

'Lens of partisanship'

Trump indictment shows gaping US political divide

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Automakers to drive country's export recovery

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Cameroon student attracted by martial arts hits high notes in opera

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Benefits seen in industrial system upgrade

Experts: Advancing modernization will move nation up value chain, have profound impact

By MA SI masi@chinadaily.com.cn

New economic growth drivers and competitive advantages will emerge as China beefs up its push to build a modern industrial system amid challenges including the US government's export restrictions on key technologies and the restructuring of global supply chains, renowned economists and industry experts said.

Hans-Paul Burkner, managing director and global chair emeritus of Boston Consulting Group, said China's efforts to advance industrial modernization will help the country move up the value chain, rendering its economy "more innovative, talent-intensive, consumption-driven and green".

The term "modern industrial system" has become a key phrase in China, with the top leadership highlighting it as a priority for the country's economic development. In an article published in February in the Qiushi Journal, a flagship magazine of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, said China should accelerate and upgrade its industrial system by planning ahead in key areas and comprehensively modernizing its industrial system.

At a group deliberation during

the annual session of China's national legislature last month, Xi, who is also Chinese president, said the manufacturing industry is indispensable to China at all times, and the country should advance new industrialization.

Bai Ming, deputy director of international market research at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said President Xi's emphasis on manufacturing showed that a modern industrial system will be key to China's economic development over the next few years, and will have a profound impact.

"In the face of growing external risks, 'Made in China' needs to be backed by a stronger industrial system," Bai said.

Burkner agreed, telling China Daily that Chinese companies "have become very competitive, not just because of cost, but also because of quality and innovation. We see quite a lot of Chinese companies being top producers of patents and really good products, and we see them all over the world."

But a greater push is needed to further boost their innovation capabilities. This will help China maintain its important position in global supply chains amid headwinds such

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Visitors take photos near the Wuhan Yangtze River Bridge in Wuhan, Hubei province, on Tuesday. TANG MAI / FOR CHINA DAILY

WUHAN EMERGES FROM THE SHADOW OF COVID-19

Life in the city has returned to normal, three years after it was hit by the disease, CUI JIA and LIU KUN report from Wuhan

On a Saturday morning at the end of February, the indoor training facility at Wuhan Sports Center was packed with people playing badminton. The air was filled with the sounds of rackets hitting shuttlecocks, sneakers thumping on the courts and cheers for teammates.

Three years ago, this sports center in Wuhan, capital of Hubei province, was packed with COVID-19 patients and medical workers wearing white protective suits. The medical teams were sent from Jiangsu, Guizhou and Anhui provinces to aid the city after the training facility and the indoor stadium next door were turned into one of China's first makeshift hospitals — in just 72 hours — to

contain the COVID-19 outbreak. Back then, people called these makeshift hospitals "Noah's Ark" as the virus spread rapidly around Wuhan, a city with a population of about 13.65 million, and there were not enough medical resources, especially hospital beds, to meet the demand.

Zhao Shaocong, a coach at the sports center, said that some of the regulars have special feelings for the facility because they recovered there after contracting the infection. In total, 1,056 patients were treated at the facility, which was one of the largest makeshift COVID-19 hospitals in Wuhan.

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Only memories remain



Community members and volunteers sort through the debris of a destroyed home, two days after a tornado hit Sullivan, Indiana, on Sunday. The area was hit over the weekend by one of the tornadoes that tore across the country's Midwest and South, killing at least 32 people and devastating communities. JON CHERRY / REUTERS See story, page 3

Japan urged to remove hurdles to ties

By ZHANG YUNBI zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

Senior officials in Beijing have urged Tokyo to subscribe to a proper perception of China, appropriately control bilateral divergences and "remove obstacles and burdens" to Sino-Japanese ties.

They made the call when meeting with Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi in Beijing. Hayashi was in China over the weekend on his first visit to the country in his current capacity.

The meetings on Sunday sent a clear warning to Tokyo that the relations between China and Japan, the world's second- and third-largest economies, respectively, will fray further if Japan fails to alter its policy regarding Taiwan or continues to echo Washington's plan to contain China geopolitically and economically, observers said.

Premier Li Qiang told Hayashi that Tokyo should work toward the same goal with Beijing, manage differences properly and build a relationship that fits the needs of the new era.

Major issues, including historical concerns and the Taiwan question, are pivotal to the political

foundation of bilateral ties and should be properly tackled with sincerity and credibility, Li said, adding that the two countries are important economic and trade partners, and should achieve a higher level of mutual benefits.

State Councilor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang told Hayashi that the two sides should push their ties to "rule out disturbances, overcome challenges and move forward".

The Taiwan question is "at the core of China's core interests" and it is pivotal to the political foundation of bilateral ties, Qin echoed the premier when urging Tokyo to honor past commitments, refrain from meddling in matters involving the Taiwan region and keep from damaging China's sovereignty.

The United States recently asked Japan and the Netherlands to join forces with it to restrain or ban exports to China in semiconductor-related sectors.

Last week, Chinese Ambassador to Japan Wu Jiahao warned that the production chain built by Chinese and Japanese firms will be "considerably damaged" if Tokyo is subject to such US-led "suppression".

"The Japanese semiconductor industry may lose China — its larg-

est market — and will find it hard to secure the sustainability of its own development," Wu said.

On Sunday, Qin told Hayashi that the US had dealt a heavy blow to Japan's semiconductor sector, with an outright bullying approach in the past, and now it is trying to play the same trick on China.

Japan "still feels the pain" and it should not side with the US, he said, adding that rallying against China will "lead to nothing but galvanizing China's determination to seek self-reliance and prosperity on its own".

As Japan holds the presidency of the G7 summit this year, Qin urged Tokyo to "properly navigate" the G7 meetings' keynote and agenda, and do more in advancing the region's peace and stability.

This year marks the 45th anniversary of the signing of the China-Japan Treaty of Peace and Friendship, one of the four landmark political documents underpinning the relations.

Referring to the anniversary, Hayashi said the Sino-Japanese ties "are rich in potential for future growth", and Tokyo is ready to fully implement consensus of leaders from both sides and will

stay committed to the four political documents.

Japan is ready to boost contacts and pragmatic cooperation with China at all levels, properly address each other's concerns and push for building a constructive and stable relationship, he added.

Lyu Yaodong, deputy director-general of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Japanese Studies, said the conflict of interests in security, politics and values "should not be Tokyo's excuse for frequent backsliding and violation of the spirit of the four landmark China-Japan political documents".

"Driven by their obsession with (issues of) national interest, policymakers in Tokyo have frequently hedged their bets when shaping China policies, and Japan's approach to China has been drifting between a reconciliatory tone and a tougher tone," Lyu said.

The key to keeping the ties afloat lies in whether Japan's China policy can stay true to the principle of the four political documents, and substantially turn into reality the common interests of both countries and the greater region, he added.

Speaking about a recently reported case of a Japanese citizen being suspected of espionage in China, Qin said the Chinese side will handle the case in accordance with law.

Trust deficit of US has been self-inflicted

In the United States, we have a popular saying: "You can't have your cake and eat it too", which is another way of saying that you cannot have it both ways. Yet this is exactly what President Joe Biden's administration is trying to do with China.

It treats China like a bitter adversary. The Biden administration even has hundreds of millions of dollars allocated to encourage Western media to blacken China's reputation at every opportunity, even resorting to distortion and fabrication to achieve their objective. Yet when they need China's help, Biden expects Beijing to comply and act as a willing supporter.

Some recent examples come to mind. At the G20 Summit in Bali in October, Biden reaffirmed the one-China principle and said he would do nothing to interfere with Taiwan as part of China. Of course, right after he left Bali, he ordered advanced weapons for Taiwan and commanded part

WORLD WATCH By George Koo

of Taiwan Semiconductor Co from the island's city of Hsinchu to the US state of Arizona.

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen flew to Switzerland specifically to intercept China's then vice-premier Liu He on his way to Davos. She asked for China's support for the dollar by continuing to buy US Treasury IOUs. She then flew on to Africa to warn African nations of China's so-called debt-trap diplomacy — without any evidence whatsoever.

On the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference in February, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with Chinese senior diplomat Wang Yi, boasting later that he gave a stern warning that China must not give weapons to Russia, or it would face dire consequences. Wang, who is now a

member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the CPC Central Committee, let it be known that the shooting down by the US of a weather balloon that wandered into US airspace was a hysterical response.

Hysteria and paranoid logic run wild in Washington. Kits for new subway cars provided by China and assembled in the US were feared to be a vehicle for spying. The ubiquitous TikTok may be thrown out of the US because it is owned by a Chinese entrepreneur.

The US has concluded that the best way to deal with its rotting infrastructure, proliferating number of homeless people, drug overdoses and mass shootings is to kick the can down the road and let the next round of politicians face the challenges.

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INSIDE Illustrations of classic magazine in the spotlight Life, page 14

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PAGE TWO



HIGH-QUALITY MATERNITY SERVICES IN DEMAND

Public hospitals offer VIP facilities for expectant mothers

Doctors provide high-quality services at International Peace Maternity & Child Health Hospital of China in Shanghai. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai
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Last summer, Tang Zhewen gave birth to her daughter in the VIP department at a public hospital in Shanghai.

The service provided at one of the city's most-respected maternity institutions — from antenatal checkups to delivery — cost her almost five times the average monthly salary in the city.

The per capita disposable income of Shanghai residents last year was 79,610 yuan (\$11,567). Tang paid more than half this amount for the service she received.

She said many factors prompted her decision to use the hospital — such as her husband being allowed to take part in the entire checkup process, including ultrasonography.

The doctors at the unit also have more experience than those at other institutions, and after giving birth, Tang had a room to herself, rather than being accommodated in a ward of eight patients.

"I didn't consider the hospital's general maternity department, as it is so crowded, and pregnant women often wait a long time for an antenatal checkup," said Tang, 34, an administration worker at a State-owned enterprise.

"Pregnancy and childbirth are special stages in a woman's life, and perhaps once-in-a-lifetime experiences, so I wanted the best treatment I could get."

Although the number of births has fallen in Shanghai and nationwide in recent years, more women are opting for better services at major maternity hospitals in the city.

Tang gave birth in the welfare unit at International Peace Maternity & Child Health Hospital of China, or IPMCH. Nearly one-fifth of the 10,000 or so babies delivered at the hospital last year were born in the VIP unit.

At Shanghai First Maternity and Infant Hospital, high-quality maternity services now comprise 20 percent of such amenities provided by the institution.

Wang Yanlin, vice-president of IPMCH, said: "With development of the social economy and improved health awareness among the public, people have higher aspirations for a good life. The VIP unit, where services are constantly being upgraded, meets women's requirements for a more humanistic service, while providing quality medical treatment."

IPMCH was established in 1952 by Soong Ching Ling, the widow of Sun Yat-sen. It was the first maternity and child health hospital established in the nation since the founding of New China three years earlier.

At public hospitals across the country, only a limited number of places are available for women signing up at a general department for antenatal checkups and child delivery. The time each woman has with a doctor is also limited, and in most cases, spouses are excluded from many procedures.

Wang said the VIP unit at IPMCH was established jointly in 2002 with Johns Hopkins Hospital in the United States.

Clients were initially foreigners and some Chinese with medical insurance to cover much of the cost, but now, most of the clients are Chinese, and the number of beds has risen from 10 to 30, Wang said.

She added that maternity services failed to meet demand in most cases, although those signing up at the hospital's general department pay much less, and the cost is largely covered by public medical insurance.

Such demand drove the hospital to launch the VIP unit at its branch in suburban Fengxian district in July this year.

Zhou Ye, director of the unit, said: "We always limit the room occupancy rate to give new mothers a better experience. We used to keep it at 60 percent, but it has been pushed up to more than 70 percent, as the number of those signing up for the VIP service has risen significantly."

To maintain a quiet and comfortable environment, the hospital insists that no more than 70 percent of the rooms are occupied.



Left: A patient consults Yao Xiaqin, a senior doctor in the obstetrics department at Shanghai First Maternity and Infant Hospital. Right: Dummies are used at the hospital for instruction in caring for babies. PHOTOS BY GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY



A father greets his baby for the first time at Shanghai First Maternity and Infant Hospital. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

Sometimes there are lines of patients waiting for a checkup, Zhou said, and the institution is trying to improve the situation for patients by introducing digital payment and allocating reservation times more precisely.

She added that every expectant mother is assigned a doctor throughout pregnancy and delivery. Family members are allowed to accompany the patient throughout the process, and they can stay in the room after the baby is delivered.

Multilevel needs

In July, Shanghai First Maternity and Infant Hospital launched Golden Key, a high-quality maternity service. The hospital had long provided a special clinic for mothers-to-be.

Ying Hao, vice-president of the hospital and director of the Shanghai Obstetrics Quality Control Center, said: "The new service was launched to meet multilevel needs from the public. Demand for the service was initially underestimated."

Huang Yiyi, director of the hospital's obstetrics department, said more women in big cities are going to care centers after giving birth, and charges have risen over the years. Women now also have higher requirements for their level of comfort during childbirth, she said.

A maximum of 20 expectant mothers using the Golden Key service can receive antenatal checkups within half a day.

Huang said, "In many cases, I'm waiting for the patients, rather than them waiting for me."

A multidisciplinary team attends to an expectant mother during pregnancy and also arranges outpatient services, including nutrition, midwifery instruction, and breastfeed-

"We understand that expectant mothers can be anxious throughout pregnancy, and they have many questions to ask. If they have good communication with the medical team and receive prompt answers to their questions, they will develop a better sense of security."

Huang Yiyi, director of the obstetrics department at International Peace Maternity & Child Health Hospital of China in Shanghai

ing, Huang added. Liu Jinfeng, head obstetrics nurse at Shanghai First Maternity and Infant Hospital, said for example that at the midwifery clinic, pregnant women are given instruction and practice on how to breathe during labor.

She added that at the nutrition clinic, doctors learn in detail about each patient's dietary requirements, and help them plan what they eat and to control their weight, which will have a bearing on the baby's size and the smoothness of the delivery.

To raise questions at any time, mothers-to-be join a WeChat group, which also includes

the doctor in charge, a nurse and midwife. A neonatologist joins the group after the birth.

Huang said: "We understand that expectant mothers can be anxious throughout pregnancy, and they have many questions to ask. If they have good communication with the medical team and receive prompt answers to their questions, they will develop a better sense of security."

"This will also help them during childbirth, which is an unprecedented experience clouded in uncertainties."

Tang said that during the antenatal checkups, she most looked forward to the ultrasound process, during which she and her husband watched the baby on screen. At general medical departments in public hospitals, other family members are not allowed to be present, and the screen is only viewed by the patient's doctor.

Liu said, "At Golden Key, we point at the screen to indicate the baby's head and feet to the parents-to-be. If they ask to watch the baby, this process can last half an hour."

Improvements made

Huang said that as a doctor, she used to view child delivery only from the medical perspective.

"For example, if a woman gave birth successfully after a prolonged delivery process, we'd say it was down to her own efforts, as we didn't use obstetric forceps or transfer her for a cesarean section. However, we neglected the woman's feelings, and this could be emotionally painful for her."

Improvements are being made. Labor analgesia — the reduction or management of pain during labor, which involves the use of anesthetic agents and/or an epidural — has been used for more than 90 percent of wom-

en giving birth naturally at the hospital, Huang said. The remainder either refuse the procedure or their health prevents them from undergoing it.

At Golden Key, midwives and nurses accompany patients throughout child delivery. They teach them to "push" in the right way and also offer constant encouragement, which many women said helps ease the pain and creates a more comfortable experience.

Huang said doctors are now paying more attention to checkups and delivery, for example, by offering words of encouragement to expectant mothers.

"Also, better pain management procedures will persuade more women who have doubts about childbirth to opt for natural deliveries," she said.

Liu said Golden Key allows fathers to cut the umbilical cord. Nurses also help the mother wear makeup in the delivery bed, and to take a family photo immediately after the birth.

Psychological support

Doctors said women opting for high-quality maternity services come from various age groups and backgrounds. However, a high proportion of them have complicated health conditions.

Xiao Wen, who experienced infertility for seven years before finally becoming pregnant last year after resorting to assisted reproductive technology for six months, signed up with the VIP unit at IPMCH.

"I went through a long and bitter experience physically and mentally before eventually giving birth, and I wanted to protect the baby with the best medical resources possible," she said.

Doctors said that compared with luxury private maternity hospitals, public hospitals have a better reputation for medical quality.

Wang, the IPMCH vice-president, said: "As a result, those at higher risk throughout pregnancy and delivery choose us. Also, it's not uncommon for a woman to decide on impulse to choose us in the middle of pregnancy if her health or that of the fetus suddenly changes."

"This is more evident nowadays, as the policy in China allows a couple to have three children, which has resulted in some older women deciding to become mothers again," she said.

Women with complicated and difficult health conditions usually request more humanistic care and mental support from doctors.

Huang said: "In some cases, women lose their first child just months after giving birth. In others, those who have been infertile for years, experience the death of their fetus. When encountering such patients, I spend a long time talking to them, as they have experienced extreme pressure."

She added that she is considering introducing psychological therapists to the service to ease the anxiety of expectant mothers, especially those who become pregnant after many failed attempts.

"Some women are unduly anxious about their unborn child. They think the baby is unhealthy if the fetus does not move often one day, and imagine that the baby is struggling if the fetus moves frequently the next day. We hope that psychological counselors can give them better guidance as a result of their professional experience," Huang said.

Wang said services at the IPMCH VIP unit will continue to be upgraded to create a better experience.

"For most women, giving birth is a first-time experience, which may influence their decision to have a second or third child. If we can offer each woman a better and even joyful experience, we may contribute to the nation's birth rate," Wang added.

The hospital's obstetrics department plans to introduce more services, such as those aiding recovery after childbirth, Wang said.

"We aim to provide the best possible support for women's health throughout their lives," she added.

TOP NEWS

Country's organ donors surpass 6.18 million

By WANG XIAOYU
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China has significantly raised awareness about posthumous organ donation among its people and improved its organ transplantation technologies, with the number of registered organ donors reaching nearly 6.2 million and the number of annual organ transplants continuing to rank the second-highest in the world, officials and experts said last week.

However, they pointed out that China still has a much lower rate of organ donors — the number of donors per million of the population — when compared with some developed countries, and hospitals capable of conducting transplantations are unevenly distributed.

More efforts are needed to boost awareness, direct quality medical resources to the grassroots and step up social assistance for those in need, they said.

Data released by the Red Cross Society of China shows that nearly 1.54 million people registered as organ donors last year, compared with around 1.52 million in 2021 and 1.01 million in 2020.

The total number of registered donors now exceeds 6.18 million, and the majority are young and middle-aged adults, age 45 and below, said Hou Fengzhong, head of the China Organ Donation Administrative Center, which is administered by the Red Cross Society of China.

"Public awareness about organ donation has markedly increased," Hou said during an event paying tribute to organ donors held in Changsha, capital of Hunan province, from Thursday through Saturday. Such events were also held in other provinces such as Anhui.

In 2010, China began a voluntary organ donation trial program. Since 2015, voluntary posthumous donation became the only legal source of organ transplants in the country.

The program has conducted 135,000 organ transplants involving about 44,000 posthumous organ donors in 13 years.

Guo Yanhong, director of the National Health Commission's medical emergency department, said that in 2022 alone, China completed nearly 17,600 organ transplants, thanks to about 5,600 donors, up 5.2 percent and 6.75 percent, respectively, from the previous year.

"Having achieved this progress in spite of COVID-19 outbreaks was no easy task," she said.

Since 2016, the numbers of organ donors, organ donations and transplantation surgeries in the country have continued to rank the second-highest in the world and the highest in Asia, according to Guo.

