



'Silver' economy

Opportunities abound in providing quality services to elderly **BIZ LIFE, PAGE 9**



Making history

US skier Mikaela Shiffrin claims 83rd World Cup win **SPORTS, PAGE 11**

CHINA DAILY

HOLIDAY EDITION

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 2023

Xi: Ties with Latin America to strengthen

Commitment to integration of region including Caribbean nations stressed

By CAO DESHENG
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President Xi Jinping has reiterated China's commitment to strengthening its partnership with Latin American and Caribbean countries, saying the nation stands ready to work with them to promote global peace and development and advance the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

Xi made the remarks in a video speech delivered at the seventh Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, which was held on Tuesday in Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina.

He was invited to address the summit by President Alberto Fernandez of Argentina, which holds the rotating presidency of the regional body — a multilateral group of 33 countries from across the Western Hemisphere not including Canada and the United States.

Xi said that Latin American and Caribbean countries are important members of the developing world that take an active part in global governance and make important contributions to it.

The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States has grown to be an indispensable force bolstering global South-South cooperation, and it has played an important role in safeguarding regional peace, promoting common development and advancing regional integration, he said.

Xi reaffirmed China's support for the regional integration process of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as its commitment to developing relations with the regional organization. He said that the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States is China's key partner in enhancing solidarity among developing countries and furthering South-South cooperation.

"That is why China has been working with Latin American and the Caribbean countries to steadily strengthen the Forum of China and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and take their relationship into a new era characterized by equality, mutual benefit, innovation, openness and benefits for the people," Xi said.

An increasing number of countries in the region have engaged in high-quality cooperation with China on the Belt and Road Initiative, and have supported and participated in the Global Development Initiative and the Glob-

al Security Initiative, he added.

In 2022, Nicaragua and Argentina each signed a memorandum of understanding with China to jointly build the Belt and Road, and this promoted investment and cooperation in fields such as electricity, transportation, telecommunications and energy.

Noting that the world is in a new period of turbulence and transformation, Xi emphasized that only through greater solidarity and closer cooperation can the international community tackle the challenges and tide over this trying time.

China is ready to continue working with Latin American and Caribbean countries to help each other and to make progress together, advocate the common values of mankind featuring peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom, and build a world with a brighter future, he said.

Founded in 2011, the regional body in Latin America and the Caribbean represents around 600 million people. A joint declaration released after the regional summit stressed the commitment of member states to accelerating regional integration.

In a recent interview with China Media Group, Argentine Minister of Foreign Affairs Santiago Cafiero said that China's participation in the summit is important, as it helps to advance cooperation on some issues and coordinate a multilateral agenda.

China is an important trade partner to most of the Latin American and Caribbean countries, so its participation in the discussions of regional development has great relevance to the member states of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, Cafiero said.

China maintains its position as Latin America's second-largest trading partner. According to China's General Administration of Customs, trade volume between China and Latin America and the Caribbean exceeded \$450 billion in 2021. In the first three quarters of 2022, the figure increased by 12.5 percent over the same period the previous year.

The Forum of China and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States is a platform to promote the comprehensive cooperative partnership between the two sides based on equality, mutual benefit and common development. Three ministerial-level meetings of the forum have been held since it was founded in 2014, with the last one taking place in 2021.

During the first ministerial meeting of the forum in January 2015, Xi pledged \$250 billion in investments to Latin America over the next decade.

Nation's new COVID cases, deaths down significantly

By CHINA DAILY

COVID-19 infections are on a sharp downturn nationwide after cases peaked around Dec 22, when the number of new cases was around 7 million per day, and the number of deaths in hospitals has also declined significantly, the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention said on Wednesday.

According to a CDC report on the national epidemic situation, since Dec 9 — the day after the Chinese mainland optimized its COVID-19

prevention measures — the number of positive nucleic acid test results and the positive rate in the reported population showed a trend nationwide of first increasing and then decreasing.

The number of positive cases reached 6.94 million on Dec 22 and then gradually decreased, reaching a low on Monday of 15,000. The positive test rate reached its peak on Dec 25 — 29.2 percent — and then gradually declined, dropping to 5.5 percent on Monday.

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Locals perform a dragon dance during a molten iron firework show to celebrate Spring Festival in Taiyuan, Shanxi province, on Tuesday. HU YUANJIA / FOR CHINA DAILY

Festive holiday bodes well for tourism rebound

By CHENG SI
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The ongoing Spring Festival holiday has blown a trumpet for the nation's tourism recovery, which is witnessing a robust rebound, thanks to optimized COVID-19 control measures.

Southwest China's Sichuan province said that as of Tuesday, the fourth day of the seven-day holiday, the number of visitors to its 15 attractions rated 5A — China's highest ranking — had hit a record high for attendance since 2020. As of Wednesday, the 15 attractions saw a year-on-year increase of about 48 percent in the number of travelers, while ticket revenue was 64 percent higher than during the same period last year.

The number of visits reached its capacity at some of the province's attractions, including Mount Emei, famous for its breathtaking views, and the Sanxingdui Museum, whose exhibits showcase the nation's ancient civilization.

A report from Hubei province in Central China was also encouraging. According to the province's bureau of culture and tourism, Hubei had received 17.62 million visits as of 3



Visitors at a museum in Guanghan, Sichuan province, take photos on Tuesday of a gold mask discovered among the Sanxingdui Ruins. LI DONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

pm on Tuesday, a year-on-year increase of 26 percent. Tourism-related revenue was about 9.92 billion yuan (\$1.46 billion) during the four days — 33.83 percent more than in the same period last year.

Figures from travel agencies confirmed the boom in the tourism market during the Spring Festival holiday. Trip.com Group, for example, said that hotels, homestays and ticket bookings for tourist attrac-

tions all outperformed those in 2019 — the year before COVID-19 hit — in the first four days of the holiday. It also said that homestay bookings doubled in the first four days compared with the same period last year, and sales of tickets for attractions rose 50 percent year-on-year.

At the holiday's halfway point, travelers began planning their return trips. Travel portal Qunar said that most of its users set their

return trips for between Thursday and Jan 31, and the market will see a return-travel peak on Friday — the last day of the holiday.

Guo Lechun, deputy director of Qunar's big data academy, said that the number of returning travelers will surge compared with that of the early period of the Spring Festival travel rush, which started on Jan 7 and will end on Feb 15.

"We estimate that the passenger volume of the year's Spring Festival travel rush will recover to 80 percent of that in 2019, which is a good start for this year's tourism industry," he said.

Early on Monday, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism released a notice reminding travelers to protect their safety and health during holiday trips. The ministry said people should not go to dangerous areas such as riverbanks and the edges of cliffs, as well as off-limits places where safety and security cannot be guaranteed.

Travelers were also encouraged to consider their own health condition when participating in high-risk recreational activities, and to prepare masks and other anti-COVID supplies.

MODERN CULTIVATION TECHNIQUES BEARING FRUIT IN MOUNTAIN VILLAGE

Changkou is growing wealthy on a range of produce, from oranges to traditional vegetables, and carbon credits

By HU MEIDONG in Fuzhou and HOU LIQIANG in Beijing

There was not even a single paved road in the dilapidated village of more than 1,000 residents. Nor were there any streetlights.

Memories of the poverty-plagued state of the mountain-encompassed settlement — Changkou in the eastern province of Fujian — before the new millennium remain fresh for many villagers.

Now, in stark contrast, they have all moved into new residential buildings of two or three stories. The annual per capita income in the village has soared from about 2,000 yuan to almost 30,000 yuan (\$4,470). Despite the changes, the mountains near the village remain green and the water is still clear.

As President Xi Jinping has

stressed, lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets.

Changkou's residents are increasingly benefiting from the beautiful environment they have safeguarded for decades.

When he arrived in Changkou in 2017, Xu Lianghui was distressed by the natural condition of the village.

"The farmland was in small plots, dotted by reeds here and there," recalled the 44-year-old from Jiangxi, Fujian's neighboring province, adding that the scene made people feel desolate.

The feeling of despondency made Xu determined to start an orchard to grow navel oranges in the village.

"The more desolate a place is, the better it is for planting orange trees because it means the land is not polluted," he said.

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Moviegoers enter a cinema in Shanghai on Sunday. CHEN YUYU / FOR CHINA DAILY

Box office gets a hopping start in Year of the Rabbit

By XU FAN
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With box office receipts soaring during Spring Festival, long-anticipated prosperity has returned to Chinese cinemas, ushering in an inspiring start for the Year of the Rabbit.

As of Wednesday, the country has grossed a total of 5 billion yuan (\$737 million) from seven new movies showing in more than 10,000 cinemas, according

to the movie information live tracker Beacon.

Although *The Wandering Earth II*, the sequel to China's most successful sci-fi epic, topped the festival's box office charts on Sunday, the second day of the Spring Festival holiday, director Zhang Yimou's historical thriller *Full River Red* turned the tide by seizing the champion's seat on Monday.

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NATION

Heating on high to keep Mohe from freezing

Cold snap produces record low, with some respite expected starting Sunday

By **LI HONGYANG** in Beijing and **ZHOU HUIYING** in Harbin

Mohe, a city in Heilongjiang province, recorded a temperature of -53 C on the morning of Jan 22, the lowest temperature recorded since 1969, as the recent cold snap continued to sweep across China, the National Meteorological Center said.

The last time the mercury fell below -50 C was in February 1969, when it reached -52.3. That figure was also recorded in Mohe, which is China's northernmost city.

Traffic police and thermal company workers have been working to keep the city running.

"All our boilers are running at maximum power. We're burning more coal, about 30 percent more than usual, to produce more heat, especially for the Spring Festival Holiday," said Xin Haiqi, who works at a Mohe thermal company.

Heating equipment is monitored 24 hours a day to ensure that indoor temperatures stay the same despite cold snap, Xin said.

The China Railway Harbin Group said that so far this year, it has transported about 6 million metric tons of coal for heating purposes, a rise of 19.6 percent year-on-year, to help Heilongjiang residents through the winter.

Extreme cold has led to ice fog in Mohe, reducing visibility to less than 10 meters. Traffic police are braving the extreme temperatures to direct

traffic, but change shifts every 10 minutes rather than every hour, to stay safe.

Traffic policeman Sun Liqiang, said that in addition to wool and cotton shoes, he puts thermal plasters in his shoes to keep warm. Clothes freeze solid after being outside for only a while.

"Even a fully charged mobile phone is drained of power in my pocket after about half an hour because of the temperatures," he said.

More cold air is forecast to sweep across China, bringing with it strong winds and frigid temperatures, according to the National Meteorological Center.

Temperatures are forecast to plummet by between 8 C and 12 C in some southern areas on Wednesday, but starting on Sunday, temperatures will rise a little in northern and eastern areas.

The Tibet autonomous region is forecast to be hit by heavy snow from Sunday through Tuesday, the center said.

Over the past 30 years, an average of 5.4 cold waves have occurred in China each year. The highest number of cold snaps since 1991 was registered in 2021, which experienced 11, followed by 2009 with eight, according to the China Meteorological Administration.

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Employees sweep snow off a sidewalk in Yantai, Shandong province, on Tuesday. ZHANG WEIGUO / FOR CHINA DAILY

Box office: Traditional values, culture increasingly popular

From page 1

The *Wandering Earth II*, which earned 8.3 points out of 10 on the review aggregator Douban, and *Pull River Red*, which garnered 7.8 points, both received much praise, indicating the technical and storytelling leaps of China's film industry, according to some insiders.

Most critics and insiders contacted by China Daily said the festival's two highest-grossing movies have signaled that Chinese movies imbedded with traditional values and culture are increasingly appealing to domestic audiences, with the trendy rise of cultural confidence in recent years.

Ticket revenue for each of the two movies has surpassed 1.6 billion yuan, more than most Hollywood blockbusters released on the Chinese mainland in recent years, according to major ticketing websites like Maoyan.

Rao Shuguang, president of the China Film Critics Association, said *The Wandering Earth II* has explored a good direction for Chinese sci-fi films, with its intriguing interweaving of traditional Chinese values, shaped by the country's millennia-long culture, with a futuristic world that faces an unprecedented disaster.

Meanwhile, showcasing the diversity of genres, the animated feature *Boonie Bears: Guardian Code* ranked third for box office receipts, followed by the espionage thriller *Hidden Blade* in fourth place and the fantasy comedy *Five Hundred Miles* coming in fifth.

Director Tian Xiaopeng's long-

awaited animated feature *Deep Sea* took sixth place in the festival charts, while the sports movie *Ping Pong: The Triumph* — released two days after the other six movies, all of which debuted on Sunday — placed seventh.

With most Chinese people recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic after the optimization of prevention measures, the domestic cinema market is witnessing a robust recovery.

Lian Xiaofang, a 38-year-old mother in Tianjin, said she was surprised to discover long lines at local cinemas, something not seen for a long time, which made her feel like being in a crowded railway station during the Spring Festival travel rush.

"My family hasn't gone to a cinema for almost a year due to worries about infection and lack of attractive blockbusters. This festival has a variety of acclaimed offerings. Although tickets for good seats were difficult to purchase, we are happy to see that life has returned to the normal hustle and bustle," Lian said.

