. Water usually runs across multiple jurisdictions and requires collaborative efforts. Deliberations have been held on trans-boundary water governance to build a consensus on, and mechanisms for, incentivizing conservation and restoring water ecosystems. For instance, Zhejiang and Anhui provinces have jointly launched a pilot ecological compensation project in the Xin'an River-Qiandao Lake basin.

Deliberations have also been held by the Chinese Academy of Environmental Planning on environmental performance evaluation to avoid perverse incentives, and to build trust and stimulate learning and innovation in Yangtze River basin management.

Empowerment is imperative in using human agency to transition toward sustainable production and consumption. The government has adopted a whole-of-society approach, involving civil society as well as the public and private sectors in the joint pursuit of solutions to sustainability challenges.

Technologies have greatly expanded the human capacity to know, connect and engage with the natural and social world. They also can empower people to consider and act based on evidence accumulated across generations and vast geographical areas. Tencent is one of the forerunners in the field. It has used cutting-edge AI technology to build platforms for users to appreciate and experience natural and cultural heritages, as well as collaboration platforms, which empower the public to fulfill their needs beyond material satisfaction, and help conserve nature.

Rooted in traditional Chinese philosophy to cherish harmony between humanity and nature, China's co-creation, deliberation and empowerment model has enabled the government, research institutes, schools, philanthropists, social organizations and businesses to work together to unleash human potential to create new quality productive forces in order to build an ecological civilization. This model has contributed and will continue to contribute to global efforts such as the Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to protect the environment and preserve the ecology.

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



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

## GLOBAL VIEWS

LEVENTE HORVATH

## Reinvigorated friendship

Hungary does not approach relations with China from an ideological point of view and views it as a friendly cooperative partner

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Hungary. Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Hungary on May 8 to 10, and agreed



with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban to elevate Hungarian-Chinese cooperation to an all-weather comprehensive strategic partnership for the new era. The two countries also signed 18 economic agreements during his visit. And in July, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban visited Beijing as part of a "peace mission", where he said during the Chinese president's visit to Budapest serious agreements were made, but more importantly, the friendship between the two peoples was established for several generations, as President Xi's visit was convincing and cordial, demonstrating China's goodwill and respect toward Hungary. "Several generations will still benefit from that visit, from the memory of your visit to Budapest," he said.

So Hungarian-Chinese relations have "embarked on a golden voyage", but in fact we can speak of a friendly relationship over the past 75 years. China has observed and studied events in Hungary on many occasions, so the country has never been unknown to the Chinese political leadership. Chinese ministerial and professional delegations have regularly visited Budapest.

The good political relationship continued after the regime change in Hungary and was further deepened in the early 2000s, but the real boom came with the launch of the Orban administration's Eastern Opening policy in 2010. The Hungarian government and the Central Bank of Hungary have developed an increasingly close and fruitful relationship with China, based on the diversification of the Hungarian economy in a changing global economy.

In recent decades, the largest

Chinese banks have established themselves in Hungary, with the Bank of China and China Construction Bank setting up their branches here. The biggest Chinese companies have also invested in Hungary: ZTE has been present since 2004 and Huawei since 2005. In 2009, Huawei set up its European Supply and Logistics Center in Hungary, which has grown into the company's largest manufacturing and logistics base outside China, now serving more than 50 countries in Europe and near Europe. CATL, Huayou Cobalt and BYD are also building their largest European factories in Hungary. CATL's investment in Hungary is even the largest single Belt and Road project, and its 7.3 billion euros (\$8.1 billion) investment is the largest project in the history of Hungary. In the past 10 years, the Chinese investment jumped from 1 percent to 58 percent of the Hungarian foreign direct investment in 2023.

In 2015, Hungary became the first European country to join the Belt and Road Initiative, and later became a member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

There are also significant cultural links, with six Confucius institutes operating in Hungary and the Hungarian-Chinese Bilingual School now in its 20th year. Hungary is a regular guest of honor at major Chinese trade fairs, most recently at China International Fair for Investment and Trade in Xiamen, Fujian province.

However, Western politicians, and with it the Western media, have a negative view of the Hungarian government's relations with China. But is Hungary really pursuing a maverick policy toward China?

From Sept 8 to 11, the Spanish and Norwegian prime ministers almost simultaneously paid official visits to China, and in July, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni visited Beijing. In December last year, Italy announced its withdrawal from the BRI with great fanfare, but in July they signed an action plan to deepen the strategic partnership. In

June, the Polish president held talks in China, and in May, President Xi visited not only Hungary but also France, where President Emmanuel Macron took him to one of the places of his childhood. In April, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz led a delegation of prominent business leaders to Beijing — and the list goes on, with the Dutch and Belgian heads of government and many others also holding talks in China.

It is also worth looking at the economic data. In the West, there is great concern about Chinese investment in Hungary, especially as 44 percent of China's European investment in 2023 was directed to the country — thanks to greenfield investments by some large Chinese companies. But they forget that on average, 50 percent of Chinese investment has gone to Germany, France and the United Kingdom in each of the past 10 years, while Hungary has been of particular interest in 2022 and 2023. It is also worth considering that while Hungary has greenfield investments, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Italy and Greece, among others, have all attracted Chinese investment in strategically important ports over the past decade or so. Most recently, in 2023, the German government allowed China's COSCO to acquire a 24.99 percent stake in the port of Hamburg. In addition, several Western European tech companies have been acquired by China.