"Through evaluations of surgical complications, we also see that the quality of organ transplantations in China ranks high in the world," she said.

However, Guo noted that the number of organ donors per million of the population in China stands at around 3.98. The United States and Spain have the highest number of about 41 donors per million.

"There are 183 hospitals qualified to conduct organ transplantations (in China), which are not enough to meet the demands," she said.

Guo thus called for mobilizing the whole society to spread awareness about organ donation, improving fairness, transparency and efficiency of its organ procurement system and directing high-quality health-care resources to community levels.

Hou, head of the China Organ Donation Administrative Center, said the center will further boost awareness drives and provide convenient registration services. This year, the number of new registered donors is expected to exceed 1.2 million.

The center will further ramp up memorial activities for organ donors and intensify humanitarian care for their families, he said.



People place flowers in front of a monument in memory of organ donors in Bozhou, Anhui province, on Sunday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Economy: Nation has most complete industrial system

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as geopolitical tensions and talks of relocating production back to developed countries, Burkner added.

China has the most complete industrial system in the world, with the country ranked the world's largest manufacturing country for the 13th consecutive year. In 2022, China's manufacturing output accounted for nearly 30 percent of the world's total, according to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

But China still faces bottlenecks in crucial technologies and industrial components such as semiconductors, and more efforts are needed to move toward greener, smarter and higher-end manufacturing, experts said.

"The industrial economy is the field with the most innovation activities, the most abundant results of innovation, and the strongest spillover effect of innovation," said Jin Zhuanglong, minister of industry and information technology.

Statistics show that the industrial economy accounts for less than 20 percent of the US GDP, but 70 percent of US innovation activities are directly or indirectly dependent on its industrial economy, he said.

Amid increasingly fierce international competition, it is necessary to build a modern industrial system and improve the resilience and security of China's industrial and supply chains, Jin said.

The United Nations has forecast that India will surpass China as the most populous country this year, and some experts worry that this could reduce China's advantages in manufacturing.

But Jeffrey Sachs, a renowned economist and director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University, said: "China's strength right now is that it is on the cutting edge of many of the most important technology innovations for the future, including low-carbon energy solutions, electric vehicles, batteries, artificial intelligence and many other sectors. All of this will be very good for China's manufacturing industry in the future."

Denis Depoux, global managing director of consultancy Roland Berger, said industrial modernization is also crucial to unleash further domestic demand and consumption in China. "To uplift consumption, more disposable income is the key. And this additional wealth can only be generated by an increase in productivity, and thus an increase in the economy's quality, which needs to be facilitated by industrial modernization," he said.

Li Dongsheng, CEO of consumer electronics giant TCL, said accelerating the industrial upgrade, boosting technological innovation and promoting global operations are the keys to the high-quality development of China's manufacturing industry.



No signs of abating

A water cannon is used to disperse demonstrators in Tel Aviv, Israel, on Saturday during a rally against the Israeli government's judicial reform bill. Protests against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's judicial overhaul continued on Saturday, despite its suspension by the premier last week, as tens of thousands took to the streets to demand it be scrapped.

SAEED QAQ / ANADOLU AGENCY VIA GETTY IMAGES

Malaysian PM: Future of ties with China bright

Anwar calls for reinvigorating Belt and Road, boosting collaboration

By CAO DESHENG
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Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim sees stronger trade and investment cooperation ahead with China, which he called "an important neighbor and trading partner," amid economic recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and mounting geopolitical challenges.

During an exclusive interview with China Daily ahead of concluding his four-day visit to China on Saturday, Anwar said it is important for Malaysia to interact more with China, and he hopes the visit will advance the two countries' economic cooperation potential.

Bilateral cooperation documents on economy, trade, agriculture and customs were signed during Anwar's visit to China, the first since he took office in November.

The prime minister said that Malaysia secured a record 170 billion Malaysian ringgits (\$38.5 billion) worth of investment commitments from China. "That shows the huge amount of confidence and trust on the part of the Chinese government and companies toward Malaysia."

Amid a busy schedule, Anwar had a meeting with business leaders from both countries on Saturday morning.

"In my discussions with the captains of industry, which again is unprecedented because we don't normally see the huge numbers of companies coming for this kind of dialogue, they stated their interest in moving into the sectors of oil and

gas, green technology, data centers and digital economy," Anwar said. This was a very reassuring sign regarding Malaysia's tourism potential, he added.

China has been Malaysia's largest trading partner for 14 consecutive years. Bilateral trade hit a historical high of \$203.6 billion in 2022, according to the Ministry of Commerce. China is also the largest source of foreign investment for Malaysia, with the amount reaching \$12.5 billion last year.

The East Coast Rail Link, a massive railway project invested in by a Chinese company in Malaysia under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, has progressed and is nearing completion, according to the prime minister.

"A huge amount of effort has been put in from both China and Malaysia. We learned from the experience, and I think the companies involved have agreed that they should also conduct additional training for their future projects."

Addressing the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2023 on Thursday, Anwar underlined the need to reinvigorate the Belt and Road Initiative and called for collaboration among countries.

"Translating lofty ideals into practical reality, solidarity and cooperation is best exemplified in the realization of the Belt and Road Initiative," Anwar said. "With the pandemic behind us, we should try to regain its momentum."

During the interview, the prime minister also underscored the importance of enhancing cooperation between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations — of which Malaysia is a member — and China under the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership free trade agreement.

"ASEAN's position is to continue to have this vigorous, robust engagement and dialogue with

China, because it benefits all ASEAN members in terms of trade and investment. So this collaboration with China should be further enhanced," he said.

"There are some issues like the South China Sea, but they shouldn't be that contentious. The answer is dialogue. I do believe that is not that easy, but you should do that. At least we think of each other as friends, and we continue to have dialogue, so these problems are not insurmountable."

"I am very pleased, and extremely glad, that the Chinese leadership takes that position to engage in dialogue and proper understanding," he added.

The prime minister expressed his opposition to the submarine deal agreed upon by the AUKUS alliance of Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. China has said the deal might trigger a global arms race and undermine peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

"Well, I also say no to AUKUS."



Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim

At least 32 dead as tornadoes rip through US states

Severe storms produced a series of tornadoes that tore across the United States' South and Midwest on Friday and Saturday, killing at least 32 people and devastating communities.

Tornadoes in at least eight states destroyed homes and businesses, splintered trees and laid waste to neighborhoods across a broad swath of the country. The dead included nine in one Tennessee county, four in the town of Wynne, Arkansas, three in Sullivan, Indiana, and four in Illinois.

Other deaths from the storms on

Friday were reported in Alabama and Mississippi, along with one near Little Rock, capital of Arkansas, where city officials said that more than 2,600 buildings were in a tornado's path.

Residents of Wynne, with a population of about 8,000, woke up on Saturday to find the high school's roof shredded and its windows blown out. Huge trees lay on the ground, their stumps reduced to nubs.

Debris that lay scattered inside the shells of homes and on lawns included clothing, insulation, toys,

splintered furniture and a pickup truck with its windows shattered.

Ashley Macmillan said she and her family huddled with their dogs in a small bathroom as a tornado passed. A falling tree seriously damaged their home, but they were unhurt.

As recovery operations began, workers used chain saws and bulldozers to clear the area, and utility crews were restoring power.

Nine people died in McNairy county, east of Memphis, Tennessee, said Patrick Sheehan, director of the state's Emergency Management

Agency. The National Weather Service said the tornado there had wind speeds up to 265 kilometers per hour and a path as long as 40 km.

More than 610,000 homes were without power on Saturday, according to the poweroutage.us website.

The storms struck just hours after US President Joe Biden visited Rolling Fork, Mississippi, where tornadoes destroyed many of the community's 400 homes and killed 26 people on March 24.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Trust: Biden doubled down on Beijing

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In the meantime, rather than confronting the real challenges at home, they work on blaming everything on China.

At the beginning of his administration, Biden could have reset relations with China, but he doubled down instead. Blinken and others have gone around promising positive relations with every country, only to stab them in the back. This has been especially true with their dealings with China. Right now,

Biden desperately needs to meet with President Xi Jinping to get China's support for the US debt, but he thinks he can get that support while trashing China and freezing China from access to semiconductor technology.

Under his leadership, the US has become a nation that inflicts self-harm by a thousand cuts. By unilaterally destroying Iraq and Libya, the US instilled fear in others. By unilaterally confiscating foreign reserves belonging to Afghanistan and Russia, Biden behaved like the mafia.

All the world can now see that holding on to the dollar and keeping it in the US is fraught with danger.

Under these circumstances, why would China want to buy more Treasury bills? That would only enable the Federal Reserve to print more dollars and run up the deficit. In fact, China is converting extra dollars into gold and spending the remainder as rapidly as possible. China is also working with Saudi Arabia and other oil-producing states to accept the renminbi instead of the petrodollar.

More than 100 countries that trade with China are already willing to hold renminbi as part of their reserve currency. All are motivated to avoid owning dollars.

The US under Biden's leadership now suffers a huge credibility gap and trust deficit with the rest of the world. The US economy and therefore American taxpayers will pay dearly from the debt trap of Biden's own making.

The author, a US citizen of Chinese ancestry and a retired international business adviser, wrote this commentary especially for China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

WORLD

Skepticism voiced about fallout from Trump indictment

By HENG WEILI in New York
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As former US president Donald Trump prepares to be arraigned Tuesday on a New York indictment, a former US attorney general expressed reservations Sunday about the effect on the legal system.



I do think that this is a watershed moment, and I don't think it's going to end up good for the country."

William Barr, former US attorney general

William Barr, who served as Trump's attorney general and later had a falling out with him over his challenge to the 2020 presidential election results, predicted the indictment would set off a wave of politically motivated prosecutions across the country.

"The real danger of this thing over the long term," he said on *Fox News Sunday*, is that "we now have thousands" of district attorneys nationally who, because "the Rubicon has been crossed, any one of them can find federal candidates or federal officeholders and so forth, can find some state law they want to pursue the person on and get themselves into the national political arena."

"I do think that this is a watershed moment, and I don't think it's going to end up good for the country," Barr added.

Also, two senators who voted to impeach Trump over the Jan 6, 2021, storming of the US Capitol were skeptical of the indictment.

"It's just a very, very sad day for America," said Senator Joe Manchin, a moderate Democrat from West Virginia, in an interview on *Fox News Sunday*.

"Especially when people are maybe believing that the rule of law or justice is not working the way it's supposed to and it's biased — we can't have that," Manchin said. "But on the other hand, no one's above the law. But no one should be targeted by the law."

Trump, 76, is expected to be arraigned, fingerprinted and photographed at a Manhattan courthouse on Tuesday as he becomes the first former US president to face criminal charges. The indictment stems from hush money paid to a porn star before the 2016 presidential election.

Senator Bill Cassidy, a Louisiana Republican who also voted to convict Trump on impeachment charges stemming from Jan 6, questioned the prosecution.

"It's wrong. I'll put it this way — no one should be the target of the law," Cassidy said on *Fox News Sunday*. "This seems to be more about the person than about the crime."

Joe Tacopina, an attorney for Trump, said Sunday that he

expects more details surrounding the arraignment to be resolved on Monday and noted that the Secret Service, which protects former presidents, also has a role to play on Tuesday.

"All the Tuesday stuff is still very much up in the air, other than the fact that we will very loudly and proudly say, 'Not guilty.'" Tacopina told CNN's *State of the Union* program.

"Hopefully, this will be as painless and classy as possible for a situation like this," Tacopina added. He said it was unlikely there will be a "perp walk", in which an individual who has been charged is paraded in front of the news media, because of security concerns.

Before the indictment, the grand jury heard evidence about a \$130,000 payment to adult film actress Stormy Daniels in the waning days of the 2016 presidential campaign. Daniels has said she was paid to keep silent about a sexual encounter she had with Trump in 2006. Trump has denied any such encounter.

Word of the indictment surfaced on Thursday, although the specific charges against Trump arising from the investigation led by Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, a Democrat, have not been made public.

"We're not doing anything at the arraignment because that would be showmanship and nothing more — because we haven't even seen the indictment," Tacopina said.

Tacopina said that Trump's lawyers will review the indictment once it is made public and will look at "every potential issue" to challenge.

"And of course I very much anticipate a motion to dismiss coming because there's no law that fits this," Tacopina added.

A court official said the arraignment is scheduled for 2:15 pm on Tuesday. The official said the judge has asked both sides to submit their positions on whether cameras and video should be allowed in the courtroom.

Trump plans to deliver remarks later Tuesday at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Florida, at 8:15 pm, his office said Sunday.

Trump, who launched his 2024 presidential candidacy in November, plans to fly to New York on Monday from Mar-a-Lago and spend the night at Trump Tower in Manhattan before his court appearance, a person familiar with the matter told Reuters last week.

He is expected to appear before Justice Juan Merchan of the criminal court in Manhattan. Merchan also presided over a criminal trial last year in which Trump's real estate company was convicted of tax fraud, though Trump himself was not charged.

Trump on Friday lashed out at Merchan, saying the judge hates him and treated the Trump Organization "viciously."

Tacopina, however, said Sunday: "I have no issue with this judge whatsoever. He has a very good reputation."

Reuters contributed to this story.

Mending ties



Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry (right) meets with his Syrian counterpart Faisal Mekdad in Cairo on Saturday. It was the first trip to Cairo for a Syrian foreign minister in over a decade. Syria has been shunned by many Arab states and its Arab League membership has been suspended since the Syrian conflict broke out in 2011. KHALED DESOUKI / AFP

ASEAN makes big push to use local currencies

Reduced dependence on US dollar seen as increasing economic resilience

By PRIME SARMIENTO
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The decision by Southeast Asian countries to use local currencies in intraregional trade will help reduce external risks because it will lessen dependence on international currencies such as the US dollar, experts say.

Members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations will be creating a task force that will design the transition that will help ASEAN economies gradually shift from using international currencies to local currencies in financial transactions, said the Governor of the Indonesian Central Bank, Perry Warjiyo.

"With the use of local currencies in the transactions across the region we will be able to strengthen our resilience in supporting regional cross-border trade and investment, which now are still relying on major international currencies," Xinhua News Agency quoted Warjiyo as saying.

He made the announcement at the end of the ninth ASEAN Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting on Friday. Indonesia, this year's rotating ASEAN chairperson, hosted the meeting on the resort island of Bali.

V. Bruce Tolentino, a private-sector member of the Philippine central bank's monetary board, said it is "high time that international trade becomes

less dominated by the US dollar and US banks and payment systems."

"Painful experiences" with supply chain disruptions caused by the pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict have highlighted the need to build alternative trade finance and payment systems, he said.

Also on Friday after the meeting, Indonesia's Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati said ASEAN remains a bright spot in the global economy, offering "more promising prospects compared to a bleaker global outlook". Collaboration is important in containing the lingering risks that threaten the regional economy, Indrawati said.

Collective expertise

Warjiyo said ASEAN members need to use their collective expertise and experience to develop policies and measures that promote economic resilience, sustainability and inclusion.

"Such actions can include the following three agendas: first, we must have a good understanding of global and regional macroeconomic and financial stability dynamics and be able to formulate an optimal policy mix; second, leveraging the global agenda in the area of cross border payments; third, with current global financial market dynamics influenced heavily by a rapid interest rate hiking cycle by major central banks, it has

been more important for emerging markets to shield the external sector from the unintended consequences."

Khor Yu Leng, director of Segi Enam Advisors, a consultancy in Singapore, said the plan to shift to local currency-based transactions shows that the ASEAN has acknowledged changing commercial and geopolitical realities.

"A bifurcated or multipolar approach would reduce trade and currency-related risks."

This also aligns with Southeast Asia's "balancing role" in global geopolitics, she said.

Tolentino said he hopes that in five to 10 years the ASEAN can use local currencies in cross-border payment systems. To be able to shift to local currency-based transactions, the ASEAN has to develop an interoperable system, he said, in which the payment systems of different ASEAN countries can accept each other's currency for transactions without having to refer to the US dollar, which will minimize disruptions and enhance inclusiveness.

However, Alicia Garcia Herrero, chief economist for Asia-Pacific with the French investment bank Natixis, said most people may still prefer to transact using the US dollar. To develop a regional currency like the euro, that currency has to be convertible, she said.

Tolentino said the European Union's experience with the euro is instructive. "Even after decades of implementation, not all EU countries use the euro."

Finnish PM faces tough bid for reelection

HELSINKI — Finns were casting ballots in a closely contested parliamentary election on Sunday that could cost left-wing Prime Minister Sanna Marin power amid voter concerns over the future of generous public services at a time of economic downturn, Reuters reported.

With no party seen as holding a decisive lead, the election is likely to be followed by lengthy coalition talks, although whichever party wins on Sunday will have the first attempt at forming a government.

The vote came just days ahead of Finland's formal accession to NATO, made possible after Türkiye ratified the country's membership bid on Thursday.

"The polls show that the more right-wing political trend in Finland is gaining strength," Juho Rahkonen from the E2 research institute told Agence France-Press.

Marin, 37, is seen by fans around the world as a millennial role model for progressive new leaders and remains very popular among many Finns, particularly young moderates, but she has antagonized some conservatives with lavish spending on pensions and education that they see as irresponsible.

"The right wing offers an alternative that makes life miserable for all



Prime Minister Sanna Marin meets voters during her election rally in Vantaa, Finland, on Friday. VESA MOILANEN VIA AP

of us, cuts services, cuts livelihoods for the poorest," Marin told supporters on Saturday. "We have an opportunity to choose a better alternative."

Opinion polls show her Social Democrats, the biggest party in the outgoing coalition government, in a dead heat with the right-wing National Coalition Party and the nationalist Finns Party, with all three seen winning some 18.7-19.8 percent of ballots.

The National Coalition has led in polls for almost two years although its lead has melted away in recent months. It has promised to curb

spending and stop the rise of public debt, which has reached just over 70 percent of GDP since Marin took office in 2019.

The grouping accuses Marin of eroding Finland's economic resilience at a time when Europe's energy crisis, driven by the Ukraine conflict, has hit the country hard and the cost of living has increased.

Voting started at 9 am and was scheduled to close at 8 pm local time. Partial results from early voting will be published shortly afterward.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Poll finds doubt in US about value of college

By AIHEPING in New York
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A majority of Americans think a college degree isn't worth the cost, according to a new poll.

The Wall Street Journal survey released Friday, which was conducted with NORC at the University of Chicago, a nonpartisan research organization, found 56 percent of Americans believe earning a four-year degree isn't worth the cost, with skepticism strongest among people ages 18-34.

In 2013, 53 percent of Americans were bullish on college, and 40 percent weren't. In 2017, 49 percent of Americans thought a four-year degree would lead to good jobs and higher earnings, compared with 47 percent who didn't.

People with college degrees are among those whose opinions have dropped the most, with 42 percent of them saying that it wasn't worth it, up more than 10 percentage points from the two polls last decade.

Paulo Eskitch, a 47-year-old violinist who lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma, told the Journal that he is less emphatic about whether his daughter, now 7, should enroll in college when the time comes.

Eskitch said he has a master's degree in music and earns about \$30,000 a year playing in several different orchestras. He said a degree has become necessary in his field, but he sometimes wishes he had pursued welding as a career because he thinks he could have made more money.

That said, he anticipates supporting his daughter if she decides to pursue higher education because there aren't enough good alternatives.

"There are some fields you just can't enter unless you have a college degree," he said. "I'm not saying that's right, but it's the way it is."

The Journal survey showed that women and older Americans are driving the decline in confidence for going to college. People over the age of 65 with faith in college declined to 44 percent from 56 percent in 2017. Confidence among women fell to 44 percent from 54 percent, according to the poll.