Yu Chao, deputy general manager of Beijing's Capital Cinema, said festival movie ticket sales have exceeded the industry's original estimations, as most insiders initially thought that festival celebrations and a resurgence of tourism might reduce the number of theatergoers.

"However, the industry's long-term development cannot rely on a few blockbusters or a specific box office season like Spring Festival. We hope more quality films, especially those with small and medium-sized budgets, will be produced or released this year to fully boost morale," said Yu.

Drilling for the future



Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni (center right) inaugurates drilling at the Kingfisher Oil Field in Kikuube, Uganda, on Tuesday. Operation of the oilfield has been undertaken by Chinese oil giant, the China National Offshore Oil Corp (CNOOC). STUART TIBAWESWA / AFP

COVID: Visits to fever clinics also down

From page 1

The number of deaths from COVID-19 infections in hospitals nationwide reached a daily peak of 4,273 on Jan 4 and then declined, falling to 896 on Monday, a drop of 79 percent from the peak, the center said.

The number of patients hospitalized for COVID-19 nationwide reached a peak of 1.63 million on Jan 5 and then began to decline, falling to 248,000 on Monday.

Among them, the number of critically ill patients had increased by nearly 10,000 per day from Dec 27 to Jan 3, and then fell to 36,000 on Monday.

The number of visits to fever clinics across the Chinese mainland started to decline after reaching a peak of 2.87 million on Dec 23. The number fell to 110,000 on Monday, a 96.2 percent drop from the peak.

In rural areas of the Chinese mainland, the peak stood at 922,000 on Dec 23 and then fluctuated downward, falling to 50,000 on Monday, a drop of 94.6 percent from the peak.

To strengthen the monitoring of the virus, since Dec 9, a total of 824 sentinel hospitals that have established an influenza surveillance network, as well as 402 national-level network laboratories, have conducted COVID-19 surveillance, the report said.

Regarding vaccination, as of Friday, a total of 3.49 billion doses have been administered.

Centenarian recovers thanks to 'proning'

By **LIU KUN** in Wuhan and **WANG XIAOYU** in Beijing

The speedy recovery of a 103-year-old COVID-19 patient in Wuhan, Hubei province, has shed light on a low-tech but potentially effective method to improve the breathing of seniors stricken by the virus, medical experts said.

Zhou Hongfang, the centenarian, was admitted to a hospital on Dec 28 after her family members found she suddenly lost her appetite and became lethargic. A quick, at-home test showed that her blood oxygen level had dropped below the red line of 93 percent.

"Her COVID-19 symptoms are typical of seniors as they rarely develop high fever or feel like razor blades are cutting their throat, and often just experience fatigue, sleepiness and appetite loss," said Chen Guoxi, a doctor at Wuhan Pulmonary Hospital.

A CT scan at the hospital showed that the virus had attacked Zhou's lungs, but due to her age and high blood pressure, Chen said she was not deemed suitable to take most COVID-19 drugs.

"Thus, we mostly relied on moderate oxygen therapy and 'proning' to improve her condition," he said.

Chen was referring to a method whereby patients are flipped over to lie on their stomach for about 12 hours a day, so as to open their lungs, increase blood oxygen and accelerate recovery.

The approach has been widely used for patients in comas in intensive care units. According to the latest treatment protocol released by the National Health Commission, the approach is also recommended for COVID-19 patients associated with risk factors, and those at risk of worsening rapidly.

Rehabilitating at home, Zhou has been able to take a stroll around the neighborhood with the help of a walking stick since Thursday.

"Her recovery reaffirms the efficacy of proning and boosts our confidence in treating very old COVID-19 patients," Chen said.

Jiang Rongmeng, vice-president of Beijing Ditan Hospital, also urged seniors above 70 years old to measure their oxygen blood levels daily and immediately rest on their belly when the reading declines to lower than 93 percent.

If the oxygen level hovers under 93 percent despite proning and at-home oxygen therapy, patients should be sent to a hospital, he said.

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FROM THE FRONT LINE | ANHUI

Local officials stay put for services

By **ZHU LIXIN** in Hefei zhulixin@chinadaily.com.cn

With the optimization of COVID-19 prevention measures nationwide, numerous people have managed to return home during the Spring Festival holiday. But Liu Zifei, a Party member in Hefei, Anhui province, is not among them.

Liu is the Party chief of the Lianhua subdistrict of the Hefei Economic and Technological Development Area. He was required to stay in Hefei during the holiday period in case of emergencies.

"We need to remain alert to the risk of COVID-19, especially among the elderly, in addition to environmental protection, fire alarms and food supplies," said Liu.

"As China optimizes epidemic prevention and control measures, this year's festival could be a vital transition period, so we must make every effort to ensure peoples' happiness," he continued, adding that he has not forgotten how the hard times began.

For the weeklong festival in 2020, he and his colleagues worked all-out on epidemic prevention and control.

With more than 120,000 residents in seven neighborhoods and over 9,000 businesses, Lianhua is the largest subdistrict of the province's largest development area.

Fan Li, Party chief of the Mingzhu neighborhood committee, said that at first, things were messy because community workers did not have the experience needed to handle this kind of situation.

By the time the 2021 Spring Festival arrived, she was able to do her work in a more orderly manner. Yet each of the eight community workers on the committee still stayed on duty for at least two days.

Peng Guizhen, director of the general office of the area's COVID-19 prevention and control command center, said that though the work then was tough, it had been successful.

The area had no infections for more than two years until March 25, 2022, when an outside truck driver tested positive.

In the course of more than 100 consecutive days, Liu and his team helped with epidemiological investigations, testing and providing other services till the situation eased.

Now with the decrease in pressure from COVID-19, he said that he and his team will have more time and energy to improve services for residents and companies.

"One of the favorable legacies of COVID-19 work is that now we know more about those we serve, like who our residents are and how many employees a company has," he said.

Fan echoed a similar sentiment, adding that: "One of our committee's key plans in the new year is to organize more activities for housewives."

Li Shuyang in Hefei contributed to this story.

Educator saw his dream come true

By **CHEN XUE** chenxue@21stcentury.com.cn

"Let's read China Daily, DAILY!" Chen Lin, English educator, professor of English at Beijing Foreign Studies University, and the man who wrote this tagline for China Daily's first anniversary back in 1982, passed away in Beijing on Saturday at the age of 101.

Chen used to say that his life-long dream was to be 100 years old and still teaching. It was a dream that came true for the senior educator.

Chen dedicated his whole life to English education and started teaching at Beijing Foreign Studies University in 1949. Inspired by a meeting in the 1960s with the late premier Zhou Enlai, who suggested that every stage of English education, from primary school to college, should be coherent within a holistic system, Chen began to compile textbooks for English for all age groups, laying the foundations for language teaching materials in China.

Since China's reform and opening-up in late 1970s, Chen broke new ground by hosting one of the country's earliest English-language TV programs, which introduced a brand-new way of language learning to China.

Chen had been a China Daily consultant since the newspaper was launched in 1981 and said that in the early 1980s, when there were few English learning resources, it offered Chinese learners of high-quality English reading material, and this was why he had come up with the tagline of "Let's read China Daily, DAILY" to encourage more people to make the best use of the newspaper.

At his suggestion, China Daily launched its educational branch, 21st Century — a series of weekly newspapers targeting English learners ranging from kindergartners to college students — in 1993. Chen once described it as "an open classroom without walls for all English learners".

"Students with a good mastery of foreign languages need to accumulate knowledge in other professional aspects so that they can better contribute to national development, the Belt and Road Initiative, and other major initiatives to help 'build a community with a shared future for humanity,'" Chen said at the 2018 TESOL China Assembly jointly organized by China Daily and Shanghai International Studies University in Shanghai. He was 96 at the time.



Online
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COVER



Eco-friendly: Villagers benefit from protecting the environment

From page 1

In 2018 and 2019, Xu planted orange trees on about 53 hectares of land that he rented from the village committee.

Fuzhou, Xu's hometown, boasts a huge navel orange industry, and the locals there have a saying: "If you cultivate a navel orange tree for three years, it will bring you income for three decades."

However, Xu never imagined that the orchard he started far from his hometown would develop into a business that would generate financial benefits for the residents of Changkou and many other nearby villages in just four years.

The launching of his orchard in Changkou coincided with a national pilot program to deepen conservation of the Minjiang River following the principle that mountains, rivers, forests, farmland, lakes and grassland are a life community, which is one of the 10 tenets of Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization.

The concept has been promoted by Xi for balanced and sustainable development that features the harmonious coexistence of humanity and the natural world.

The Minjiang, which is known as Fujian's "Mother River", runs for about 577 kilometers in the province and a tributary called the Jinxi River runs through Changkou.

As a part of the huge program, with total planned investment of 12.1 billion yuan, a 70-million-yuan ecological remediation project was rolled out in the areas near Changkou in 2017.

The project not only aims to conserve the mountains, soil and water, but also improve people's living environment and raise incomes.

In addition to afforestation, control of water and soil loss, dredging, construction of sewage treatment facilities and landscaping, efforts have been made to beef up agricultural infrastructures.

For example, the government has renovated agricultural irrigation channels and drainage systems in Changkou, and laid paved roads through the farmland. All these facilities have benefited Xu greatly, saving him from having to invest his own money to build the necessary facilities for his orchard.

The government has also built a smart water-fertilizer integrated system and an intelligent monitoring system specifically for his orchard.

"I can control the water-fertilizer integrated system with just my phone," he said with a smile, adding that the investment in the system amounted to about 2 million yuan.

Supported by the internet of things and big data technologies, the intelligent monitoring system can follow and analyze all the procedures in orange tree cultivation and help adjust irrigation and fertilization in a precise manner.

Thanks to the monitoring system, Xu has also introduced an orange tree adoption program. Clients can learn all they need to know about the trees they adopt — including irrigation, fertilization and the use of pesticides — in a real-time manner.

Xu has introduced a number of eco-friendly approaches in the orchard. To reduce fertilizer use, for instance, "green manure" is planted under orange trees. "Green manure" refers to fast-growing plants that are sown to cover bare soil. They can return valuable nutrients to the soil and improve its structure after being planted while still green.

The local high-quality natural environment and the eco-friendly cultivation approaches mean that Xu's oranges can be sold for high prices at market.



From top: An aerial view of Changkou village in Sanming, Fujian province.

Orchard founder Xu Lianghui tends to his navel orange trees in Changkou.

Changkou resident Qiu Caoli pounds leicha, or ground tea, a local specialty, while telling visitors stories about the village in March last year. ZHOU ZHIHONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

"The price of navel oranges from my orchard ranges from 10 yuan to 12 yuan per kilogram. The market price of the fruit usually stands at 8 yuan to 12 yuan per kg," he said.

His navel oranges are sold in many large cities such as Shanghai and Nanjing, capital of Jiangsu province. "They sell well," he said.

Xu said he pays the Changkou village committee 30,000 yuan a year for each hectare of farmland he rents. Meanwhile, many villagers can each earn 40,000 yuan to 60,000 yuan a year by working in his orchard.

He has also expanded his navel orange orchards to several other villages. In total, the orchards cover about 267 hectares and host roughly 220,000 trees.

According to local authorities, Xu's business is expected to raise the incomes of local villagers and village committees by 4 million yuan a

year starting in 2025, when all of the trees will start yield fruit.

In addition to 100 full-time employees, the operation of Xu's orchards requires about 700 temporary workers in peak harvest seasons.

Apart from navel oranges, Changkou has also brought in vegetable, flower and mushroom industries, which all make full use of the natural environment, according to the village committee.

In addition to eco-agriculture, ecotourism has continued to boom in Changkou, with the village receiving about 50,000 tourists a year, it said.

In 2012, a tourism company called Yunqushan launched a rafting project in the village with investment of 20 million yuan. Without having to make any investment in the project, the village committee became a shareholder through Changkou's land and the livable environment.

Each year, the committee receives 10 percent of the project's gate receipts.

Chen Zubiao, Yunqushan's general manager, said the company invested a further 2.6 million yuan in 2019 to expand its facilities after seeing consistent surges in the number of tourists arriving.

Also attracted by the village's pleasant environment, the Fujian Tourism Development Group decided to start a tourism program in the village in 2019 with total investment of 600 million yuan.

According to the agreement the village reached with the company, the project aims to build the settlement into a sanitarium-like ecotourism base so people can visit not only for sightseeing, but also for health treatments. Facilities will also be built for environmental education programs to promote the philosophy that "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets".

While some villagers choose to work for companies that come to invest in Changkou, others have started their own businesses. Yang Fuchun, for example, started a rural resort in his three-story house in 2017. Previously, he and his wife could make only about 50,000 yuan a year as migrant workers, but now the business brings them annual income of more than 100,000 yuan, he told Fujian Daily.

Luo Peiying, an official with the Changkou village committee, said the residents can lease their empty properties to the village committee to assist the development of tourism. They not only earn rental income, but receive dividends from the operating revenues.