To sum up, Hungary, like other European countries, is developing ever closer ties with one of the world's fastest growing economies. Strengthening cooperation between China and Europe benefits both sides and aligns with their long-term interests.

*The author is director of Eurasia Center at John von Neumann University in Hungary and former consul general of Hungary in Shanghai. The author contributed this article to China Daily, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

CSABA MOLDICZ

## Opening to the East helps

Hungary and China can cooperate in many areas, especially with regard to Chinese investment, which can help avoid the worst effects of European protectionism

On the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and Hungary, China-Hungary economic relations stand at a critical point. Bilateral relations have flourished for two reasons. First, there are clear, tangible benefits for both countries in terms of economic cooperation, so that it now appears to be sustainable; this can be seen in the alignment of the globalization policies adopted by both countries. Second, there are no ideological or political controversies between the two countries, both pursuing the policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

From the Hungarian perspective, the continuation of globalization is of strategic interest to Hungary. China seems to be the only major economy where clear and decisive steps are being taken by the political leadership to preserve the achievements of economic globalization. China's strategy to promote globalization — the Belt and Road Initiative and other Chinese initiatives — is a big change. What is new about these initiatives is that both reflect the changing world order and the slow shift in the balance of economic power. Whereas a few decades ago, 70 to 80 percent of global investment came from the West and the rest by the East, the situation has now reversed and the majority of global investment comes from the East. Hungary's policy of "opening to the East" is basically an adaptation to this new situation.

The Hungarian government's motivation to create incentives to lure investment from the East, and from China in particular, is thus understandable. They present immense economic opportunities for cooperation. Take the BRI launched in 2013 for example, which essentially coincided with the Hungarian government's policy of "opening to the East" adopted a year earlier. While the Hungarian policy is aimed at expanding trade, investment relations and technology transfer with Asia, the BRI is a broader initiative aimed at further advancing the globalization process and diversifying China's economic relations with the world.

However, Hungary's policy is being challenged by political forces, especially in the West, who are reacting to this new reality by trying to divide the global economy into several spheres of political and economic

**Hungary and China can cooperate in many areas, especially with regard to Chinese investment in Hungary, which can also help to avoid the worst effects of European protectionism and maintain economic relations between the two regions.**

influence. This is often referred to as decoupling or de-risking. European countries and the European Union have recently accused China of having industrial overcapacity and dumping its State-subsidized products on European markets, causing difficulties for European economies. The problem of overcapacity became an accepted, if unproven, fact due to the West's unwillingness to cooperate with China.

The problem China is now facing is not due to weak competitiveness of the Chinese economy or any other long-term structural weakness, but due to alleged differences in economic development. The question of whether the accusation is justified or not has been pushed aside. Western politicians associate overcapacity with excessive State subsidies in China. It is therefore worth discussing whether the accusation is true.

We must add that it is easy to jump to conclusions, as different Chinese and Western economic governance styles explain the overcapacity on the Chinese side. At the same time, a different picture emerges when we look at the hard facts. The latest version of the so-called Global Trade Alert report contains an inventory of 18,137 corporate subsidies granted by China, the EU and the United States since November 2008. Based on the findings, the report concludes: "Since the European Union and the United States were together responsible for 12,629 entries in our inventory of corporate subsidies, claims that extensive resort to subsidies is found only in state-dominated economic development models should be discounted. Resort to extensive subsidization is also a common feature of policy in more market-based systems of economic governance." The fact that both the EU and the US frequently resort to the instrument of state subsidies does not surprise economists,

but only the public and attention-seeking politicians.

Of course, it is important to see to what extent government subsidies can boost local industry, as Western analysts often put it. When it comes to the volume of subsidies, we can see that the EU has the most protectionist trade policy. We do not have specific figures for China, as China is included under the "rest of the G20" label, but it is quite clear that the EU applies the most subsidies in terms of value. In 2019, the total volume of subsidies in the EU amounted to \$262 billion, while the same figure was \$74 billion in the US and \$142 billion in the rest of the G20. These figures clearly show that the EU has the most protectionist approach to trade, both in terms of volume and number of government subsidy measures.

As we have seen above, the problem is not due to bilateral relations, but due to the deteriorating geopolitical conditions. More and more investments are being diverted by inward-looking European moves, which serves neither the interests of European consumers — as competitive Chinese suppliers are replaced by less competitive suppliers and consumers have to pay more — nor the interests of European companies, which are protected behind high tariff walls but whose competitiveness is not improved thereby.

The calls from European companies not to introduce protective measures should serve as a wake-up call to European decision-makers. European manufacturers, including Volkswagen and Mercedes, have warned against the unintended side-effects of protectionism. The reason why these reactions are important in the context of Hungary-China economic cooperation, is that German carmakers are closely woven into the Chinese supply chains and heavily represented in the Hungarian economy, the sector together accounts for around 20 percent of the Hungarian GDP. Hungary and China can cooperate in many areas, especially with regard to Chinese investment in Hungary, which can also help to avoid the worst effects of European protectionism and maintain economic relations between the two regions.