"These findings are indeed sobering for all of us in higher education, and in some ways, a wake-up call," Ted Mitchell, president of the American Council on Education, which counts more than 1,700 institutions of higher education as members, told the Journal. "We need to do a better job at storytelling, but we need to improve our practice, that seems to me to be the only recipe I know of regaining public confidence."

Mitchell said student debt, which has reached \$17 trillion, and the 60 percent graduation rate at four-year colleges are two of the biggest problems undermining confidence in the sector.

Enrollment in US colleges has declined by about 15 percent over the last decade while the growth in alternative credentials, including apprenticeships, has increased sharply, according to the survey.

The poll found disaffection has spread to all age groups as well as residents of cities and suburbs.

Bryan Caplan, an economist at George Mason University who has written extensively about higher education, told the Journal that he thought college was still worth pursuing for "A" students in high school. He suggested "B" students enroll only if they are willing to pursue fields such as economics or engineering because those majors have, on average, a strong return on investment.

Full tuition during the pandemic when classes were delivered online was a mistake that hurt the sector's reputation, he said.

The robust labor market also may have contributed to college enrollment falling, Business Insider reported March 26.

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WORLD

Following the Vision of a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind and Bringing More Certainty to World Peace and Development

Editor's note: Chinese Premier Li Qiang on Thursday delivered a keynote speech at the opening plenary of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2023.

Your Excellencies Heads of Government,
Your Excellencies Heads of International Organizations,
Your Excellencies Members of the Board of Directors of the Boao Forum for Asia,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Friends,

It gives me great pleasure to join you in the beautiful Hainan island for the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2023. Let me begin by extending, on behalf of the Chinese government, warm congratulations on the opening of the Annual Conference, a hearty welcome to all participating guests, and sincere appreciation to you all for your long-standing care and support for China's development.

The theme of this year's Annual Conference, "An Uncertain World: Solidarity and Cooperation for Development amid Challenges", is highly relevant to our times and responsive to our shared concerns. In a world of turmoil and transformation, humanity is faced with unprecedented challenges. Instability, uncertainty and unexpected developments have become the norm. Amid the momentous shifts where uncertainty abounds, people yearn for more and stronger forces of certainty to drive the world to a brighter future.

Ten years ago, President Xi Jinping put forward the vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind. Later, he expounded China's proposition on this vision at this Forum and on many other international occasions, and went on to propose the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI) and the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI). These initiatives are China's proposals for global development and governance. Over the past ten years, China has taken concrete actions to advance the building of a community with a shared future for mankind, and achieved a series of major outcomes. The high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, in particular, has helped developing countries achieve faster development and opened up new space for the growth of the world economy. Meanwhile, China has made productive efforts as a major responsible country to champion political settlement of crises, resolve international hot-spot issues, facilitate peace talks and de-escalate tensions. These are the real steps that China has taken to build a community with a shared future for mankind. What has happened shows that the vision of a community with a shared future for mankind has become a banner that guides the trend of the times and human progress, and a source of certainty for lasting peace and shared prosperity in the world.

Asia and the entire world are at a crossroads of history. We must hold high the banner of the vision of a community with a shared future for mankind, and join hands to foster an Asian community with a shared future. We need to work together to build an anchor for world peace, a source of impetus for global growth, and a new pacesetter for international cooperation, to add certainty



Chinese Premier Li Qiang speaks during the opening ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2023 in Boao, Hainan province, on Thursday. LYU SHUAI / XINHUA

to world peace and development and shape a better future for humanity.

First, working together to maintain a peaceful and stable environment for development to bring greater certainty to the fluid global environment. Peace is the prerequisite for development. Without a generally peaceful and stable environment, Asia's remarkable progress in the past several decades would not have been possible. To achieve greater success, chaos and conflicts must not happen in Asia. Otherwise, the future of Asia would be lost. The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and the Bandung Spirit, which were developed nearly 70 years ago, encapsulate the wisdom of the Asian people. The Asian Way of mutual respect, consensus-building and accommodating the comfort levels of all parties provides the fundamental guide for countries to pursue development through cooperation. The more turbulent the world is, the more important it is for us to cherish these invaluable assets and firmly safeguard the hard-won peaceful environment. We need to stay committed to good neighborliness and amity, support ASEAN centrality in East Asian cooperation and work with a strong sense of togetherness in face of difficulty to keep Asia peaceful and stable. We need to implement the GSI, uphold the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, oppose wanton use of unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction, reject taking sides, bloc confrontation and new Cold War, address differences and disputes through peaceful means to jointly uphold world peace and tranquillity.

Second, working together to build a more vibrant center of growth to bring greater certainty to world economic recovery. Asia, with nearly 60 percent of the world's population, almost 40 percent of the global economy and over 30 percent

of international trade, is an anchor and propeller of global growth. We need to implement the GDI, seize the opportunities in the latest round of technological revolution and industrial transformation, foster new drivers of growth through cooperation on the digital economy and green economy, and make Asia a source of impetus for world economic recovery and growth. It is important to deepen regional economic integration and intensify macro policy coordination. We need to pursue high-quality implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), and actively advance negotiations on the new round of China-ASEAN FTA upgrade. We need to develop a regional structure on the division of labor that draws on comparative strengths and advances win-win cooperation, and work to foster a big regional market of greater openness. We need to build an open world economy, promote high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, further liberalize and facilitate global trade and investment, oppose trade protectionism, decoupling or cutting supply chains, keep global industrial and supply chains stable and smooth, and inject strong dynamism into the global economy.

Third, working together to expand effective ways for enhanced solidarity and cooperation to bring greater certainty to the shifting global governance. Today's world is a global village where the futures and destinies of all countries are closely intertwined. The many global issues confronting humanity need to be addressed through consultation by all. Last year, Asian countries successfully hosted the BRICS Summit, the Leaders' Meetings on East Asian Cooperation, the G20 Summit and the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, playing an important role in improving global governance. We need to keep to the approach of extensive consultation, joint contri-

but ion and shared benefits to exercising global governance, take an active part in reforming and building the global governance system, and firmly uphold the UN-centered international system and the international order based on international law. We need to deepen cooperation on food, energy, environmental protection, disaster prevention and relief, climate response and poverty reduction, jointly make a strong call for peace and development, and send a positive signal of upholding multilateralism to make the global governance system more just and equitable.

Fourth, working together to pursue deeper and more substantive people-to-people exchanges to bring greater certainty to the interactions among civilizations. Not long ago, President Xi Jinping proposed the Global Civilization Initiative, providing an important direction for advancing inter-civilizational exchanges and mutual learning, and promoting the progress of human civilization. Asia is a showcase of cultural diversity where different civilizations enrich and inspire one another. Meanwhile, Asian countries are at different development stages, with developing countries accounting for the majority. Each country has its unique history, culture and national condition. We wish to work with all parties to implement the GCI and open up new prospects in people-to-people exchanges and cultural interactions that bring our peoples closer. We need to uphold mutual respect and trust, embrace openness and inclusiveness, respect the development paths that countries choose on their own, and reject the notion of "clash of civilizations" and ideological confrontation. We need to promote the common values of humanity, and increase exchanges in culture, education, and health among our young people and the media. We

need to increase understanding and trust through sincere communication, and properly handle disagreements and problems in the spirit of seeking common ground while setting aside differences, to create a model of sound interactions among different civilizations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Friends,

As the world's largest developing country, China's development itself has global impacts. While focusing on running our own affairs well, we in China have followed the trend of the times of peace, development, cooperation and mutual benefit, and have been a builder of world peace, a contributor to global development and a defender of international order. China has created the twin miracles of rapid economic growth and enduring social stability, which in itself is a contribution to the world. In this uncertain world, the certainty that China offers is an anchor for global peace and development. This has been the case in the past, and will remain so in the future.

Looking ahead over the longer run, there is certainty in the goals and prospects of China's development. The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) held last October drew up a blueprint for China's future development. The Congress made it clear that by the middle of the century, the central task of the CPC is to lead the Chinese people of all ethnic groups in a concerted effort to realize the second centenary goal of building China into a great modern socialist country in all respects and to advance the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on all fronts through a Chinese path to modernization. The modernization that China aims to achieve is the modernization that involves a huge population and features common prosperity for all, material and cultural-ethical advancement, harmony between man and nature, and peaceful development. We will not pursue such modernization through war, colonization or plunder, but peace and development to bring our entire 1.4 billion-plus people into a modern society. This will create powerful impetus for economic growth in Asia and beyond. Accomplishing this central task requires long, persistent efforts. In this process, no matter how the world situation may evolve, we will stay committed to reform, opening-up and innovation-driven development. We will continue to inject new vigor and vitality into the global economic development, and welcome countries around the world to share in the opportunities and benefits that come with China's development. I believe a China that is stable and dedicated to development, a China that is down-to-earth and pressing ahead with fortitude, and a China that is confident, open and sharing will surely be a strong force for global prosperity and stability.

Looking at the near term, both the dynamism and momentum of China's growth are strong. In the first two months of this year, the Chinese economy showed an encouraging momentum of

rebound. Major indicators, including consumption and investment, picked up. Employment and prices were broadly stable. Market expectations improved notably. The manufacturing PMI has remained above the 50-point mark. Several international organizations have revised up their forecasts for China's growth this year. Perhaps more telling than the statistics is the actual situation on the ground. Take Hainan, the seat of the Boao Forum, for example. In the past, tourism usually boomed during the week of the Spring Festival holiday. Now we are seeing the "golden tourism week" extending to "golden month" and even "golden season" as the island sees a steady inflow of tourists and a sustained boom in offshore duty-free sales. It is a good indicator of the resilience, potential and vibrancy of the Chinese economy. It is also strong proof that the fundamentals underpinning China's long-term growth are robust and China's economic and social policies are sound and effective. Going forward, we will continue to prioritize stability, seek progress while maintaining stability, consolidate and build on the momentum of recovery and work for sustained and overall improvement in the economic performance. We will combine the strategy of expanding domestic demand with deepening supply-side structural reform to make China's market even bigger. We will roll out new measures to increase market access, improve the business climate and ensure the delivery of projects to create a better institutional environment that enables SOEs to take new initiative, private companies to break new ground and foreign companies to make new investment. We will effectively prevent and defuse major risks, safeguard the overall stability of China's financial sector in particular, and guard against systemic risks. We have the confidence and ability to sail the giant ship of the Chinese economy steadily ahead against all winds and waves, and make even greater contributions to the global economy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Friends,

There is another big event in Asia this year. That is the 19th Asian Games to be held in Hangzhou of China this autumn. The pandemic may have postponed the Games, but it also made us look even more forward to this rendezvous. The coastlines in Hainan and the West Lake in Hangzhou are just two of the many beautiful places across China. We welcome you to visit more places. Where there are scenic areas, there is new economy and business opportunities for win-win cooperation. I am confident that as we join hands to meet challenges through cooperation, and promote development with an open and inclusive mind, we will bring greater certainty to Asia and the world, and usher in an even brighter future for humankind.

To conclude, I wish this year's Boao Forum for Asia a full success.

Thank you.

More to come from closer China-Brazil ties

By XU WEIWEI in Boao, Hainan
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Relations between Brazil and China are expected to move to a higher footing, as the two countries prepare to celebrate the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties next year, according to Alessandro Golombiewski Teixeira, former economic adviser to the president of Brazil.

Golombiewski Teixeira, also Brazil's former tourism minister and former deputy minister of development, industry and foreign trade, told the media on March 30 that both China and Brazil can help other

nations. He was attending the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2023 in Boao, Hainan province.

Describing trade cooperation between Brazil and China as "strong and winning", he said the two sides enjoy complementary aspects in their trade relations. China imports soybean, beef, oil, sugar and iron ore from Brazil, with chemicals and electric cars going the other way, he said.

Both countries belong to BRICS — the group that also includes Russia, India, and South Africa. He said the BRICS has an important mission of giving voice to developing countries and will have a bright future as it

expands into BRICS Plus.

He noted that BRICS will strengthen multilateralism because all its five members believe in multilateral institutions, and in sharing a vision and common prosperity.

He said that some countries would like to lead the world to war, but China is not one of them. Our world needs peace and China has shown its will for that to the global community, he said. "Without peace, you don't have anything. Can you talk about poverty and inequality and development when a country is destroyed?"

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva recently postponed a



Alessandro Golombiewski Teixeira

planned trip to China over health reasons but Golombiewski Teixeira said that he hopes Brazil — which represents 40 percent of the Latin American economy — has the chance to join the Belt and Road Initiative when the visit takes place.

"BRI is an important cooperation mechanism in the world," he said, adding that he sees it more as a platform for countries working together rather than a simple project.

Talking about China's Global Security Initiative, or GSI, Golombiewski Teixeira recalled that he was

at the Boao Forum for Asia last April when Chinese president announced the GSI.

To him, the GSI and the Global Development Initiative, or GDI, are "two sides of the same coin".

It is very important that more companies enter the Brazilian market. He cited the car industry, where Chinese brands have changed Western-led perceptions to become popular. "Now, people are going crazy with the Chinese cars, such as BYD and Great Wall (Motors)," he said.

An important way to see the partnership is that China has different waves of investing in Brazil, he said. It started with infrastructure, then electronic companies, such as Midea and Hisense, and now it is a new

stage where Chinese tech companies are in Brazil.

"Brazil is one of the largest markets for TikTok and Kuaishou in the world, which is a good thing. Also, companies like BYD, like Tencent are getting more into the Brazilian market because there are a lot of similarities with the Chinese market," he said.

Apart from Chinese e-commerce companies entering into Brazil, he said that Brazilian companies are also coming to China. Noting that the central banks of China and Brazil recently concluded an agreement to trade in their own currencies, he said financial collaboration can help countries better sail through financial crises, such as facing the impact of the banking turmoil in the US and Europe.

BUSINESS

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Automakers drive China's export recovery

Edge in electrification, respect for local demands prove big game-changers

By LI FUSHENG
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Made-in-China vehicles are gaining overseas popularity, which is expected to drive exports that serve as a major pillar of the country's economic growth.

In the first two months this year, ships loaded with 682,000 vehicles left China for overseas destinations, up 43 percent year-on-year, according to the General Administration of Customs.

Those vehicles' combined value totaled 96.83 billion yuan (\$14.1 billion), up almost 79 percent year-on-year. In the same period, China's total exports added up to 3.5 trillion yuan, up 0.9 percent year-on-year. In other words, auto exports accounted for 2.8 percent of the country's total exports.

The China Association of Automobile Manufacturers expects the auto industry to increase its share of China's exports in the future, adding vehicle exports this year will rise by at least 20 percent year-on-year to 3.73 million units.

The CAAM's confidence sprang from the fact that China overtook Germany as the world's second-largest vehicle exporter in 2022, delivering 3.11 million vehicles to overseas buyers.

The industry's top association attributed the export surge to foreign manufacturers' insufficient supplies in respective local markets and, more importantly, Chinese companies' advantage in electric vehicles.

To seize the opportunities, local authorities in coastal regions including Shanghai and Guangdong province are working to facilitate exports that are recovering in the post-COVID-19 era.

"We are experiencing rapid growth in NEV exports and we expect our measures will help grow the volume and optimize the structure of our foreign trade," said Hu Hong, deputy secretary-general of the Guangdong provincial government, on March 20.

Nansha in the South China province is one of the country's busiest ports for vehicle exports.

In late March, an NYK Line ship loaded with 3,600 electric Neta Vs made by Hozon left the port for Thailand and neighboring countries, making the largest single shipment among Chinese NEV startups.

Days earlier, Chinese logistics company Anji unveiled a route from Ningde, Fujian province, where SAIC produces its MG vehicles, to Lazaro Cardenas, a port city in Mexico.

The 13,500-kilometer voyage will take around 23 days, three to five days less than the previous method

of transporting the vehicles from SAIC's Ningde plant to Shanghai and then shipping them.

Chen Shihua, deputy secretary-general of the CAAM, said made-in-China vehicles have shaken off their stereotypes thanks to their competitive edge in electrification and cutting-edge onboard features.

"Destinations of exports tell something. Our NEVs are selling well in new destinations where we failed to get a foothold previously, like Europe," said Chen.

New York-listed Chinese startup Nio entered Europe in 2021 with Norway as its first stop. In 2022, it expanded into four other European countries including Germany and Sweden.

Its electric sedan ET7 was named late last year as the best model in the "Medium and Upper Class" category in the 47-year-old Golden Steering Wheel competition in Germany.

The award made Nio the first Chinese automaker to win the much-coveted accolade, which is usually won by German and Japanese brands.

SAIC Motor, China's largest carmaker by sales, expected the deliveries in March of its hatchback MG4 Electric to reach 10,000 units in Europe.

There are now around 40,000 orders in Europe to be delivered, said Zhao Aimin, executive vice-president of SAIC International.

Zhao said one important ingredient of SAIC's success in overseas markets is to offer competitive products based on an understanding of local customers' demands.

"Every week I have a four-hour meeting with our research and development colleagues," said Zhao, who offers feedback gleaned from direct exchanges with overseas car buyers and potential customers.

SAIC launched the MG4 Electric hatchback in 2022, which is its first model developed with global markets in mind.

It is the result of SAIC's Chinese and British teams and has won top ratings in new car quality programs across different regions, including the famously strict European New Car Assessment Program.

He expects the model's overseas sales this year to reach 150,000 units. Zhao said the result has been "motivating and assuring", adding that three to four models developed for global markets will follow by late 2024 or early 2025.

Besides products, a sustainable sales network is crucial, Zhao said. "Without our local dealers, we can't reach our customers no matter how good our products are.

"The top priority is the voice of



A cargo ship is ready to load cars for export at Yantai Port in Shandong province on March 14. TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY



Destinations of exports tell something. Our NEVs are selling well in new destinations where we failed to get a foothold previously, like Europe."

Chen Shihua, deputy secretary-general of the CAAM

our salespeople. We listen to them and we discuss to ensure our network is healthy."

SAIC has been China's largest vehicle exporter for seven years in a row. It exported 1.02 million vehicles in 2022, up almost 46 percent year-on-year, and 65 percent of them were SAIC's brands, primarily MG and Maxus.

"Around one in three Chinese vehicles sold overseas are SAIC ones," said Zhao. He expects the figure to grow to 1.2 million vehicles this year, with Europe, the Middle East and Mexico among its major markets, and up to 70 percent of the products to be SAIC's own brands.

Beijing-based BAIC Group expects its overseas sales of passenger vehicles to reach 30,000 units this year in overseas markets, up from 18,215 units in 2021, said Patrick Yang, general manager of BAIC International Development Co.

BAIC's lineup is primarily composed of gasoline vehicles, but they

are well received as well in some markets. "In Saudi Arabia, Chinese automakers have a total market share of about 20 percent," said Yang.

He said it has something to do with Chinese carmakers' repositioning of their models. "Chinese vehicles used to be seen as merely tools of transport, so local customers would like them to be sold at prices as low as possible.

"But we are now moving upward with our competitive new-generation products, like the X7 and BJ40 series."

Among high-profile buyers of the Beijing BJ40 SUV is Francois Steyn, a professional rugby union player in South Africa. And in Costa Rica, they include Keylor Navas, a goalkeeper for Premier League football club Nottingham Forest.

Its compact Beijing X55 SUV, which was introduced into South Africa in late 2022, was named as a finalist in the Car of the Year competition in the country in January.

Yang said the average price of the company's passenger vehicles will rise to \$14,000 this year from around \$12,000 in 2022.

Zhao at SAIC said China-made vehicles' growing recognition overseas makes those in the Chinese auto industry proud. But he is quick to add that there is still a long way to go to reach the level of well-established international giants.