With 1,267 hectares of woodland in total, Changkou has a forest coverage rate of 92 percent. Since 2021, when local authorities introduced a forest carbon credit mechanism, the villagers have benefited financially from the forest they have safeguarded for generations.

Forest carbon credits are calculated based on the amount of carbon dioxide that is captured by added woodland areas. As a market instrument, it is used in many countries to encourage afforestation.

Emitters of carbon dioxide can buy the credits to offset the gases they generate, while the credits can also serve as collateral for bank credit and loans.

As China forges ahead with its climate targets of peaking carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality before 2060, the country has vowed to beef up afforestation so that more carbon dioxide can be absorbed from the atmosphere.

On May 18, 2021, the village received the country's first carbon credit stamp from the local forestry administration for 213 hectares of its woodland. A third-party assessment shows that the forest absorbed 12,723 metric tons of carbon dioxide from 2016 to 2020. The credit was quickly sold for about 140,000 yuan, according to local authorities.

"All the money has been distributed to villagers as a dividend. Each villager got 150 yuan," said Deng Wanfu, Changkou's Party chief. The local forestry administration is issuing the second forest carbon credit stamp for the village, he told Fujian Daily.

The new stamp is for almost 479 hectares of forest, and the total credit this time amounts to 21,139 tons of carbon dioxide.

Thanks to a surge in the price, Deng expects that the credit will bring the village 600,000 yuan in income. "Once we sell the credit, we will distribute dividends to the villagers again," he said.

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WORLD

Mood upbeat for growth in China-Africa trade

By ZHAO RUINAN
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African and Chinese business owners have expressed their confidence in the prospects for growth in bilateral trade and deepened business ties in the future, saying China's optimization of its anti-COVID policies last month will bring more benefits and opportunities.

Mouhamadou Bassirou Pouye, the owner of a Senegalese company providing logistics services, said his company had to readjust its business model due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including developing an e-commerce platform.

"My customers mostly are Africans and some Chinese based in Africa. With the COVID-19 pandemic, we readjusted our business model because the restrictions had turned our working method upside down, which is also the reason why we developed an e-commerce platform to maintain the same performance," the 37-year-old said.

But with China's refined policy, he said, there is great potential for business growth over the coming year. "In addition to doing online business, we will start doing physical business again with the return of our customers in China," he said.

Pouye said many businessmen plan to waste no time in making a personal visit to China soon.

After China's optimization of its policy response to COVID-19, hopes are rising that the Chinese economy can make a strong recovery and lead the way for the global economy in the midst of challenges on many fronts.

Kristina Hooper, chief global market strategist at Invesco, a global investment management company, said the optimized policy and measures "could help propel China to be a key growth engine in 2023".

Economic dynamism is making a speedy comeback in China. For Pouye, a strong and dynamic market was the very factor that led him to China 10 years ago.

Pouye started his business in 2011 in his home country and, to further his ambitions, traveled to China in 2013. Three years later, he decided to open a branch trading company in Yiwu, Zhejiang province.

The businessman said he is confident that China-Africa cooperation will grow even stronger, with more exchanges expected in the future.

Revival of exchanges

"The cooperative ties between China and Africa are getting solidified year after year and with initiatives like the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation and the Belt and Road Initiative, (the friendship) will no doubt last for the future," he said.

The last FOCAC summit was held in Dakar, Senegal, in November 2021, during which China and Africa agreed to boost cooperation on the digital economy.

Zhu Shun, general secretary of the Yiwu China-Africa Business Council, welcoming the optimization of the anti-COVID policy, said that the revival of business exchanges between China and Africa will bring more opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises to accelerate their development.

Zhu is also the owner of Zhejiang Jinmin Electric Co, which sells low-voltage electric appliances and switch socket products. During the pandemic, his company had been affected, mainly because of the disruptions in logistical services.

"The refining of COVID response policy is a good rain after a long drought," he said, adding that these resumed exchanges will help boost global trade and bring the world out of the haze of the pandemic.

Report: Half of US mass attacks sparked by workplace disputes

By AI HEPING in New York
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Half of the violent mass attacks in the United States from 2016-2020 were sparked by personal, domestic or workplace disputes, and a gun was used for nearly three-quarters of the attacks, according to a Secret Service report released Wednesday.

The 70-page report — *Mass Attacks in Public Spaces: 2016-2020* — came days after a pair of mass shootings in California that took the lives of 18 people and as authorities searched for motives in the attacks linked to older men.

The sheriff's office said it believes the shootings at a California mushroom farm and at another nearby site on Monday were "workplace violence" but hasn't given a detailed motive.

Chunli Zhao, 66, the lone suspect in Monday's massacre at two mushroom farms in the seaside town of Half Moon Bay was charged Wednesday with seven counts of premeditated murder and a single count of attempted murder.

Los Angeles law enforcement authorities said investigators hadn't yet established why 72-year-old Huu Can Tran shot and killed 11 people and wounded nine Saturday night at a ballroom dance hall in Monterey Park, California. Tran later killed himself as police closed in on him.

The Secret Service report is an analysis of 173 mass attacks that occurred in 37 states and Washington

DC, from major cities to small towns. It details attacks that hurt three or more people in public spaces, including churches and schools. It was done by the agency's National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC).

It aims to prevent violence by identifying warning signs.

Dr Lina Alathari, the chief of the center, said the trends could help community leaders know what red flags to spot before someone carries out a mass attack.

Although a personal grievance was the single most common motive for an attack, one-quarter of the attackers studied from 2016 to 2020 were motivated by conspiracy theories or hateful ideologies.

Hateful ideologies that motivated attackers included anti-government, antisemitic or misogynistic views. The authors of the report also found nearly one-third of all attackers had evidence of planning their attacks.

The typical attacker was a 34-year-old man motivated by personal grievances rather than ideology, the report says.

Alathari told NBC News the grievances could be "perceived wrongs, most often related to personal issues, maybe health or financial issues, workplace issues, as well as issues with family and romantic partners".

The Secret Service says in the five-year span of data the agency analyzed, 513 people were killed and 1,234 people were injured.

Agencies contributed to this story.



People attend a candlelight vigil on Tuesday for victims of a deadly mass shooting at a ballroom dance studio in Monterey Park, California. MARIO TAMA / GETTY IMAGES VIA AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Shootings leave anger over guns

By LIU YINMENG in Los Angeles
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Back-to-back mass shootings less than two days apart in California have claimed 18 lives, including those of Chinese citizens, and left mourners angry over gun use.

On Monday afternoon, news broke of a shooting in Half Moon Bay, near San Francisco, which left seven dead as police were continuing their investigations into a Saturday shooting in which 11 people were killed at a dance studio in Monterey Park in Los Angeles County.

On Monday evening, hundreds of people gathered at the Monterey Park City Hall for a memorial service for the victims of the shooting.

For residents who live near the dance studio, the shooting has rattled a close-knit and peaceful community.

"We have never expected such a tragedy could happen in such a peaceful community when everyone was enjoying the Chinese New Year holiday," said July Wong, a Vietnamese Chinese living in Monterey Park.

People in the neighborhood condemned gun violence and urged that action be taken.

"We have the highest rates of gun deaths in the world. We have more guns than people. ... We have more than one gun for every man, woman and child in America. That is insanity," said Paul Cole Padilla, an educational administrator.

He held a poster that read "The Problem is Guns!"

The Chinese Consulate General in San Francisco said on Tuesday that some Chinese citizens were among the victims in the second attack, allegedly carried out by 66-year-old Half Moon Bay resident Chunli Zhao.

"We are shocked and deeply regretted to learn about this severe shooting incident. According to various sources, Chinese citizens were among the victims," the consulate said in a statement.

The consulate said it is in communication with police and has contacted some of the families of the victims, adding: "We will do our best to provide consular assistance".

A spokesperson for the Chinese Consulate General in Los Angeles confirmed on Monday that at least one Chinese citizen died in the Monterey Park shooting.

At 10:22 pm on Saturday, Huu Can

Tran, 72, walked into Star Ballroom Dance Studio and began spraying bullets at the guests, who were celebrating Chinese New Year. He killed five men and six women between the ages of 57 and 76. Nine people were wounded.

Tran then went to a second dance studio in the nearby city of Alhambra, but Brandon Tsay, the 26-year-old operator of the club, managed to wrestle the gun away from Tran before he was able to harm anyone else.

Tran died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound in his van at a parking lot the next day as police closed in on him.

According to the Los Angeles County Department of Medical Examiner-Coroner, the female victims were identified as Xiujuan Yu, 57; Hong Jian, 62; Lilian Li, 63; My Nhan, 65; Muoi Ung, 67; and Diana Tom, 70. The male victims were identified as Wen Yu, 64; Valentino Alvero, 68; Ming Ma, 72; Yu Kao, 72; and Chia Yau, 76.

Police said jealousy over a personal dispute might have been a motive behind the Monterey Park shooting.

Less than 48 hours after Tran's

rampage, Zhao allegedly opened fire at a pair of Northern California mushroom farms, killing five men and two women, all of whom were Asian or Hispanic, according to the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office. Another male victim suffered injuries and is being treated in a hospital.

Zhao was arrested in the parking lot of the sheriff's Half Moon Bay substation more than two hours after the shooting. On Wednesday, he was charged with seven counts of murder and one count of attempted murder.

Authorities have yet to definitively confirm the motive for either shooting.

US President Joe Biden ordered flags to be flown at half-staff to honor the victims.

California Governor Gavin Newsom said he was meeting with the victims of the Monterey Park shooting when he was pulled away to be briefed on the Half Moon Bay shooting.

"Tragedy upon tragedy," Newsom said in a tweet on Monday.

Chang Jun in San Francisco and Xinhua contributed to this story.

Move to shut out property buyers sparks backlash

By MAY ZHOU in Houston
mayzhou@chinadailyusa.com

Texas State Representative Gene Wu could have expected Chinese New Year to pass with celebrations of his cultural heritage. Instead, this month the lawmaker has been kept busy defending the rights of his people and immigrants in the southern state.

It all started a week before the Spring Festival celebrations got underway. That's when Texas Governor Greg Abbott tweeted that he would sign a bill "to ban citizens, governments & entities of China, Iran, North Korea and Russia from purchasing land in Texas".

State records show that the bill was filed in November by Republican State Senator Lois Kolkhorst and got little notice by the public and media. The bill, called SB 147, if passed, would ban government entities, companies, citizens of China, Iran, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Russia from purchasing property in Texas.

Abbott's tweet got people's attention and sent members of the Chinese community in Texas into a flurry of activities protesting the bill. Heated debates erupted in social chat groups among Chinese Americans. While some people say that the bill is not a big deal if one becomes a US citizen, others see this as the Chinese Exclusion Act 2.0.

To Wu, SB 147 attempts to ban large swathes of immigrants from China and the other three coun-

tries, including lawful permanent residents, from buying property in Texas. He said there are about half a million "green card" holders from China alone in the United States.

"After an unprecedented rise in anti-Asian hate around the nation, our communities continue to struggle against not only violence within our society, but with political persecution as well," Wu said. "SB 147 is discriminatory, hateful, and brings back painful reminders of laws passed a hundred years ago that specifically prevented Chinese individuals from owning property, starting businesses, or even marrying the person they love."

Wu was referring the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which denied Chinese immigrants from entering the US and refused to grant Chinese already there citizenship. It was not completely repealed until 1968.

Supporters of SB 147 say that it's proposed in consideration of national security. But Wu warned that Texas is only a test ground for this type of bill. If passed, it's very likely that many GOP-controlled states will follow suit.

On Wednesday, he was scheduled to hold a news conference to denounce SB 147 in Austin.

Kenneth Li, president of the Asian American Business Council and a real estate broker, said that SB 147 violates the Texas Fair Housing Act.

"The politicians play politics and ignore immigrants' significant contributions to this country," Li said.

Street confrontation



Police charge against protesters in Lima, Peru, on Tuesday. Protesters are seeking the resignation of President Dina Boluarte, who had called for a "national truce" to end weeks of unrest. MARTIN MEJIA / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Briefly

JAPAN 1 dead, 9 missing after cargo ship capsizes

One person was confirmed dead and nine others still missing after a Hong Kong-registered cargo ship capsized off Japan's Nagasaki prefecture, the Chinese Consulate-General in Nagasaki said on Wednesday. The ship, *Jintian*, sank in the morning off Danjo Islands, the consulate-general said, adding that 14 Chinese and eight crew members from Myanmar were on the vessel. Japan's Coast Guard said four Chinese and a sailor from Myanmar had been rescued, one crew member from Myanmar was confirmed dead while seven others were reported to be in a state of cardiopulmonary arrest.

NEW ZEALAND New PM pledges focus on economy

Chris Hipkins was sworn in on Wednesday as New Zealand's 41st prime minister, following the unexpected resignation last week of Jacinda Ardern. Hipkins, 44, has promised a back-to-basics approach focusing on the economy and what he described as the "pandemic of inflation". Hipkins later chaired his first cabinet meeting. He will have less than nine months before contesting a tough general election, with opinion polls indicating his Labour Party is trailing its conservative opponent.