*The author is head of the International Relations School at Mathias Corvinus Collegium, Budapest, and correspondence researcher at the China-CEE Institute. The author contributed this article to China Daily, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.*



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

LIFE

# Heritage provides blueprint for future

Diverse forms of new quality productive forces give Beijing's Dongcheng district a cutting edge in the cultural and creative sector, **Cheng Yuezhu** reports.



Poly Art Museum, located in Beijing's Dongcheng district, has been developing high-tech methods to preserve and present its collections. SONG JIARU / FOR CHINA DAILY

The *hutong* (alleyways) have long been iconic to central Beijing, promising those who enjoy taking a walk in tranquility a great experience, with their gray brick walls, upturned eaves and paths shaded by luxuriant tree branches.

But today, these *hutong* have more to offer. While most remain residential buildings, some courtyards have been renovated into areas for rich cultural and entertaining experiences.

Those who walk along the Doufuchi Hutong in Beijing's Dongcheng district may come across a small, inconspicuous door, but when they walk in, they find themselves in a courtyard of considerable size.

The courtyard, called The Guan, is now known as a local culture museum along the Beijing Central Axis, which was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List this July.

Renovated from a former temple and opened to the public in January, The Guan includes a bookstore, a digital art gallery, a Beijing Central Axis Post Office, and a few hospitality venues.

A tourist surnamed Liu came across The Guan with her friend on a serendipitous afternoon "city-walk" session. She says that they wanted to wander around the Bell and Drum Towers area without making any additional plans, and this courtyard came as a pleasant surprise.

"When we walked in through the small door, I thought this place was like an unexpected realm. There's a bookstore, a Spanish poster exhibition in the digital gallery, and the restaurant looks quite nice as well. I think they are a good fusion of ancient and modern, and it's a nice place to walk around and rest," Liu says.

According to Chen Xue, curator of The Guan, the complex adopts diverse forms of new quality productive forces, including technological and innovative mediums, to highlight the culture of the Beijing Central Axis. New quality productive forces refer to advanced productivity freed from the traditional economic growth mode and productivity development paths. It features high tech, high efficiency and high quality, and comes in line with the new development philosophy.

"The inscription of the Beijing Central Axis on the UNESCO World



**Top left:** The Beijing Central Axis Post Office, at The Guan museum in Dongcheng district, features a range of merchandise themed on Beijing culture. **Above left:** Visitors collect seal stamps of 15 heritage sites on their "Beijing Central Axis passport" there. **Above right:** The 77 Cultural and Creative Park, also in Dongcheng, has been transformed from a former offset printing factory. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Heritage List has had a significant impact, increasing public interest in our work and inspiring us to create new cultural scenarios. We've developed a consolidated showcase of the Beijing Central Axis-themed cultural and creative products, intangible cultural heritage elements and experiential cultural activities," Chen says.

The post office features a range of cultural merchandise themed on the Beijing Central Axis and Beijing culture. One of the best-selling products is the "Beijing Central Axis passport", a booklet that contains illustrations of the heritage site's 15 components, adopting anti-counterfeiting measures. Visitors to the post office can collect seal stamps in the booklet.

"When The Guan opened, it mainly attracted nearby residents, passing tourists and ancient architecture

enthusiasts. After the inscription of the Beijing Central Axis, a lot of young people saw posts online and came to check it out, and tourists from home and abroad surged. The visitor numbers have doubled," she adds.

In response to the national call for "exploring effective mechanisms for the integration of culture and technology", authorities of the Dongcheng district have been leveraging its rich resources in recent years, promoting the high-quality development of the cultural industry and fostering new quality productive forces to boost the cultural market.

These approaches feature the combination of culture with other fields, such as technology, finance and consumption, empowering cultural and economic development through the revitalization of



historical buildings, the leading examples of cultural enterprises and the upgrading of cultural industry parks.

Poly Culture Group, with its Beijing Poly Theatre and Poly Art Museum, also based in the district, has been exploring effective new methods of culture dissemination, cultural asset management and digitalization.

Its theaters have introduced a "smart theater" service platform that incorporates ticketing and big data analysis. For cultural artifact preservation and display purposes, the corporation developed a digital display cabinet that allows user interaction and naked-eye 3D technology for presenting key artifacts.

Ma Chi, general manager of Poly Culture Group's cultural communication digital technology center, introduces the digital display cabi-

net. While it appears to be an ordinary glass cabinet from the front, its sides are touch-sensitive screens that allow visitors to interact with the system.

A digital representation of an artifact is displayed on the screen and by simply tapping and dragging, visitors can rotate the object to view it from any angle to appreciate the artifact's details, such as inscriptions, and read about its history and background story.

One of the artifacts placed inside the cabinet is a bronze food vessel from around 2,900 years ago. Its lid is missing. Ma says that he and other digitalization experts worked with archaeological researchers to present the vessel and its history in digital format.