"There lies a long way for Chinese brands to go up (in the global market)," said Zhao. He admitted that when SAIC planned the MG4 Electric, the dream was to make it as popular as Volkswagen's Golf, "a really international model".

Zhao called on Chinese companies to have "less talk but more walk".

"What we should do is to offer our international customers great products, enable our local dealers to make money and make some money ourselves as well."

For Chinese cars abroad, the road's getting wider but tougher

REPORTER'S LOG

By Li Fusheng

Be more confident but it's not time for champagne yet — that's what I might probably say to Chinese carmakers going global.

I have my reasons. Over the past three years, the rise of China's vehicle exports has been meteoric. The surge started suddenly in 2021. Exports touched a phenomenal 2 million vehicles, taking even industry insiders by surprise.

That's because for almost the whole of the preceding decade, the figure stayed at around 1 million units, although China became the world's largest vehicle market 12 years before (in 2009).

Exports hit a new high of 3.11 million units in 2022, overtaking Germany as the world's No 2 vehicle exporter. Chinese cars garnered both attention and orders in developed markets like Europe, Australia and Japan as well as emerging ones like Thailand.

The China Association of Automobile Manufacturers said auto



Visitors check out BJ40 SUV from BAIC Group during the 19th Guangzhou International Automobile Exhibition held in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on Nov 20, 2021. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

exports would grow by at least 20 percent year-on-year this year to 3.73 million units. Some analysts are even more optimistic, saying the figure could touch 4 million.

But everyone agrees it's not going to be a "live happily ever after" story. Auto markets are known for ferocious, intense competition. New models, if successful, can sound the death knell for others.

If you look back, it's not hard to

realize the surge in 2021, which is widely seen as Chinese carmakers' preliminary overseas triumph, was primarily the result of the competitive edge of "made in China".

An important factor was, foreign carmakers' production was slashed by the COVID-19 scenarios, whereas most auto plants in China weren't disrupted severely because the pandemic was brought under control relatively sooner, said the CAAM.



Workers operate on a production line of BYD, one of China's biggest NEV manufacturers, in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, on Feb 23. YUAN JINGZHI / FOR CHINA DAILY

But it's true that China's first-mover advantage in electric vehicles is generating new opportunities with their acceleration and futuristic features, including big displays, onboard karaoke and automatic parking.

Auto giants in both Germany and Japan are slower in their transition to the new era because of their dominant position and good profit in the internal com-

bustion engine vehicle sector.

So the leading position in the new game of EVs has emboldened Chinese carmakers. Zhao Aimin, executive vice-president of SAIC International, said what Chinese carmakers have achieved in global markets has motivated and emboldened many veterans, including himself, in the industry.

SAIC's MG4 Electric, developed for the global market, has been well

received. The model is expected to see its R&D cost of around 1 billion yuan (\$145.6 million) being recovered in around 2.5 years, half the time for most models.

This has made the carmaker more determined to launch more such models developed by its Chinese and international teams based on demands of overseas customers.

But global giants including Volkswagen and BMW are designing, developing and launching their own EV models as well. In terms of scale and brand awareness, Chinese brands are no match at all.

When Chinese EV startup Nio expanded into Germany last year, CEO William Li said it's no more than a "primary school student" compared with those car giants in Europe, despite local media reports that Nio is launching an offensive to take those behemoths head on.

"Europe is the home turf of our respectable rivals, and they have a much deeper understanding of local customers and the car industry itself. They are definitely the examples we want to learn from," he said.

The difference isn't limited to understanding. Among Chinese auto exporters, SAIC has been the largest exporter for seven years in a row, accounting for roughly one-third of the total. The carmaker said it has just started to make money in overseas markets.

BUSINESSINSIGHT

Expansionary macro policies still necessary

EAGLE EYE

By Zhang Ming

The outlook for China's economic growth this year is generally positive. Consumption, production and investment have recovered significantly after the optimization of contagion control policies with last year's low base providing room for rapid growth on a comparative basis. Therefore, China's GDP growth is projected to be 5.5 percent this year, with inflation below 3 percent.

However, we should not be overly optimistic given various uncertainties.

First, external uncertainty remains high, especially the possibility of a global economic downturn.

The risk of recession in the United States is relatively low at present, but the odds are high for the eurozone and the United Kingdom to enter a recession or even negative growth in 2023. Monetary tightening adopted to curb inflation is one cause for economic downturn, while the supply-side shock on the global level is another. Shrinking external demand will lead to a decline in China's export growth.

Second, the US Federal Reserve's steep interest rate hikes may continue to escalate global market volatility.

Long before the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank, financial crises have broken out in emerging market economies and developing countries. Affected by the Fed's interest rate hikes, smaller economies such as Lebanon have suffered from capital outflows, currency depreciation, high foreign debt and asset price declines, and their economies have fallen into recession. Recession in some countries is linked to commodity price volatility.

In the short run, the probability that the SVB collapse will trigger a large-scale crisis of small and medium-sized US banks has decreased as the US government decided on a bailout of the bank. But the recent turmoil in the global stock market, especially price declines in the commercial banking sector and turmoil at Credit Suisse, have led to concerns over a reduced risk appetite among global investors, and new financial turmoil and risks in succession. Such risks will hold up northbound capital flows and exert a negative impact on China's financial system and capital market.

Escalated geopolitical conflicts pose another major uncertainty. The Russia-Ukraine conflict that broke out in February last year was



CAI MENG / CHINA DAILY

unexpected, as is its duration and scope. At present, many macro and financial forecasts are made on the assumption that no new major geopolitical conflicts will break out, but there are relatively large uncertainties in other regions.

The above-mentioned uncertainties will affect China's macroeconomic and financial stability via trade, investment and psychological expectations.

Internally, China's economic growth faces three major uncertainties.

After three years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the "scarring effect" — which refers to the mid- to long-term impact that a major crisis may have on economic growth — should be considered first.

The mid-term impact of the three-year pandemic on China's economy is reflected in at least three aspects.

First, it will affect the risk-taking willingness of Chinese households and enterprises.

Second, the contagion has impacted the balance sheets of enterprises and financial institutions, escalating

financial risk in some areas.

Third, the pandemic has seriously affected the income growth rate of low and middle-income families.

In addition, China's total population reached its peak last year, which will also bring about important changes. According to research conducted by Cai Fang at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, a negative impact will be increasingly noticeable on the demand side once an economy's total population peaks. Low and middle-income families may face negative shocks more frequently. These have been proven by international experience.

When China's economy confronted downside challenges in the past, policies were mainly adopted on the supply side to protect market entities, but after total population peaks, China's macroeconomic policy should be partly shifted to the demand side to better help low- and middle-income families.

We should understand that relaxed fiscal policy, rather than the market's endogenous growth, is the

major reason for China's current economic recovery.

The biggest change in last year's fiscal policy was the 740 billion yuan (\$107.71 billion) policy development financial instrument introduced in the second half. Local infrastructure projects can apply for this instrument. Without this, infrastructure investment in the second half of last year would have been impossible.

In addition, the special bonds actually issued last year were much higher than 3.65 trillion yuan. There was still a large amount of value-added taxes left over for tax refunds, which played a very important role in promoting infrastructure investment and stabilizing the market.

If macro policy tightens this year, it may be difficult for China to achieve its 5 percent GDP growth goal. Considering many uncertainties at home and abroad, this year's macro policy should continue to be relaxed and normalization should not be implemented prematurely.

There are a few major aspects to

be considered to promote consumption recovery in an all-round way.

Income growth rates of low- and middle-income families should be restored as soon as possible. Treasury bonds, cash or consumer voucher subsidies can be issued to low and middle-income families so that they can better overcome external shocks and uncertainties.

People's confidence should be boosted by any means possible. Reform and opening-up are crucial to that end. Despite the decelerating globalization, China should further advance high-quality opening-up amid deepened internal reform to enhance people's expectations.

Policies should be introduced to promote comprehensive recovery in the services sector.

The recovery of China's services sector at present is now more reflected at the high-level end, such as international tourism, domestic tourism, cinema attendance and entertainment. What really matters, however, is whether small shops that have been closed for a long time

can reopen. More government policies, such as tax reductions and exemptions alongside other forms of financial support, could be introduced so that grassroots service companies can recover after three years of heavy losses incurred during the pandemic.

Additionally, the primary distribution of national income should be more inclined toward the residential sector.

International comparisons show the proportion of Chinese residents' income in the primary distribution of national income is still low at present. People are reluctant to consume, partly due to concerns over the sustainability of the future social security and medical insurance systems. In order to address such worries, higher-level government bodies should coordinate social security and medical insurance. Therefore, people's motivation for precautionary savings can be alleviated and their willingness to consume durable goods and discretionary products will be higher.

It should be noted that the expansion of household consumption is also closely related to the direction of future real estate policies. Of course, we should not go backwards, for the Chinese household leverage rate has soared from 18 percent in 2008 to 70 percent in 2019 due to speculation. The policy of "housing is for living, not for speculation" should be assiduously followed. Policy can also be optimized and implemented more smoothly.

Lastly, the recovery of household consumption depends on the healthy development of private enterprises.

Private enterprises provide 80 percent of employment opportunities in China. Large contraction of private enterprises will result in serious problems in the job market, affecting incomes and expectations. Consumption will not be able to recover either. Thus, it is important to better protect the interests of private enterprises and entrepreneurs. More room for development should be opened up for private enterprises so that the job market can thrive, helping people to increase incomes, expand consumption and restore domestic demand.

The writer is deputy director of the Institute of Finance, part of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. This article is the transcript of the author's speech at the 62nd Macroeconomic Monthly Data Analysis Meeting (March 2023) of the China Macroeconomic Forum at the Renmin University of China. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Recovering real estate on way to future balance

MAIN STREET

By Qin Hong

From the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China last year to the recent two sessions, real estate is one of the sectors highlighted in many high-level documents, such as the Government Work Report. Based on the sections concerning property, we see three major focuses in its future development — preventing risks, helping those with inelastic housing demand and stimulating demand for better homes.

Three major focuses

Regarding risk prevention, given the current stage of real estate development in China, there are two main risks that we think should be put under close watch. The first is debt risk, as the number of collapses by Chinese real estate developers last year had more than doubled compared to 2021. The second is secondary risks following debt risks, the most important of which is that it may lead to the addition of incomplete projects.

Another major focus is to further support homebuyers with inelastic housing demand. Currently, homebuyers in some Chinese cities, especially major urban areas, are still confronted with high property prices when buying a house for living in instead of speculation. Ensuring

support for both housing and rental markets is key to addressing the basic living needs of a large urban population.

China has been setting up and improving its housing guarantee system in accordance with actual housing needs in cities nationwide, which is a significant move to this end. There has been a clear view of how the nation established such a system, which not only integrates public rental housing and guarantees rental and co-ownership housing, but also vigorously promotes the rental market to further shore up residential property demand.

However, compared to housing markets in developed economies such as Japan and Germany, houses for urban rental services in China make up much less of total existing housing units, with the figure for 2020 being 21.1 percent, lower than the typical 35 percent or higher figures recorded in more mature markets. More importantly, the quality of rental services and homes needs to be further improved. This is also part of the reason why the government encourages large-scale and professional rental service providers to develop high-quality rental housing under centralized and unified management.

Luckily, more improvements are likely to be seen in the years to come. It is underlined in the nation's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) that a total of 6.5 million units of guaranteed rental apartments will be built in 40 key cities nationwide

to solve the housing difficulties of nearly 20 million people seeking residential property.

Another focus is to stimulate demand for better homes, which we believe will be an important measure to stabilize China's real estate market over a certain period, as the relevant market space is quite large.

Based on related figures revealed by the seventh national population census, we have analyzed the market-oriented housing demand in domestic cities and towns over the past 10 years. Market-oriented housing demand in cities and towns over the past decade stood at about 121 million households, of which 25 million have demand for new houses due to shantytown renovation or demolition, some 31 million households seek better homes, and 65 million households are planning to move to big cities amid the ongoing urbanization drive.

It should be made clear that unleashing and meeting demand for better homes cannot be achieved merely by increasing the number of larger residential properties. There should be a corresponding improvement in housing quality. It's not all about building better homes. Better housing projects should provide homebuyers with better living experiences and related amenities. Homebuyers with demand for upgrades do not always prefer the latest generation of real estate projects. Optimized and upgraded existing projects are also key to tapping homebuyer

demand for better living spaces. Therefore, whether China can see an effective and efficient unleashing of such a demand, which has great potential, depends on how much product innovation can be achieved and whether homebuyers can improve their urban living environments through new housing purchases.

How has the new permanent population in cities and towns contributed to real estate growth in recent years? According to our research, since 1995, more than 20 million new permanent residents have been added to China's cities and towns annually, and such a trend continued until 2019. However, from 2020 to 2022, there were some big reversals. In 2022, the new permanent population of cities and towns was only 6.46 million. Thus, in the future, the government should focus on unleashing demand for better homes, make it a key pillar to stabilize the real estate market and strive to reverse downtrends as quickly as possible.

Measures in place

In order to ensure the smooth operation and recovery of real estate, the government has introduced many supportive policies, especially financial policies, such as 350 billion yuan (\$50.94 billion) in support to ensure housing unit delivery. Taking a closer look at these moves, it can be found that their aims — more than 300 measures were put forward by local governments nationwide last year to

ease restrictions on housing purchases, a historical low interest rate and financial support for developing guaranteed rental housing on a large scale — are very clear, with their benefits also clear. In fact, such efforts have already paid off.

According to January-February official data, commercial housing sales, sales area and growth in real estate development investment had all rebounded significantly, but we must continue to pay attention to the sustainability of the recovery, as some current market activity indicators still imply a less-than-solid foundation for a sustained market recovery, which calls for efforts of all parties in the market to boost confidence.

New development model

In February, the top leadership emphasized that while adhering to the principle that houses are for living in, not for speculation, more concerted efforts should be made to study how measures should be conducted related to major trends and structural changes, such as the supply and demand relationship and the urbanization pattern, in order to come up with a long-term strategy that suits the long-term development of the real estate industry, eliminates drawbacks of the traditional development model's heavy reliance on high leverage, high debt and high turnover for many years, and promotes the smooth transition of the industry to a new development model.

Referring to the new development model of the industry, we see four aspects worthy of mentioning. China should prioritize the transformation of its development model

from the old "three highs" — high leverage, high debt and high turnover — to a development model integrating development, operations and services.

The profit model should be updated and diversified, instead of simply relying on developing new projects. As we see, more than 95 percent of the income of real estate developers comes from housing sales. Income sources should be further diversified in the future.

The high-debt financing model should be shifted to a diversified financing model using various equity and debt options. Eliminating debt from the financing mix is not realistic but in the future, equity financing should be given bigger play.

Developers need to add business stability, brand promotion and project and service quality to their business goal lists, instead of purely seeking high sales and rapid or even blind expansion.

All in all, with the general direction of future development clear and requirements for short-term policies and long-term development of real estate also clear, we believe that after market adjustments are implemented, the entire industry will return to a new balance. The market potential is there, and enterprises should actively innovate, build confidence and achieve better development to further tap the market.

The writer is a senior researcher at the National Academy of Development and Strategy, a think tank of the Renmin University of China. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CHINA



Visitors enjoy the blossom at the East Lake Cherry Garden on March 25. JAO XIAOXIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Tourists pass by a 3D screen in Jiangnan district, Wuhan, capital of Hubei province, in February. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY



Students take a class at a primary school in Wuhan in February. ZHAO JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY



From left: People read at the Hubei Province Library in February. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY A restaurant owner makes reganmian (hot and dry noodles) in Wuhan's Liangdao street in February. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

People regain appetite for life

By CUI JIA and LIU KUN

Guazao (eating breakfast) is a big deal for people in Wuhan, capital of the central province of Hubei.

After the lifting of the 2020 citywide lockdown aimed at containing the COVID-19 epidemic, the first thing many people chose to do was celebrate by having hot and dry noodles at local restaurants.

Now, such restaurants are packed with locals and tourists every morning. Unlike visitors, who deem it necessary to find a seat to have breakfast, Wuhan people often choose to pick up the noodles in a paper bowl and eat them on their way to work.

Meanwhile, restaurant staff are struggling to accelerate the process of making *shaomai*, a steamed dumpling with thick dough on the top, to keep up with demand. The smells escaping from the steamers into the streets serve as the best advertisement for the restaurants.

For people in Wuhan, which was the first place in China to see an outbreak of COVID-19 at the end of 2019 and in early 2020, the hustle and bustle of the city is back, and people's lives have gradually returned to normal.

Like most cities in China, Wuhan experienced an infection peak around late December after the country gradually began easing the COVID-19 curbs as the less pathogenic but highly transmissible Omicron strain became dominant.

Unlike during the first outbreak in Wuhan, medical workers now have a clear understanding of the virus and access to better medical resources, so the infection peak passed smoothly, according to Hu Ke, director of the second department of respiratory and critical care medicine at the Renmin Hospital of Wuhan University (Hubei General Hospital).

"After that, I believe the city has stepped out of the shadow of the COVID-19 epidemic, but how people have recovered both physically and mentally is even more important," he said.

Hu has also delivered 36 babies who were born at the hospital in 2020. Their mothers were all COVID-19 patients who later recovered. "It's very rewarding to see that both the babies and their mothers are very healthy," he said.

Meanwhile, continuous support must be offered to patients still living with the symptoms of long COVID-19, including shortness of breath, debilitating fatigue or mental health issues, such as sensitivity to light, exercise intolerance and insomnia, as well as mental health issues, he added.

Wu Zhifeng, president of the Wuhan Sports Center, which was used as a makeshift hospital in 2020, said it's obvious that local people have started to attach greater importance to health, so the number using sports facilities has increased significantly compared with the pre-epidemic era. Furthermore, people are taking a greater interest in outdoor activities.

"After experiencing the epidemic, many people have changed their way of life and are trying to stay healthy. Our facilities, such as running tracks, soccer fields and badminton courts, are always packed in the evenings and on weekends," Wu said.

Contact the writers at cuijia@chinadaily.com.cn



Scan to watch a video

Recovery: Vitality, glamour returning to Wuhan

From page 1

"During breaks, they often show people pictures of what the facility was like when it was a makeshift hospital, and point out where their beds once were. Now that they are back and enjoying life, I believe both the Wuhan people and the city have stepped out of the shadows of the COVID-19 epidemic," Zhao said.

Wuhan detected its first case of novel coronavirus at the end of 2019, and the fatality rate was relatively high at the beginning of 2020 in the central Chinese city.

By then, the country had implemented a series of unprecedented measures in the city to contain the out-

break and save lives. More than three years later, Wuhan has pulled through and people's lives have returned to the pre-epidemic state.

The city's medical workers and residents have said that the Feb 23 announcement by the national health authorities that the COVID-19 epidemic had "basically" ended was like a reward for them, while the memories of how they battled the epidemic during its most deadly phase will never fade.

Tough times

Wen Danning, head of the infectious diseases department at Wuhan Jinyintan Hospital, said even when the number of patients being treated for pneumonia of an

unknown cause started rising in early January 2020, she didn't realize that a pandemic would soon begin, changing people's lives worldwide.

Specializing in infectious diseases, Jinyintan was one of the first hospitals in Wuhan and the world to treat patients with this pneumonia, including those with severe symptoms.

It quickly turned out that the infections were caused by the novel coronavirus, which could be transmitted from human to human. "Dealing with a new disease that even didn't have a name, the medical workers were gripped by a feeling of panic at the beginning," Wen said.

On Feb 11, 2020, the disease

caused by the virus was named COVID-19 by the World Health Organization.

Soon, medical experts from all over China arrived at the hospital to study the disease. Based on their experience of treating viral pneumonia, the team quickly drafted the first guidance on diagnosing and treating the disease. Since then, China has published 10 versions of the guidance.