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These materials are distributed by China Daily Distribution Corp. on behalf of China Daily Beijing, China. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice.

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CHINA DAILY (ISSN 0748-6154) is published daily except

weekends by China Daily USA, 1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,

New York, NY 10036. Periodical postage paid at New York, NY

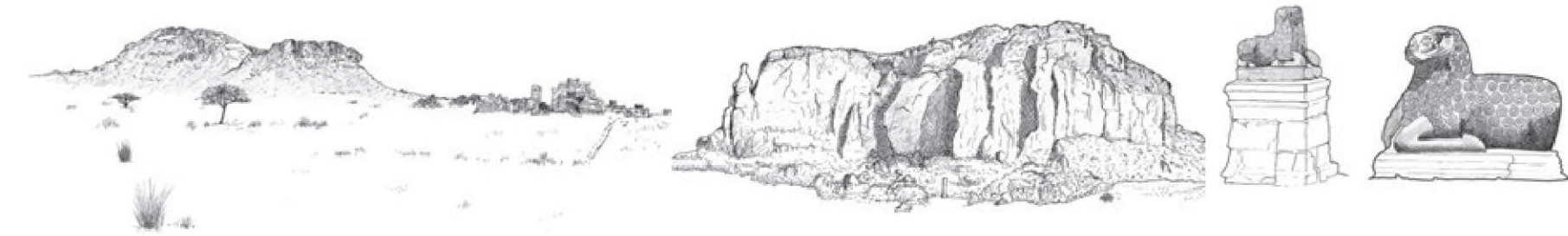
and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address

changes to CHINA DAILY USA, 1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New

York, NY 10036.

Vol. 38 — No. 762

PEOPLE



Above: Su Ning's sketch paintings on Africa that appear in his albums. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Painter builds bridge of cultural exchanges

Landscapes of Guilin, Africa and Myanmar have fired Su Ning's artistic vision

By LI YANG
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He says he set out from Xinjiang like a camel on the Silk Road. He was assigned to work in oilfields in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region upon graduation from university in 1996 and traveled all the way to Sudan in Africa in 2001, where he worked as the foreign affairs manager for several oil projects for eight years. In his spare time, he drew pictures of what he saw. This is one side of the self-portrait drawn by Su Ning, a painter, writer and scholar in his 40s.

After Sudan he came back to his hometown of Guilin, a tourist resort known for its picturesque karst landforms in Southwest China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. He then took up the same post of foreign affairs manager for oil pipeline project in Myanmar in 2012. Visiting the Southeast Asian nation often proved to be a golden opportunity for Su to gather creative ideas for his art.

The government of Myanmar invited Su to Yangon for the overseas launch ceremony for his book, *Buddhist Flower of Myanmar*, which is collected in the Myanmar National Library. Su also introduced the first Chinese-language book on Myanmar painting to China. He is committed to promoting artistic and cultural exchanges to strengthen the traditional "Paukphaw" friendship between China and Myanmar.

Using another animal metaphor, Su says of his "pilgrimage" to the Southeast Asian country: "I was like an Asian elephant that strode from Guangxi to the jungles in Myanmar." That's where he immersed himself in and was inspired by the Buddhist culture in the country, which is the other side of the self-portrait of Su.

Then he came back to Guilin, and worked as a cultural and art researcher at a local university. But he has never ceased painting, taking



full advantage of his "camel" and "elephant" experience, to contribute to exchanges between China and Sudan and China and Myanmar, as he believes that art is a common language of different cultures.

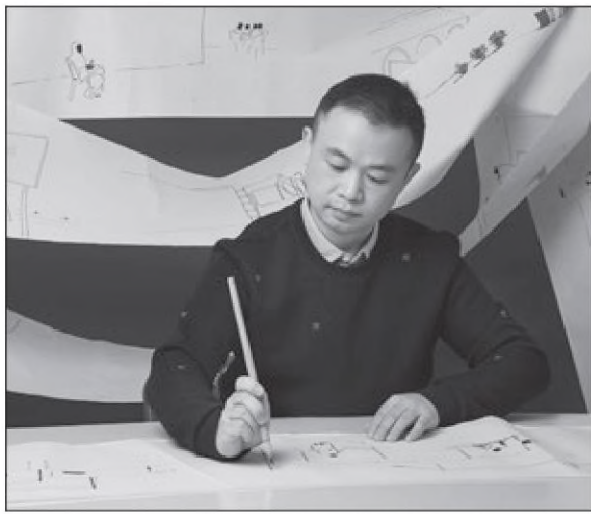
Su has held several solo exhibitions of his African art in Sudan and China since 2006, including the "Maburuk Sudan" (Cheers Sudan) serial exhibition, making him arguably the most influential Chinese painter in Sudan.

Some Africans in China spoke highly of the Maburuk Sudan exhibition, saying that it was fabulous to see an art exhibition on Africa in China, and Su's paintings made them feel homesick and immediately shortened the distance between Chinese and African people.

Su told the media: "I am dedicated to doing my little bit to help the Chinese people better understand Sudan and Africa, and vice versa."

Artists in Sudan praised Su for "drawing" a bridge of artistic exchange between China and Sudan, as the exhibitions of his paintings have served to deepen the mutual understanding of the Sudanese people and their Chinese counterparts, and promoted the people-to-people exchanges and friendship between the two countries.

Su has also published an album of paintings *Sudan in My Eyes* in Sudan showing how a Chinese artist



Above: Su's works on Africa. Below: Su paints at his workshop in Guilin, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

sees the country. Book critics say the book has filled a vacancy in its field.

Compared with a painter with professional training, Su's artistic creation is full of randomness. Art critics say that Su's painting style is not something that can be cultivated in a traditional art school.

The publishing of *Sudan in My Eyes* was at first not part of Su's plan. When he was in Sudan, he



liked finding scraps of paper and drawing whatever he saw on them: the wild grassland in the rainy season, the lions and the elephants by rivers. Until one day when his works were spotted by Dr Rashid Diab, a Sudanese modern painter, visual artist and art historian, who marveled at Su's creations, and encouraged him to continue to stick to his style and keep on drawing what he

saw in Sudan. Su didn't expect that his sketches would finally be collected in the album, which reportedly caused a bit of a sensation in Sudan after it was published.

The media quoted Diab as saying of Su's paintings: Frankly, the most difficult relationship in a painting is the relationship between black and white. Under each line, the paper is being scored so it cannot lie. The layout and atmosphere need to be created. The fewer the lines, the more there is the need for ideas and planning. In that sense, Su's painting is closer to philosophical thinking.

The album has been presented by the Sudanese government as a state gift to visiting Chinese guests. And some Sudanese officials have also attended Su's art and book shows in Beijing during their visits to China.

Su, who is also vice-chairman of Guilin Culture Promotion Society, has taken the opportunity to introduce Guilin to the Sudanese guests, welcoming them to the national "guestroom city", as Guilin is known, having received many foreign visitors since the 1960s.

Su said: "I often stroll along the Lijiang River in Guilin, as if I can breathe the breeze of the Nile. I often climb the mountains in Guilin, but when I look at the starry sky I am missing Africa; I miss my days and nights in Africa and my friends far away"

In producing more than 200

drawings of scenes in and around Guilin, Su says he has tried to express the "beauty of the thousands of faces" of Guilin landscape with various techniques, such as using thick strokes, oil painting, acrylic gouache, and rock coloring, but, he feels they still do "not capture the complete beauty of the Guilin landscape". And it is in his "dialogue" with the Guilin landscape that Su started realizing that "learning from nature is always the secret of making works fresh". Which is the secret of the success of his works on Sudan.

Over these years, Su has also authored several books on Africa in Guilin and Shanghai — including *Nile, Nile; Starry Sky in Africa; Close to the Nile; Habibi Sudan; and Lonely Suakin*. Critics attribute Su's articles and books on Africa to his first-hand experience in and love of the continent that greatly expanded his vision and view.

Moreover, Su's blog on Sudanese culture and art has developed into an important platform for China-Sudan cultural and art exchanges since it was launched in 2005. Many Chinese people interested in African culture, art and history and African people interested in China often visit his blog, which has served as a de facto public sphere for cultural exchanges between China and Africa.

Till now, many African friends have turned Su's house into a staging post for their trips to China. Su often receives African friends in his home all year round. He makes coffee, cooks Sudanese and Chinese food and organizes salon activities. This active person-to-person communication provides Su with what he calls "an inexhaustible atmosphere and inspiration" for artistic creation, as well as valuable chances for African visitors to know China, as nature, people and life are the true sources of inspirations for art.

Li Ziyu in Guilin contributed to this story.

By LI YANG
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Dafeng Hall (Big Wind Hall), an academy of Chinese painting founded by Zhang Zishan and Zhang Daqian in Shanghai in the 1920s, has been a shining light in the recent art history of China. The works of members of the academy have repeatedly reached new highs in the auction market in recent years. As a result, Dafeng Hall is known as the wind vane of the Chinese landscape painting and calligraphy market.

Specializing in splash-ink landscape paintings, Dong Yinghua is one of the academy's members, having being accepted in 2016. However, unlike its other members, who received professional training, Dong is largely self-taught.

He was born in Qiqihar, Northeast China's Heilongjiang province, in 1970. Painting was not a tradition in Dong's family. His father and mother worked in a factory. But Dong has been devoted to painting since childhood. He attributes his interest and talent to being a natural gift. His family was poor and could not afford decent brushes and paper. But that did not prevent him from painting. He drew on old newspapers, walls, any surface he could find.

Dong joined the army in 1989, and his drawing talent earned him a post as a clerk in the company office. It was the first time he realized the difference his artistic gift could make to his life.

After his discharge from the army, his works did not seem to be as well



Left: Dong Yinghua works on a splash-ink landscape painting at his studio in Beijing. Right: *Sailboats and Waterfalls*, a splash-ink landscape painting by Dong. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

received by the public as in the army. Feeling lost, he gave up the plan of earning his living with a brush and became a worker in a factory in his hometown.

But even working in the factory every day could not extinguish the flame of art in Dong's heart. In 1994, after careful thought, Dong quit his job and came to Beijing to chase his dream.

Dong visited Liulichang and Panjiayuan, two major art markets in the capital city, every day to recommend his works to galleries. "I will never forget that my first painting sold for 3,000 yuan (\$447.6)," Dong said. He wired 2,000 yuan back to his parents, about twice their monthly income at that time, paid 500 yuan for his house rent, spent 300 yuan on new brushes and paper, and kept 200

yuan for himself.

However, his lack of professional training became more prominent, as the gallery owners regarded him as only an amateur painter. "I had no idea what to do about that. But thankfully I didn't stop painting," Dong said.

The turning point came unexpectedly one day around 2010 when Shi Yunxiang, an artist and then manager of the Dafeng Hall, came across Dong's works in a gallery in Liulichang.

Shi told the gallery owner that he wanted to meet the painter. They felt like old friends at the first meeting, and Shi enabled Dong to join the academy which provided Dong with his long-awaited chance to learn skills from masters. For Dong, it was an "eye-opening" experience, and one that saw him transformed



from being a talented "attic" painter to a professional artist with contracts with galleries. It was also an experience that consolidated his resolve to pursue his childhood dream, and Dong attended workshop training at the Academy of Arts & Design of Tsinghua University between 2013 and 2014.

In the process, he gradually formed his own understanding of art, and his works gradually showed their unique artistic characteristics and style.

Talking about his "luck", Dong said: "As the saying goes, working hard is the only thing I can do. Just leave the rest to God."

Dong applied the splash-ink skills of Zhang Daqian, a co-founder of the club, to his landscape paintings, and creatively merged some Western painting techniques to it, forming

his own "heavy-color splash-ink landscape painting style".

The techniques of splash-ink painting are very difficult to master, as the flow of ink and color have to be carefully controlled. Even for those who are proficient, the success rate for paintings is very low, about 10 percent. It requires not only ideas and skills, but also energy, physical strength and time, and a larger painting will take months or even longer to finish, Dong said.

He added: "Inspired by techniques of previous artists, I am trying to give full play to my own strengths, hoping to carry forward the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation and the cultural heritage of the splash-ink painting school with my new heavy-color splash-ink landscape painting."

Commenting on Dong's works, Shi Yunxiang pointed out that, although they might seem spontaneous, the creation of a splash-ink landscape painting is highly rational. The artist should have a clear idea before splashing ink onto the paper about what kind of painting it will be and what effect is trying to be achieved.

"This is the so-called wit of the brush, and Dong has extraordinary basic skills in this respect, good painting skills, with the ability to create and represent the form of things," Shi said.

Dong can create layers of visual effects in his splash-ink paints forming a sharp contrast between the virtual and the real, as well as coordinative effects of different colors. It takes solid basic skills, deep understanding of the splash-ink techniques and long-term practice to make the most of this innovative, seemingly casual way of painting.

Man Weiqi, director of the Chinese Traditional Painting Academy, said Dong developed a new way to express natural phenomena by using ancient painting techniques and Western painting skills. The combination of color, ink and landscape not only shows the exquisite Chinese culture, but also integrates the artistic essence of Western paintings.