"By researching similar vessels, we digitally re-created a lid that's in line

with historical facts. While no one knows where the lid is after several millennia, we can give viewers a concept of its complete form, which is something viewers wouldn't see from a traditional display case and without expert guidance," Ma says.

"Digital methods can better present artifacts before and after their restoration, as well as their history. In this way, the artifacts can be brought to life and visitors can gain a deeper understanding, recognize them and develop a sense of pride in our Chinese culture and history."

The 77 Cultural and Creative Park, also in Dongcheng district, exemplifies one of Beijing's urban renewal initiatives. Once an offset printing factory, it has been transformed into a cultural industry park centered on film, television and theater arts.

Industrial relics have been preserved, including a gigantic chimney now displaying real-time air quality and a hot foil stamping machine that stands as a witness to the park's industrial history. The former workshop in the middle of the park has been renovated into the 77 Theatre, a venue frequently hosting performing arts shows.

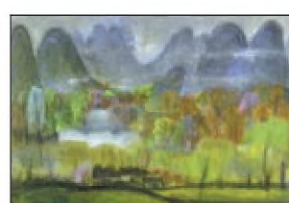
"The park is one of the earliest cultural and creative parks in Beijing, and one of the first to center on a particular theme, which in our case is film, television and theater," says Li Ming, deputy general manager of Beijing Dongfang Daopu Cultural Asset Operation and Management, the park's managing company. "Our park's positioning is compatible with Dongcheng district's cultural environment and resources."

The Central Academy of Drama and Beijing People's Art Theatre located in proximity provide rich performing arts resources and theater practitioners. The park's Beijing Drama Rehearsal Centre, with 18 rehearsal rooms and a studio, serves as a creative hub for many university and professional theater troupes. According to Li, more than 200 original theater productions are created and rehearsed here annually.

"Throughout the process of constructing and renovating the cultural park, we have not only given new purpose to the old buildings, but have also allowed the park to play a more profound role in Beijing's cultural landscape," Li says.

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What's on



Chinese painting

Ever since its establishment in 1928, the China Academy of Art, in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, has been on the forefront of the reform of Chinese painting. Its first dean, Lin Fengmian, who had studied art in France, initiated the integration of Chinese and Western art styles; Pan Tianshou, a professor and ink artist of repute, explored the modernization of teaching Chinese painting;

and Huang Binhong, a great painter and art theorist, born in Jinhua, Zhejiang, took the creation of the mountain-and-water genre of painting to a new height.

*Ever Glow*, an exhibition now on at China Art Museum, Shanghai, until Oct 27, navigates the reinvention of Chinese painting at the academy, pushed forward by teachers of the academy, who have also been celebrated artists of the classical style, throughout decades, and by the students.

10 am-6 pm, closed on Mondays. 205 Shangnan Lu, Pudong New Area, Shanghai. 400-921-9021.

Sporting role

Ma Yuehan (1882-1966), also known as John Ma, is remembered as a professor of physical education who



established a sports culture at Tsinghua University, where he taught for years and was a leading figure of modern sports in the country. He believed and populated the roles of sports in cultivating body, mind and character.

An art exhibition named after him has been brought by Tsinghua University to his birthplace, Xiamen, Fujian province, at which artworks of various kinds are on show at Jinsha Academy to hail a shared mission of

art and sports to make a person stay well physically and mentally.

To mark the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, a special section has been set up displaying works paying tribute to Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of modern Olympics, and the core values of the Games.

9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 200 meters north of Haicang Commerce Center Subway Station, Haicang district, Xiamen, Fujian province. 0592-680-6202.

Advice through art

Garnering acclaim since it was shown in Beijing in July, *For So Long, and Colorful*, an exhibition dedicated to the work of prolific artist Huang Yongyu (1924-2023), created in the last decade of his life, is touring Changsha, Hunan province, where

the late painter, writer and designer grew up.

The show at Hunan Art Museum was curated in his last will. "It will show 100 paintings, to celebrate the 100 years I have lived," he once said. It has been his last sharing with the public of his passion in art, his interest in all types of life — flowers, plants and small animals — and his ambition of creating on paper an artwork of several meters. His works are also his last advice to people, to observe, with shrewd eyes, to read and think, and then to express, clearly and meanwhile with restraint. The exhibition runs until Nov 24.

9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 2 Jinjiang Lu, Yuelu district, Changsha, Hunan province. 0731-8278-1500.



## LIFE

## Leveraging star power for charity

Public speaking program brings celebrities together to inspire philanthropy, **Xu Fan** reports.

In 2015, former NBA star Yao Ming stepped away from his busy schedule to take on a role he had never explored before — for 12 days, the basketball legend worked as a physical education teacher at a primary school in Bai-shi town, Guang'an city, in Southwest China's Sichuan province.

Although Yao lacked coaching experience and the school's facilities were rudimentary, the brief stint left an indelible mark on him. He vividly recalls a teenager surnamed Liang who showed a burgeoning passion and talent for basketball despite having never played the sport.

"In one training class, Liang secretly sneaked over to give me a cookie, whispering, 'Teacher, the class is taking a long time, are you hungry?' I was so pleased as I felt it was a form of communication," recalls Yao during a speech he delivered at the 2024 Star Talks, a celebrity public-speaking program produced by the Lichun Studio affiliated with Tencent News.