"China's quick response to gain insights into COVID-19 in Wuhan laid a solid foundation for the country and the world to introduce measures to contain the spread of the virus and save lives," Wen said.

In addition to putting enormous pressure on local medical workers, the sudden outbreak became a grave test for both the city and its people as the original strain of the virus started to spread among communities, and the fatality rate was relatively high.

Memories of the period from late January to mid-February 2020 are terrifying for local people. When he was interviewed by China Daily in April 2020, Zhang Dingyu, former head of Jinyintan, said people were worried about a shortage of medical resources and whether they would be treated if they fell ill.

Walking in the outpatients' reception hall at Wuhan Hankou Hospital, Zhao Hua, who worked as a doctor in the department, recalled the scene about three years ago.

Zhao said the hospital received orders to transform itself into a designated facility for COVID-19 patients at 4 pm on Jan 20, 2020. At 9 pm, as soon as things were ready to admit patients, the fever clinic

quickly filled with people with symptoms.

The hospital then opened the outpatients' reception hall and the emergency department to cope with the rising number of patients.

"The outpatients' reception hall was packed with people. There was not even time for medical workers to worry about getting infected — all we could think about was to see as many patients as possible. The outbreak hit Wuhan so suddenly and fiercely. However, we soon got the help we desperately needed," Zhao said.

Xiao Bang, a local resident, said that he was deeply worried in 2020 when he heard that the epidemic had plunged the city into "a state of war".

"Wuhan people fully complied with the epidemic control measures, which were all new to us. At that time, every person was a soldier in the war to contain the epidemic. We fought hard. Even by staying home, we bought valuable time for those measures to take effect," Xiao said.

As the doctor in charge, Hu Ke, director of the second department of respiratory and critical care medicine, remembers the date clearly.

"On the same day, the number of COVID-19 patients in hospitals across Wuhan hit zero. By April 16, 2020, only 50,333 people had been infected in the city and the death toll stood at 3,869.

"The experience gained in epidemic control in Wuhan is extremely valuable," Hu said.

"We proved that by quickly isolating patients and making sure they could all receive treatment in hospitals or makeshift hospitals, the COVID-19 epidemic could be contained in a short period of time."

As an expert in COVID-19 epidemic control, Hu has been to other parts of the country to assist local medical workers in dealing with COVID-19 outbreaks during the past three years.

"When medical workers hear that I am from Wuhan, they always show great respect because they know that I have dealt with the deadliest strain of the virus, and how hard it was. My experience is greatly valued," Hu said.

Wen, from Jinyintan Hospital, said the research on the virus carried out in Wuhan enabled China and the world to quickly develop testing kits and vaccines. She added that research on COVID-19 started at the hospital as soon as the outbreak began spreading in 2020. Several vaccines and medicines targeting COVID-19 in China have been developed, based on the hospital's data and research.

"More importantly, we are always willing to share the findings of the research and our experience with other hospitals around the world because COVID-19 is the common enemy of mankind," she said.

A special award

In September 2020, Zhang, former head of Jinyintan and now deputy head of the Hubei Health Commission, received the national honorary title "People's Hero" for his outstanding contribution to the fight against the COVID-19 epidemic.

A photo of Zhang shaking hands with President Xi Jinping when he received the title is displayed at the entrance to the hospital's administration

building. Wen said: "After passing the test of containing the COVID-19 epidemic, I believe we would act more calmly and be better prepared if a similar public health incident happened again. More importantly, medical resources at hospitals in Wuhan were boosted during the epidemic."

At Jinyintan, construction of two new buildings is almost complete. One of them will be dedicated to conducting research on infectious diseases, and the other will be an emergency response building that will provide routine healthcare, but can quickly be transformed into facilities to handle any sudden epidemics in the future, Wen said.

The hospital had only treated COVID-19 patients for the past three years, but in February, all general healthcare services fully resumed at the newly renovated outpatients' building was also put into use.

that read, "Thanks for risking your lives to save ours."

Since 2021, the Wuhan government has been inviting medical workers who aided the city to return and see the beautiful springtime cherry blossoms, which are famous across China. They were unable to enjoy them in 2020 because of the strict epidemic control measures.

This year, more than 16,000 medical workers have been invited back to the city. Once again, they received a warm welcome. On March 18, a special viewing session was arranged for them for the third year running at Wuhan University, one of the most popular spots to see the cherry blossoms in the city.

Zhao, from Wuhan Hankou Hospital, said that in addition to the help provided by medical workers, Wuhan people will remember the support of those in other parts of the

country. "We received many messages from people across China, offering encouragement and giving us strength during the most difficult times. Such emotional support was priceless," she said.

"Wuhan people are very tough. We fought the epidemic hard, and now we are playing hard. I had to abandon a plan to visit the East Lake last weekend because the traffic jam there was scary. Don't get me wrong: I am not complaining — I am glad to see that Wuhan has recovered so well and that people are enjoying their lives."

Meanwhile, continuous support must be offered to patients still living with the symptoms of long COVID-19, including shortness of breath, debilitating fatigue or mental health issues, such as sensitivity to light, exercise intolerance and insomnia, as well as mental health issues, he added.

Wu Zhifeng, president of the Wuhan Sports Center, which was used as a makeshift hospital in 2020, said it's obvious that local people have started to attach greater importance to health, so the number using sports facilities has increased significantly compared with the pre-epidemic era. Furthermore, people are taking a greater interest in outdoor activities.

"After experiencing the epidemic, many people have changed their way of life and are trying to stay healthy. Our facilities, such as running tracks, soccer fields and badminton courts, are always packed in the evenings and on weekends," Wu said.

From left: A high-speed train passes the Yellow Crane Tower in Wuhan in February. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

Children have fun at a games center built on an old industrial park in Wuhan in November. WU ZHIZHUN / XINHUA

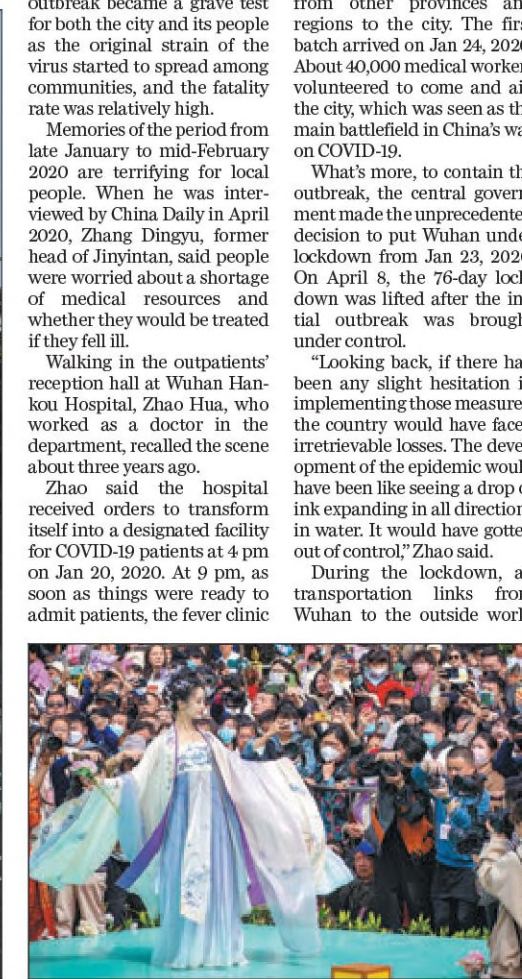
A patient checks his results at Jinyintan Hospital in Wuhan in February. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

Students play soccer at the Wuhan Sports Center in February. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

Hu Ke (right) checks a patient at Wuhan University People's Hospital in February. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY



From left: A high-speed train passes the Yellow Crane Tower in Wuhan in February. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY



People take photos of a woman dressed in hanfu (traditional Han costume) on a tourist street in Wuhan in February. CHEN LIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Students play soccer at the Wuhan Sports Center in February. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY



Hu Ke (right) checks a patient at Wuhan University People's Hospital in February. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY



A patient checks his results at Jinyintan Hospital in Wuhan in February. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY



Students play soccer at the Wuhan Sports Center in February. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

CHINA

Crowd pleaser



A special art exhibition by autistic children draws crowds at the Sanshen Great Hall in the Xixi Wetland in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Sunday, the 16th World Autism Day. The exhibition's goal was to offer a glimpse of the colorful inner world of children with autism, fully tap their talent and encourage people to accept and help those with the condition. DONG XUMING / FOR CHINA DAILY

China to continue pushing cyberspace governance

International cooperation key so all can benefit from internet, experts say

By CAO YIN
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While upholding independence, equality and mutual respect, China will continue to increase international exchange and cooperation on law-based cyberspace governance so more people can benefit from the internet, officials and experts said.

"We stand ready to partner with all other countries to explore effective ways to make the internet more beneficial to humanity and contribute to building a fair, open, inclusive, safe, stable and energetic cyberspace," Cao Shumin, vice-minister of the Cyberspace Administration of China, said while introducing a white paper on the matter at a recent news conference. Titled "China's Law-Based Cyberspace Governance in the New Era", the white paper was issued by the State Council Information Office on March 16. It demonstrates China's efforts to boost cyberspace governance by improving legislation, enhancing public awareness and strengthening international exchange over nearly 30 years.

Cao said the rule of law has helped the developing country with

the largest number of internet users in the world innovate and blaze its own trail of law-based cyberspace governance that observes both Chinese specificities and international norms.

She also said that China has played an active role in international cyberspace rulemaking, contributing ideas and solutions to global internet development.

At the same time, Cao emphasized that China respects the cyber-sovereignty of other nations and supports the participation of all countries in global cyberspace governance on equal footing.

"With different conditions, political systems, cultural backgrounds and laws, every country has the right to choose its own method of cyberspace governance," she said.

"We'll strengthen international exchange and cooperation to reform the global cyberspace governance system to ensure that all countries share the opportunities brought by the development of the internet, and build a community with a shared future in cyberspace," she added.

Noting that cyberspace is a global space, Wang Yi, a law professor at the Renmin University of China, said that all countries share the

same desire to develop the digital economy, face the same challenges posed by cybersecurity threats and have the same need to improve cyberspace governance.

"The same desires, challenges and needs are proof of the significance of international cooperation in cyberspace governance," he said.

Wang said that while China should continue to play its role in global cyberspace rulemaking, other less developed nations should also participate.

"More participation from developing countries will help maintain international fairness and protect the international system with the United Nations at its core," he said.

Calling on China to create more cyberspace rules that can be internationally accepted, Wang said the country has made a great effort to promote rulemaking in recent years, including creating platforms for global cyberspace dialogue.

According to the white paper, China has expanded cyberspace cooperation with some of the United Nations' special organizations, taken an active role in formulating UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence and cooperated extensively with the World Intellectual Property Organization in adjusting domain name rules and settling related disputes.

China is also a member of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. Under the agreement, the 15 member states have established regional rules regarding electronic signatures and authentication, online consumer protection, personal information protection, cybersecurity, cross-border transfers of information by electronic means and IP rights protection, the white paper said.

While engaging in bilateral and multilateral dialogue and exchange in law-based cyberspace governance, China has also increased international law enforcement and judicial cooperation on cybersecurity.

From March to June last year, for example, it was one of 76 countries to participate in an operation named First Light 2022. Initiated by Interpol, the operation led to 2,000 arrests and the interception of \$50 million in illicit funds, which helped curb transnational scams.

In addition, China has focused on building a global platform promoting connectivity, understanding and mutual trust in the rule of law in cyberspace.

For instance, every year since 2014, China has hosted the World Internet Conference, which is attended by representatives from governments, international organizations, internet companies, think tanks, industry associations and technology communities, the paper added.

Scientists stress science in seeking COVID origin

By WANG XIAOYU
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China upholds openness and transparency in studying the origins of the novel coronavirus, and has been cooperating with global researchers and sharing relevant data, according to an article released by a group of Chinese scientists on Thursday.

They said that there is no definitive conclusion regarding the origins of the virus, and uncovering this will take tremendous effort. They called for maintaining a scientific and logical attitude in future research.

The article was written by scientists from several institutions, including the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences, Ruijin Hospital Affiliated to Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine and Peking University's School of Life Sciences.

It was published in China CDC Weekly, a national public health bulletin and an academic platform set up by the CDC.

"On the issue of the origin of SARS-CoV-2, all studies and conclusions should be based on science," the scientists wrote. "Chinese scientists maintain an open, transparent and responsible attitude and practice. They have worked with scientists from all over the world on origin tracing and have contributed many scientific references."

During the initial phase of the epidemic in Wuhan, Hubei province — the outbreak between late 2019 and early 2020 — a number of cases were found to be linked to the city's Huanan Seafood Market. As a result, researchers from the China CDC and local disease control workers were dispatched to collect and analyze environmental and animal samples.

"These results were promptly shared with the public through official media. After surveillance work in the field, the data were further analyzed, and during the "WHO-convened Global Study of Origins of SARS-CoV-2: China Part from July 2020 to February 2021", the results were reported to WHO experts and discussed by a team composed of both WHO and Chinese experts," the scientists said in the article.

At the same time, Chinese researchers summarized their analyses linked to the seafood market and released their findings to the public in a preprint study. Raw data related to the study were also deposited in the Global Initiative on Sharing All Influenza Data, an international database.

"The data have neither been removed nor deleted since they were added. In accordance with the usual practice of publication, and by agreement with the journal and GISAID, the data are released simultaneously with formal publication, but the link to access the data for journal review has always existed," the scientists wrote.

However, they stressed that all these data only showed that the market acted as "an early amplifier during the pandemic due to the high number of consumers every day, resulting in many of the initially identified infection clusters".

"The origin of the virus involving animal-to-human transmission cannot be determined based on current data," they wrote.

The researchers said that hypotheses and conclusions presented in the report released by the WHO in March 2021 are both scientific and objective.

They added that tracing the origins of the virus is a scientific issue that requires scientific evidence and logical inference. Determining the origins of the novel coronavirus may still be a long way off.

Pepper in palm



An exhibitor shows off a round pepper during the 2023 China Seed Conference and Nanfan Silicon Valley Forum, in Sanya, Hainan province, on Saturday. More than 3,000 domestic and foreign visitors from the seed industry participated in the four-day conference, which will end on Tuesday. WANG CHENGLONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Green is the dominant theme for Asian Games

By MA ZHENHUAN in Hangzhou
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Green is the dominant theme of the 19th Asian Games Hangzhou 2022 — green design, green production, green recycling, green energy applications and green packaging.

Another green aspect is the manufacturing of the Games' mascot, which is proving popular with young buyers. The mascot's aim is to promote communication and cooperation between manual workers and new manufacturing technologies.

Each doll goes through 12 stages of fabrication; fabric inspection, cutting, compounding, embroidery, offset printing, digital printing, sewing, keel plugging, cotton stuffing, sealing, inspection and packaging and requires a greater degree of craftsmanship than ordinary dolls.

For example, the offset printing needs to be stitched from point to point to ensure that the emblem is centered, said Wang Jiangtao, who is in charge of one of the licensed manufacturers for the Games.

The fabric is printed using digital technology without wasting water, gas or pulp, which saves more ener-

300,000 kilowatt-hours

of green electricity is expected to be generated from the photovoltaic system used to make mascots of the games in a year.

gy and is more environmentally friendly than traditional printing, Wang said.

The doll is cut both by regular and electric scissors rather than being laser cut, which also reduces emissions, and only strictly necessary outer packaging is used to save material.

In addition, the manufacturer uses green electricity derived from solar panels on its roof, helping to achieve the goal of zero carbon emissions.

The photovoltaic system is expected to generate about 300,000 kilowatt-hours of green electricity every year and save about 88 metric tons of coal, reducing carbon emissions by about 220 tons, the equivalent of planting 12,000 trees.

In addition to the primary host city Hangzhou, which will host the largest number of events, five other

cities have stepped up green energy capabilities, including green power supply, energy-saving renovations and smart energy.

The design of the mascots — a group of robots — conveys the charm of Hangzhou and expresses the spirit of the Games.

Together, the three mascots are known as the 'Memories of Jiangnan', which comes from a poem written by Bai Juyi during the 'Tang Dynasty (618-907).

"When I recall Jiangnan, Hangzhou brings back most of my memories," he famously wrote.

According to designers Zhang Wen and Yang Yihong, a young couple at the China Academy of Art, the idea for the mascots was inspired by daily life in Hangzhou and their memories of the city.

Zhang said they often took their 3-year-old child for walks through the streets and alleys of Hangzhou and visited many landmarks, including the Liangzhu Museum, Canal Square and West Lake.

The mascots were created on April 3, 2020, and represent the ruins of Liangzhu, West Lake and the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal.

It was then that Zhang and Yang decided to call their mascots 'Memories of Jiangnan'.



Online See more by scanning the code.

Privately built, liquid-fuel rocket first in world to reach orbit in debut flight

By ZHAO LEI
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The TL 2, a carrier rocket developed by Space Pioneer, reached orbit on Sunday afternoon, becoming the first privately built, liquid-fuel rocket in China to reach orbit.

The rocket blasted off at 4:48 pm from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China. Shortly after, it placed a remote-sensing satellite in a sun-synchronous orbit about 500 kilometers above the Earth, Space Pioneer said in a news release.

The launch marks the first time that any privately developed, liquid-propellant carrier rocket in the world has succeeded in its first orbital attempt, which refers to a powered flight that places a craft in orbit in outer space.

Before the TL 2, all liquid-propellant rocket types developed by private enterprises, including SpaceX, Virgin Orbit and China's LandSpace, failed on their first attempt.

The successful launch also makes Space Pioneer, based in Beijing, the third private company in China to have carried out an orbital mission. Previously, i-Space and



"The more private companies thrive, the more energetic and competitive China's space sector will become."

Wang Yanan, editor-in-chief of Aerospace Knowledge

Galactic Energy, two other space industry startups in the capital, achieved the feat using their own solid-propellant rockets. Solid-propellant rockets are easier to design and make than liquid-fuel rockets, but have a smaller capacity and so cannot launch large satellites or deploy spacecraft to high orbits.

In December, LandSpace launched the first of its ZQ 2 rockets from Jiuquan in the first attempt by China's private space sector to use a liquid-propellant rocket to reach orbit. The mission failed because of a minor malfunction around the end of the flight.

Wang Yanan, editor-in-chief of Aerospace Knowledge, said the TL 2's success is a milestone for China's space industry because it shows that the country's private players have grown strong enough to undertake important tasks previously only conducted by State-owned giants.

"Private companies have displayed their ability through orbital missions. As more privately made, liquid-fuel rockets enter the market, they will be given government contracts and will be used to launch large, expensive satellites. The more private companies thrive, the more energetic and competitive China's space sector will become," he said.

TL 2, which stands for Tianlong 2, or Sky Dragon 2, is 32.8 meters tall and 3.35 meters wide, and has a liftoff weight of 153 metric tons. The rocket is capable of sending satellites with a combined weight of 1.5 tons to a sun-synchronous orbit at an altitude of 500 km, or spacecraft weighing 2 tons to a low-Earth orbit, according to Space Pioneer.

Space Pioneer was established in 2015 by engineers from State-owned space conglomerates.

COMMENT

Editorials

Report reveals US' pique at Hong Kong's progress in disempowering its proxies

In stating that the central authorities took new actions in the period from March 2021 through March 2022 "directly threatening US interests in Hong Kong", the US State Department got to the nub of its complaints in the 2023 Hong Kong Policy Act Report released on Friday.

Those interests, as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken outlined in his statement that day were the dissent and the undermining of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of people in Hong Kong that the United States promoted with its support of radical elements in the special administrative region.