Dong said he intends to continue to explore new possibilities in painting skills to bridge Chinese and Western painting.

Xue Shanshan in Beijing contributed to this story.

READ



Virtual clothing design by Sun Fanrui, named Beware.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Another virtual design project by Sun, called Rheology.



A model "wears" virtual clothing designed by Chen Peng.

At school, Miao Sheng'ai is a grade 12 student, busy preparing for her college entrance exam; at home, she designs garments that don't exist in the physical world.

The "fabric" she uses is not made with thread, but generated by computer, allowing the 18-year-old Tianjin resident to fully let loose her creativity and imagination. In the digital fashion landscape, rules are made to be broken and gravity does not exist.

"With no concerns about textiles or functional needs, I can focus on the visual aspect of my design," Miao says. She learned to use 3D design software on her own and her unique fashion sense has gained her 19,000 followers on Xiaohongshu, a popular Chinese social media platform.

Already she has garnered interest from an entertainment star. Xu Yangyuzhuo, a member of pop idol group SNH48, recently posted three digitally altered photos on the platform in which she sports Miao's designs.

Digital fashion is gaining in popularity with the tech-savvy younger generation, who live more and more of their social lives online, and influencers and celebrities are following Xu's lead, using the new technology to enrapture audiences.

Digital fashion, still a largely unexplored frontier, has grabbed the fashion industry's attention, and circumstances have also forced a market change. The COVID-19 pandemic, which shuttered or restricted the operations of malls and boutiques around the country, accelerated the pace of digitization.

Morgan Stanley, a United States investment bank, predicts that by 2024, industries that operate in virtual space will hit a value of \$8 trillion in China. In a recent report, it stated that "the metaverse will be the next generation platform to replace mobile internet".

The concept of the metaverse refers to a network of virtual places linked to a virtual universe, in which people can interact via various forms of virtual technology, including virtual reality and augmented reality.

Companies in China are responding in force to the new opportunities presented by these technologies. During the Spring-Summer China Fashion Week in September, sportswear brand Anta and tech giant Baidu launched a virtual fashion show, displaying Anta's latest gear.

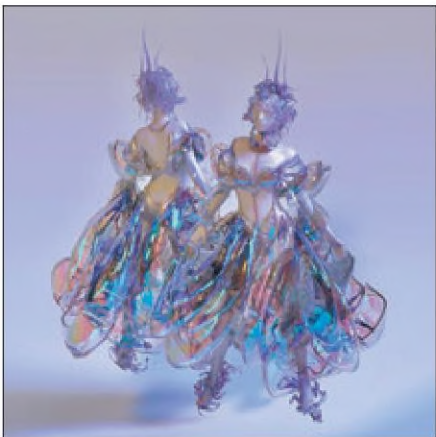
Social media platforms like Xiaohongshu and Bytedance have also entered the field. Via R-Space, a digital shopping platform, Xiaohongshu users can shop for virtual garments and accessories. Bytedance launched Pheagee, a digital fashion community, early last year. It carries virtual clothing collections from 28 domestic brands.

Customers can not only browse but also try on digital clothes through augmented reality. After paying for digital items on these platforms, they can send a picture of themselves and wait to receive a photo in which they are wearing the virtual pieces. The photo can then be posted on social media.

Prices are customer-friendly, ranging from a few dozen to a few hundred yuan. The designs Miao sells on R-Space usually cost 89 yuan (\$13.12) for two photos.

FASHION DESIGNERS EMBRACE METAVERSE

Self-expression is no longer restricted to the domain of reality, Wang Qian reports.



Left: Sun Fanrui's design, named Qi. Center and right: A digital fashion collection released by designer Chen Peng and digital artist Uv Zhu. The collection explores the potentialities of clothing in the metaverse. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



A set of designs from Lemuria, a collection Chen is displaying on digital fashion platform Pheagee. His style is much the same in his physical and digital designs. He defines it as "one-sized fashion", speaking for all body types. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Digital fashion is here to stay, satisfying increasing demand for self-expression online. As one Xiaohongshu fashion blogger, named Kira Qiya, explains in a post to her 113,000 followers, "by getting rid of all the rules of reality and the limitations of textiles, digital fashion has opened a brand-new world for my wearing experience".

She owns 54 virtual clothes and accessories on R-Space, including an iridescent dress with butterfly wings, a shimmering tutu which makes her look like she is wearing water, a futuristic headpiece and a handbag with a beating heart.

Going virtual

After COVID-19 put face-to-face activities like shows on hold, an increasing number of designers turned to the metaverse as the place to display their collections.

Designer Chen Peng, who founded his namesake brand in 2015, col-

laborated last year with digital artist Uv Zhu, releasing a digital fashion collection consisting of six super-sized puffer jackets, intended to provoke thought as well as sales.

"In this collection, we try to discuss what clothing will look like in the metaverse and what its function will be," Chen says, adding that in the metaverse, clothing becomes a part of a person's body, like skin or muscle, growing with them over time.

"It is different from traditional clothing, which is used for warmth and modesty, in that designers can focus purely on visual effects and design expression," he says. "It can help designers be more creative and artistic."

The pieces in Lemuria, a digital collection of Chen's displayed on Pheagee, sell for 599 yuan each. His style is much the same in his physical and digital designs. He defines it as "one-sized fashion", speaking for all body types.

Chen urges designers to try new methods to lure the younger generation and prepare for the future. He is considering participating in the upcoming Metaverse Fashion Week on virtual reality platform Decentraland, set to be held in late March.

Chen is just one of a new generation of virtual artists from China who have made their mark in the digital fashion industry.

Sun Fanrui started her exploration in digital fashion in early 2020 while studying for a bachelor's degree in fashion at the Lu Xun Academy of Fine Arts in Northeast China's Liaoning province. Last year, she enrolled in the Royal College of Art in London for a master's degree in fashion. Her whimsical digital creations are popular on overseas digital fashion platforms, such as XR Couture and Xtended Identity.

"In digital fashion, designers can create unlimited designs in a fast

and easy way," Sun says. "In today's world, people like to express themselves through different mediums. Virtual clothing provides a new form of self-exploration and self-presentation in cyberspace."

Her virtual designs are inspired in large part by ocean animals, and look alien and ultramodern. In her eyes, digital fashion opens up new possibilities.

Sun, with a background in traditional fashion design, says digital fashion has helped her to push the boundaries of textile and structure. She hopes to transfer the insights gained to her real-world fashion designs.

"With the rise of digital fashion, more and more are joining the industry, more work will be displayed and everyone will have a chance to write the new chapter of digital fashion together," she adds.

Universities and design schools are busy preparing the new gener-

ation of fashion designers for this exciting frontier. In November, the first China Metaverse Fashion Design Competition was launched in Wuhan, Hubei province. Developed by tech company Zettakit, it featured students from more than 20 fashion and art education institutions.

Promising future

The metaverse, with all of its potentialities, has also proven a challenge to govern, and problems have appeared like real estate speculation, virtual currency scams and copyright disputes.

According to Morgan Stanley, Chinese regulators are "increasing focus on minors' addiction, personal information protection, data security, and openness of ecosystem", though mainstream adoption of the metaverse will "take a long time, given major technological and regulatory hurdles."

Designers and entrepreneurs in the digital fashion world agree that, since the industry is in its infancy, and given that there are relatively few cost or technological barriers to becoming a digital fashion designer, more regulation is necessary to guarantee high quality and good services. However, they remain optimistic about its future.

Xing Ziqi, co-founder of London-based brand Xtended Identity — which aims to extend human identity beyond traditional limitations in an innovative, boundary-free way — says that "the global pandemic starting in 2020 made digital fashion mainstream, and we have been creating digital fashion in the metaverse since then. From my observation, digital fashion is a hot concept in China, welcomed by customers and designers".

She predicts that in the future, everybody will have digital clothing displayable on social media, in video calls, at online conferences and in other virtual scenarios.

Fashion is the most widely adopted digital commodity not only in China, but across the world, according to a study conducted last year by Virtue Worldwide, a creative agency owned by American-Canadian digital media and broadcasting company Vice. Virtue Worldwide's survey of 3,000 consumers found that virtual goods are no longer considered niche purchases. A total of 94 percent of respondents see digital fashion becoming mainstream.

Nor are digital pieces restricted to the low-end market. Some are going for prices these days that rival those of the haute couture fashion world. Last year, Xtended Identity sold a dress on virtual goods marketplace The Dematerialised for \$6,100.

Designers have grand, science fiction-esque visions for the future of digital fashion. Xing Ziqi and her co-founder Xing Yunjia predict that digital and physical fashion will eventually intermingle. They call this "phygital".

"It refers to a garment that consists of digital parts and physical parts that form a complete look, which will be the key innovation in our next collection design. The beauty of combining the digital and the physical is that it pushes people's fashion experience beyond reality," says Xing Ziqi.

Contact the writer at wangqian@chinadaily.com.cn

IMAGE



From left: People visit a country fair in Taian city, Shandong province, on Jan 12. Children make paper-cut window ornaments at a workshop in Zhongguozhuang village of Taishan district in Taian on Jan 13. A chef places rabbit-shaped steamed buns on a table in a steamed bun shop in Taishan district on Jan 14. PHOTOS BY ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY



FESTIVE FUN

Spring Festival has arrived. China Daily photographer **Zou Hong** traveled to Taishan district of Taian city in Shandong province to visit its markets, take part in celebrations and enjoy the festive atmosphere, all captured here in photos.

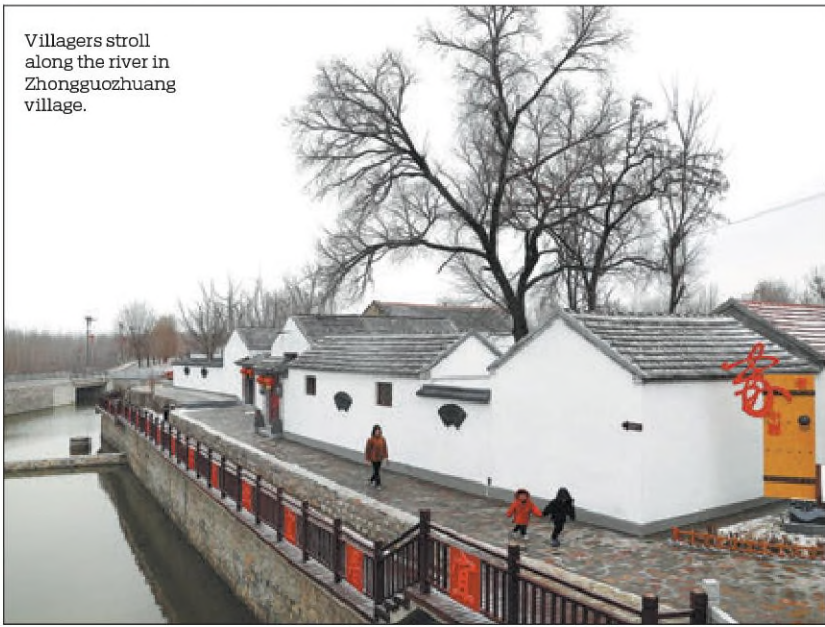
People let off fireworks in Wanglinpo village in Taishan district to celebrate the Lunar New Year on Jan 14.



From left: A stand owner sells calendars at a country fair in Taian on Jan 12. A chef uses a mould to make the Chinese character fu (lucky) on steamed buns at a shop in Taishan district on Jan 14. A community official (left) brings a door ornament for Spring Festival to a resident of Caiyuan Street community in Taian on Jan 13.



A stand owner sells paper Spring Festival couplets at a market in Taian on Jan 12.



Villagers stroll along the river in Zhongguozhuang village.



Villagers attend a parade in Fuyangzhuang village in Taishan district on Jan 13.

TREND



Students from the No 3 Primary School Affiliated with Tianjin Normal University in Tianjin practice calligraphy on Nov 19. LI YAN / XINHUA



Above: Instructors from family counseling service centers in Beijing attend advanced training in counseling and child psychology last year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY
Right: Family education instructor Dong Yufang provides online consultation to parents at her home in Beijing earlier this month. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Teachers undergo training with a primary school psychology instructor in Beijing in 2019. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Above: A teacher provides consulting to three students in a middle school in Shenyang, Liaoning province, on Oct 10. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Children stage a tug-of-war during a sports meet held in a kindergarten in Haikou, Hainan province, on Nov 29. YUAN CHEN / FOR CHINA DAILY



FAMILY AFFAIRS

By YANG ZEKUN
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A program in Beijing offers counseling services to parents and children to deal with the various challenges they face

Parenting is tough, no matter what. And sometimes it's so tough that parents find themselves at a loss.

That's why family education counselor Su Shu spends his days offering advice on such problems as: "My kid is addicted to playing mobile phone games; what should I do?" and "My son doesn't want to go to school, and it seems there's nothing I can do about it."

The 50-year-old started working in family education in 2016 and is responsible for building a team of family counselors. He joined the family counseling service center in Beijing's Shunyi district in July 2019 and attended the district's "family-school-society" coeducation counseling room project last year.