Star Talks was initiated in 2016 and has gathered nearly 100 celebrities from different fields to share their most cherished memories and insights about their lives and careers. This year's edition was held as a special program to highlight the 99 Giving Day, an annual public philanthropy campaign launched by Tencent in 2015.

Alongside eight other celebrities, Yao delivered a 10-minute speech, primarily reflecting on his experiences and thoughts about the past 16 years since he established the Yao Foundation — a charitable organization dedicated to supporting youths in underdeveloped regions, aiding them in achieving all-around healthy growth in areas such as sports, nutrition and psychology.

In the early years of his foundation, he advised volunteers not to bring smart devices to rural schools. Yao wanted them to approach the countryside children cautiously, aiming to prevent the children from discovering the stark contrast between their hometown and the outside world.

"However, society is evolving rapidly. With the widespread use of smartphones, we have observed that children and teenagers in rural areas, particularly the 'left-behind' children (whose parents work in cities, leaving them in the care of older relatives), are facing health issues due to smartphone



Basketball legend Yao Ming (top) shares his volunteer experience at a primary school in Sichuan province in the 2024 Star Talks, a public-speaking program of Tencent News. The program also features other celebrities, including (above from left) former TV host Yang Lan, entrepreneur Duan Rui, actress Tao Xinran and singer Huang Zihongfan. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

addiction," he says during the speech.

"This challenges the traditional notion that rural children usually engage in outdoor activities like running in fields, climbing mountains and playing in streams — a stereotype that no longer holds true," adds Yao.

The sports star also warns that many rural children, lacking sufficient outdoor activities, exhibit a lower level of basic athletic abilities such as endurance, speed,

strength and balance compared to their urban counterparts.

Zhang Liyi, director of Lichun Studio and the Star Talks producer, tells China Daily that the program initially drew inspiration from TED Talks.

Typically, celebrities express their thoughts through interviews, but delivering a public speech enables them to freely articulate what they wish to convey, making a heartfelt connection with the audience, Zhang explains.

"We aspire for celebrities to candidly reveal their inner thoughts and share their experiences and perspectives on various charitable causes with the public. This aims to pique public interest and motivate more individuals to engage in charitable endeavors through this year's program," she adds.

Aside from serious topics and touching moments, the livestream of the speeches was sometimes funny. One such moment occurred when Yao, standing 2.26 meters

tall, took the stage.

"We thought about adjusting the height of the props and backdrop screen to match Yao's stature. However, when the day arrived and he walked onto the stage, the props appeared as small toys. We joked that most of us looked like dolls standing next to him," Zhang says.

Another intriguing memory for Zhang stems from a speech given by Huang Zihongfan, a singer who recounted his experience working as an animal caregiver at the wild-

life shelter and rescue center in Nanjing Hongshan Forest Zoo for a day.

Huang was tasked with a special assignment — cleaning a cage spanning nearly eight square meters. This enclosure housed over 20 birds, predominantly parrots, along with two Chinese bamboo partridges, a feisty crested mynah, and two common hill mynahs that incessantly emitted sounds resembling an electric car alarm.

In the cage, Huang remembered hearing a peculiar sound from a parrot that consistently mimicked human speech, as if conversing with someone. Initially intrigued, Huang engaged with the parrot, only to later feel a sense of cruelty upon learning from the zoo caretaker that the bird had been abandoned by its owner.

"The bird had been conditioned to speak in response to humans, potentially compromising its innate survival skills in the wild," Huang explains in his speech.

Huang also shared his observations of pets, vividly describing a cat at his friend's house that is cool, independent and enjoys hiding and playing on its own. "I was very curious about the cat and often stared at it, imagining how my perspective of the world might change if I were in its place," says Huang.

"Huang offers a fresh perspective that sparks an intriguing discussion on animal protection. It serves as a reminder of how humans should treat animals as equals rather than looking down on them and acting as benefactors," comments Zhang.

Female celebrities have demonstrated strength, bravery and insight in their fields. For instance, TV host-turned-entrepreneur Yang Lan addressed the topic of artistic education in rural areas. Actress Tao Xinran shed light on the greater challenges girls face in rural areas compared to boys. Duan Rui, the wife of successful businessman Cai Lei who was diagnosed with a terminal disease, discussed how she manages the financial burden to support her husband's research for a cure.

Zhang says they hope that the heartfelt stories the celebrities share will inspire compassion, motivating more individuals to engage in charitable events and understand the essence of giving.

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## Lion dance serves as testament to community and inclusivity

NANJING — For many Chinese born in the 1980s and '90s, the first thing that comes to mind when discussing the lion dance is the martial arts movie *Once Upon a Time in China III* featuring Jet Li as Chinese martial arts master and folk hero Wong Fei-hung.

In this classic movie, Wong travels from Foshan, Guangdong province, to Beijing for a "Lion Dance King" competition where he confronts political intrigue and the cultural clash between tradition and Western influences. As he navigates personal and national challenges, Wong relies on his martial arts skills to protect his loved ones and uphold his principles, creating a narrative rich in cultural heritage.