In attempting to discredit the successful practice of "one country, two systems", the SAR's national security law and Hong Kong's new electoral system, the US is continuing to meddle in Hong Kong affairs, and slandering the rule of law, democracy, freedom and human rights in Hong Kong in an attempt to tarnish Hong Kong's international appeal.

To begin with, the government of the US has no grounds to evaluate "conditions" of Hong Kong, or any other part of a foreign country, not to mention hinting that other countries should dance to its tune on Hong Kong.

The US practices relating to Hong Kong are grave violations of the principles of international law and basic norms governing international relations, as a spokesperson for the Commissioner's Office of the Chinese Foreign Ministry in the SAR said.

With patriots administering Hong Kong and the introduction of a national security law in the SAR, the space for Washington to interfere in China's internal affairs has been squeezed and the juice of its sour grapes flows through the report.

Otherwise the report would not have ignored the positive changes the SAR has experienced during the period it covers, particularly the institutional causes behind the changes and their far-reaching influences.

Over that period of time and beyond, the SAR has witnessed a quick recovery from the social chaos fueled by the US, the economic stagnation resulting from this, and the US sanctions imposed on Hong Kong, as well as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Contrary to the US State Department's claims, it is the successful practice of "one country, two systems", the national security law and Hong Kong's new electoral system that have restored peace and public order in the SAR and put it back on the right track for further prosperity.

By calling these progressive moves retrogressive, the US government has made it crystal clear that the "US interests" in the SAR conflict with those of Hong Kong and Hong Kong people. As such, what the rest of the report supplies is essentially nothing but a sequence of footnotes.

What the report makes clear is why the "presence" of the US in a country deserves vigilance. As the report details in relation to Hong Kong, its presence may take the form of proxies in various fields, including, not coincidentally, the judicial, administrative, educational and communication organs that are the "pillars" of democracy, human rights and security.

What China has done is to remove the US tumors that had been growing in Hong Kong and strengthened its institutional resistance to any reappearance.

Sino-Japanese trust key to Asia-Pacific stability

A direct hotline between the Chinese and Japanese defense ministries has been set up and is due to be put into operation this spring. Announcing the news on Friday, the Chinese Defense Ministry said it would "strengthen the capabilities of the two sides to manage and control maritime and air crises".

Plans for the hotline have been in the works since 2007, but they stalled due to Japan's "purchase" of the Diaoyu Islands in 2012. It was not until President Xi Jinping and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida agreed at their meeting in Bangkok in November to accelerate the talks on the mechanism that it was finally realized.

Although this is a welcome sign that the two neighbors want to foster trust and maintain regional peace and stability, China is justifiably concerned about a possible regression in Japan's policy toward it, as Wang Yi, director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, said in his meeting with former Japanese prime minister Yasuo Fukuda in the Chinese capital on Friday.

These concerns have been fueled by recent moves by Tokyo that call into question whether Japan will continue to adhere to the direction of peaceful development.

Wang said that China hopes Japan will uphold

the commitments made in the four political documents between the two countries and create conditions conducive to the healthy development of China-Japan relations.

This will have been a message reiterated to Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi, who paid a two-day visit to Beijing on the weekend, before heading to Brussels to attend the meeting of NATO foreign ministers.

The possibility of Tokyo providing a doorway for NATO to expand its reach into the Asia-Pacific is one of the concerns that Wang was referring to.

Although it is too early to say the relationship between China and Japan has warmed up, the meeting may have helped the two sides orient their relations in the right direction if Tokyo engaged in the exchanges with goodwill and sincerity.

If they can thaw their relations again, China and Japan would hopefully see a rebound in their bilateral trade volume, which dropped in 2022, thus laying a firmer foundation for mutual trust.

But to get bilateral ties back on the right track, Japan needs to recognize that having good relations with its neighbor is of more benefit to it than hanging on to the coattails of an ally 10,000 kilometers away that is only interested in looking after No. 1. It is absurd to please the latter at the cost of friendly relations with the former.

Growing danger of Pentagon's insatiable greed

There is more than enough reason for the entire world to feel uneasy about the prospects of world peace when the defense budget of the United States for 2024 will be \$842 billion, up 3.2 percent from the enacted level in 2023. The figure was released by the White House late last week.

That the US accounts for about 40 percent of the world's total defense expenditure begs the question why the US needs to spend so much on its military, when it already has the world's largest and strongest military force.

The US has been involved in most of the military conflicts around the world in recent decades. The invasion of Iraq, Afghanistan and its military involvement in the civil war in Syria as well as the important role it has played in the current military conflict between Russia and Ukraine, are recent instances, but the list is much longer when other military clashes or conflicts in the past several decades are included.

The threat to world peace will persist simply because the expansion of the US' military presence worldwide has become a source of interest for its military-industrial complex.

Hyping up competition and confrontation between major countries and overstating threats to its national security from various countries have been the reasons it has fabricated for the necessity

of rapidly expanding its military in recent years.

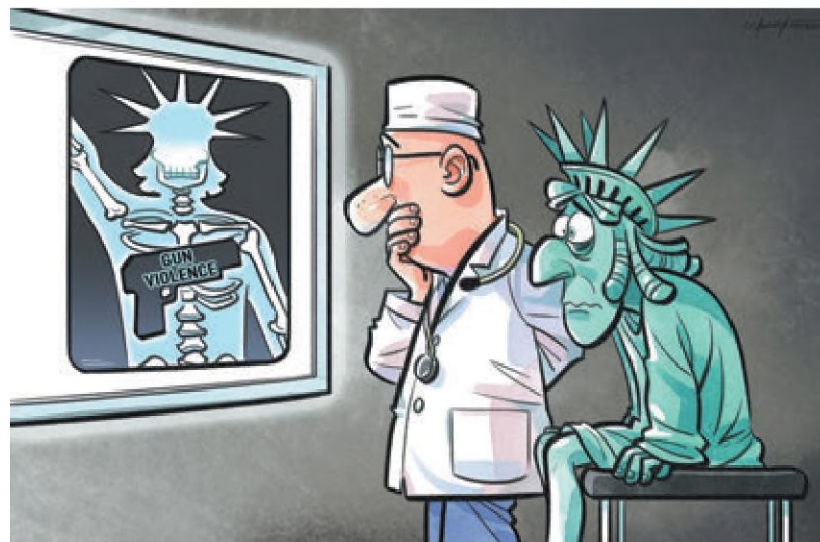
Of the new budget, a lot of money will be spent in further modernizing its weapons such as ballistic missiles and strategic bombers, which will very likely stimulate a new global arms race, a factor that will pose a threat to world stability.

Despite the failures it has suffered in its invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, Washington has not learned the lesson that military interventions will not help it impose its values on other nations. Neither will they persuade the world to accept its own perception of democracy and freedom.

The rapid increase of its national debt, which has risen to more than \$31 trillion, has become a heavy burden on the finances of the country. Such heavy national debt should prompt the US to shrink its military spending. Yet, the Pentagon still demands such a large budget, which will undoubtedly squeeze the share of what Washington should spend on the well-being of the US people. Meanwhile, it is the American people that will have to dig deep to foot the bill for the expansion of the US military.

It is the world that suffers from the increased tensions in various regions because of the US military-industrial complex's insatiable greed. The entire world needs to be vigilant as the continued expansion of the US military will only make the situation even worse as far as world peace and development are concerned.

Li Min



Opinion Line

Press pause to ensure AI benefits humanity

The open letter on the official website of the Future of Life Institute, co-signed by experts such as SpaceX CEO Elon Musk and computer scientist Stuart Russell and calling for suspending training artificial intelligence systems more powerful than GPT-4, is still sparking debate.

Besides calling for a suspension of six months, the open letter also stresses the importance of reaching a security agreement so as to ensure that the powerful AI systems are more accurate, secure and loyal to humankind.

Actually, as early as 2017, more than 2,000 professionals and scholars co-signed the Asilomar AI Prin-

ciples, 23 guidelines for the research and development of artificial intelligence that aimed to establish a set of values for AI to be aligned with so that it would benefit humanity.

Since then, more than 100 AI principles and documents have been introduced.

Technology is becoming more deeply ingrained in people's lives, which means that human values and ethics must be considered inalienable parts of research and development to ensure that as technology progresses it is for the benefit of humankind.

With cutting-edge technology increasingly posing potential risks

to human survival, while seeking to empower human society with science and technology, we should be alert to the irreversible risks that would result from excessive scientific and technological empowerment.

It is time that a suspension button is pressed for giant AI systems. That's the only way for humanity to prevent high-tech systems from becoming uncontrollable.

At the end of the open letter it reads: "Let's enjoy a long AI summer, not rush unprepared into a fall." That poetic sentence not only applies to the very situation right now, but also to the coming future.

— BEIJING NEWS

Call for more support for autistic children

Sunday was the 16th World Autism Awareness Day. Thanks to the past 15 years of efforts, awareness of autism has increased. Those suffering from it are no longer considered to "have an inward character" and proper medical support is now available to them. The public too shows greater understanding of the condition, which is a neurodevelopmental disorder that impacts how a person engages in social interaction and communication. Other characteristics are atypical patterns of activities and behaviors, such as difficulty with transition from one activity to another, a focus on details and unusual reactions to sensations.

The formal diagnostic name is autism spectrum disorder. The word spectrum indicates that it manifests in different forms with varying levels of severity. Children and adults who have autism spectrum disorder may not speak at all or have delayed or limited verbal

communication. Some people have heavily impaired cognitive thinking while others are extremely gifted.

This year the focus of the United Nations' autism awareness day was on "transforming the narrative: contributions at home, at work, in the arts and in policymaking", a call for accepting, supporting, and including autistic people, and advocating for their rights.

There are no known causes of autism, but there are contributing factors, including genes, brain development and environmental factors. And although there is no "cure" for autism, it can be managed with interventions. Autism can be reliably diagnosed by age 2 or earlier, and early identification can help autistic children get the care they need.

That care requires huge efforts from both doctors and families. In my past interviews, the organizers of professional training agencies have shown the timetable of their

training courses, which is even more intense than that of ordinary schools. Some parents also explained that one of them has to quit their job in order to stay with their autistic child all day.

It is a sad but undeniable fact that caring for one autistic child might be a burden for a whole family and require a professional carer. How to help these families is a question that the whole society needs to take into consideration. For example, many local governments, such as that of Haikou, Hainan province, have been investing in special education so as to cover all children, which could save money and energy for the suffering families.

The latest data indicate that the number of people with autism is over 10 million in China, of which 2 million are children. They need more care from society and that care should not be limited to April 2 only.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Washington biggest hindrance to origin tracing

The United States government has signed the so-called COVID-19 Origin Act of 2023 into law. The act distorts the facts by hyping up the theory that the virus leaked from a Chinese lab.

By doing so, the US has exposed to the world its malign intentions. Since the onset of the pandemic, the US has been convulsed by partisan quarrels and political polarization, which caused its failure in pandemic-prevention policies. In order to cover up their failures, US politicians have repeatedly tried to sensationalize the "lab leak" theory.

The US has severely disturbed the global cooperation on scientific origin-tracing studies and international public health governance. COVID-19 origin-tracing should be a scientific job done by impartial expert teams.

It should also be carried out across the world, instead of in China only. By politicizing the task, the US has set the biggest obstacle to completing it successfully.

For years, the US has been impeding rather than supporting the origin-tracing work. It claims to attach great importance to the job, but has never invited World Health Organization expert groups to do any study in the US, never provided information on suspected cases in the early stage of the pandemic in the US, and even politically suppressed some outspoken scientists, turning a deaf ear to the global society's concern about its Fort Detrick biological lab.

As the world's only nation that opposes restarting negotiations for the Biological Weapons Convention

protocol, the nation with the biggest number of biological labs all over the world, as well as the nation with the highest COVID-19 death toll, the US is not qualified to take the lead in tracing the origin of the pandemic.

China supports the global scientific origin-tracing efforts and opposes politicizing the issue. China has twice received WHO expert groups which have issued reports on their findings, which lays a solid basis for the global origin-tracing work.

It is necessary for the WHO to do the origin-tracing in a fair, objective, and transparent way. By politicizing and weaponizing origin tracing, the US is only curbing global cooperation that might help prevent a future pandemic.

— PEOPLE'S DAILY

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COMMENT



China and the World Roundtable | Taiwan Question

Editor's note: The Taiwan question is at the very core of China's national interests, and the one-China principle is the bedrock of China-US relations. By deliberately ignoring these facts and colluding with "Taiwan independence" forces, the US is jeopardizing peace and stability across the Taiwan Straits and hurting the feelings of people on both sides of the Straits. Three experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

Kong Qingjiang

Commitment not a case of semantics

The transit of Tsai Ing-wen, leader of Taiwan island, through the United States en route to Guatemala and Belize, is nothing but a selfish and reckless political gamble. Such an arrangement between the US and the Taiwan authorities poses a severe challenge to the one-China principle inscribed in the three Sino-US communiqués.

It is a given fact that Taiwan is a province of China. This fact is recognized by countries across the world including the US. China made the one-China principle a precondition for the establishment of diplomatic ties with the US. In response, Washington solemnly pledged in the Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the People's Republic of China and the United States of America (Joint Communiqué) that: "The United States of America recognizes the Government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal Government of China. Within this context, the people of the United States will maintain cultural, commercial, and other unofficial relations with the people of Taiwan."

Therefore, the US is obligated to honor the commitment of maintaining only unofficial relations with the people of

Taiwan. Specifically, it should not accord any official from the Taiwan province special treatment that is otherwise inaccessible to the ordinary people of Taiwan. Unfortunately, the US has often been found to circumvent its obligations and commitments, either on the pretext of providing humanitarian convenience for senior officials of the island on their way to or from Central American countries or by citing the uncertain international status of Taiwan.

The inclusion of the US' unofficial relations with Taiwan in the communiqué, in fact, reinforced the fact that the US was obligated to respect the dignity of the government of the People's Republic of China which is the sole legal representative of China, just as it does to the governments of other countries with which it has diplomatic relations.

Some US officials refer to a paragraph in the joint communiqué, which reads: "The Government of the United States of America acknowledges the Chinese position that there is but one China and Taiwan is part of China." They claim that it is the Chinese position that there is but one China and Taiwan is part of China, and the US merely admits the existence of the Chinese position. The US side tends to offer its own understanding of



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the term "acknowledge", but in the eyes of China, "acknowledgement" is no different from "recognition".

It is clear that the US side is using semantics to confuse the international community. Any sane person will acknowledge that in the likelihood of the US later denying Taiwan's status as part of China, no joint communiqué would have been prepared, let alone signed. Also, the misinterpretation of the Sino-US agreement by some US politicians would not only threaten China's sovereign interests but also harm the overall interests of the American people.

As a matter of fact, some US politicians' position in this regard does not hold. The joint communiqué has two versions, one in English and the other in Chinese. Both versions are authentic and legally binding. Under the customary international law on treaty interpretation, when one version of a single treaty

allows two interpretations, the other version of the treaty must be referred to for ascertaining the true meaning of the treaty.

In the Chinese version of the above paragraph from the joint communiqué, the Chinese word *chengren* must be undisputedly interpreted as "recognition" in English. Therefore, the US commitment in this regard is clear: The government of the US recognizes the Chinese position that there is but one China and Taiwan is part of China.

And since the US recognizes the Chinese position, allowing Tsai Ing-wen to transit through the US is nothing but a violation of the joint communiqué and the one-China principle which the US has pledged to follow. The US government should stop such unlawful and provocative moves.

It should also be clear to the US that China, according to international law, is entitled to take countermeasures against such a violation. And the Chinese government is empowered by China's laws to take necessary measures, including imposing sanctions on the people responsible for such a violation.

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

Martin Sieff

US conjuring up suicidal dreams dangerous for Tsai

Not content enough with manipulating and pushing Ukraine into a conflict with Russia, the Joe Biden administration is now encouraging Taiwan leader Tsai Ing-wen to provoke the Chinese mainland, which could lead to ruinous and incalculable consequences for the island. And the US should know the Taiwan question is totally different from the Ukraine crisis.

Tsai has seen her popularity shrink significantly of late, and like so many other desperate and irresponsible politicians before her, she is now currying favor with the United States in an effort to regain her popularity and credibility at home.

Tsai's decision to transit through the US during her visit to Guatemala and Belize in Central America was obviously made with the encouragement of the Biden administration and the bipartisan crowd of armchair warrior heroes among the China hawks in the Congress. Pestered by all those irresponsible politicians to act "fake-tough" against China, the Biden administration has tried to play down China's grave concerns over the violation of the one-China principle by the US.

It is therefore time to reiterate that the US bipartisan policy for about half a century has been to recognize China's sovereignty over Taiwan. Any moves that encourage adventurous, demagogic politicians in Taiwan to attempt to violate the 1992 Consensus and proclaim "Taiwan independence" will never be accepted by Beijing.

Japan seized the island of Taiwan in 1895 and used it for the next half a century to plot and subvert political stability and peace on the mainland, including the genocidal military invasion that claimed more than 35 million lives. For a few decades after the end of World War II, successive US administrations cynically used Taiwan as "Airstrip One of the East" and a massive naval strategic base with which to threaten the mainland.

Tsai ought to know better than to take such grave gamblers' risks. After all, she has led the ruling Democratic Progressive Party for years and has been the island's leader since 2016.

However, Tsai's formative years and professional and intellectual influences reveal her to be a head-in-the-clouds legal theorist and Western moralizer who would greatly benefit from a crash course in Confucian ethics and political realism.

Tsai holds a master's degree and doctorate in Western law, a discipline which is remarkably effective in protecting its most passionate devotees from having to face the pressures of political and economic reality, not to mention security requirements in the practical and real world. She earned her master's degree from Cornell University Law School in the US and her PhD from the London School of Economics — ironically, my alma mater too — in the United Kingdom. But she never studied security policies, strategy, modern history and least of all diplomacy.

Any child should be able to see that China's national strength and global influence have been increasing, while the US has irresponsibly over-extended its global commitments to include interfering in other countries' internal affairs and is heavily burdened with serious social and economic problems at home. What the US needs, therefore, is to stop, at least for a decade, trying to moralize and impose its own fantasies and so-called solutions on the rest of the world and instead attend to its own domestic issues without blaming other countries for them.

For Tsai to persuade a militarily over-extended, cash-strapped and domestically-divided US to make the unprecedented commitment to support a Taiwan she is trying to propel toward "independence" is not only dangerous but also irresponsible, for it could harm people both in the US and on the island. It's another matter that a rising, confident and powerful mainland will never tolerate such a coup de main.

The American people rightly see no reason to fight a perilous, expensive war against a thermo-nuclear power halfway around the world over an issue in which no primary US national interest is even remotely at stake.

Washington should stop playing with fire by interfering in China's domestic affair, which is exactly what the Taiwan question is, in order to divert the American public's attention from the real problems faced by the US. Washington's moves to worsen the Ukraine crisis has proven to be catastrophic for the Ukrainian people, and has put the US at direct loggerheads with Russia. The last thing any responsible US leader ought to risk is encouraging Tsai to go charging down the same appalling road to self-destruction.

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



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Liu Qiang

Washington a peace-breaker across the Straits

At a time when the problems facing the world are becoming acuter, Sino-US relations are also becoming increasingly tense, because the United States has been repeatedly violating the one-China principle. The US' moves have poisoned cross-Straits relations, and they include allowing Taiwan leader Tsai Ing-wen to transit through the US en route to Guatemala and Belize in Central America and House of Representatives Speaker Kevin McCarthy.

By allowing Tsai to transit through the US, not once but twice, Washington is actually backing "Taiwan pro-independence" forces on the island. Worse, the US has tried to play down Beijing's serious concerns as overreaction and twisted them to claim Beijing is preparing to forcibly reunify Taiwan with the Chinese mainland.