"Our work is to help parents solve their own problems while also improving ourselves," Su says.

In October 2019, Beijing set up a pilot program to integrate resources from schools, families and society to create counseling rooms to resolve family education problems faced by parents and children.

It began with pilots in Dongcheng, Chaoyang, Haidian, Fengtai, Fangshan, Tongzhou, Changping and Daxing districts. Each district selected at least one middle school, one primary school, one kindergarten and one community to set up each consultation room.

By the end of last year, over 100 such counseling rooms had been set up in

the city. The plan developed by the committee for the well-being of the next generation affiliated with the Beijing Municipal Education Commission calls for evenly distributing these centers throughout the city's districts.

The rooms usually provide two 90-minute consultations a day on weekdays during school terms and one daily during winter vacation. One expert and one volunteer answer families' questions and produce relevant records, Su explained.

"After parents leave the consultation room, the expert and volunteer review the session to find shortcomings in their services and make improvements. Volunteers conduct a second session for families with serious problems," Su said.

The room in Shunyi will adopt an appointment mechanism starting from the next school term to offer services to all parents in the district, Su said.

Common problems parents mentioned are communication between parents and children; habits; ability cultivation; general interpersonal communication; emotional adjustment; psychological adaptation; and caretaking skills.

"Some parents place high expectations on their children but lack sufficient understanding of their kids and can't guide the situation and teach children according to their aptitudes,"

he said. "And many parents don't know enough about family education. Many children's problems stem from their parents."

Su said counseling is a science. So volunteers produce summaries and learn from experience. But volunteers' professionalism needs improvement to meet families' diverse needs.

Wang Lin is a primary school psychology instructor in Beijing's Fengtai district and a volunteer of the district's "family-school-society" coeducation counseling room. She encounters various family education issues almost daily both in the classroom and the counseling room.

Wang said she always acts as a listener first. She lets families take their time to describe their problems before offering suggestions.

"I can't describe the sense of accomplishment that comes from watching a child and his or her parents walk into the counseling room crying or sad and leave with bright smiles," Wang said.

The parent-child relationship of second-child families is a frequent discussion topic. She recalled a 10-year-old girl once visited her consulting room and complained that her parents seemed to favor her brother. At first she was silent. Then, she cried and explained her grievances to Wang.

"No matter what, my parents always asked me to humor my brother. I've tried my best to do everything right. Why don't they notice?" she asked.

Wang then invited the girl's parents to the counseling room to suggest they listen to their daughter more and pay more attention to her progress.

The mother said, "I never realized that our careless actions caused so much harm to our daughter."

After a dozen sessions, Wang gradually saw the girl change to become more outgoing and confident. She often told Wang about the praises and gifts her parents gave her.

In recent years, Wang has also sent family education coaches into the communities and set up a consulting room with several other psychology instructors in the Fengyi Garden community in Fengtai.

The instructors take turns answering questions and providing services for residents.

They help students who drop out of school because of internet addiction to re-enroll, help parents find kids who've run away and answer questions about primary and junior high schools' admissions policies.

The residents' trust and gratitude make Wang feel good about performing this public service.

She remembers a call she received a few months ago. "A junior high girl dropped out of school for a year and did nothing but lie in bed staring at

the ceiling and refused to see a doctor. The mother hoped I could get her daughter to re-enroll in school."

Wang immediately went to their home and visited the girl's bedroom. "The curtains were tightly closed, and there was no light. The bedside table was full of empty cola bottles," Wang recalled.

"She was very polite. When she saw me entering the room, she quickly sat up in the bed and whispered, 'Hello, teacher'. I told myself I need to help this kid get out of the house."

During her visits over the following weeks, Wang brought snacks and fruit, and chatted with the girl like a friend. Eventually, she began to open up.

"Mom and Dad thought I was sick and took me to the hospital. The doctor prescribed medicines for me, but I thought they'd make me fat, so I secretly vomited them up," the girl told Wang.

After nearly two months of counseling with Wang, the girl finally agreed to see a doctor again.

Today, through the treatment of a professional psychologist, the girl's mental health has returned to normal, and she is back in school.

"There are many children just like this girl today. They are struggling to find a way to speak up and seek help," Wang said.

"Without proper treatment, their situations may get worse. If possible, more effort should be made to care for these children and their families. This is the value of counseling rooms in schools and communities."

Helping communities one household at a time

By YANG ZEKUN

More skilled professionals will be needed to meet the increasing demand for family education counseling, experts said.

The "family-school-society" coeducation counseling room in Beijing's Shunyi district opened in October.

It now has 45 volunteers with relevant knowledge and practical experience. Many are kindergarten principals or psychology instructors in primary and middle schools in Shunyi, the district's community education center said.

Tian Jie, head of the family education research and guidance office of the district's community education center, said the number of volunteers has remained relatively stable, with some joining and some leaving every year. Many are also classroom teachers who also need to deal with pressure from their jobs.

"We and the parents hope the counseling services can become more professional. Our current team members aren't at that level," Tian said.

"But if parents face really serious prob-

lems, we need to invite some experts to offer guidance."

The center launched an online WeChat account in 2020 to collect questions raised by parents in Shunyi. The number of inquiries has exceeded 20,000.

Volunteers classify and answer these questions and post answers on the WeChat account.

Each school in Shunyi has sent teachers to universal family education training once a year since 2016. Qualified volunteers must participate in advanced training in counseling and children's psychology. They earn the certification and participate in more than three practice sessions.

Many parents have applauded the counseling project because they get useful suggestions to resolve problems and a channel to express their anxieties. A single session may not solve the problems at the root. The volunteers often teach them how to analyze the problems and find their own solutions, since each family has a different background, Tian said.

The offline counseling room has not opened yet because of the epidemic, but

rooms will soon open in more schools, villages and communities.

Understaffing is a challenge.

Shunyi has hundreds of schools, villages and communities.

More volunteers will be needed for the plan to be fully actualized, Tian said.

"We are actively approaching the women's federations on different streets and in different towns, and are applying to use their children's homes to carry out consultations. More cooperation will be undertaken with other organs to improve the project," she said.

Jin Ziwei, an assistant researcher from the National Institute of Education Sciences, said that coeducation counseling rooms are important places to integrate collective efforts against the backdrop of the "double reduction" policy, which refers to easing the burden of excessive homework and off-campus tutoring for students undergoing compulsory education.

"Family education guidance should be based on professionalism. General services are far from enough. The authorities should advance the professional develop-



Instructors from Beijing's Shunyi district participate in a symposium on the "family-school-society" coeducation counseling held by the district education authorities in November 2021. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ment of teams, actively set up teams of experts, teachers, parents and volunteers, and improve their services," Jin said.

Operating such counseling rooms in more cities and districts works toward the imple-

mentation of the Family Education Promotion Law.

"Summarizing the experience of developing this model, we should expand family education support as a public service," Jin said.

BIZ LIFE

‘Silver’ economy grows with aging population

Businesses find opportunities in giving seniors more meaningful lives

By LIU YUKUN
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After saying goodbye to her grandchild at the school gates, Hu Chunmei started to think of ways to pass the day.

Hu migrated from her home village in Hubei province to Beijing to help her daughter with child-rearing about eight years ago. Since her granddaughter started school in August, she knew she had to adjust to a new routine.

“It’s much harder than I thought. I tried *guangchangwu* — a style of dancing as a group in public — with friends I met in the community, going out to restaurants and learning calligraphy ... but got bored very soon. I even thought of finding a job but all I could do was cleaning and recycling bottles,” she said.

Hu is not alone in attempting to find meaning in their retirement life. As the group with probably the most disposable income without housing or education pressures, seniors’ demand for a quality life is supporting the rapid development of the “silver” economy.

According to the Ministry of Civil Affairs, by the end of 2021, there were 267 million people aged 60 or above, accounting for 18.9 percent of the total population.

Li Banghua, deputy head of the ministry’s nursing services department, said at a news conference that the total population of those aged 60 and above is likely to surpass 300 million by the end of 2025, accounting for more than 20 percent of the total population.

“Developing the elderly service industry is growing to be an important way to cope with the aging population,” he said.

The growing group is also possessing increasing spending power. A report by consultancy iiMedia showed that in 2021, the market size of the elderly care industry reached 8.8 trillion yuan (\$1.3 trillion), a year-on-year growth of 22.3 percent, and the market size is expected to reach 12 trillion yuan in 2023.

The government has also rolled out a series of measures to support the elderly care sector. The Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Ministry of Finance have arranged a total of 1.1 billion yuan to support 42 regions in building in-house senior care beds and providing home-based services for disabled elderly people and those with financial difficulties.

The “in-house senior care beds” refers to a mechanism that the government has been promoting, through which seniors can enjoy professional nursing and health monitoring services at home the same way they would in a nursing home.

“Compared with the past, an increasing number of seniors today are starting to embrace a variety of recreational activities and are familiar with the internet. Many of them are also changing their view from saving more to paying more to enjoy life, which is an important driver of relevant business growth,” said Duan Mingjie, founder and CEO of AgeClub, a consulting and incubation service platform focusing on senior care businesses.

Just recently, a group of 16 retired



Some senior citizens use exercise equipment at a park in Beijing. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

people was having fun traveling to Hengdian World Studios, one of the world’s largest studios located in Zhejiang province, to shoot a “film” that replicates classic scenes of a popular TV show called *Empresses in the Palace*.

The group of people, with an average age of 62, were dressed in Qing Dynasty clothing, wore delicate makeup, and tried to perform like professional actors and actresses with vivid facial expressions and voices.

The “film” soon went viral across social media platforms and became among the top 10 trendy topics on Weibo.

In the “Behind the Scenes” video, participants were excited about the experience, saying it helps to achieve the dream of acting that they had since they were teenagers. The acting experience cost them an average of 4,000 yuan per person.

Bai Yun, one of the participants, said that she wishes to try anything new and interesting. Upon hearing about the activity, Bai registered without hesitation. “I had dreams of being an actress since I was a teenager but ended up working in an office for half my life.”

She also learned to walk the catwalk and went to Shanghai Fashion Week. “I just want to be a delicate woman and age gracefully.”

Although some netizens pointed out that the participants still couldn’t hide their nervousness in front of the camera, had accents in



An employee demonstrates how to operate an AI-enabled robot at an elderly care service center in Hefei, Anhui province. LIU JUNKU / XINHUA

reading the lines and slightly stiff movements, they looked energetic and appeared to enjoy the shooting, which makes it quite touching.

Peng Kai, director of the Shanghai Ruichi Fashion Club and also the

organizer of the activity, said he came up with the idea to help seniors achieve their dreams. “It’s possible to be cool in one’s 60s or 70s,” Peng said.

In September, Ruichi also organized a team of over 40 seniors to

walk in a runway show at Shanghai Fashion Week.

Duan said that the senior care sector is seeing an increasing number of companies develop businesses relevant to culture and entertainment, while in the past, the majority

of businesses in the sector focused on nursing.

“With the penetration rate of the internet constantly increasing among the elderly, a growing number of seniors are exposed to large amounts of information now. Many of them follow the trends, are willing to embrace changes and are open-minded, and have great potential for consumption. Areas such as consumer products for seniors, entertainment, services and health management are seeing a big opportunity for development,” Duan said.

He said that a growing number of companies are specializing in business sectors that launch products and services for the elderly and more startups focus on the area despite the COVID-19 challenges in the past three years.

In July, Alibaba cooperated with the China Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics to establish a research lab that focuses on the silver economy to promote an upgrade in senior consumption and explore the potential to develop a variety of relevant businesses.

Su Bochuan, director of public affairs, said that on Alibaba’s e-commerce platforms, the total number of consumers over the age of 50 has reached about 100 million. “Our focus of businesses include apparel, home care, home appliances, healthcare and food.”

“From the consumption trend we observed through our platform, we found that the supply growth of senior-friendly bathroom fixtures and furniture far exceeds the growth rate of other categories. Alibaba has established a team to grasp the business opportunity in the sector,” Su said.

Home appliance brands such as Midea Group, Haier and Xiaomi are also stepping up efforts to develop technology-embedded products that can make senior life easier and more comfortable, such as a suite of smart bathrooms with voice control, an emergency call button on the floor in case of emergencies and automatically adjusted designs to ensure proper water temperatures and light.

Companies are also ramping up efforts in the gaming sector. Recently, Jubensha, a scripted role-playing game that is popular among youngsters, is gaining increasing favor among the elderly.

The 173 Network Group, a game producer targeted at seniors, has launched a series of Jubensha games, whose backgrounds are films that were popular among the elderly.

“The games were popular among the users. They like it when we call them ‘elderly youngsters’ instead of seniors. They are very open about new things and eager to try different recreational activities,” said Ye Kejia, CEO of the company.

“We found that an important driver of senior consumption is that they need companionship and ways to expand their social lives. A game is a very good way to achieve that goal,” Ye said.

Ye said the company also has training services that teach the elderly to become game hosts. “We found that many middle-aged and elderly people are very willing to go back to work in fear of finding themselves ‘useless’ to family and society. We launched such training in hopes that they can both find meaning in their retirement life and also have fun.”

Service platforms cater to nation’s expanding elderly group

By LIU YUKUN

A college student on weekdays and part-time delivery driver on weekends, 26-year-old Lin Ran said the most surprising order he received was to accompany a 68-year-old to a doctor’s visit.

“It was the day when I ran errands for people who ordered such services through on-demand retail platform Meituan. I got an order from a lady who offered to pay me about 400 yuan (\$59) to accompany her father to the hospital,” Lin said.

“At that time, one still needed to scan the health code attached to the hospital gate, fill out a series of online forms before getting in because of COVID-19 and confirm the appointment on an automatic

machine in the hospital. I understand those procedures could be challenging to a senior who is not familiar with the internet,” he said.

Aging in the digital age can be difficult for many people, especially those who live alone. Helping the elderly adapt to the environment and supporting them through challenges is emerging as a burgeoning business.

Li Banghua, an official with the Ministry of Civil Affairs, said at a recent news conference that at present, the proportion of elderly people who live alone has exceeded half of the total aging population. According to the Ministry of Civil Affairs, by the end of 2021, there were 267 million people aged 60 or above.

Li said that in some cities and rural areas, the proportion of those living alone even exceeds 70 percent. Living alone can be inconvenient, difficult and even unsafe. However, as a traditional mode of caring for the elderly, in-house senior care is also the choice for most families.

“At present, a large number of elderly people still prefer staying in their homes rather than going to a nursing home. The in-house senior care industry is on a rise buoyed by increasing demand and policy support,” said Duan Mingjie, founder and CEO of AgeClub, a consulting and incubation service platform focusing on senior care businesses.

Lin, the part-time deliveryman,

said he also receives orders like grocery shopping, paying for water and power bills, and even killing cockroaches for the elderly.

“There are a lot more elderly people than I thought who live alone and seek help for medication, transportation, personal care and everyday small things. Although their sons and daughters care about them, they find it hard to make time to do these things as they need to work, or they live in other cities and have little kids to take care of,” he added.

Aside from accompanying seniors to medical appointments, there is also a growing number of orders asking for assistance with bathing and housecleaning. The elderly group also began to learn how to

order food, pay for errand running and find hourly nurses through online platforms.

According to Meituan, in 2021, the search volume of phrases including “bath assistance for the elderly” increased by 808.06 percent year-on-year, and the order volume for “bath assistance for the elderly” increased by 1450 percent year-on-year.

In the first quarter of 2022, the search volume of “accompanying the elderly to the hospital” on Meituan increased by 424 percent year-on-year, and the relevant order volume increased by 95 percent year-on-year.

The government has also rolled out a series of supportive policies to promote the development of the

in-house senior care industry.

In 2016, long-term care insurance began to be piloted, which targeted people who have been in a state of disability for a long time and focused on covering the spending of severely disabled people’s basic life care and medical care. In 2020, the number of piloted cities expanded to 49.

This year, the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Ministry of Finance arranged 1.1 billion yuan in public welfare funds to support 42 regions in building “in-house senior care beds” and providing home-based services for seniors who are disabled or have financial difficulties.

The government has also been promoting a mechanism that requires government officials, social workers and relevant personnel to visit seniors who are physically challenged or face difficulties in other daily life aspects.

TRAVEL



Tourists kayak up the stream in Ban Nam Rat Watershed Forest where they can explore lagoons and admire the lush jungle. PHOTOS BY YANG WANLI / CHINA DAILY

Head inland to enjoy Thailand

By YANG WANLI in Surat Thani, Thailand
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What comes to mind if you are planning to visit Thailand? Beautiful sea views, island hopping, or Tom Yum soup? Why not leave those ideas behind and try something fresh, such as an inland tour to discover a different Thailand?

In the South Thailand province of Surat Thani, you will experience another side of Thailand. Granted the name from King Rama IV, Surat Thani means “city of the good people”. Most Chinese tourists are fascinated by the province’s islands, such as Koh Samui and Koh Tao.

But few have explored its amazing inland, which includes one of the oldest evergreen rainforests in the world — Khao Sok National Park — or the magnificent Buddhist temples in the Khao Na Nai Luang Dharma Park, and boat trips along the rivers.

For most travelers who arrive in Surat Thani by plane, the nearest site to explore will be the provincial center. Located close to the sea, the provincial center has countless small rivers connecting residences to the east Thailand Bay.

Taking a boat along the river, you can witness fishermen’s lives in Bang Bai Mai community. Also known as “Nai Bang”, the community still lives in a simple way. In this area, hundreds of small canals flow into the Tapi river, which finally meets the ocean.

On a small wooden boat, you can see the mangrove nipa palm trees and coconut trees lined up on both sides of the canal. For animal lovers, the trip will provide a chance to closely observe local birds and water lizards.

“Nipa palm trees are important to us. The leaves can be used for wrapping sweets or making brooms. It can be also processed to make desserts,” a boatman told us.

Every Sunday, the sightseeing boat can also take you to Bang Bai Mai Market — an old floating market in Surat Thani known for a wide selection of local dishes and Thai snacks such as Toddy Palm Cake, Black Coconut Sweet Pudding, and Mango Sticky Rice.

The market is surrounded by greenery and a canal, which makes it stand out from other markets in the city. While the market offers plenty of food stalls, it’s a good choice to try the deep-fried banana blossom and the Thai curry puff, each priced at about 30 Bhat (\$0.89).

After exploring the market, visitors can drop by a nearby coffee shop with outdoor seating next to the canal. A local cafe named Korjak sitting at the riverbank is one of the most popular choices with a forestlike atmosphere due to its lush surroundings.

As some travelers may be interested in local coconut products, Suan Lung Song is on the recommended list. It is a knowledge center where people can learn every aspect of coconut farming. They can also experience making cold-pressed coconut oil and soap.

Lush rainforests and mangroves offer a journey of discovery for holidaymakers



From left: A sculpture of Buddha in the Khao Na Nai Luang Dharma Park. The Khao Na Nai Luang Dharma Park consists of a total of six pagodas in different shapes and colors from brick red to white and gold.



Limestone peaks stick out of the water in Cheow Larn Lake, which sits in the heart of Khao Sok National Park.

National Park

Surrounded by one of the oldest evergreen rainforests in the world, Khao Sok National Park will impress you with its huge limestone mountains, deep valleys, breathtaking lakes, exciting caves and wild animals.

Together with adjacent wildlife sanctuaries in Khlong Saeng, Khlong Yan and Khlong Naka, the combined area of the park is more than 3,500 square kilometers, making up an area more than half the size of Bali.

In the park, tourists can choose different ways to explore, such as personal elephant encounters, jungle trekking or canoeing. One of the most interesting areas is the beautiful Cheow Larn Lake in the heart of the national park, complete with floating

raft houses and luxury tents.

On a limited budget, visitors have options to live in those small but cozy hotels or family stays at an acceptable price. It is convenient to book a tuk-tuk, the local motorcycle taxi, at the hotel to visit Cheow Larn Lake.

Among the Thai people, Cheow Larn Lake is famous for its landmark: three limestone peaks nicknamed mini Guilin. Guilin refers to the city in South China’s Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, which is known for its karst landforms and limestone peaks.

For travelers who are willing to explore wildlife, Khao Sok is unmissable.

Thailand boasts some of the most biodiverse regions on Earth, and Khao Sok is one of them. Thanks to it being relatively unchanged over millions of years, Khao Sok

has become a haven for a variety of birds, insects, reptiles and mammals.

According to the Khao Sok National Park’s official website, the park is home to 311 species of birds, 48 species of mammals, more than 30 species of bats, countless insects and reptiles, endangered tigers and an estimated 200 wild Asian elephants.

Moreover, there are around 200 species of plants per hectare in Khao Sok, with a combination of ginormous trees, trailing vines and exotic flowers. Some plants are unique to the rainforest. For example, the largest flower on Earth, rafflesia, can grow up to 90 centimeters in width.

Jungle exploration

Nearby the Khao Sok National Park, there are two sites with jungle experiences. About 40 minutes by car from the Cheow Larn Lake, visitors can enjoy a breathtaking view of the Khao Na Nai Luang Dharma Park, especially in the early morning or evening with sunlight passing through the park’s front arch.

The Khao Na Nai Luang Dharma Park consists of a total of six pagodas in different shapes and colors from brick red to white and gold. The most impressive one to me is what local people called the “floating pagoda” with a small pond underneath it.

Both the pond and the pagoda are built on the top of a small mountain. Lotus and small fishes give the pond a sense of Zen. Religious text is written carefully in gold powder on the red bricks. Standing on the pagoda, an overhead view of the forest is an unforgettable moment.

After the soul baptism in the park, Ban Nam Rat Watershed Forest, which only takes 30 minutes by car, is a destination not to be missed. It offers crystal-clear waters of a flooded forest, consisting of a lake, various jungle canals and stunning lagoons.

“In the past, the forest used to be a small freshwater canal that looked like a peat swamp forest. This magical place, referred to as Khlong Rood by the locals, is a hidden gem and a true highlight of the region,” an officer from the forest ticket office said.

The lake itself mirrors the various tree stumps and rocks that stick out of the surface, creating the illusion of no horizon. In the forest, visitors will see many species of plants, including water lilies, orchids and tropical pitcher plants.

You can kayak up the stream and explore breathtaking lagoons, surrounded by lush jungle greenery. You can have a fantastic end to the day by parking your kayak and taking a dip in the crystal-blue waters of the jungle among colorful fish.



Online
Watch the
video by
scanning
the code.

Boutique routes added to tourism market

By YANG WANLI
in Surat Thani, Thailand

As China has witnessed rapid social and economic development over the past few decades, more Chinese people are willing to explore tailored traveling routes. Thailand’s tourism sector has sensed the new trends and has started to launch more diversified products.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand head office in Bangkok has worked with the five TAT offices in the People’s Republic of China to offer niche products to Chinese travelers.

“Over the past years, we have tapped the potential segments in China, such as luxury, weddings and honeymoons, and sports tourism,” said Tanes Petsuwan, TAT deputy governor for international marketing — Asia and the South Pacific.



Tanes
Petsuwan

In early December, Doi Inthanon Thailand by UTMB, a global trail running event in the city of Chiang Mai attracted around 51 runners from China, including two elite trail runners: Zhao Jiaju and Xiang Fuzhao.

“Moreover, sustainability has currently become a significant concern for tourists. For the Chinese market, we are promoting luxury hotels that advocate sustainability,” said Tanes.

For instance, TAT Chengdu Office has designed a luxury package that combines sea turtle conservation activities. For example, releasing sea turtles at Mai Khao Beach in collaboration with the JW Marriott Phuket Resort and Spa. Other hotels may offer activities that engage with local communities, such as collecting trash.

As a country famous for wild elephants, he said Thailand is changing elephant-themed travel from the traditional feeding and riding to elephant care tourism, which is animal friendly and sustainable.

During the past three years, Thailand had fewer tourists due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The TAT took this chance to discuss with the National Bureau of Agricultural Commodity and Food Standards to issue the Thai Agricultural Standard TAS 6413-2021: Good Animal Practices for Elephant Facility.

The guideline aims at a standard for elephant camps nationwide to regulate them, ensure good management of the facilities, the procurement of food and water, hygiene control, and personnel to cater for the well-being of elephants.

Now, travelers in Thailand can have firsthand experience of how elephant-related tourism has been transformed, from elephant riding to better understanding the elephant’s behavior and learning to nurse them.

“It allows tourists to learn to feed, shower and take care of elephants. In addition, tourists can gain a better understanding of how elephants are traditionally raised and taught as well as what we must do to protect them,” said Tanes.

“This change will also yield long-term benefits for all sides: elephants, the mahouts (the keepers), the camp owners, tourists and the community, which will help us lead to sustainability. After joining the trip, we hope that this would help shift the image of elephant tourism in Thailand and enhance awareness of elephant care tourism to foreign and local tourists alike,” he added.

As China has adjusted its management of COVID-19 and no longer requires international travelers to undergo quarantine or take a nucleic acid test upon arrival in China from Jan 8, Tanes said some Chinese-Thai descendants living in Thailand may consider visiting family in China during the Chinese New Year.

“China is one of the favorite destinations for Thai people. There will be many Thais who want to visit China due to various reasons, including travel, education, business and a family reunion,” he said.

In terms of marketing activities, Tanes reveals that they have prepared to cater to the pent-up demand in the Chinese market. In January, there will be livestreaming travel package sales to Thailand with C-trip, China’s leading online travel agent, as well as other livestreaming about Thailand with Chinese Key Opinion Leaders.

A sensational taste of southern seafood delicacies

By YANG WANLI in Surat Thani, Thailand

With its provincial center next to the Thailand Bay, Surat Thani is a famous source of oysters in Thailand. Local people take much pride in the big and delicious shellfish.

The Surat Thani oyster is a white scar oyster. Its aquaculture production area is in Ban Don Bay across the districts of Chaiya, Ta Chang, Pumpin, Muang and Kanchanadit.

Of those oyster farms, the Tourism Authority of Thailand recommends Sinma-

na Farmstay located at the mouths of the Khlong Tha Thong canal and Khlong Kradade stream, which is a place for the natural cultivation of oysters. The oysters raised at this farm are larger than those in tank-based sites.

In Chaiya district, another crustacean is on the recommended list. In the Pu Condo cafe, the must-try dishes include Pu Condo (crabmeat piled vertically), Sala Pao Pu (dumplings filled with crabmeat), and Hoi Cho Pu (deep-fried crabmeat rolls).

As a bonus, visitors can watch crab eggs

hatching, the production of crabmeat and the releasing of baby crabs into nature. Also, visitors can buy the crabmeat products manufactured here.

In the evening, street food in San-Chao Market is a must-go place. One of the special local cuisines I recommend is BBQ fish balls with spicy yellow curry paste in a southern Thai style.

The fish ball is made with fresh fish paste and cowpea. After being roasted on blackwood charcoal for about five minutes, the taste has a special softness and crispiness.

Meanwhile, the yellow curry paste brings a local spicy kick.

Before leaving the province, you should breakfast at Suan Rattana Thai dessert garden in Tha Chang district. The must-try local dish is Long Tong Kaki or noodles with clear soup and pig’s trotters.

In the cafe, you can buy Surat Thani’s famous Thai desserts, including Luk-Chup (fruit-shaped mung beans), Thong Yip (pinched gold egg yolks) and Thong Yot (gold egg-yolks drops) to take a taste of Southern Thailand back home.

SPORTS

WINTER SPORTS

Shiffrin claims historic 83rd World Cup win

Another record in the US skier's trophy-laden career moved her to the top of the list past compatriot Lindsey Vonn

Exhaustion. Relief. Satisfaction. American skier Mikaela Shiffrin felt all that and more after winning a record 83rd World Cup race Tuesday.

Shiffrin's giant slalom victory broke a tie on the all-time women's list with former American teammate Lindsey Vonn, who retired four years ago when injuries cut her career short.

"I don't think there are words to explain all the feelings," Shiffrin said. "In the end of it, it's like there's too much excitement to feel. I don't know if that makes sense. So it's something you can't explain. So I just try to breathe a bit and enjoy it."

Shiffrin now needs only three more wins to match Ingemar Stenmark's overall record — between men and women — of 86 victories. Stenmark competed in the 1970s and 80s.

Shiffrin led from start to finish at the Kronplatz resort in the Italian Dolomites, crossing 0.45 seconds ahead of world champion Lara Gut-Behrami and 1.43 ahead of home favorite and former overall champion Federica Brignone.

Shiffrin posted the fastest first run and was therefore the last skier to race in the second run.

"I was a bit nervous for the second run, but mostly, I hate waiting," Shiffrin said. "Finally, when it was time to go, then it was like everything went quiet, and I just pushed as hard as I could every turn. It was pretty amazing to come through the finish and see that I was quite fast. Because I could hear that the other athletes were skiing well. I thought, 'I could lose this, so I better try to ski a really good run.' And it was."

Shiffrin seemed exhausted and relieved immediately after finishing, bending over and resting her head on her poles and then biting her lips before going over to embrace Gut-Behrami and Brignone.

Brignone told Shiffrin, "Congrats," and Shiffrin responded, "Oh my god."

Unlike when she broke down into tears when she matched Vonn's record of 82 wins earlier this month in Kranjska Gora, Slovenia, Shiffrin kept her composure during the playing of her national anthem.

Then a gold-colored crown was placed atop her head. It was Shiffrin's ninth win of the season.

What's more is that Shiffrin is still only 27 and could have many more years of elite racing left in her career.



Mikaela Shiffrin of the United States reacts as she is symbolically crowned on the podium after winning the women's World Cup giant slalom on Tuesday in Plan de Corones (Kronplatz), Dolomites Mountains. Shiffrin won a record 83rd World Cup race. AFP



Mikaela Shiffrin adjusts her hat on the podium after winning the women's World Cup giant slalom on Tuesday. AP



Mikaela Shiffrin celebrates on the podium after breaking the record for World Cup wins with 83 titles. REUTERS

Vonn was 33 when she won her last World Cup event and Stenmark was 32.

"I just feel so lucky to be her teammate in this era and watching her break history every day," said Nina O'Brien, the only other American finisher in 18th. "And she's been really supportive as well."

American skier Paula Moltzan was fifth after the first run but fell midway through her second run, losing her balance and getting twisted around before sliding down the mountain.

The record also comes nearly a year after Shiffrin didn't win a medal in six events at the Beijing Olympics after entering amid big expectations. She didn't take long to rebound from her Beijing performance, claiming her fourth overall World Cup title at the end of last season.

Now she's the most successful female skier of all time.

"That's a pretty good image for the sport, for women's Alpine skiers," said Tessa Worley, a two-time world champion in GS. "And she's still doing amazing things. So it's an inspiration for us to just go and keep pushing."

Shiffrin had to learn how to handle the nerves that come with leading the first run.

"It's still hard for me to believe that, apparently, I have the mental focus again to be strong again in the second run," she said. "That's something I don't take for granted."

Shiffrin started her second run immediately after Gut-Behrami had taken the lead by a large margin.

"I saw her from the start and then I was thinking, 'Why did I watch? I can't go that fast.' So, then I was a little bit, kind of wild on some spots but it felt so clean," Shiffrin said. "I thought I wouldn't be faster but I thought I could maybe be close. And then, somehow, I got there to the finish and it was quite good."

Shiffrin can quickly add to her record total in another giant slalom at Kronplatz on Wednesday. Then she has two slaloms — her best event, having accounted for 51 of her 83 victories — in Spindleruv Mlyn, Czech Republic, next weekend. That was where Shiffrin made her World Cup debut as a 15-year-old in March 2011.

If she wins all three of her next races, she could match Stenmark by Sunday. Shiffrin will then again be a multi-medal threat at the world championships in Courchevel and Meribel, France, which start on Feb. 6.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

From the start, Mikaela showed she was the skier to beat

From a prodigiously talented 15-year-old to the most decorated female skier of all-time, Mikaela Shiffrin has done quite a lot in only 12 years.

The American skier won her record-breaking 83rd victory Tuesday in her 238th race on the World Cup circuit, the globe-trotting competition for the best skiers on the planet.

Shiffrin, who broke a tie with former teammate Lindsey Vonn by winning a giant slalom in Italy, has also won two Olympic gold medals and one silver, plus six world championship titles and five more medals from that biennial competition.

But it is her World Cup career — and now her pursuit of Ingemar Stenmark's once mythical total of 86 wins — that has made her one of the greatest skiers in history.

World Cup

Shiffrin's racing career on the World Cup circuit started two days before her 16th birthday in March 2011 in the Czech Republic. Wearing bib No. 46 in a giant slalom, she finished outside the top 30, meaning she didn't qualify for a second run.

Her first slalom, the discipline she would come to dominate with 51 victories, was the next day and again she finished outside the top 30.

Shiffrin's first podium came in December 2011. Wearing bib No. 40, she was third behind ski greats Marlies Schild, a childhood idol, and Tina Maze.

The first of her 83 wins — and counting — came one year later in Are, Sweden, on Dec. 20, 2012.

Incredibly, Shiffrin won the World Cup slalom title that season, adding



Mikaela Shiffrin speeds down the course during the World Cup giant slalom, in Kronplatz, Italy, on Tuesday. Shiffrin won the race, thus becoming the most successful woman in World Cup skiing history by taking her tally of victories to 83. AP

two more wins before a dramatic World Cup Finals race in Lenzerheide, Switzerland. A spectacular second run overhauled a 1.17-second lead by Maze, who had a record-setting season but was left distraught after losing to a rival who turned 18 three days earlier.

Shiffrin won five season-long World Cup slalom titles in six seasons. The streak was broken after a December 2015 injury in Are during race warmups.

The inevitable first overall World Cup title came at the age of 22 in the 2016-17 season when Shiffrin won 11 races.

It was the start of three straight titles. The next season included a first downhill win in Lake Louise, Canada — in only her fourth start.

Shiffrin won a record 17 races in 2019, tallied 2,204 World Cup points — second only to Maze in skiing history — and got top-five places in all but one of her 26 events.

In January 2020, she looked set for a fourth title, taking a 370-point lead after two speed race wins in Bansko, Bulgaria. Then family tragedy struck.

Family ties

Shiffrin's mother, Eileen, has always traveled with her in an entourage of coaches and mentors. Her father, Jeff, was a familiar sight at races, readily recognizable with a bushy mustache taking photo-

graphs around the finish area.

In February 2020, Jeff Shiffrin died after an accident at the family home in Colorado.

Shiffrin flew home from Europe to begin a grieving process she has been frank and open about. After skipping several weeks of races and losing her lead in the standings, her scheduled return was halted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which ended the season.

A foundation to help young skiers was set up in her father's name, the Jeff Shiffrin Athlete Resiliency Fund.

Shiffrin then won a fourth overall World Cup title last year, bouncing back from a disappointing showing at the Beijing Olympics.

She is now set to earn a fifth giant crystal globe in March with a clear lead fueled by nine victories this season following Tuesday's win.

Olympics

At 18, Shiffrin stepped on the Olympic stage like she belonged there.

A fifth-place finish in the giant slalom at the 2014 Sochi Games preceded a dominating wire-to-wire win in slalom. Shiffrin finished more than a half-second ahead of Schild, the best slalom skier in the world at the time.

Four years later in Pyeongchang, Shiffrin took gold in giant slalom a day before her fourth-place finish in slalom. She later took silver in Alpine combined, a race made up of a downhill run and a slalom run.

Beijing blip

Shiffrin was expected to be the

star of the 2022 Beijing Olympics with medal hopes in all five women's events. What happened next was bewildering even to her.

Shiffrin skied out of the giant slalom and slalom within a few seconds of each run, did not truly contend for a medal in downhill and super-G, and failed to finish the slalom in Alpine combined.

"I'm certainly questioning a lot," Shiffrin said after her fifth failure. "I'm really disappointed. And I'm really frustrated."

She will still be only 30 when the 2026 Milan-Cortina Olympics roll around. Women's races are scheduled for Cortina d'Ampezzo, where she won four medals at the 2021 world championships.

World Championships

Shiffrin's first worlds-level race was at the 2011 juniors in Crans-Montana, Switzerland, when she was still only 15. Racing in slalom with a cold, she placed third behind two rivals both four years older.

Starting in 2013, Shiffrin won four straight world titles in slalom. The streak ended with bronze in 2021 in Cortina, but she took home four medals from that event, including gold in Alpine combined.

The combined was her sixth world title. In total, she has 11 medals from 13 events at the worlds. The other two results were top-10 finishes in giant slalom as a teenager.

The next world championships begin on Feb. 6 in the French resorts of Courchevel and Meribel. Five more medals could be in play.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

SPORTS



Venezuelan player Cade Gotta wears his hair in the shape of a spider during a Caribbean Series baseball game against Panama in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, on Jan 31, 2022. AP



Mali's Falaye Sacko sports an eye-catching Mohawk during the African Cup of Nations 2022 Group F match against Mauritania at the Japoma Stadium on Jan 20, 2022. AP



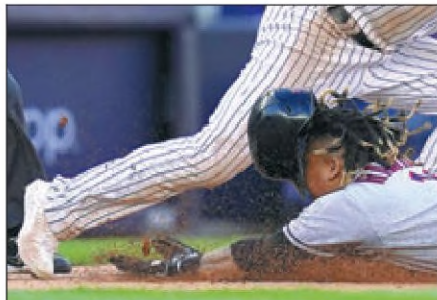
Louise Christie of Scotland performs with the ball in the individual all-around rhythmic gymnastics competition at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, England, on Aug 5, 2022 AP



GETTING THEIR HEADS IN THE GAME

As the world's top athletes put it all on the line again last year, it made for some intense and, sometimes, hair-raising moments

Sweat drops from the face of Spain's Rafael Nadal during a break in his second-round match against Yannick Hanfmann of Germany at the Australian Open on Jan 19, 2022. AP



Cleveland Guardians Jose Ramirez dives safely into third base during an MLB game on Oct 14. AP



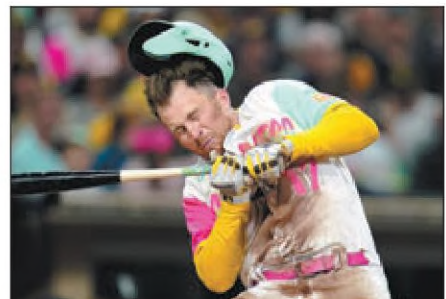
Switzerland's Martin Fuchs on Leone Jesi crashes at the Six Bars horse jumping on May 28. AP



Jessie Diggins celebrates winning the bronze medal in the women's sprint free cross-country skiing competition at the 2022 Winter Olympics on Feb 8, 2022. AP



Errol Spence Jr lands a punch on Yordenis Ugas during a world welterweight fight on April 16. AP



San Diego Padres' Brandon Drury is hit in the helmet by a pitch during an MLB game on Sept 30. AP