The origins of the lion dance date back over a thousand years in China. Traditionally performed during Chinese New Year, cultural festivals and significant occasions, this art form is intended to ward off evil spirits and invite good fortune.

Over time, the lion dance has emerged as a cultural bridge connecting the past and present and the East and the West, through a shared appreciation for its artistic beauty and symbolic significance.

The story of Kelvin Tran, a participant in the 2024 World Chinese King of Lion Dance Championship in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, reflects this journey of cultural transmission.

Born in Australia to grandparents from Chaozhou in South China's Guangdong province, Tran grew up in a Sydney neighborhood where lion dancing thrives. His parents often took him to watch lion dance



Left: A lion dance team from Shenzhen, Guangdong province, performs during the 2024 World Chinese King of Lion Dance Championship in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, this month. ZHANG MENG / XINHUA Right: A lion dance team from Singapore showcases its balancing skills, standing on a high pole, during the event. JI CHUNPENG / XINHUA

performances, sparking his interest in the art form.

A family friend introduced him to the practice when he was 8 years old, marking his pivotal step into the world of lion dance. As his passion grew, Tran cofounded the Qing Fong Dragon and Lion Dance Team in 2018.

Within Chinese communities, lion dance is more than just a performance; it is a communal activity that involves intricate teamwork and rigorous training. For 24-year-old Tran, lion dance is a pathway to building and strengthening community ties in Australia.

"Our membership has grown to over 70, so it's quite a big team, and it's gaining popularity, which is great for us," he says. This growth reflects the deepening of relation-

ships among members. "I wouldn't call them just friends; I call them family," Tran emphasizes, highlighting how the lion dance fosters familial bonds that enhance social cohesion.

Moreover, the lion dance is a testament to community and inclusivity. "We're open to everyone and anyone," Tran explains. "At the moment though, it's mostly Asian demographics but we are more than happy to welcome others onto our teams."

This inclusive philosophy is reflected in the diverse lineup of participants at the 2024 World Chinese King of Lion Dance Championship, which attracted 100 athletes from China, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Australia and Canada, among others.



Unlike Tran, who has Chinese heritage, Syahdatulazmi Bin Bustamam from the Malaysia team discovered his passion for lion dancing two decades ago after attending a performance in his hometown. Captivated by the vibrant display, he fell in love with the art form instantly.

By day, Syahdatulazmi runs a restaurant with his wife but remains committed to practicing as the lion's tail three days a week, dedicating two hours per session.

"I've been doing lion dancing since I was a kid," says the 31-year-old, who is considered "relatively old" in the world of lion dance, through an interpreter. "It's become a hobby for me; I have to do it every day."

Due to adverse weather conditions, the high-pole competition —

renowned for its athleticism and acrobatic stunts — was relocated to a shopping mall on the first day of the competition.

Among the audience was 25-year-old Kiki, who was drawn by the sound of gongs and drums. After watching the exciting competition, she says, "I'm happy to see the inheritance of traditional culture. I had only seen performances in China and I didn't realize that different countries each have their own unique features."

The traditional southern lion dance competition, along with dragon dance performances and cultural exchanges related to these ancient traditions, was eventually relocated back to its original venue, the Confucius Temple, a prominent tourist attraction on the banks of

the picturesque Qinhuai River in Nanjing.

"A venue like this adds historical and cultural context to the event," says a tourist surnamed Han. "It also provides an authentic cultural experience, making my visit more memorable and enriching. I really enjoy watching the Indonesian team."

Despite not being crowned the "Lion Dance King", Tran was satisfied with his team's performance at their first international competition. "Competing at such a significant landmark in Nanjing, and in China overall, is very special. The architecture and cultural significance are incredibly meaningful to me."

Tran's story touches on the cyclical nature of cultural transmission. As he watched his 2-year-old nephew, who mirrored his introduction to lion dance during childhood, he expressed hope: "It's nice to inspire the younger generation. Hopefully, I'll teach him if he likes it."

During the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the time period in *Once Upon a Time in China III*, the lion dance united communities and asserted cultural identity. Today, it serves as a medium to connect diverse cultures, fostering understanding and respect.

Tran's desire to continue the tradition ensures that the lion dance remains a vibrant, living cultural practice, inspiring future generations as it inspired him, passing on the lion's enduring symbol of power and wisdom.

XINHUA

## CULTURE

# Changing his tune for a dream

Costa Rican conductor impresses audiences in China with both determination and versatility, **Zheng Zheng** and **Wu Wanzhen** report in Shanghai.



A hush of anticipation explodes into rapturous applause in a concert hall in Changzhou city, Jiangsu province, as Edwin Montealegre, a young conductor from Costa Rica, strides onto the stage. He takes a moment to sweep his gaze over the auditorium before raising his baton to begin the performance.

This is a culmination of years of hard work and a dream — to establish his own professional orchestra in China.

The 37-year-old conductor's journey, beginning in Shanghai, has been an unconventional one. Growing up in the tropical Central American country of Costa Rica, he graduated with a bachelor's degree in conducting in 2017.

"In 2018, my professor advised me to go to China because there was a good teacher from the Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory teaching at Shanghai Conservatory of Music," Montealegre recalls. "It was an opportunity I couldn't pass up."

So, he took the plunge, arriving in Shanghai later that year to first learn Mandarin — no easy feat when learning it simultaneously with English. However, the challenge was worthwhile when he gained admission to the Shanghai Conservatory of Music's master's program in 2019.

During his studies, he became enthralled by Shanghai's vibrant arts scene and the wealth of opportunities for musicians. "Here is one of the most beautiful places in the world, especially if you're a musician. There

are so many important musicians from around the world here. You have opportunities at every turn," he says.

Inspired by the top-caliber concerts he frequently attended, he began "dreaming big" of one day conducting his own professional orchestra and choir to similar levels of excellence. He thinks Shanghai's arts infrastructure — with its state-of-the-art venues, lighting and technology — seems to make anything possible.

"You just need to imagine it, and then figure out how to make it possible," he says.

The seeds of ambition were sown. But when job offers came in from back home as he completed his thesis, he needed to take a pivotal decision — return to the comforts of Costa Rica or take a risk to pursue his musical vision in Shanghai.

Against the odds, the conductor chose the road less traveled.

"I knew I needed to do something here, either find a job or perhaps establish my own company," he recounts.

He then went to the immigration office to ask about a visa to see if there was an option that allowed him to stay in China. The officer suggested an entrepreneurship visa.

With no business experience, he had to quickly acquire the skills to craft a company plan that could qualify him for an entrepreneurship visa. "What is a business plan? I had no idea," he says, adding that he had to look it up online.

“You just need to imagine it, and then figure out how to make it possible.”

Edwin Montealegre, conductor from Costa Rica



From top: Edwin Montealegre (top), 37, a conductor from Costa Rica, in rehearsal with the Shanghai M Orchestra, which he founded. The orchestra performs in its debut concert held in Changzhou city, Jiangsu province, in May. PHOTOS BY WU WANZHEN / CHINA DAILY

Researching how to tailor the concept for the performing arts industry, he proposed establishing both a professional choir and even an orchestra.

"There are a lot of people who want to attend high-level concerts but there are not enough orchestras here in Shanghai for that purpose. Analyzing this kind of detail, we decided to start this company and bring joy to and inspire people," he says.

The visa application was accepted, and Montealegre officially launched

his endeavor early this year with the company named Shanghai M Orchestra.

However, hurdles still loomed.

With a starting capital of zero, he had to repeatedly muster self-belief. "I think the most difficult thing is to keep the belief that you can make it possible because there are so many people who will tell you it's impossible," he says.

Through relentless networking and pitching to investors and spon-

sors, he gradually built support and financial backing for his fledgling orchestra. And, according to Yang Xuan, his girlfriend and a key member of the company, "Montealegre is also building up his team. We have a composer, Kamel, from Algeria, and two Malaysian women who help find orchestra members and recording."

With a core orchestra finally assembled from students from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, Montealegre confronted the responsibility of his leadership role, as he found he had to manage every detail — from staff members to equipment — while maintaining the standard of conducting.

"From the start of rehearsals until the end, I'm not anyone's friend," he asserts, adding that he focuses on every detail because he's always aiming for high standards.

However, he is keen to strike the right balance. "These musicians aren't machines," he says. "I don't want anyone suffering through rehearsals. They chose the music life because they love to play. I want people to enjoy each rehearsal."

It's an approach rooted in his belief about music's transcendent power to emotionally uplift audiences. "Music is the language of the soul," he proclaims. "If we play from the heart, people can feel a range of emotions."

The pivotal moment for his company came on May 18 with its inaugural public performance. "Our sponsors expected a high level of performance from our members," he says, noting that the musicians

delivered a memorable display.

While a big achievement, it's just the first milestone in his vision. Future ambitions include many activities from touring nationwide to establishing a music academy. He and his team are also mulling the idea of a music-themed camp for young Chinese musicians in his home country sometime soon.

"For me, it's important to become a bridge between China and my country, and also between China and the Western world through the music," he says.

He thinks the supportive business environment and a wealth of resources and services in Shanghai helped him pursue his dreams. "The government here is serious about attracting more investment. There are guides in many languages, for example, for work permits — there are about nine languages — and the policies for foreigners are getting better," he says.

For those considering a life in China, he advises an open mind and a willingness to embrace new experiences. "You need to be open to enjoy new traditions, new food, a new way of thinking. You have to understand that there are so many ways of thinking," he adds.

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Online  
Watch the video by scanning the code.

## Traditional medicine enjoys healthy following in the UK

By XING YI and HAN JING in London

After three years' studying acupuncture and an apprenticeship in a student clinic, Izabela Wilczynska is finally on her own and applying all she has learned in treating a patient.

The main complaint the elderly lady in front of her has is pain from blocked sinuses. After investigating her medical history and previous records, examining her palms, tongue, and pulse, Wilczynska lays the patient on a bed and prepares needles.

"Are you nervous?" asks Wilczynska.

"No," the lady replies. "I've tried Chinese acupuncture, which solved similar pain in my 20s when I was in Sri Lanka. It went really well."

Then, Wilczynska inserts a dozen fine needles into the lady's head, face, hands, and legs.

The needles are left in position for around 30 minutes before they are removed. In the meantime, Wilczynska puts an infrared heat lamp near to her patient, to enhance the therapy.

After the treatment, the lady asks: "When can I come again? I feel better!"

The whole process was actually Wilczynska's final exam in her diploma course in Chinese acupuncture at the London Academy of Chinese Acupuncture, or LACA.

"She definitely can pass the exam," says Han Yonggang, who supervised the exam and who is a practicing traditional Chinese medicine, or TCM, doctor and a professor at the academy. "But I expect more from her."

Han says Wilczynska did very well during the consultation part of the process but did not give an adequately thorough explanation of the treatment to the patient.

"There are differences between Chinese traditional medicine and the modern Western medical system, for example, checking the tongue is rare in Western medical practice," says Han. "So, she must explain her treatment very well to let patients feel safe."

Han also points out some minor mistakes and a lack of confidence in Wilczynska's performance.

"But it is common for new acupuncturists. She needs more practice."

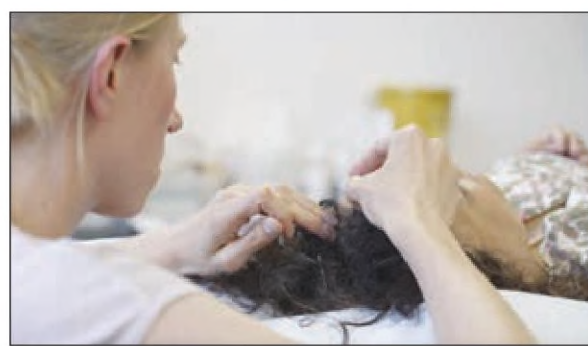
Wilczynska was among the first cohort of 20 students graduating from the LACA, which was established in 2020 and that offers courses in acupuncture, herbal medicine, and tuina massage.

On July 28, the academy held a celebration for its first graduates, in a pub in London's Canary Wharf.

"I'm a little bit emotional, as you can imagine. After three years, we did it," said Wang Tianjun, LACA's principal, at the gathering of the students, lecturers, and their families and friends.

"During the pandemic, all traditional Chinese medicine doctors and practitioners shoulder a lot of work to support so many patients in this country. We noticed that we have this historical responsibility to hold the Chinese medicine here, not only during the pandemic but also in the long-term future," said Wang.

Wang found four other like-minded



Top: Izabela Wilczynska performs acupuncture for a patient in London. HAN JING / CHINA DAILY

Above: The first batch of graduates from the London Academy of Chinese Acupuncture celebrate their graduation in London in July. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

doctors of traditional Chinese medicine to start the academy. They are Tang Tiejun, Ye Liuzhong, Han Yonggang and She Jun. Each had earned

degrees in China and had been teaching and practicing TCM in the United Kingdom.

A graduate of Nanjing University

of Chinese Medicine in 1989, Wang worked in the profession in China for 18 years before completing a doctoral program at the university on acupuncture in the treatment of depression.

Wang moved to the UK in 2007 and taught at the University of East London UK until 2014. His latest book, *Acupuncture for Brain: Treatment for Neurological and Psychological Disorders*, was published by Springer in 2020.

"I am happy to see LACA has enrolled so many people interested in TCM," Wang said at the celebration. "I still remember at the beginning, some of you were so worried about how to hold a needle. I remember your hands were shaking..." he said.

"Now that you've completed your education. We are colleagues. We are working together. We have to all take the responsibility together to make Chinese medicine beautiful, and wonderful in the UK."

Wang could have been talking about Wilczynska because she was scared of needles when she was young.

"I don't like needles and I was scared of them since I was a child. So, an acupuncture course, for me, is a kind of therapy, because I stopped being scared of needles," she said.

Wilczynska took the acupuncture course because she had a positive experience with TCM.

"It all started seven years ago, when I was very ill. I'd tried everything, and nothing helped me... Then somebody introduced me to a Chinese medicine and said: 'Listen, you can change your

diet. You eat your food, but with Chinese principles," she recalls.

Then, she bought a book by a Polish author who was a TCM practitioner in her native Poland.

"And I started using her advice, which was based on Chinese medicine. It helped me within weeks and then, after a year, I was full of energy."

Wilczynska used to be a public-speaking coach but, during the pandemic, she started to consider a career in TCM and found the course provided by LACA.

"It is a long journey. I wouldn't say it was very easy. It was quite hard sometimes. Because for us Europeans, I think it's completely different, it's a different culture, different understanding. I don't have that background," she says. "If something is happening in your body, it's never just physical. It's always something more than that. So, that was the most, I think, significant thing I've learned."

At the graduation celebration, Wilczynska and her classmates all received a diploma and an accreditation from the Chinese Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine Alliance UK.

Wilczynska also received a gift from her professor at the academy — a book about Chinese medicinal plants and herbal drugs.

"That was actually very encouraging because he knew my dream is to be a herbalist," says Wilczynska. "Maybe, I will treat friends and other people at home first. And then I will open my own clinic."

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