First, it is clear the US is a troublemaker and has been interfering in the Taiwan question, which is China's internal affair. The fact is that Taiwan is an integral part of China and reunification has been the common goal of both sides of the Taiwan Straits since the War of Liberation (1946-49).

Although the US is well aware of this historical background, it has been supporting the pro-independence forces on the island and using Taiwan as a strate-

gic chip to poison cross-Straits relations. The Taiwan question is central to the Chinese nation. The bond between the two sides of the Straits is so strong that a Taiwan leader passing through another country becomes an extremely sensitive political and diplomatic issue.

Tsai's stopovers in the US are an excuse that Washington is using to cover up the essence of Tsai's political show — to gain support for pro-independence forces. Understating the provocative action as "the latest in a series of routine 'transits'" is a smokescreen Washington is using to heighten tensions across the Straits, which has also worsened Sino-US ties.

Second, the US is a peace-breaker in the Taiwan question. In recent years, the pro-independence forces on the island have become more vocal thanks to US support.

The US has gone back on its promise to adhere to the one-China principle that there is but one China and Taiwan is an integral part of China.

As for the Joe Biden administration, it has repeatedly stressed that it does not support "Taiwan independence". But its actions belie its words, as the US Congress has passed several Taiwan-related acts, increased US-Taiwan exchanges, allowed US officials to interact directly with Taiwan officials.

More important, the US has been sell-



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ing increasing amounts of advanced weapons to Taiwan, and has even talked about helping Taiwan defend itself against the mainland. Tsai seeks to split the country by getting US support, which is exactly what her "stopovers" are aimed at achieving. And by arranging her transits through the US, Washington is trying to hollow out the one-China principle.

Third, the US is a thief crying "catch the thief". Accusing Beijing of overreacting to the transits of high-level Taiwan officials through the US, the Biden administration has said "Tsai's stopovers are in keeping with past precedent" and asked Beijing not to use them as a pretext to step up activities across the Straits.

A two- or three-day stay in Los Angeles is far beyond a "transit", not to mention that Tsai is also scheduled to meet with House Speaker McCarthy. People are questioning why the US arranged the "transits" but the administration insists

they are "nothing new" and instead claiming that Beijing poses a risk to the region.

Maintaining its global hegemony is the only reason the US is doing so. The US should be held responsible for any break in peace across the Straits. From the strategic point of view, the US uses the "Taiwan card" to raise tensions across the Straits, in order to force the mainland to deplete its resources in restoring normalcy.

And once that happens, Washington can bargain with Beijing using the "Taiwan card" again.

The US should stop playing the "Taiwan card". It has already breached many of its commitments using innumerable excuses. No matter how desperately the US tries, it cannot cover up its real motives. It has been damaging the foundation of Sino-US relations by backing "Taiwan independence". And it should be held accountable for all the consequences.

The US always accuses other countries of breaking the rules. But the US itself does not follow any international rules or laws. It's high time the US stopped interfering in the Taiwan question and returned to the right track of the one-China principle.

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GLOBAL VIEWS



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

DARYL GUPPY

A personal tribute

The BRI has touched our lives over the past 10 years and its sound policy structure means it will continue to touch lives for at least the next decade

Over the past 10 years, the Belt and Road Initiative has become an important driving force for global economic trade and investment cooperation through concerted efforts and concrete actions. It is a program of vital global significance.

I have personally witnessed the development in countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative. I stood on the hard-stand foundations of the China-Laos Railway station at Mohan. I watched the tunnel for a high speed rail line emerge from a mountainside in Yunnan province. I discussed the preservation of cultural artifacts in Dunhuang, Gansu province, and the way the Belt and Road Initiative cooperation could stop the illegal trade in antiques.

My personal touch-points of the initiative are just small examples of the wider achievements and milestones that reflect the four major dimensions of the Belt and Road Initiative. Over the past decade there have been some modifications to the initiative, priorities have been adjusted in response to developing circumstances, but the four policy dimensions of the initiative have remained intact and have stood the test of time.

The first and most obvious dimension of the Belt and Road Initiative is physical infrastructure, as this facilitates the growth of trade. High-speed rail connections are a key component because they have opened up new areas in Asia and Central Asia. The rail-sea transportation route from Xi'an, Shaanxi province, to Germany, which is 11,300 kilometers long, traverses Central Asia, the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea and can transport 6.6 million metric tonnes of cargo annually. The Laos-China Railway constructed under a Belt and Road program carries more than 11.2 million tons of goods annually.

The thousands of kilometers of better roads and bridges are essential to trade development. They provide the physical framework that enables previously trade-deprived areas to enter the global marketplace. Land-locked Central Asia now has increasingly reliable trade transport and access. This engagement is a foundation of prosperity and the Belt and Road Initiative reaches out to tackle the massive infrastructure deficit that hinders the global economy.

Western commentary has an almost exclusive focus on the infrastructure scale and fails to under-

stand the broader benefits of the Belt and Road Initiative.

The second dimension is trade infrastructure and this is perhaps more important than roads and bridges. This includes the removal of trade barriers and standardization of trade regulation. China's participation in agreements such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership is consistent with the philosophical objectives of the Belt and Road Initiative, which supports the Global Development Initiative.

Trade settlement processes are essential enablers of trade. China leads the way in many areas, such as the use of blockchain customs clearance based on digital certificates. The Guiyang Free Trade Zone continues to do good work in developing blockchain solutions for cross-border e-commerce. China's support for the World Trade Organization as the primary mechanism for resolving trade disputes is consistent and compatible with the inclusive nature of the Belt and Road Initiative.

The third dimension is the essential soft infrastructure because it deals with payment systems and protocols. This is an essential ecosystem that includes a broader application of blockchain certification not just for payments, but also in fighting product substitution.

Countries within the Belt and Road Initiative participate in a harmonized set of trade and trade settlement standards that will make cross-border trade more efficient. Physical infrastructure, such as the Laos-China Railway, is a foundation but its true economic benefit is enabled by the common software infrastructure adopted by participants in the initiative.

International standards serve as soft infrastructure. A universally accepted USB plug design is just as vital to modern commerce as a new bridge. This is where the Belt and Road Initiative has delivered a lasting impact. The return on investment for a bridge is less important in the long term than the adoption of the standards on everything from construction to finance, from cross-border e-commerce transaction to data management.

When the initiative builds high-speed rail links, it also exports key technical standards for this type of construction. Countries tend to voluntarily adopt these standards and it becomes soft infrastructure that underpins the operation of the digital economy.

The final dimension of the Belt and Road Initiative is capital infrastructure. Currency integration is a precursor to the growth of China's capital markets. The steady progress in the opening of the capital account, debt markets and the liberalization of investment conditions are part of this process. More recently this has included the application of China's digital currency which prevents trade being held hostage to the US dominated Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication currency transfer system.

Foreign commodity companies are using China's digital currency to speed up trade settlement time, reduce exposure to currency and counterparty risks. Settlement is now measured in hours rather than multiple business days.

At its core, the Belt and Road Initiative is based on the concepts of a shared prosperity that recognizes and accepts the diversity of political structures.

The broad and widespread impact of policies on cross-border trade, e-commerce, operational systems, regulatory structures and trade relationships has encouraged countries to create a role for themselves within the Belt and Road Initiative discussions. At times business organizations such as the Silk Road Chambers of International Commerce and others have led the way for political and business leaders to lift the China relationship to a more sophisticated level.

It's easy to be overwhelmed by the grand achievements of the Belt and Road Initiative, but for me the 10-year celebration is more personal. The engineering achievements of tunnels and bridges are an impressive sight, but so too is the simple WePay transaction made from a foreign country that we take for granted because it rests on a digital economy that is equally a part of the benefits of the Belt and Road Initiative. The initiative has touched our daily living over the past 10 years and its sound policy structure means it will continue to touch lives for at least the next decade.

The author is an international financial technical analyst and a former national board member of the Australia China Business Council. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CHEANG VANNARITH

Fully tapping potential of RCEP

Cambodia and China should increase cooperation through SMEs to fully reap the benefits of the trade pact

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership is a catalyst of regional economic growth, integration and connectivity in the Asia Pacific, accounting for about 30 percent of global GDP and one-third of the world's population.

The RCEP, the world's largest free trade agreement, is a modern, comprehensive, high-quality and mutually beneficial economic partnership that facilitates the expansion of regional trade and investment and significantly contributes to global economic growth and development, especially in the face of the difficult post-COVID-19 socio-economic recovery.

The Asian Development Bank's study found that the RCEP will increase member economies' incomes by 0.6 percent by 2030, adding \$245 billion annually to regional income and 2.8 million jobs to regional employment.

The RCEP covers trade in goods, trade in services, investment, economic and technical cooperation, and creates new rules for electronic commerce, intellectual property, government procurement, competition, and small- and medium-sized enterprises.

Cambodia-China economic ties have gained new momentum after the coming into force of the Cambodia-China Free Trade Agreement and the RCEP in January 2022.

China is Cambodia's largest foreign investor, with non-financial direct investment reaching \$690 million in the first 11 months of 2022, a year-on-year rise of 32.7 percent. China is also Cambodia's largest trading partner. Bilateral trade volume hit about \$14.5 billion in 2022, a year-on-year increase of 19 percent.

In the joint statement released after the visit of Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen to China in February, both sides agreed to enhance customs inspection and quarantine cooperation and further promote imports of high-quality agricultural products from Cambodia and continue to advance "Single Window" interconnection to facilitate trade flow.

By making full use of the RCEP and the CCFTA and international

platforms such as the China International Import Expo, the China Import and Export Fair, and the China-ASEAN Expo, Cambodia can enhance its competitiveness and popularity of its products in China.

Localities in both countries can also play their respective roles to take advantage of the existing bilateral and regional trading arrangements and platforms to enhance practical economic cooperation, especially the trade in goods and services and digital trade.

The RCEP offers both sides huge potential to cooperate and optimize benefits.

According to a study by the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia in October 2022, there is a huge export potential for the Kingdom. The report shows that Cambodia's GDP could rise by around 2 to 3.8 percent, and exports between 9.4 and 18 percent. A 9.4 percent increase in exports could have an annual growth impact of 2 percent on the baseline growth rate and a 3.2 percent increase in employment. The higher impact of an 18 percent increase in exports can translate into a 3.8 percent GDP increase and a 6.2 percent increase in employment. Job opportunities would increase by 3.2 to 6.2 percent annually, and tax revenue by 2 to 3.9 percent, while the overall investment could increase by around 23.4 percent.

The RCEP also provides a platform and framework for parties to undertake economic cooperation programs and activities that

can enhance the capability of SMEs to benefit from the opportunities arising from their integration in the regional and global supply chains.

In this connection, China and Cambodia should deepen their cooperation on SMEs. It is important to create an environment where businesses can operate with less bureaucratic bottlenecks. In this context, e-government platforms such as online business registration, licensing and taxation have provided continuity, accessibility and reduced transaction costs.

The issue of taxation is of tremendous importance for small businesses. In this regard, tax incentives and tax simplification can enable SMEs to grow their operations until they reach a certain level of sustainability.

Going forward, China and Cambodia should develop concrete cooperation to help Cambodia enhance its production capacity, competitiveness and export capacity, especially supporting SMEs to fully reap the benefits stemming from the RCEP.

First, the two countries should exchange best practices on how to improve SMEs' access to markets and participation in global value chains, by promoting and facilitating partnerships among businesses.

Second, China and Cambodia should promote the use of e-commerce by SMEs and enhance the digital capacity of SMEs.

Third, the two sides should strengthen the entrepreneurship and innovation capacity of SMEs, including the application of latest technologies.

Fourth, China and Cambodia should promote awareness, understanding and effective use of the IP system among SMEs.

Fifth, they should promote good regulatory practices and build capacity in formulating regulations, policies and programs that contribute to SME development.

The author is president of the Asian Vision Institute, an independent think tank based in Phnom Penh. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



SHI YUMENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

LIFE



An exhibition in Beijing shows illustrations for Duzhe magazine throughout years, including (from left) *Before Launch*, by Wang Qing, *All People Living in the World*, by Li Min, and *Beginning*, by Leng Bingchuan. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Magazine for keeps

Exhibition illustrates Duzhe's world of literature and art over the decades, **Lin Qi** reports.

Since it was first published in 1981, the magazine Duzhe (Readers) has been many people's daily reading. Its condensed articles cover a wide range of areas of knowledge and topics, widening readers' vision of the world while becoming one of the most popular magazines in the country.

The bi-monthly magazine introduces people to literary beauty and the depth of thought. The magazine also serves as a platform where artists are able to showcase their gift by creating related illustrations. More than 300 artists have illustrated over 20,000 works to add artistic glamor to the magazine's 780 issues over four decades, according to its publisher, Duzhe Publishing and Media Co, which is based in Lanzhou, Gansu province.

Now, an exhibition is putting the spotlight on how illustrations have given added meaning to the magazine by showing some 250 such works that have been featured in it. *Duzhe Illustration Art Works Touring Exhibition* is running at the Beijing Fine Art Academy through April 9, as the first stop of a national tour. It shows the magazine's art and editorial elements, and the advancement of illustrations in the course of the country's reform and opening-up.

Works on show come with small boards on which original pages provide the text — short stories, essays, poems and critiques — and the illustrations, enabling the audience to sense the chemistry between words and images. It shows how far and wide the editors at Duzhe have reached, along with artists across the country.

Li Xiaolin, a professor of printmaking at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, is among those whose gift was spotted by the magazine.



Li took up illustration classes while pursuing a master's degree at the CAFA. His works were included in a book of his teacher's, and caught the attention of Duzhe's editors who contacted him.

"Then I began to receive commissions from the magazine. I have made nearly 2,000 paintings for it over the past 25 years," says Li, whose works are on show.

He says artists enjoy freedom when creating for the magazine.

"It is not a must that we illustrate precisely what the content is about. We are not to explain, but to visualize the atmosphere being delivered, and to extend the implications. This is especially true with essays and poetry," he says.

Li says earlier he sometimes had to have his job done in one or two days, and mail his work by postage service when the computer was still a luxury item to most people, but these days, all he needs to do is simply take a shot of his work with a mobile phone, his "reliable assist-



Top: An illustration by Qiu Jiong to go with an article talking about figures of versatility in Chinese history. Above: The inaugural edition of Duzhe magazine, in 1981.

ant", and send the picture to the magazine's editors.

He says the long-term collaboration between the magazine and its contributors, based on mutual trust, is evident at the exhibition, which covers a variety of styles and approaches of expression.

"People can see works that are realistic and abstract, colorful and in black and white. Aesthetically, the quality is steady, which is one of the reasons why the magazine has been successful."

A number of illustrations have been provided by professional artists like Li, while there are also amateurs whose creativity and imagination became known to people through their work for the magazine.

An issue, dated October 2007, published an essay and a drawing by Wei Erqiao, a cardiologist at the school hospital of Harbin Institute of Technology in Heilongjiang province, who died of lung cancer two months earlier, at age 43. Between

the lines, Wei narrated the changes in his feelings for life, art and belief after being diagnosed with the disease. The late doctor liked drawing since childhood, and developed a habit of painting on prescription pads during night shifts. His works look simple but are humorous and insightful. He drew over 7,000 illustrations, including several for Duzhe that are also on show.

The works of Qiu Jiong, who graduated in physics from Nanjing University and now works as a comic and illustration artist, was inspired by *Han Xizai Gives a Night Banquet*, a master scroll painting made more than 1,000 years ago. Qiu has reenacted the banquet scene — showing the host, guests and performers — to go with an article on versatile figures in Chinese history.

Qiu says he likes to draw "embarrassing moments" in real life, or scenes in which he would put together figures from different periods of time and generate dramatic tension. He says he hopes to evoke shared feelings in the audience and engage in a mind-opening journey.

Liang Xiaosheng, the noted author and a regular contributor to Duzhe, attended the exhibition opening on March 16, and said he came to see the works of his favorite artists. He said the birth of the magazine was out of a wish to enrich the cultural life and spiritual world of young people in Lanzhou, and was "a miracle", as it is based in deep northwest, and not in Beijing or Shanghai.

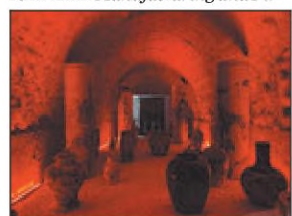
"I began to read Duzhe in my 40s, and now, in my 70s, I am still reading it. I have kept dozens of issues of it at home," he says. "I'm getting old, and still a faithful reader."

Contact the writer at linqi@chinadaily.com.cn

what's on

Reborn in flames

Tang Ying, the supervisor of imperial ceramic kilns under the reign of Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), said it was the burning fire that turned clay into porcelain ware. The kiln is where the clay, glaze and color pigments transformed clay into beautiful items. A variety of porcelain items, featuring diverse patterns and colored glazes — famed in Chinese art history — were a result of consistent experiments of artisans working at such kilns. *Manufacturing and Fir-*



ing, a long-term exhibition at the Chinese Traditional Culture Museum, showcases the diligence and creativity of those that contributed to ceramic-making in Jingdezhen, hailed as the country's time-honored "porcelain capital" in Jiangxi province. It shows over 100 objects fired at the kilns, some of which were created in old classical styles and others in modern types. For ceramic lovers, knowing how a kiln works is the first step in a journey to truly understand the brilliance of Chinese ceramic art and the hard work behind it throughout centuries. *9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 16 Hujing East Road, Chaoyang district, Beijing. 010-8799-1866.*

Messages on rocks

People in the prehistoric era carved pictographs on cliffs and rocks to record what they saw and how they



lived. Such hieroglyphs, known as cliff paintings and carvings, have been found in abundance in the Ningxia Hui autonomous region in Northwest China. The mysterious pictorial recordings, before the invention of writing, form an encyclopedia for the studies of many aspects of prehistoric communities. An exhibition now on at Wuxi Museum in the city in Jiangsu

province, provides a glimpse of this chapter of primitive art. It shows rubbings of cliff paintings, dating to different periods of time, from the collection of Ningxia Museum. Images on show include human figures and faces, hunting scenes, animals, hand impressions, symbols and other categories of rock art. In between the lines and patterns, a viewer can sense the creators' urge to make their presence felt in the world. The exhibition ends on June 13. *9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 100 Zhongshu Road, Wuxi, Jiangsu province. 0510-8572-7500.*

Magnificent work

From the depiction of middle-class family life that Adriano Cecioni (1838-86) hinted at in his work to a sunny view of the Place Saint-Michel public square in Paris painted by Jean-Francois Raffaelli (1850-

1924) to demonstrate his renewed interest in the city's landscapes; from a portrait made by Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920) of his agent's wife that represents a pinnacle of the artist's short-lived life to an etching of the Minotaur by Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), commissioned by the leading art dealer Ambroise Vollard, representations of modernism evolved over a span of 150 years. The styles these figures heralded and their spirit to reform and embrace changes, covering the period from the mid-19th century to the 1970s, are given a vivid portrayal at *Magnificence*, an exhibition at the Sky Museum in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, through June 25. The show features luminaries of modern art, including Vincent van Gogh (1853-90), Henri Matisse (1869-1954) and Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), to name a few. The works are from the collection of the National Gallery of Modern and



Contemporary Art in Rome. *10 am-8 pm, Tuesday to Thursday, Sunday; 10 am-9 pm, Friday and Saturday. Shenzhen Media Group Tower, Futian district, Shenzhen, Guangdong province.*

LIFE

Fighting spirit pays off

Young Cameroon student initially attracted by martial arts hits the high notes in Yuju Opera. **Chen Nan** and **Shi Baoyin** report in Zhengzhou.

As a child, Sime Nkemeni Darrin, who was born and raised in Bafang, a small town in Cameroon, was fascinated by Chinese martial arts. He dreamed about learning the discipline and visiting China one day.

In 2016, Darrin, who was a student majoring in material science at the University of Yaounde I, in Yaounde, the capital of Cameroon, started to learn Chinese at the Confucius Institute of the University of Yaounde II. Aside from martial arts, he got to know about the country through photos and videos.

After a year of learning Chinese, Darrin arrived in Kaifeng, Henan province, as a language student at Henan University.

The reason why Darrin chose to apply to Henan University was that the renowned Shaolin Temple, which is widely known for its expertise in martial arts, is located in Henan. Soon after he arrived in Kaifeng, he traveled to the temple.

"When I saw the kung fu masters practice, it was like a dream come true. I was told that martial arts is more than the powerful movements, like self-defense, it is about a way of life, which is full of Chinese philosophy," says Darrin.

Of all the different types of Chinese martial arts, Darrin has been focused on learning and practicing tai chi, which is known for its fluid combination of slow, graceful movements and lightning-quick strikes.

Since 2017, Darrin has participated in martial arts competitions, especially for tai chi, and won a number of awards. He

“When I saw the kung fu masters practice, it was like a dream come true. ... Tai chi helps me gain my balance, physically and mentally.”

Sime Nkemeni Darrin, doctoral candidate at Henan University's School of Physical Education and Sport

says that tai chi helps him become strong, healthy, stay in good shape and develop excellent concentration.

"Tai chi helps me gain my balance, physically and mentally," he says. "It changed me."

Now, Darrin is pursuing a doctoral degree at Henan University's School of Physical Education and Sport.

Besides tai chi, Darrin also learned to perform Yuju Opera, a popular local art form, which also has a large national fan base.

Yuju Opera, which originated and thrived in Central China's Henan, is among the top five traditional opera genres in China. With a history dating back to the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), Yuju Opera is known for its melodic singing, dazzling martial arts movements and stories, which are based on folk tales, especially those about brave heroes who are loyal, honest and patriotic.

In 2017, Darrin watched a Yuju Opera performance, *Hua Mulan*, for the first time after arriving in Kaifeng. The show tells the story of legendary heroine, Hua Mulan, who, when her aging father is called up to serve in the army, disguises herself as a man to fight for the country in his place.

"The story is full of drama. The singing of the performers and the live band were full of energy," recalls Darrin, who later studied Yuju Opera with veteran artist Li Shujian. The classic piece was premiered



Top: Sime Nkemeni Darrin performs an excerpt of the Yuju Opera *Chaoyang Gou* (Chaoyang village) during a cultural festival at Henan University in 2019. **Above:** Darrin poses with his teacher, Yuju Opera artist Li Shujian, after he performed on the popular TV show *Li Yuan Chun* at Henan TV in 2019. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

In 2017, Darrin watched a Yuju Opera performance, *Hua Mulan*, for the first time after arriving in Kaifeng. The show tells the story of legendary heroine, Hua Mulan, who, when her aging father is called up to serve in the army, disguises herself as a man to fight for the country in his place.

"The story is full of drama. The singing of the performers and the live band were full of energy," recalls Darrin, who later studied Yuju Opera with veteran artist Li Shujian. The classic piece was premiered

in 1950 by famous Yuju Opera master Chang Xiangyu (1923-2004). It's one of the most well-known and popular Yuju Opera pieces among Chinese audiences. One of the verses — which asks: "Who says women are not as capable as men?" — has been loved and learned by lots of Chinese over the years. It is also Darrin's favorite line from the piece.

Li, director of Henan Yuju Opera Theater, performed for more than four decades. He is known for playing heroes, from generals bat-

ting for the country, to noble-hearted intellectuals. One of his most well-known roles is Cheng Ying of *The Orphan of Zhao*, which is based on the classic tragedy by Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) playwright Ji Junxiang.

"I have more than 200 students, professional Yuju Opera performers and amateurs. He (Darrin) is one of the few overseas students who have been learning Yuju Opera with me, and he has been doing so for about five years," says Li, who is credited with expanding the fan base of the ancient art form through online performances during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Since Yuju Opera is performed in the Henan dialect, he had to learn the dialect first. He learned and practiced very hard," says Li.

In 2019, Darrin performed Yuju Opera on the popular TV show, *Li Yuan Chun*, produced and broadcast by Henan TV, which premiered in 1994 and highlights traditional Chinese operas.

Under his Chinese name, Liu Bianjing, Darrin won second place in one of the TV show's sections, which saw a number of amateur Yuju Opera performers compete. Darrin notes that Kaifeng was formerly known as Bianjing in ancient China. He calls himself Bianjing to express his love for the city.

It's been about five years since Darrin left his home country, and he has been showing his family, through video calls, his life in China and two of his favorite things he has learned: tai chi and Yuju Opera.

"When I perform Yuju Opera for my family through video calls, they don't know what I am singing at all, but they find it very interesting. They are happy that I'm doing what I love in China," says Darrin, who plans to go back home this year.

"I have made lots of friends here and I am considering living and working in China after graduation," he adds.

Contact the writers at chennan@chinadaily.com.cn

'Water tower' guards health of rivers

XINING — Sitting at his computer, Kunlek Namgyal can monitor the water ecology status of key areas, such as the Sanjiangyuan area, in real time through a video system with just a click of the mouse.

The Sanjiangyuan area, known as China's "water tower", contains the headwaters of the Yangtze, Yellow and Lancang rivers. In recent years, Yushu Tibetan autonomous prefecture in Northwest China's Qinghai province, which administers a part of the area, has been strengthening the protection of water resources through scientific and technological means.

Kunlek Namgyal, 26, is from Yushu's Zadui county, located at the source of the Lancang River. Having grown up by the water and now in charge of managing the video monitoring system, he has developed a deep appreciation for the ecological changes taking place in the area.

“The computerized system ... makes the ecological protection in this area more convenient and efficient.”

Kunlek Namgyal, water resources remote monitor for the Sanjiangyuan area

"Due to its vast territory and inconvenient transportation, the ecological monitoring and protection of Sanjiangyuan have always relied on field patrols by people, which has problems, such as slow response, lengthy time frames, high cost and limited coverage," says Kunlek Namgyal. "The computerized system solves these problems well and makes the ecological protection in this area more convenient and efficient."

The development of the video monitoring system in Yushu began in 2019. The system consists of high-altitude observation video cameras at multiple vantage points, a real-time transmission network and a management and control platform, forming an important part of the ecological monitoring network in the Sanjiangyuan area.

Because there is no network signal and power grid coverage in many parts of the Sanjiangyuan area, the construction of some observation stations requires dedicated lines, which is difficult and expensive. So far, more than 11 million yuan (\$1.6 million) has been invested in the system.

An integrated ecological environment monitoring network has been developed in Yushu, says Zhang Bo, deputy director of the ecological environment bureau of the prefecture.

The monitoring network has three tasks: obtaining the overall trend of change in the regional ecological environment through remote sensing satellites, using unmanned aerial vehicles and other small aircraft to realize regional environmental observation, and reflecting the ecological environment quality through ground observation stations.

"The completion and operation of the platform have effectively supported the supervision of the nature reserves and the monitoring of the diversity of species to help protect the water ecology in the source area," Zhang says.

On average, Yushu provides approximately 29.7 billion cubic meters of clean water annually to downstream regions.

Eurasian otters, which have high requirements for water quality, are also frequently spotted in Yushu's urban rivers.



Left: Darrin works as a volunteer for a charity group in Kaifeng, Henan province. **Right:** He plays football with his schoolmates at Henan University. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Passion burns strong for unique HK porcelain

HONG KONG — Yuet Tung China Works, located in Kowloon Bay, Hong Kong, has been crafting porcelain pieces for nearly a century.

As visitors step inside the factory, they are greeted by the exquisite and unique Cantonese-style porcelain pieces that adorn the walls and shelves. Artisans can be seen painting or coloring on porcelain items, their hands steady and eyes focused.

The factory's collection ranges from designs featuring the Grand View Garden in *A Dream of Red Mansions* to modern Hong Kong landmarks, each a testament to the artisans' exceptional craftsmanship and dedication to their work.

At Art Central 2023, an annual international art fair in Hong Kong, the factory's collection of Guangcai porcelain drew much attention. Joseph Tso, the third-generation successor of the factory, takes great pride in the skills of Guangcai.

This traditional craft, born more than 300 years ago, involves painting and firing various colored paints on white porcelain vessels. The pigment is delicately applied onto the porcelain body, imbuing it with subdued tones and a matte finish. After being fired at a scorching 800 C, the pigment is transformed into a permanent, vitrified state, revealing a stunningly trans-

parent and smooth porcelain masterpiece that is a feast for the eyes.

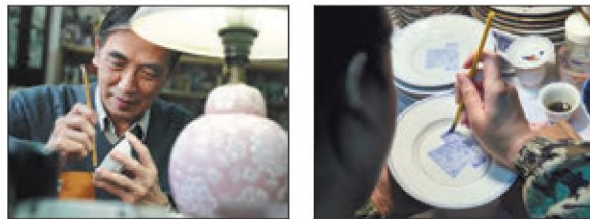
"Becoming a Guangcai painter requires at least three years of apprenticeship," Tso says. According to him, the most crucial aspect of Guangcai is the composition of the image and the freehand drawing of lines. Aspiring artists must first learn to draw lines before being able to create more complex designs.

Using a box to support their hands, painters deftly wield a brush in one hand and a porcelain dish in the other, creating perfect circles like the smooth movement of a needle on a record player.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the ceramics factory flourished, with approximately 300 painters hand-crafting and painting the delicate porcelain pieces.

Back then, the shop's products were mainly sold to Europe, America and Japan. Surging demand, however, also revealed problems: the hand-painted process was time-consuming and costly, and the plant had to cope with a shortage of skilled artisans.

Tso's father came up with the idea to introduce customized products through a "half painting, half filling" approach. The hand-drawn pattern is first screen-printed onto transfer paper, and then transferred onto the white porcelain for



Clockwise from top: Joseph Tso and his wife Ruby Tso at their factory, Yuet Tung China Works; a worker paints a pattern on a Cantonese-style porcelain plate; Joseph Tso decorates a porcelain item. PHOTOS BY LYU XIAOWEI / XINHUA

firing. This process enhances production efficiency and streamlines the manufacturing process.

On its social media pages, Yuet

Tung describes itself as Hong Kong's first, and last hand-painted porcelain factory. Similar to some traditional crafts, Guangcai porce-

lain in Hong Kong faces the challenge of passing down its techniques and knowledge to future generations.

"Times change, and we must adapt in order to persevere," says Tso, who introduced new designs to the porcelain products after taking charge of Yuet Tung's business in the 1970s.

No matter how much the company adjusts, Chinese traditional elements have always been the core of its products.

"As a Chinese, I am very proud that we have such a rich cultural heritage," says Ruby Tso, the wife of Joseph Tso. She believes that Guangcai porcelain is one of the industrial gems of China, and they have a responsibility to let more people know that this craftsmanship is well protected in Hong Kong.

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of young apprentices who have come to the Yuet Tung China Works to learn the craft.

"In the past three years, we have had approximately 2,000 students participating in our classes," says Ruby Tso. "We will persist in running our business and helping Guangcai to continue to shine in Hong Kong."

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SPORTS

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CITY'S TOUR
DE FORCEPremier League champion treats
Chinese fans to trophy celebrations

Manchester City legend Paul Dickov poses beside the English Premier League trophy at the Great Wall in Beijing last Monday. The visit was part of the club's trophy tour to celebrate last season's title triumph. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By JAMES BOYLAN
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When one of the most coveted trophies in world soccer comes to town, only the very best will do.

To celebrate its 2021/22 English Premier League title, Manchester City took the trophy on tour in China last week, visiting some of the nation's most iconic landmarks, including the Great Wall near Beijing and Yuyuan Garden in Shanghai.

City Football Group China CEO Scott Munn revealed the VIP treatment, which is required under Premier League rules, even extended to allocating the trophy its own first-class seat on a high-speed train.

"This is the original not a replica, so it travels with two full-time security guards. It's never allowed to be out of their presence. It had its own seat on the plane, and in China it travels on the train," Munn told China Daily.

"It's fantastic for the club to be back for the first time since 2019," he added. "It's a chance to reengage with our fan base here after three years."

"For us, the timing was perfect. China is one of the key markets for Man City. We're delighted that everything opened up in February and we were able to plan it."

As well as catching a glimpse of the silverware, fans also had the chance to win prizes "that money can't buy," such as signed shirts, Munn explained.

Last week's festivities were part of a global tour to celebrate City's dramatic title triumph.

In a nail-biting final-day finish last May, Pep Guardiola's men found themselves 2-0 down to Aston Villa with just 15 minutes left on the clock to leave Liverpool on the brink of glory. However, in scenes reminiscent of Sergio Aguero's last-gasp heroics in 2012, City summoned all its class and resilience to win 3-2 and claim its fourth title in five years.

With pandemic restrictions relaxed, City wasted no time in organizing the Chinese leg of the trophy tour, taking club legend Paul Dickov along on ambassadorial duties and placing a special emphasis on grassroots engagement.

"The trophy is a real sort of surprise and delight for everybody, whether it's a visit to a school or a college, or like this morning when we did an activity with the Special Olympics," Munn said. "It's just amazing to see young boys and girls with smiles on their faces, or kicking a ball with Paul with the trophy there. It's pretty amazing."

City prides itself on going the extra mile for the Chinese market,



"This is our third trophy tour and hopefully soon we'll have the team back and playing football here again ... Chinese fans absolutely love winners. And for sure, we've been one of the most successful Premier League teams of the last 10 years, and that has correlated to a significant spike in interest in China."

Scott Munn,
City Football Group China CEO

with analytics company Nielsen totaling the club's match-watching, merchandise-buying fan base at around 46 million.

"We have 21 official supporter groups across China, so we had the Beijing group visit us on the weekend. And then we had the Shanghai group coming to a live screening of the match against Liverpool on Saturday. So that's certainly something that you love to see, when you get to see the fans in person," Munn said.

"And then there were other traditional activities, like we did a Chinese paper-cutting experience. So just being able to immerse yourself in some of those traditional Chinese activities, but also have the people that are involved with this there is great and have the trophy up close and Paul there as well."

Innovative approach
With all of Europe's elite soccer



Paul Dickov experiences Chinese paper-cutting as part of the club's trophy tour in Beijing last Tuesday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Manchester City fans cheer on their team in Shanghai on Saturday as they enjoy City's 4-1 rout of Liverpool. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

clubs vying for China's attention, City is keen to stand out from the crowd, especially on social media where it has 10 million followers across multiple channels. That portfolio will soon also include the Red platform.

"I think one of the things that we've done completely differently to everyone else is when we first established our office here (in Shanghai), we created our own digital content team, so all the content we made is done here locally," said Munn.

"We have a full-time Chinese staff member in Manchester, but all that content is bespoke for the market. And for us, we think that's a real point of difference."

"So this is not just taking some footage from the UK and putting subtitles on it. This is actually having our staff tailor it — whether it's an interview from Manchester in

Mandarin, or whether it's actually producing it here and then putting it out in Mandarin — it's a real advantage."

That attention to detail extends to City's merchandise operation, with the club's recent limited-edition Chinese New Year shirt, produced by Puma, selling out globally.

"We've learned that there really is an opportunity for us to develop niche products. And already we're starting to plan next year for the Year of the Dragon with some pretty unique items. It's not just shirt sales, but across all of our business," said Munn, who added that the club is also working on plans for its star-studded team to return to China.

"The team has been here twice in the last eight years. This is our third trophy tour and hopefully soon we'll have the team back and playing football here again," he said.

The Haaland factor

Boosting City's popularity in China this season has been the addition of superstar striker Erling Haaland, who has already netted 42 goals across all competitions this term.

Munn reckons Haaland fits perfectly with City's reputation for innovation and excellence — and that's something that Chinese fans identify strongly with.

"Chinese fans absolutely love winners. And for sure, we've been one of the most successful Premier League teams of the last 10 years, and that has correlated to a significant spike in interest in China and probably disproportionately to the rest of the world," he said.

"Secondly, Chinese fans love a superstar. The one thing that Erling Haaland brings is absolute superstar quality. So we see that both in shirt sales and in the printing of his name and number on the back of shirts, but also in the engagement."

With Haaland helping to spearhead City's hunt for Premier League, FA Cup and Champions League honors, fans can surely expect more trophy tours to be on the way.

And Munn believes securing an elusive European title could be a real game-changer for the club's ambitions in China.

"There's no question that a Champions League result would be phenomenal in this market. And we've seen historically the impact it can have, but we are also realistic. It's an incredibly difficult competition, and we'll give it everything we can," he said. "And certainly we'll be ready, if we do have success, to maximize that on and off the pitch here in China. That will be a clear focus."

Guardiola's
men keep
pressure on
Gunners

No Erling Haaland, no problem for Manchester City.

Even without the Premier League's leading scorer, Pep Guardiola's team came from behind to rout Liverpool 4-1 on Saturday and stay in pursuit of first-place Arsenal.

Haaland, who has scored 42 goals in all competitions this season, was ruled out of the game at Etihad Stadium after failing to recover from a groin injury.

But even after falling behind to a strike from Mo Salah, City powered back with goals from Julian Alvarez, Kevin De Bruyne, Ilkay Gundogan and Jack Grealish to keep the pressure on Arsenal and deliver another blow to Liverpool's Champions League qualification hopes.

"Nothing changed," Guardiola said after his 100th win at Etihad with City. "The quality, the football tactics, the players, and when we have Erling we have something special, and Julian (Alvarez) is something special too."

"He was so clever with the ball, he's an exceptional player. The club made an exceptional signing with him — he's a world champion alongside Lionel Messi because he has something."

City's dominance was so complete that by the end Jurgen Klopp said the result could have been even worse for his team.

"We just had to follow as they did whatever they wanted," the Liverpool manager said. "We were lucky they weren't in a greedy mood."

The game represented one of the biggest remaining tests in City's league campaign and defeat would have allowed Arsenal, which beat Leeds 4-1 later in the day, the chance to extend its lead at the top to 11 points.

That looked like a real possibility when Liverpool scored against the run of play early on, with Diogo Jota bursting past City's high defensive line and laying off to Salah to sweep a shot into the corner.

But City equalized when Alvarez, Argentina's World Cup winning striker, converted Grealish's cross in the 27th.

Liverpool had no answer to City's attacking quality in the second half, with De Bruyne poking home a cross from Riyad Mahrez less than a minute after the restart.

Gundogan added a third from close range in the 54th, and Grealish got a deserved goal to round off the scoring in the 74th.

It was Guardiola's 100th home win in the league with City in 128 games at Etihad Stadium. He is the quickest manager to achieve that feat, beating Arsene Wenger's record of reaching that total in 139 games.

"Our display was almost perfect from the first minute to minute 93 in the way we played against a team, our big rival in the last seasons," Guardiola said.

Liverpool is seven points off fourth-place Tottenham and still hasn't won a league match at Etihad Stadium since 2015.

Klopp's team has now lost three straight games since routing Manchester United 7-0 last month.

"In the end, we had moments but in general how we lost everything, unacceptable," Klopp said.

The German added that "fourish" of his players "had an OK game, and the rest were somewhere I don't know".

Jesus stars

For Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta the return of Gabriel Jesus to his forward line must feel like the signing of a new player.

The Brazilian was back in the starting lineup for the first time in the Premier League since November on Saturday and struck twice in a 4-1 home defeat of Leeds United.

"We were exceptional," Arteta said after the Gunners cruised to a seventh successive league victory.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA