

WORLD USA

4 people in Kentucky shot dead in bank by employee

PAGE 7



IPO system of A-share market reaches milestone

BUSINESS, PAGE 8



Treasured boxes

Craftsman carries on ancient practice of making containers

LIFE, PAGE 15

# CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 TUESDAY, APRIL 11, 2023

XI'S VISION | GLOBAL SECURITY INITIATIVE

## Special envoys helping boost hopes for peace

President's blueprint promotes mediation efforts, dialogue to solve problems worldwide

By ZHANG YUNBI  
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In light of China's recent mediation success in getting Saudi Arabia and Iran to sit together for a landmark dialogue last month and to resume their diplomatic ties on Friday, many policy observers have pointed to the extensive peacemaking efforts made by Chinese diplomats — particularly special envoys — who have traveled across the globe in recent years.

March, for example, witnessed packed schedules and travel by envoys representing the Chinese government or the Foreign Ministry and focusing on specific regions or issues, such as the Middle East and the Horn of Africa.

They made footprints in destinations including Central Asia, the Middle East, North Africa and the Pacific Islands, where hot spot issues or the dire need to galvanize local development are high on the regional or global agendas.

In one of the latest developments, Zhai Jun, the Chinese government's special envoy on Middle East issues, met with a group of Beijing-based diplomats from Arab states and the League of Arab States on Friday in Beijing.

"China will continue to make relentless efforts to facilitate a proper resolution of the Palestinian question at an early date," Zhai said. At the heart of the Chinese envoys' discussions with foreign peers is Beijing's overarching blueprint for peace — the Global Security Initiative, which was proposed by President Xi Jinping in April last year, officials and experts said.

Beijing's expanding lineup of special envoys and its efforts to send them worldwide are among China's practices in carrying out the Global

Security Initiative and building a community with a shared future for mankind, analysts added.

The initiative "offers insights for promoting political settlement of flashpoints such as the Korean Peninsula issue and for coping with global security challenges", and it "speaks volumes about China's sense of responsibility to world peace", said Liu Xiaoming, the Chinese government's special representative on Korean Peninsula affairs.

China welcomes other countries joining in the initiative and will work with European countries and the international community to build a more peaceful, more secure and better world for all, he said in a speech on Thursday during a visit to Brussels, the home of the European Union's headquarters.

Observers said that through efficient, practical face-to-face discussions, negotiations and mediation by China with other countries, the China-led initiatives and proposals are not simply political gestures, but blueprints that are constantly being perfected, improved and rolled out, one after another.

"Mediating for peace and promoting dialogue has always been a pivotal guideline of China's diplomacy," said Su Xiaohui, an associate research fellow at the China Institute of International Studies.

Amid numerous conflicts such as the Ukraine crisis, there has been suspicion and pessimism around the world, as some question the efficacy of mediation and special envoys' mediation trips, she said.

"So China's mediator role in facilitating Saudi Arabia-Iran's repair of ties has injected more confidence and faith into the global community and convinced more people that an

See Vision, page 3

## Historic handshake



Mahdi al-Mashat (left), head of the Houthi Supreme Political Council, shakes hands with Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to Yemen Mohammed bin Saeed Al-Jaber at the Republican Palace in Sanaa, Yemen, on Sunday. Saudi and Omani mediators arrived in Houthi-held Sanaa over the weekend to discuss a "near-final" historic peace deal with Houthi leaders to end the war in Yemen, local media said. Peace initiatives in the region have gained momentum after Saudi Arabia and Iran agreed to reestablish ties in a deal brokered by China. JON CHERRY / REUTERS See more, pages 6,11

## Macron urges Europe to reduce dependence on US

By CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels  
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French President Emmanuel Macron has urged Europe to reduce its dependence on the United States and avoid getting caught up in confrontation between the US and China.

Experts said Macron's recent three-day trip to China had contributed to bilateral relations and hopes of a peaceful settlement of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

In an interview with reporters aboard a French presidential aircraft flying from Beijing to Guangzhou, Guangdong province, Macron stressed the importance of Europe's "strategic autonomy" in order to become a "third superpower".

He said "the great risk" Europe faces is that it "gets caught up in crises that are not ours, which prevents it from building its strategic autonomy", the news website Politico reported on Sunday.

Macron put forward the idea of the European Union's strategic autonomy in September 2017, four months after becoming president.

"The paradox would be that, overcome with panic, we believe we are just America's followers," he

said. "The question Europeans need to answer ... is it in our interest to accelerate (a crisis) on Taiwan? No."

Tensions across the Taiwan Straits have increased following Taiwan leader Tsai Ing-wen's meeting with US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy in California last Wednesday during her recent provocative "transit" trip. In response, China's People's Liberation Army carried out drills from Saturday to Monday, including simulated strikes against key targets on the island of Taiwan and in its surrounding waters.

"Europeans cannot resolve the crisis in Ukraine; how can we credibly say on Taiwan, 'watch out, if you do something wrong we will be there? If you really want to increase tensions that's the way to do it," Macron said.

He also said Europe had increased its dependence on the US for weapons and energy and must now focus on boosting European defense industries.

He added that Europe should reduce its dependence on the "extraterritoriality of the US dollar".

"If the tensions between two superpowers heat up ... we won't

have the time nor the resources to finance our strategic autonomy and we will become vassals," Macron said.

Many Europeans have complained about "weaponization" of its reserve currency by the US, which has forced European companies to cut business ties with third countries or face secondary sanctions.

On Sunday night, Macron posted on Twitter a video clip of his three-day visit to China in which he said: "I feel at ease with (President Xi Jinping), including on substance. There is a mutual attraction between France and China, a fascination, a friendship, a singular journey".

Arnaud Bertrand, a French entrepreneur with experience in China and a commentator on geopolitics, said on Twitter on Monday, "All in all it couldn't be clearer now, with this and Macron's earlier communication that he (Xi) sees France as China's foremost ally in the West to counter US-led efforts to contain the country."

Hosuk Lee-Makiyama, director of the Brussels-based European Centre for International Political Economy, said that Macron proved that Europe and China might not

necessarily share the same ideal outcome regarding the Russia-Ukraine conflict, but they share the second-best option, a cease-fire that respects the United Nations Charter, adding that some hawks forget that diplomacy is always about pursuing the second-best option.

He said both Europe and China have much to gain from strengthening trade and investment ties, from Airbus planes to renewable energy and infrastructure projects.

Yan Shaohua, an associate professor at Fudan University's Institute of International Studies, said the fact that Macron brought with him a large business delegation, and the signing of a number of commercial deals, show that trade and economic cooperation is still the central pillar of China-Europe relations.

He Zhigao, a researcher at the Institute of European Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said the joint declaration by China and France is rich in content, covering 51 subjects, and is practical and easy to implement.

"There is great motivation for more cooperation and development in Sino-French and Sino-EU relations," he said.

## 'Justice for Jasper'



Concerned community members rally on Monday outside Alameda County Courthouse in Oakland, California, to demand that the district attorney fully prosecute three suspects in the fatal shooting of 23-month-old Jasper Wu. They carried signs that read "Give us a safe community" and "We are angry". CHANG JUN / CHINA DAILY See more, page 7

## Initiative offers path to shared prosperity

On the eve of the 10th anniversary of the proposal of the concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind, President Xi Jinping unveiled the visionary Global Civilization Initiative during a global gathering of political parties centered on the theme "Path Towards Modernization: The Responsibility of Political Parties".

Along with Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Commit-

tee, nearly 500 representatives from political parties, organizations and think tanks from across the world participated in the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-Level Meeting, including heads of state of friendly countries.

In 2013, Xi proposed building a community with a shared future for mankind and later the Belt and Road Initiative. One of the important parts of the BRI is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which has made a tremendous contribution to economic development across Pakistan.

President Xi's proposal for a global network of intercivilizational dialogue and cooperation

See Initiative, page 3

## RURAL AREAS TASTE COMMERCIAL SUCCESS

Vitalization projects bring new life while preserving traditions

By LI LEI in Beijing,  
YANG JUN in Guiyang and  
LI YINGQING in Kunming

Tucked away in the rugged terrain of Guizhou province, Xijiang Qianhu Miao village — a highly popular destination

among visitors — is making its mark in the competitive rural tourism industry.

Born and bred in Xijiang township, sociologist Li Tianyi, 48, has witnessed firsthand the village's transformation since the early 1980s.

in-depth

Some 40 years ago, the ethnic village inhabited by members of the Miao and Dong communities

was grappling with intractable poverty. Now, the village ranks among the top scenic spots for young urban residents longing for a respite from the hustle and bustle of city life and for the chance to post photos of their visits on social media.

Li, a member of the Miao ethnic group who teaches at Guizhou Minzu University in Guiyang, the provincial capital, said the secret of the village's commercial success is its distinctive culture.

See Villages, page 2

INSIDE  
Huge potential seen for China's green growth  
Global Views, page 13

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## PAGE TWO



Xijiang Qianhu Miao village in Guizhou province is a highly popular destination among visitors. Seen from above, the village is a sea of bamboo houses situated amid terraced rice fields. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

From page 1

In 1982, as China gradually opened up its economy and prioritized growth, Xijiang Qianhu Miao Village, which roughly translates as "Miao village with 1,000 households", was designated a scenic spot by the provincial government for its breathtaking views.

Seen from above, the village is home to a sea of bamboo houses spread among rolling terraced rice fields and fish ponds. As night falls, tens of thousands of light bulbs gleaming dim and yellow from residents' homes transform the ancient hamlet into a kind of fairyland. Some vloggers have even compared the village with those depicted by Japanese director Hayao Miyazaki in his 2001 animation film *Spirited Away*.

Visitors immerse themselves in local culture by taking part in festivities in which villagers dressed in traditional clothing parade on the streets and slaughter pigs by the roadside.

Li said: "The terraced fields, festivals, folk songs and dances are all embedded in the rice-growing culture of the Miao people. The core to the village's development is its culture."

For years, Li monitored the development of tourism in the village. In 2016, he set up the Xijiang Qianhu Miao Village Cultural Research Institute, with the aim of reviving the fading culture of his people and ultimately sustaining the tourist boom from which locals and those living beyond the area have prospered.

"Tourism and traditional culture, as Li has observed, go hand in hand. 'Tourism gives traditional culture a second life in modern times and also enables traditional culture to travel farther,' he said.

**Competitive edge**

To help Xijiang gain a competitive edge amid increased rural tourism, which has been pursued by the authorities since 2013 to end some of the nation's most entrenched poverty, the institute researched and documented the intangible cultural heritage of the Miao people, such as their folk songs. Li said these efforts provided the basis for devising entertainment projects to provide visitors with an immersive experience.

For example, one of the village's main attractions was inspired by the Miao tradition of throwing *lanmenjiu*, or rice wine parties, to entertain wedding guests.

Li suggested that the tradition be adapted to welcome visitors to Xijiang. According to tradition, only when visitors have drunk 12 cups of rice wine — each cup representing one wish from villagers for visitors, such as becoming more attractive — would arrivals be allowed to enter the village.

"While we need to find those traditions that resonate with modern-day

## VILLAGES: TOURISM EXPECTED TO GROW



Residents of Xijiang village, Leishan county, Guizhou, attend a dance festival in November. HUANG XIAOHAI / FOR CHINA DAILY

visitors, we simply cannot just reinvent traditions out of thin air," Li said. Younger travelers often lament that some ancient towns are becoming overly commercialized, but Li said they do not dislike commercialization itself.

"They hate homogenization," he said, referring to simply replicating established tourism models. "Tourism must be based on local culture and a region's distinctive resources," Li said.

Rural poverty has been eradicated as China sets out on a new journey to vitalize the countryside.

In December, a guideline published by the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council stated that construction projects, such as renovating rural homes and upgrading dirt roads, are being planned to bolster rural infrastructure. Rural tourism fostered during the 10-year fight against poverty is also likely to see further growth, experts said.

With such work now underway, Premier Li Qiang has emphasized that after they are revamped, rural villages should not look the same.

On March 13, at a news conference to mark the close of this year's National People's Congress, he said, "China is a vast country with cultures and customs that vary from village to village, even though they may be just a few miles apart."

Li took time at his first public appearance since being appointed premier just two days earlier to stress that rural development is not solely about economic growth. It is also important to highlight the countryside's economic, ecological, social and cultural values, preserve



Children play in a hostel transformed from a traditional house in Pingtian village, Songyang, Zhejiang province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

local rural culture, and avoid all villages having the same appearance, he said.

**Protection stressed**

Li Xiaoyun, a rural development expert at China Agricultural University, said that if all villages were identical, the countryside would no longer trigger nostalgia among the public. In addition, farmers would not be able to tap the economic value of Chinese culture in different regions.

"More and more places are putting increased emphasis on protecting and inheriting regional cultural characteristics while vitalizing themselves," he said.

Li Xiaoyun is among scholars using their expertise to curb rural poverty through tourism, part of the antipovity drive that began a decade ago.

In 2014, he traveled with a team of researchers from Beijing to Hebian, which translates as "riverside village",

in Yunnan province. This picturesque ethnic Yao community sits on the perimeter of a subtropical forest.

Initially intended to be a field study of the poverty-stricken community staged over just a few months, the team's involvement with the village lasted several years. By the time it ended in 2017, the team had helped transform Hebian into a tourist resort complete with bamboo hotels, 4G internet access and nightclubs.

"Using the poverty relief fund, the village was rebuilt based on its original architectural style, and the traditional lifestyles of the locals were preserved," Li Xiaoyun said.

The renovation work, which included adding toilets and air-conditioning, helped make the village a more welcoming place for farmers to stay.

Li Xiaoyun has surveyed a range of rural development projects, from coastal Zhejiang province to the

inland municipality of Chongqing, and come to the conclusion that those that are successful never involve demolishing old villages to build new ones from scratch.

He said successful projects call for minute modifications to be made to the original layout of a community, in the hope of improving its socioeconomic functions so that "traditions can be organically connected to modernity".

Some developers decide to move farmers out of their home village and turn it into a purely commercial area. At first glance, the village seems to have been preserved, whereas it has been destroyed, Li Xiaoyun said.

"The primary function of villages is to provide homes for farmers," he added.

Villages also need industries to provide jobs, and the integrated development of farming, craftsmanship and the service sector represented by tourism is the ultimate route to vitalization, he said.

As he does not believe in relying on a single source of income, Li Xiaoyun set up an e-commerce center in Hebian to help sell local farm produce, including organic eggs and pomelos.

"Tourism is not the only solution for rural villages," he said.

**Tasteful effect**

He Wei, dean of the architecture department at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, said many traditional rural communities are pleasant sights.

Unlike urban residents living in high-rise apartments, those in rural areas design and build their own homes — often using materials

sourced locally, such as rocks in mountainous regions, or timber in southern provinces. As a result, most rural homes are not as neatly positioned as tower blocks in cities. However, these two- or three-story traditional homes blend perfectly with their surroundings.

"These properties unexpectedly create a tasteful visual effect, and standing outside these homes is a relaxing and pleasant experience," He said.

A love of rural life helped inspire He to turn a crumbling dirt house in Pingtian village, a cloud-enveloped hamlet in Songyang, Zhejiang province, into a popular hostel for young people.

Named Yeyejia, which translates as "grandpa's", the property was inherited by He's client from his grandfather. The two-story structure — the second floor is used to store grain — is more than 100 years old, but time and lack of repairs had left their mark on the rough-looking exterior walls.

Like many villages in China, Pingtian had largely been deserted by its residents, with just a few seniors remaining. Situated halfway up a slope, the village is surrounded by mountains.

To avoid interfering with the farmhouse's "harmonious relations" with its surroundings, He and his colleagues decided to preserve the exterior while making significant changes to the interior. The aim was to provide cozy accommodations for visitors — mostly young people — and offer a temporary escape from urban life.

"The modern interior contrasts sharply with the property's mottled facade. This contrast spills over through the doors and windows, creating a strong psychological tension and sense of beauty. The design brings history into contemporary life," He said.

Traditional homes should not be preserved by "fixing" them to a certain time in history. Instead, preservation efforts should meet the demands of modern-day residents, He added.

Since 1978, China has gradually opened up its economy and launched a rapid urbanization drive that encompasses efficiency and most modern aspects of city life.

To a certain degree, this process has eroded rural culture and led to the demolition of traditional homes to make way for concrete and steel structures, He said. As a result, many villages that are thousands of kilometers apart basically look the same.

Urbanization has brought many rural people to cities, but society should be wary of rural areas being significantly changed by urbanization, He added.

Tang Ying in Nanchang contributed to this story.

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Left: Hebian village, an ethnic Yao community, sits on the edge of a subtropical forest in Yunnan province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Center: Li Xiaoyun (left), a rural development expert at China Agricultural University, shows Hebian villagers how to prepare a hotel room for visitors. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Right: Two- and three-story traditional homes blend with their surroundings in Youtian village, Songyang. ZHANG WEIGUO / FOR CHINA DAILY

## TOP NEWS

# Expo expected to advance trade amid challenges

Officials, executives say China will offer new growth opportunities for companies worldwide

By ZHU WENQIAN in Haikou and ZHONG NAN in Beijing

The third China International Consumer Products Expo, which started in the southern island province of Hainan on Monday and runs through Saturday, is expected to help increase the country's premium consumer product imports and give a boost to international trade amid multiple challenges facing the world economy, officials and company executives said.

China's pace of upgrading consumption has significantly accelerated, and both traditional and emerging consumption sectors have witnessed growth. Consumption has continued to strengthen its fundamental role of helping boost economic growth, Vice-Premier He Lifeng said via video link during the opening ceremony of the expo, which was held in Haikou, the capital of Hainan.

This year, the expo has attracted the participation of more than 3,300 brands from home and abroad, while more than 1,000 new products are set to make their debut. Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao said the expo will help strengthen the ties between exhibitors and buyers, stimulate vitality, boost consumer confidence and promote consumption upgrade.

The 2023 expo is focusing on hot topics such as green, healthy, fashion and technology-driven consumption, and it will host a series of activities to promote consumption, Wang said.

"China's economic growth shows a positive prospect, offering new growth opportunities for multinational corporations, especially for international consumer product brands," said Bai Ming, deputy director of international market research at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation in Beijing.

Industrial participants said the expo will serve as an important stage to help promote the building of Hainan into an international tourism consumption center and a

market platform for high-quality consumer goods.

To benefit from the favorable business policies of the Hainan Free Trade Port, Pernod Ricard — the world's second-largest maker of wines and spirits — has opened four duty-free stores in the island province.

"We will continue to deeply explore China's vast market of imported wines and spirits, and seize market opportunities by drawing on Hainan's policy advantages. We expect to provide Chinese consumers with more premium products and exquisite experiences, thus injecting new dynamics into the thriving Chinese market," said Jerome Cottin-Bizonne, managing director of Pernod Ricard China.

China's consumer market is second only to the size of the one in the United States. In 2022, China imported consumer goods worth 1.93 trillion yuan (\$281 billion), up 75.8 percent compared with 2017, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

During the opening ceremony, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said via video link that Italy considered it a great distinction to be the guest country of honor at the expo. The European nation is participating in the expo this year with some 150 brands. Meloni said that thanks to the expo, Italian products are anticipated to gain more favor from Chinese consumers and also others globally.

Japanese cosmetics company Shiseido Group, a three-time participant of the expo, said that China's market scale for cosmetics is on track to become the world's largest, and the country has become the source and driving force of global innovation.

"Participating in the expo has given us greater confidence in the enormous opportunities unleashed by the consumer sector in China, with the country's further opening-up," said Yu Lili, head of corporate communications at Shiseido China.

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# Compatriots urged to unite against interference

By MO JINGXI  
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China's top political adviser Wang Huning called on Monday for compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Straits to join hands with one heart to resolutely oppose external interference and separatist activities aimed at "Taiwan independence", stressing the need to complete reunification of the motherland and realize national rejuvenation.

Wang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks when he met in Beijing with Liu Chao-shiuan, president of

the Taiwan-based council of the summit for entrepreneurs across the Taiwan Straits.

Wang, who is also chairman of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, China's top political advisory body, said efforts will be made to promote the development of cross-Straits relations in the correct direction by following the overall policy framework for resolving the Taiwan question in the new era.

As Chinese modernization advances on all fronts, strengthening cross-Straits exchanges and cooperation will help better enhance the well-being of compatriots on both sides and affection

between compatriots and develop the economy of the Chinese nation, Wang said.

He said that the motherland will always show respect and care for Taiwan compatriots and enterprises so that they will not just be willing to come to the Chinese mainland, but also be able to stay and integrate into the local communities and achieve better development.

In this way, they can better benefit from the mainland's development achievements and enjoy the glory of national rejuvenation, Wang said.

"We are committed to peace and stability across the Taiwan Straits, but 'Taiwan independence' and

cross-Straits peace and stability are as irreconcilable as water and fire," he said.

Liu said he is ready to increase the role of the summit, deepen cross-Straits industrial cooperation and promote integrated development across the Taiwan Straits, which will contribute to the well-being of compatriots on both sides of the Straits and national rejuvenation.

The summit for entrepreneurs across the Taiwan Straits, established in 2013, is one of the most important platforms for people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. Last year, the summit was held in Xiamen, a coastal city in Fujian province.

## Ready for Nepali New Year



Dancers perform at an event to mark the upcoming Nepali New Year, which falls on Friday, at Bhaktapur Durbar Square in Bhaktapur, Nepal, on Sunday. New Year in the Nepali Calendar usually falls in the middle of April. AMIT MACHAMASI / NUR PHOTO VIA GETTY IMAGES

# Vision: Flexibility shown in mediation efforts

From page 1

issue could and should be fundamentally resolved through diplomatic, peaceful approaches," she added.

The locations of the mediation efforts made by Chinese special envoys have shown great flexibility, as envoys either meet diplomats at home or travel outside China to discuss matters as needed.

Qian Bo, the Chinese government's special envoy on Pacific Island countries' affairs, traveled to Guangzhou, Guangdong province, at the end of February for a ceremony marking the launch of the China-Pacific Island Countries Center for Disaster Risk Reduction and Cooperation.

Last month, he flew to the Pacific region to meet with leaders and senior officials of countries including the Federated States of Micronesia, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu.

Also high on the Chinese envoys' agendas are detailed proposals

made by Beijing in recent years for political settlement of specific issues.

The proposals include the five-point proposal, unveiled in 2021, on realizing peace and stability in the Middle East, the Outlook on Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa released last year, and the position paper on a political settlement of the Ukraine crisis issued last month.

Xue Bing, the Foreign Ministry's special envoy for Horn of Africa affairs, visited Ethiopia and the African Union's headquarters in Addis Ababa last month.

An important task of the visit was "to maintain close communication with countries in the region on behalf of China" on advancing the implementation of the Outlook for Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa, and to "support countries in the region in realizing development through solidarity as well as stability and prosperity", Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said.

The Chinese envoys don't speak only with those who are directly involved in a certain issue or in a specific region. In many cases, they might speak to a third country or an international organization engaged in or interested in their area of expertise, and the meetings' wide-ranging agendas will also cover international and regional issues of mutual interest, according to the Foreign Ministry's website.

Due to China's objective stance in handling various hot spot regional or global issues, the Chinese envoys are often welcomed by both parties that have strained relations.

For example, Zhai, the special envoy on Middle East affairs, visited both Palestine and Israel during his trip to the region last month.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas told Zhai that "Palestine highly appreciates China upholding a just position on the Palestinian question", and he said he expected China to "continue to play a constructive role in promoting a fair and early settlement of

the Palestinian question".

Special envoys from China and other countries are also joining forces and making their contacts more productive.

In June, the Foreign Ministry's special envoy on Afghan affairs, Yue Xiaoyong, chaired a meeting in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, gathering special envoys or special representatives of Afghanistan's neighbors, including Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Pakistan, Iran and Russia.

As a major step showing the progress of their coordination, a regular meeting mechanism was established among them, and the mechanism's first meeting was held last month in Tashkent.

What China has advocated is common, sustainable security, while some other voices in the world seek security at the cost of other nations, said Wu Sike, China's former special envoy on Middle East affairs.

"The world knows clearly which security outlook aligns with the trend of the times and can enable more cooperation and play a role as catalyst for resolving global security issues," he added.

# Initiative: Fostering deep interactions between civilizations sought

From page 1

aligns with his vision of promoting international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. The Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative form a comprehensive approach to promoting world peace, security, development and harmony.

The Global Civilization Initiative builds upon the inherent strengths of China. It seeks to foster deep interactions between civilizations across the globe, evolve common values and share the goals of prosperity and development. By leveraging the strength of a new type of party-to-party relations, the CPC is

committed to expanding global partnerships and building a new type of international relations that prioritizes people's interests.

The vision for global cooperation and shared prosperity underscores the importance of prioritizing people's aspirations for a better life and advancing modernization in a people-centered way. As Xi emphasized, the ultimate goal of modernization is the free and well-rounded development of the people, and modernization must not solely be measured by indicators and statistics on paper, but must deliver a happy and stable life for the people.

By working together to address the challenges facing humanity and

**This initiative aligns with the rejuvenation of the China Dream, which seeks happiness, peace and prosperity not only for the Chinese people but for the entire world.**

realizing this shared vision for the future, we can promote the sustainable development of humanity and ensure that the rights and interests of future generations are protected. The Global Civilization Initiative

reflects China's commitment to pursuing peaceful coexistence and tolerance at the global level. This initiative aligns with the rejuvenation of the China Dream, which seeks happiness, peace and prosperity not only for the Chinese people but for the entire world. With nearly one-fifth of the world's population, China recognizes its responsibility to the global community and aims to spearhead efforts for mutual learning, equality, inclusiveness and dialogue. President Xi's vision aims to create shared values for human civilization, including democracy, equity, justice, peace, development and freedom.

The idea of mutual coexistence is not mere rhetoric but a well-

thought-out policy with guiding principles, the foremost of which is to promote intercivilizational dialogue and transnational cooperation to pave the way for an interconnected human civilization. This intervention is timely and significant, given the challenges faced by humanity, including economic slowdown, environmental degradation and a lingering Cold War mentality.

Xi's emphasis on international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation is key to building a global network for intercivilizational dialogue and cooperation. By expanding partnerships with political parties and organizations worldwide, the CPC seeks to deepen interactions and expand the con-

vergence of ideas and interests.

China's leadership believes that core human values should be global in scope and applicable to all. Thus, justice, equitable access to resources, social harmony and world peace are the key determinants of global civilization.

The Global Civilization Initiative promises protection against intolerance, insecurity, inequality, injustice and underdevelopment across societies. This commitment testifies to China's genuine belief in global prosperity, common values and shared civilization, and the international response reflects global trust in the Chinese leadership and the suitability of China to lead the world in challenging times.

The writer is founder of the Friends of BRI Forum. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## CHINA

## School sees graduate numbers soar

Even though he graduated three years ago, Wang Qiaosong is still an idol for many students at his old high school in Zhenxiong county, Yunnan province.

That's because he was the first alumnus to be enrolled by Peking University — aka PKU — one of China's most prestigious schools.

Mangbu Secondary School is located in Mangbu township, about 30 kilometers from Zhenxiong's county seat. The only bus between the two places takes more than 60 minutes along a zigzag mountain road.

At the end of 2020, Zhenxiong was one of the last counties in China to eradicate poverty. It once had the reputation of being a county with low-quality education and a poor level of development.

However, last year, 77 percent of the 1,061 high school graduates from Mangbu Secondary School enrolled at universities, with 211 gaining admittance to prestigious schools.

Wang, 21, who scored 691 points out of a possible 750 in the national college entrance exam, or *gaokao*, spent all his primary and secondary school years in Mangbu.

His parents left home years ago to find work in larger cities, so his grandparents cared for him.

"I have never found studying hard — perhaps that's because I have helped my family with farmwork since childhood, so I know that studying in class is easier than working in the fields," he said.

The school day starts at 6:30 am and ends at 10:30 pm. It is a strict, repetitive schedule, and in order not to be late, some students can run up five flights of stairs in about 30 seconds.

Wang said that despite the grueling schedule, he chose to focus on the brighter side of studying.

"For example, I could see the sunrise in the mountains before the morning reading session and enjoy the beautiful sunset during the evening self-study period. Sometimes, if the door to the roof of the teaching building was unlocked, I could also watch the stars," he said.

According to Caixin magazine, Wang was awarded a scholarship worth 200,000 yuan (\$29,000) by the township government and the school as a reward for getting into PKU. The school also held an hour-long firework display to celebrate Wang's achievement.

Wang said he is grateful to many people for being able to enroll at PKU. Although his parents were far from home, they always reminded him to study hard whenever they called, and his grandfather was also strict about his academic studies.

Moreover, teachers at Mangbu Secondary School helped him greatly and his classmates also motivated him, he said.

Mangbu Secondary School's success has brought renown to Zhenxiong, a county that was once mired in poverty. Zou Shuo reports from Beijing with Li Yingqing in Kunming.



From top: New students at Mangbu Secondary School, Zhenxiong county, Yunnan province, line up to form the phrase "No 1" during military training in 2019. SHEN JIE / FOR CHINA DAILY Students read on the school campus in 2021. CHEN YABO / FOR CHINA DAILY



The school's success is the result of Zhenxiong's continuous investment in education and the importance it attaches to education, especially in the less-developed are-

as, Wang said, adding that in his six years at the school, he witnessed how the teaching facilities were upgraded.

The sacrifices made by the teachers are also responsible for the school's development, with some treating the students like their own children, he said.

#### Major makeover

He Qibing, the vice-principal, said the school has undergone a major makeover in the past 10 years.

When he first started working there a decade ago, the school had just a single three-story teaching building, a one-story office block and a two-story dormitory for the students. Now, it has five teaching

buildings, two office buildings, two laboratory buildings, four student canteens, a canteen for the teachers and 11 student dormitory buildings. It also boasts a soccer field, 11 basketball courts and four volleyball courts.

A decade ago, the school only had 1,000 middle school students and less than 100 teachers. The numbers have risen to more than 7,000 middle and high school students and almost 500 teachers, making it the largest township secondary school in the county, he said.

Meanwhile, 10 years ago, the school was notorious for its poor academic performance and was ranked the lowest in the county.

Now, it is ranked in the top tier of Zhaotong city, which oversees the

county, he said. In 2020, 649 of its graduates enrolled at universities, rising to 688 in 2021 and 821 last year, he added.

The biggest reason for the achievement is that the school has dedicated teachers. They have faced many difficulties head-on, with many never taking leave and maintaining the same busy schedule as the students to make sure that more children can realize their dreams, he added.

Tan Maoqiao, who has taught at the school since 1996, said that as an alumnus he knows how difficult it is for rural children to change their destiny through education and see the wider world. Thus, he did not hesitate to teach at the school after graduating from a vocational college in Zhaotong.

Living conditions in Mangbu are not very good, with frequent fog and rain, and Tan does not have much time to look after his elderly parents, but simply witnessing the school's progress has made him committed to continuing devoting himself with passion and dedication, he said.

Wu Kongxiong has taught at the school for 24 years, since he graduated from Yunnan Normal University in 1999.

"I chose to teach at the school 20-plus years ago because I had to make a living, but I stayed because I have seen the worst times and want to make them better," he said.

"The school is successful because we have an exceptional principal, a united and dedicated teaching group and hardworking students,"

#### Working toward a dream

Li Jing, a senior student at the high school will take the *gaokao* in June. Her dream school is also Peking University.

As a Mangbu native, the 17-year-old feels a sense of belonging and happiness at the school. Studying there can also help save her parents money due to the generous scholarships awarded to students with good academic performances, she said.

The school offers three years of free tuition and accommodations, and 3,000 yuan in subsidies every year for students who perform well in the high school entrance exam, according to Mangbu's enrollment brochures.

Li gets up at 6 am and arrives in her classroom at 6:30. She takes an hour-long break at noon and returns to her dormitory at 10:30 pm. She said she enjoys the full schedule because she can study and rest well, and she feels happy and fulfilled.

"To enroll at PKU, I will have to work harder. Although the dream is still far away, I believe that with my teachers' help and care and my dedication, it can be achieved," she said.

Contact the writers at [zoushuo@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:zoushuo@chinadaily.com.cn)

## Greater funding results in makeover

By ZOU SHUO and LI YINGQING

Unprecedented investment in schools and teachers has helped Zhenxiong county, Yunnan province, make a major change in the past decade, becoming famous for its education system, said Zhu Qicai, head of the county's bureau of education and sports.

Schools at all levels have had complete makeovers, with dilapidated buildings and facilities replaced by new ones, he said, adding that the schools are also equipped with sports facilities, multimedia rooms, libraries, science rooms and music and art rooms.

"Schools have become the most beautiful places and must-see scenery in the county," he said.

The county has made sure that there are no dropouts in the nine-year compulsory education system and achieved a dynamic zero dropout rate.

It provides financial assistance to students from poorer families and offers free lunches to rural students, Zhu said.

Last year, enrollment at kindergartens reached 85 percent, with the rates at primary and high schools reaching 99.9 percent and 90 percent, respectively, he added.

In 2016, the county and Yunnan Normal University established the Yunnan Normal University Affiliated High School in Zhenxiong and offered major support in terms of policy, funding, teachers and student entry policies.

The county also has given the administrators full autonomy in running the facility and hiring teachers.

In 2019, the school achieved outstanding performances in the national college entrance exam, or *gaokao*, with 100 percent of its first batch of graduates enrolling at universities, while three students were admitted to the prestigious Tsinghua and Peking universities in Beijing, Zhu said.

Later, the county opened more secondary schools in collaboration with other universities and established a cooperation mechanism with more advanced facilities from preschools to high schools, he said.

In the past three years, 6,015 graduates in the county have enrolled at key universities and 25 have been admitted to Tsinghua or Peking universities, Zhu said.

He said he is deeply touched and proud of the success of Mangbu Secondary School, which has sent 4,659 graduates to universities in the past decade.

Zhenxiong is Yunnan's most populous county with 1.71 million residents, of which 346,000 are school students, he said. Zhu added that developing education is the most direct and effective way to tap into the county's human resources.

As a township secondary school, Mangbu does not have the best students in the county, but its performance in the national college entrance exam has been extraordinary, Zhu said.

By being admitted to universities, the students can change their own destiny, their family's future and even that of their hometown, he noted.

Last year, 6,574 of the county's high school graduates were admitted to universities, accounting for 43.3 percent of the total, Zhu said.

"They are the future of education development in the county, and the future of its social and economic development," he added.



From left: Students compete in a race on campus last year. CHEN YABO / FOR CHINA DAILY Students learn to paint during an art class in 2021. CHEN YABO / FOR CHINA DAILY Children enjoy reading together on the school soccer field last year. SHEN JIE / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Parents praise teachers, new facilities, awards and scholarships

By ZOU SHUO and LI YINGQING

Parents of graduates of Mangbu Secondary School said they are grateful to the school for helping their children realize their dreams of going to university and seeing the wider world.

Yang Zhaoquan, father of Yang Jie, a 2019 Mangbu graduate, said his daughter enrolled at Yunnan University for undergraduate studies the same year. She will attend the University of the Chinese Academy of Sciences for postgraduate studies this fall.

Yang worked in Mangbu from 2010 to 2016, and he witnessed the school's transformation.

"Being a township school, it is meant for the children of farmers and those from underprivileged backgrounds, and it has enabled such children to receive a quality education not far from their homes," he said.

Yang said his daughter did not perform well in the high school entrance exam, but she did well in the national college entrance exam, or *gaokao*, thanks to the school and its dedicated teachers.

She also made progress in sports, music and art, which made her popular, he said.

The success of the school benefits local farmers most because they save money by sending their chil-

dren to a good educational facility near their homes, he said.

Thanks to government policies, the school offers subsidies to all students, along with generous scholarships for those who display good academic performance, he said.

Yang noted that everyone in Mangbu feels proud of the school.

Having learned from Mangbu's example, other schools in the county have made progress in terms of performance, and the county is now renowned for its education, Yang added.

Xiang Enjun runs a small computer shop in the town, while his wife is a farmer.

He said his daughter graduated

from the school in 2018, and his older son graduated in 2021. His younger boy is still at the school.

His daughter is now an undergraduate at Kunming Medical University, while his older son studies at Yanbian University in Jilin province.

"I am extremely grateful to the school. Without it, our family would not have the financial means to support three children so they could receive a good education," he said.

Both his daughter and his older son were average in class when they entered the high school, but thanks to the help of the good teachers they were admitted to good universities, he said.

The students' parents feel a sense

of reassurance as they know that the teachers are taking good care of their children, he said.

Moreover, the children have an excellent learning environment, so they are all very grateful to the school, he said.

In addition, the school's development and good reputation have seen the town witness great progress in sectors such as transportation, catering and logistics. That has resulted in higher incomes for local people, he said.

"We hope the school's good momentum will continue," he added. "It not only sets an example to other schools in the county, but is also a blessing for residents."

## CHINA

## Yunnan's 'lonely' orchid king is self-taught expert

Malipo county's wild bounty proves to be path out of poverty for resourceful guide turned businessman

By CHEN LIANG in Malipo, Yunnan  
chenliang@chinadaily.com.cn

For the past 20 years, one man has helped botanists find dozens of new plant species, and in recognition of his work, a new species now bears his surname.

That man is 52-year-old Guo Xibing, a plant hunter, hostel owner, orchid expert, contractor of academic projects, tour guide and true Renaissance man.

Guo grows more than 500 species of orchids in his 300-hectare mountain-top garden in Yunnan province, quite a few of which will go on to appear in botanical gardens in big cities sooner or later. Thanks to his plants, his property is estimated to be worth millions of US dollars.

In addition, he runs a homestay with dozens of rooms that over the years has served as a temporary workstation for hundreds of college students majoring in plants and biology, some of whom have stayed for months on end.

He also works with dozens of universities, scientific institutions and botanical gardens, and if you too are a botany enthusiast and love hunting for wildflowers, he may even be willing to guide you around the area for a reasonable fee.

A man of many talents, in the end, Guo describes himself simply as a farmer. "I do all these things to be able to support my family," he said.

## Road to botany

Born in Daxichang village in Yunnan's Malipo county, Guo began growing corn on the family plot on the steep karst slopes in the area after graduating from middle school.

"As we were forced to plant in the cracks between rocks, our corn yields were very low," Guo said. "We were quite poor."

To support his family, he began to trade wild orchids and planted *Lanxangia tsoo-ko*, a member of the ginger family, and found jobs as a migrant worker.

His life changed in 2002 when he met a botanist who had come to survey wild orchids in Malipo, which lies on the border with Vietnam and is known for its biodiversity, especially its plants. The researcher, who came from the Orchid Conservation & Research Center of Shenzhen in Guangdong province, hired Guo as his guide.

Thanks to a passion for exploring the wilderness he has had since he was a child, Guo knows the area's karst mountains and forests very well. He was able to help the researcher complete the survey successfully, and in March 2003, he was hired by the center as a temporary orchid surveyor.

In addition to covering his costs, the center paid him 1,500 yuan (\$218) a month, and their temporary working relationship lasted until 2017.

As more botanists came to Malipo, Guo began to realize that his home was a treasure trove of wild



Left: *Paphiopedilum malipoense*, a rare orchid named after Malipo county in Yunnan province. Right: A *Vanda* orchid grows in Guo Xibing's garden in Malipo.



plants and that growing *Dendrobium* orchids, treasured herbs in traditional Chinese medicine, might help him finally shake off poverty.

He learned from the researchers he guided and bought books, teaching himself photography and learning how to use the internet from his children just so he could "know a little more".

As Guo's knowledge of the kingdom of botany deepened, he gradually became known in the area as a "soil expert", not only for growing *Dendrobium*, but also for nurturing other orchid species and for his ability to find wild plants.

"An expert specialized in the Laurel family asked me to help him find 20 different samples. He showed me photos and illustrations," Guo said. "Then I started searching for similar plants in the wild and gradually got to know the family. Later, a Melastome specialist sought my help, and I became familiar with another family of plants."

The experience accumulated over the course of numerous field trips has turned Guo into a walking map of wild plants. "There are around 6,000 species of flowering plants in Malipo, and more than 80 have been named after the county," Guo said. "This is more than in many other provinces, and that's why botanists have kept coming here."

Entomologists, zoologists and ecologists have followed the botanists. "While they are here, they turn my home into their workstation," he said.

## A man researchers rely on

Gradually, scientists began to hire Guo for assignments, including plant surveys, specimen collecting and even pollination experiments. Effectively, he has become a research project contractor.

Because they needed to be able to drive researchers in the wild, Guo's wife, Wang Yongchun, learned in 2007 and is now a seasoned hand. "She was the first to learn to drive in the family, and drove me around looking for plants," Guo said. "She once even drove me to Tibet on an orchid survey."

Guo himself has refused to learn. "In the car, I need to be on the constant lookout for plants," he explained.

He charges researchers 1,000 yuan to collect a plant specimen. "If they ask me to collect 40 different specimens, I might lower the fee to 700 yuan per species," he said, add-

ing that it is a tough and challenging job and he often needs to hire a driver to travel around southeastern Yunnan and other local guides, too.

"Some plants are truly rare and can only be found in a small patch of forest in a remote area," he said. "A single commission can take between one or two days to two weeks."

Guo said he often has to combine several jobs before setting out into the field. Otherwise, he risks losing money.

Some of his other jobs also require endurance and can be physically intensive, too, he said.

Once, he spent 15 days with a group of doctoral students observing the pollination process of the *Paphiopedilum dianthum*, an endangered orchid species found only in China, Laos and Vietnam. Their goal was to discover the insects involved in the process.

They spent hours each day in the wild, watching and waiting for any insect to enter the orchid's large frontal pouch, but it wasn't until the 15th day that their patience paid off.

Just as they were about to give up, Guo noticed that a nearby orchid was moving. He quickly grabbed his camera and DV camcorder to capture the moment, and managed to catch the insect with a net.

As a result, the students were able to complete their thesis about the orchid's pollination process.

Guo has lost track of the number of times he has done these kinds of experiments. Sometimes, he spends a month in the mountains, working around the clock to help experts from across the country explore southeastern Yunnan.

For many botanists and researchers, he has become the man they rely on, and whenever they come to Malipo, Guo is the first person they seek out.

Since 2002, an average of 50 to 60 specialists call on him for research purposes a year. Some stay for just two or three days, while others stay for as long as 40 or 50.

Every summer, a large group of graduate students come to study at his plantation.

To house the increasing number of visitors, Guo and his family built a four-story building in their old compound in 2012, and then a second one nearby in 2016.

Over the past three years, strict epidemic control and prevention measures have had a negative

sightings. It was an exhausting day for all of us.

On the third day, he took us to his gardens. That morning, we passed through a gate near his house to explore one section, and in the afternoon, we drove a couple of kilometers and visited another section via another gate. Guo's garden is divided into four sections, which are scattered across different parts of the mountaintop.

He showed us more than 20 species of flowering orchids, some growing on the trunks of big trees, and others in cracks. Without him, we would have had no way to differentiate them from the tens of thousands of orchids growing all over the rocky slopes.

As he guided us, Guo also kept telling us to watch our steps. If he hadn't, we might easily have stepped on some orchids or rare Chinese herbs. Meanwhile, he was constantly weeding or removing pieces of dead wood from the trail.

That's when we realized why Guo was willing to guide us. He is still passionate about his work. Like a lion, he patrols his territory regularly.

"I will feel uneasy if I don't climb the mountains for three or four days," he said.

And so I decided that he was well worth writing a story about.

impact on the number of visitors, but despite this, Guo said that he is busier than ever.

He explained that due to the constraints on travel, some specialists chose to outsource their field collection and experiments almost completely to him.

There are cases of sealable bags in his office, along with a computer, a printer, an electron microscope and a refrigerator. "I'm a big customer of Shunfeng Express's Malipo branch," Guo said.

## Orchid kingdom

Helping researchers has earned Guo a stable income, which he has invested in his orchid kingdom.

In 2004, he began planting *Dendrobium* on a plot of a little over 1 hectare.

"Although the area is mostly karst rocks, it is an excellent place for the orchids to grow," Guo said, adding that the area is known for its misty weather, with about 260 foggy days a year around Daxichang, weather perfect for growing orchids.

"I don't need to water them at all."

Since leasing additional land from other villagers, his plantation now extends over 300 hectares. He has devoted himself in part to breeding and growing 100 species of *Dendrobium* on 130 hectares of land, which produce 20 metric tons of edible fresh *Dendrobium* twigs a year.

On one 67-hectare parcel, Guo is growing between 500-600 species of orchids he has found in the wild over the years. Native to Malipo's karst forests, they flourish on his plantation, which has become a kind of orchid kingdom.

In May 2018, the International Conference on Wild Orchid Conservation, held that year in Hong Kong, chose Guo's plantation for its on-site research. Sixteen orchid experts from eight countries, including the United States, the



Guo Xibing descends a slope while hunting wild flowers in the forest in Malipo. PHOTOS BY CHEN LIANG / CHINA DAILY

United Kingdom and Japan, visited his gardens that September.

Because of his extensive collection of wild orchids and excellent growing skills, Guo has been invited to help design orchid gardens in other provinces and to introduce species he has grown to them.

"My orchids can be found in the botanical gardens in a number of big cities," he said.

His success with orchids is now shared by other families in the county. Over the years, he has held dozens of training courses and taught around 1,000 farmers how to grow *Dendrobium* orchids, and the plant has become a major source of revenue in Malipo.

He has also won numerous government and academic honors over the years. Despite this, neither of Guo's children plans to carry on his work. "This life is too hard and lonely for them," he explained.

His son works with the local government as a temporary worker, and his daughter lives in the county seat.

Guo employs six families to help him take care of his plantation, and although he spends between 400,000-500,000 yuan a year on seasonal workers, he and his wife still do most of the work themselves.

To that degree, it could be said that Guo is the lonely king of his remote orchid kingdom.

## Notice

Brigade 4, Qingfeng village, Heqing township, Pudong New Area, Shanghai [farmers' residence land usage certificate of Hu Ji Zhai (Chuansha) Zi No 045744, Heqing township village residence land certificate of Pu He Tu Zi (2010) No 759], with Yu Sanmei (deceased), Gu Ailiang and Gu Aixun as the farmers' residence land users; No 107, Gujiazhai, Brigade 4, Qingfeng village, Pudong New Area, Shanghai [farmers' residence land usage certificate of Hu Ji Zhai (Chuansha) Zi No 045731, Heqing township village residence land certificate of Pu He Tu Zi (2004) No 1557, Heqing township village residence land certificate of Pu He Tu Zi (2004) No 9715], with Gu Dingchu (deceased), Gu Yanhua and Gu Yanping as the farmers' construction land users:

According to the "Pre-Notice of the Land Acquisition" of Hu (Pu) Yu Zheng Di Gao [2022] No 352, the above mentioned properties have been included in the range of expropriation for the land reservation project of the Plot 17 of the Zhangjiang Medical Apparatuses and Instruments Industry Park, Heqing township, Pudong New Area.

At present, the project has entered the compensation phase for the properties on the expropriated land. Related rights holders of the above properties cannot be contacted, so related property expropriation documents cannot be sent and negotiation cannot be conducted with you. Related rights holders of the above mentioned households are required to contact the expropriation implementing unit within seven days from the date of the publication of this notice and provide a valid property ownership (property rights) certificate, identity certificate, contact address and contact number to ensure the delivery of relevant property expropriation documents to negotiate compensation for the expropriation.

If you fail to contact us within the time limit, this company will announce relevant affairs concerning the expropriation and compensation of your properties in accordance with the regulations through the bulletin board of this base.

**Office hours:** 09:00 to 17:00, Monday to Friday.  
**Contact address:** Building 2, No 1500, Zu Chongzhi Road, Pudong New Area, Shanghai, China.  
**Contact:** Niu Jun; **Tel:** 86-13524217877. **Supervision Hotline:** 86-13916838578.

**Property expropriation implementing unit:** Shanghai Pudong No 1 Property Expropriation Service Firm Co Ltd.

Appendix I:

## Delivery Notice (1)

Yu Sanmei (deceased), Gu Ailiang and Gu Aixun and other (household); Gu Dingchu (deceased), Gu Yanhua and Gu Yanping and other (household):

According to the "Pre-Notice of the Land Acquisition" of Hu (Pu) Yu Zheng Di Gao [2022] No 352, the above mentioned properties have been included in the range of expropriation for the land reservation project of the Plot 17 of the Zhangjiang Medical Apparatuses and Instruments Industry Park, Heqing township, Pudong New Area. It is hereby noticed that relevant documents will later be directly delivered to the co-owners to whom documents are able to be sent directly. The co-owners that receive the documents should transfer the documents to other co-owners of the same household. Co-owners of one household should negotiate relevant affairs as a whole.

Shanghai Pudong No 1 Property Expropriation Service Firm Co Ltd  
April 11, 2023

## Fascination, not fame keeps Guo's love of plants alive

By CHEN LIANG

As I planned a holiday to see wildflowers in southeastern Yunnan province, a region known for its rich flora and fauna, one of my travel mates suggested that we hire Guo Xibing as our "flower guide", and stay at his house for a couple of days.

When he went to Malipo county in Yunnan about 10 years ago as a volunteer plant collector for Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, Guo was his guide. His deep knowledge of local plants left a strong impression on my friend.

But he had concerns. Guo had become wealthy, and fortune and fame can change a person. For the proposed fee of about \$100 a day, he was worried that Guo might not be willing to work as hard to show us as many wildflowers as possible.

"He could easily just show us a few noted Malipo flowers and call it a day," he said.

Guo dispelled our misgivings in less than half a day.

When we arrived at his house on our first morning in Malipo, he invited us to have a quick brunch before heading into the wild. For the remainder of the day, he guided our car along dirt roads winding along the border between China and Vietnam until we reached remote valleys hidden in the area's karst mountains.

From time to time, he'd ask me to pull over and then disappear down a trail into a valley or up a slope on his own. Once he found plants that were in bloom, he'd call on us to follow his tracks to see them. We stopped dozens of times along the way and managed to see a number of fantastic flowers that you can only find in that part of the country.

Guo was genuinely happy with his discoveries and took many pictures with his smartphone. We kept going until dusk.

The next day, we left his house before 7 am and again, returned at dusk. Several times during the day, I overheard him phoning botanists and briefing them on his

# WORLD

## Meeting seen as step forward in efforts to revive cease-fire in war-torn nation

ADEN, Yemen — Saudi Arabia and Yemen's Houthi militia on Sunday engaged in direct talks aimed at reviving a cease-fire in the war-torn nation, as part of international efforts to find a settlement to Yemen's nine-year conflict.

Saudi Arabia's delegation, chaired by the kingdom's ambassador to Yemen, Mohammed bin Saeed Al-Jaber, met with Mahdi al-Mashat, head of the Houthi's supreme political council, which runs rebel-held areas in Yemen, according to the Houthi-run SABA news agency.

An Omani delegation, which arrived in Sanaa on Saturday, joined the talks, the agency reported. It said al-Mashat hailed Oman's efforts to bridge the gap between different sides of the war to achieve peace in Yemen. SABA did not give further details.

Mohammed al-Bukaiti, a Houthi leader, said on Twitter that achieving an honorable peace between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia would be "a triumph for both parties" and urged all sides to take steps to "preserve a peaceful atmosphere and prepare to turn the page of the past".

Officials from both sides spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss closed-door negotiations.

They said the Saudi-Houthi understandings include a six-month truce with a cessation of all military activities across Yemen. The Houthis have committed to coming to the table with other Yemeni parties to negotiate a political settlement to the conflict, they said. The United Nations is meant to facilitate the political negotiations, they added.

Both parties also agreed to further ease restrictions by the Saudi-led coalition on Sanaa's airport and the Houthi-controlled Red Sea ports in Al Hudaydah, the officials said. The Houthis would lift their year-long blockade on Taiz, Yemen's third largest city which is held by government forces, they said.

There was no immediate official comment from Saudi Arabia on the trip, the second of its kind in 2023.

The visit indicates progress in the Oman-mediated consultations between Riyadh and Sanaa, which run parallel to the UN peace efforts. The peace initiatives have gained momentum after Saudi Arabia and Iran agreed to reestablish ties in a deal brokered by China.

Oman, which shares borders with Yemen, has been trying for years to bridge differences between Yemen's warring parties.

In comments to The Associated Press, Hans Grundberg, the UN envoy for Yemen, described the ongoing efforts, including the Saudi and Omani talks in Sanaa, as "the closest Yemen has been to real progress toward a lasting



Yemenis carry humanitarian aid provided by a charitable organization on the outskirts of the northeastern city of Marib on Thursday. PHOTO BY AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

## Saudi-Houthi talks spark Yemeni hopes

### Timeline of key events in yearslong conflict

Diplomatic moves to end the conflict in Yemen are underway after Saudi Arabia and Iran agreed to resume diplomatic relations.

Here is a timeline of the conflict and the moves to end it.

**2014:** The Houthi militias advance from their stronghold in Yemen's northern mountains to seize the capital Sanaa in September.

**2015:** In February, then-Yemeni president Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi flees to the city of Aden. A coalition led by Saudi Arabia enters the conflict in March. As Iran-backed Houthis advance on Aden,

Hadi flees to Saudi Arabia.

**2019:** The Houthis escalate their attacks on Saudi Arabia.

A major hit on the Abqaiq oil processing plant and Khurais oilfield on Sept 14 halves the kingdom's crude output.

Riyadh and Washington accuse Iran of being behind the attack, which it denies.

**2022:** A United Nations-brokered cease-fire starts on the first day of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan on April 2.

Renewed twice, the truce expired in October without the government

and rebels reaching an agreement to pursue it.

**2023:** In a China-brokered announcement, Iran and Saudi Arabia agree on March 10 to restore ties.

Days later, UN officials say the rapprochement should offer momentum toward peace in Yemen.

On April 8, Omani mediators arrive in Sanaa to help broker a truce between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia.

On April 9, a Saudi delegation arrives in the capital to negotiate a potential new truce.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

peace" since the war began.

"This is a moment to be seized and built on and a real opportunity to start an inclusive political process under UN auspices to sustainably end the conflict," he said.

### 'Positive signals'

Yemeni Foreign Minister Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak said there were "positive signals" that a cease-fire deal would be announced, along with addressing other humanitarian and economic issues.

"The (regional) circumstances are different," he told Egyptian satellite channel Al-Qahera in an interview aired on Friday. "It pushed toward achieving a solution."

Bin Mubarak, however, said there are "many fundamental issues" that Yemen's warring sides need to address before reaching a settlement to the conflict.

Ahmed Nagi, a Yemen expert at the International Crisis Group, a Brussels-based think tank, said the Iran-Saudi Arabia rapprochement has given a boost to Saudi-Houthi negotiations, and that both sides are close to announcing the cease-fire's renewal.

However, the second track of the Houthi-Saudi negotiations — a potential road map to reach a permanent settlement to the conflict — would be a major challenge when discussed by Yemeni parties, he said.

"Each party has different interpretations and expectations," he said. "Given the complexities of the situation, it is hard to see progress on this track very soon."

Yemen has been embroiled in a devastating civil war since 2014, with the Houthis fighting against the internationally recognized Yemeni government. The Saudi Arabia-led coalition intervened in the conflict in support of the Yemeni government in 2015. The war has killed tens of thousands of people, displaced 4 million, and pushed the country to the brink of starvation.

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## Food serving as melting pot for Chinese, African cultures

By OTIATO OPALI in Nairobi, Kenya  
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When Joseph Gachoki started working at Kenya's iconic Tin Tin Chinese restaurant 30 years ago, he did not know that his journey to delve deep into Chinese culture had just begun. Today, Gachoki, who has risen through the ranks to the position of front office operations manager, says that the restaurant is synonymous with Chinese culture in Kenya.

Back in 1978, Chinese nationals and couple James Tin and Anna Tin established the Tin Tin restaurant in Nairobi, making it the first Chinese restaurant in Kenya.

"When I started working here in the 1990s, we were mostly serving Chinese customers but over time, our clientele has evolved and today, we mostly serve local customers. We have customers who first tasted and loved Chinese food at our restaurant and though we can serve local dishes on request, they strictly come to have Chinese food," Gachoki said.

Despite being owned by a Chinese proprietor, all the staff, including chefs at the restaurant, are Kenyan. While setting up the restaurant back in the 1970s, co-founder Anna Tin taught local chefs to cook Chinese food and the skill has been passed on to date.

"Being the first Chinese restaurant in the country, we have to maintain the standards of making Chinese food in order for our customers to continue enjoying the unique Chinese experience that we offer," Gachoki said.

However, Jitesh Lakhani, the owner of Taste of China, a Chinese restaurant in Nairobi's Parklands area, has taken a different approach to serving Kenyans Chinese food. His rooftop restaurant with a 360-degree view of Nairobi features Chinese decorations with dragons and Chinese wall hangings, creating an

atmosphere that has come to be loved by its customers. However, Lakhani serves what he refers to as "Indo-Chinese food".

"When we established Taste of China back in 2008, we had a Chinese chef who joined us. He trained my wife and the head chef on how to prepare authentic Chinese cuisine. Unfortunately, the Chinese chef had to move back to China because his family was affected by an ensuing earthquake. Once he left, the head chef, my wife and other staff started fusing the Chinese cuisine with other ideas," Lakhani said.

### Multicultural environment

With Kenya being a multicultural country with a sizable number of the Indian community of which he is a member, Lakhani decided to continue serving Chinese food after the departure of his Chinese chef but decided to add more variety for his clients.

As a result, people from different cultural backgrounds are able to enjoy the food at his restaurant as can be seen in his clientele, which is made up of both resident and tourist Chinese nationals, Indians, Kenyans, Europeans and even Koreans.

Despite the food being foreign, both Gachoki and Lakhani said that feedback on Chinese delicacies served in Kenya is very positive and most local customers have indicated their preference for chicken, pork and prawns.

Robin Bosibori, a regular customer at the Tin Tin restaurant, said that she first visited the restaurant during a friend's wedding reception back in 2006 and she has been a customer ever since.

Gachoki said that Kenyans' love for Chinese food has grown to an extent that the restaurant gets orders to serve Chinese food at events such as weddings or birthdays.



Protesters attend the "Rally for Our Rights" ahead of the 2023 Wisconsin Supreme Court election outside the Wisconsin State Capitol in Madison, Wisconsin, on April 2. EVELYN HOCKSTEIN / REUTERS

## Violence on rise over abortion issue in US

By MAY ZHOU in Houston  
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Since the US Supreme Court overturned a constitutional right to abortion with its decision in Roe v. Wade last year, violence has broken out on both sides of the issue.

The violence started even before the June 24 decision by the high court was announced. A militant group in the state of Wisconsin that claimed to be pro-abortion took the name "Jane's Revenge" after the decision draft of Roe to overturn abortion rights by the Supreme Court was leaked in May.

The group's name is believed to be a reference to the 1970s-era Jane Collective, an underground service in Chicago that provided abortion when it was illegal in the United States, Fox News reported.

On May 8, the office of the anti-abortion group Wisconsin Family Action was set on fire, and the first communiqué from Jane's Revenge was put online. By July 8, the website of Jane's Revenge had documented about 10 such attacks. However, the site stopped updating such occurrences after that date.

In the past, it has been mostly anti-abortion activists who committed violent acts against abortion providers and facilities, not any group or person claiming to be pro-choice.

Some have expressed skepticism

that Jane's Revenge is in fact a pro-choice organization and said it may instead be an anti-abortion group that is seeking to turn people against abortion rights.

Newsweek reported that six months after Roe was overturned, there had been 122 attacks on churches and pregnancy centers, many of them done under the name of Jane's Revenge. The data were collected by the Family Research Council in Washington, DC. It recorded five fire bombings and 47 vandalism incidents.

Katherine Spillar, executive director of the Feminist Majority Foundation, told USA Today recently that she has seen more violent incidents and threats since the overturning of Roe, including people blocking access to clinics, invasions of clinics, arson, stalking, gunfire, and bomb and death threats.

"It's a coordinated strategy to drive clinics out of existence," Spillar said.

Colleen McNicholas, chief medical officer at Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis region and Southwest Missouri, told USA Today that she has also seen "new, more threatening tactics" from anti-abortion protesters who have shown up with ladders, cutting ties to fencing, using bullhorns and filling schedules with fake patients to cause longer wait times.

Agencies contributed to this story.

## As tigers thrive, India's indigenous demand rights

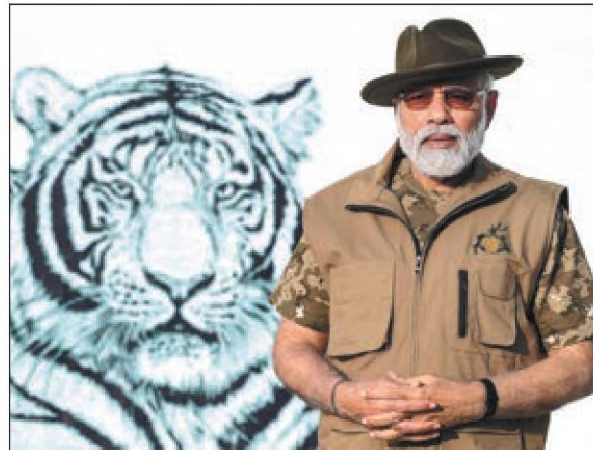
BENGALURU, India — It was a celebratory atmosphere for officials gathered just hours away from several of India's major tiger reserves in the southern city of Mysuru, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced on Sunday to much applause that the country's tiger population has steadily grown to over 3,000 since its flagship conservation program began 50 years ago after concerns that numbers of the big cats were dwindling.

"India is a country where protecting nature is part of our culture," Modi said. "This is why we have many unique achievements in wildlife conservation."

Modi also launched the International Big Cats Alliance which, he said, will focus on the protection and conservation of seven big cat species, namely, the tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, puma, jaguar and cheetah.

Protesters, meanwhile, are telling their own stories on Sunday of how they have been displaced by wildlife conservation projects over the last half-century, with dozens demonstrating about an hour away from the spot of the announcement.

Project Tiger began in 1973 after a census of the big cats found India's tigers were fast going extinct through habitat loss, unregulated sport hunting, increased poaching and retaliatory killing by people. It's believed the tiger population was around 1,800 at the time, but experts widely consider that an



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi posing during his visit to the Bandipur and Mudumalai Tiger Reserves on Sunday. PIB VIA AFP

overestimate was due to imprecise counting methods in India until 2006.

Laws attempted to address the decline, but the conservation model centered around creating protected reserves where ecosystems can function undisturbed by people.

Several indigenous groups say the conservation strategies meant uprooting numerous communities that had lived in the forests for millenniums.

Members of several indigenous or Adivasi groups — as indigenous peo-

ple are known in the country — set up the Nagarhole Adivasi Forest Rights Establishment Committee to protest evictions from their ancestral lands and seek a voice in how the forests are managed.

"Nagarhole was one of the first forests to be brought under Project Tiger and our parents and grandparents were probably among the first to be forced out of the forests in the name of conservation," said J.A. Shivu, 27, who belongs to the Jenu Kuruba tribe.

The fewer than 40,000 Jenu Kur-

uba people are one of the 75 tribal groups that the Indian government classifies as particularly vulnerable. Adivasi communities like the Jenu Kurubas are among the poorest in India.

Some experts say conservation policies that attempted to protect a pristine wilderness were influenced by prejudices against local communities.

India's tiger numbers, meanwhile, are thriving: the country's 3,167 tigers account for more than 75 percent of the world's wild tiger population.

But critics say the social costs of forest conservation — where forest departments protect wildlife and prevent local communities from entering forest regions — are high.

Sharachandra Lele, of the Bengaluru-based Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment, said the conservation model is outdated.

"There are already several examples of forests being used actively by local communities and tiger numbers have actually increased even while people have benefited in these regions," he said.

Vidya Athreya, the director of the Wildlife Conservation Society in India, said: "Traditionally we always put wildlife over people." Athreya added that engaging with communities is the way forward for protecting wildlife in India.

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## WORLDUS

## 4 slain by employee in Kentucky bank

By MAY ZHOU in Houston  
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A 23-year-old bank employee with a rifle shot and killed four people and wounded nine others at his Louisville, Kentucky, work site on Monday morning and then was killed by police, authorities said.

Gunshots were heard around 8:38 am at the Old National Bank before it opened. Police arrived at the scene within three minutes and exchanged fire with the gunman, Louisville interim Metro Police Department Chief Jacquelyn Gwinn-Villaruel said at a news conference. "We then returned fire and stopped that threat," she said.

The gunman was identified as Connor Sturgeon, a 23-year-old white male. The gun used in the shooting was an AR-15-style rifle, a federal law enforcement source told CNN.

Sturgeon was notified that he was going to be fired from the bank, and he wrote a note for his parents and a friend indicating that he was going to shoot at the bank, said a law enforcement source familiar with the investigation, according to CNN. Sources indicated that he had issues of low self-esteem growing up.

The chief said Sturgeon was livestreaming during the attack. "That's tragic to know that that incident was out there and captured," she said. "We're hopeful that we can have that incident removed, that footage removed."

Meta, the company that owns Facebook and Instagram, said in a statement that it had "quickly removed the livestream of this tragic incident this morning."

Nine people, including two police officers, were treated for injuries from the shooting, University of Louisville Hospital spokeswoman Heather Fountain said in an email.

Officer Nicolas Wilt, 26, was shot in the head during an exchange of fire with the gunman, police said. He is a recent graduate from the police academy, sworn in as an officer less than two weeks ago on March 31. He was out of surgery and listed in stable but critical condition.

Police released the names of the four people who died: Tommy Elliott, 63; Jim Tutt, 64; Josh Barrick, 40; and Juliana Farmer, 57.

An emotional Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear told a news conference

that Elliott was an "incredible friend." He said Elliott helped him to build his law career, to win the governor office, and offered him advice on "being a good dad."

Another close friend of Beshear's was wounded and in critical condition.

Beshear praised the police for their quick response and said that there was no doubt that officers saved lives. "Our bodies and minds are not meant to go through this type of tragedies," said Beshear in the morning news conference.

The shooting, the 15th mass killing in the US this year, came two weeks after a former student killed three children and three adults at a Christian elementary school in Nashville, Tennessee. That state's governor and his wife also had friends killed in that shooting.

Louisville Mayor Craig Greenberg, himself a workplace-shooting survivor, called the shooting "an evil act" and "targeted violence."

"To add to this tragedy, a few blocks away, shortly after this tragedy, another man lost his life, and a woman was shot in a completely different act of targeted violence," said Greenberg.

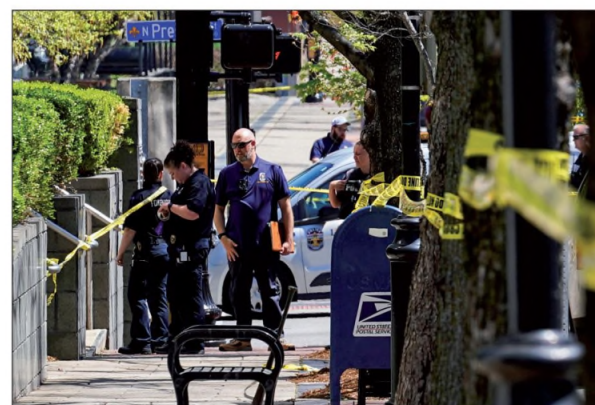
The incidents appeared to be unrelated, but they both took lives, said Greenberg. "They both leave people scarred, grieving and angry. I share all those feelings myself right now."

President Joe Biden responded to the shooting in a tweet: "Once again, our nation mourns after a senseless act of gun violence — Jill and I pray for the lives lost and impacted by today's shooting. Too many Americans are paying for the price of inaction with their lives. When will Republicans in Congress act to protect our communities?"

On Monday, police in Nashville disclosed that while they haven't discovered a motive in that shooting, writings left behind by Audrey Hale indicated that she had planned a mass shooting for months. Hale was not on the police's radar before the shooting.

Police also said Hale was under a doctor's care for an undisclosed "emotional disorder," but didn't say if there is a link between the disorder and the shooting.

Agencies contributed to this story.



Police deploy at the scene of a mass shooting outside an Old National Bank branch in downtown Louisville, Kentucky, on Monday. A 23-year-old bank employee with a rifle shot and killed four people and wounded nine others at his work site on Monday morning and then was killed by police, authorities said. JEFFREY DEAN / REUTERS

## Talking global finance



Jin Liqun (center), president and chair of the board of directors of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, speaks with other panelists at the "Scaling Up Resilience and Sustainability Financing" discussion held during the World Bank and International Monetary Fund spring meetings on Monday. The discussion was sponsored by the Bretton Woods Committee, the International Finance Forum and the Paulson Institute. ZHAO HUANXIN / CHINA DAILY

## US probes leak of documents

Dozens of classified Pentagon files, including on Ukraine military, end up on social media

By AIHEPING in New York  
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US officials are trying to identify who leaked dozens of classified Pentagon documents that appeared online with details that include secret assessments of Ukraine's combat power and intelligence gathering on America's allies, including South Korea, Canada and Israel.

Security analysts who have reviewed the documents on social media sites told various US media that the documents also include sensitive briefing material on China, the Indo-Pacific military theater and the Middle East.

Chris Meagher, the assistant to the secretary of defense for public affairs, said Monday at a briefing that the Pentagon first became aware of the document leak last week, with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin first briefed on the matter on April 6.

At a separate briefing, national security spokesman John Kirby said that President Joe Biden was first briefed about the leak last week.

Meagher said that the document leak has prompted US officials to reassure its allies "of our commitment to safeguarding intelligence and fidelity to our security partnerships."

NBC News reported Saturday that a senior US official said that

the government's "working theory" is that the documents are real, although some of them could have been altered.

It remains unclear whether the leak is the result of a hack by a foreign adversary or whether the disclosures came from within the US government or through a US ally with access to American intelligence reporting.

The evidence that this is a leak, and not a hack, appears strong, said The New York Times.

The leak is expected to raise questions among US allies about whether Washington can be trusted with secret information, said security experts.

A South Korean senior government official on Monday in a briefing cast doubt on the legitimacy of the documents, saying there are suggestions that some of the information might be fabricated. He said that his country will demand that the US take "appropriate measures" once the investigation has concluded.

The documents first appeared last month on social media websites, beginning with the Discord server for the video game Minecraft and 4Chan. Their existence was first reported on Friday by the Times.

A Pentagon official said that the Defense Department is assessing the "validity" of the documents, and an interagency effort is

US officials have engaged with Allies and partners and have informed relevant congressional committees of jurisdiction about the disclosure."

Sabrina Singh, Pentagon deputy press secretary

assessing how the leak could affect national security and relationships with allies.

"Over the weekend, US officials have engaged with Allies and partners and have informed relevant congressional committees of jurisdiction about the disclosure," said Pentagon deputy press secretary Sabrina Singh in a statement.

Two US officials told Reuters on Sunday that they haven't ruled out that the documents may have been doctored to mislead investigators as to their origin or to disseminate false information that may harm US security interests.

Some experts say it could be an American who leaked the documents. Michael Mulroy, a former senior Pentagon official, told Reuters in an interview that the focus now is on this being a US leak, as many of the documents

"were only in US hands."

But those running the investigation said they haven't ruled out the possibility that pro-Russian elements were behind the leak.

CNN said it has reviewed 53 leaked documents, all of which appear to have been produced between mid-February and early March.

They provide a rare window into how the US spies on allies and adversaries alike, CNN said.

While US allies are aware that the US intelligence community collects information on friendly nations, diplomats from some of the countries mentioned told CNN it was frustrating — and harmful to the US reputation — to see that information exposed publicly.

One of the documents, dated Feb 23 and marked "Secret", outlines in detail how Ukraine's S-300 air defense systems would be depleted by May 2 at the current usage rate, according to NBC News.

In a statement to the Times, Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky, said the documents were filled with "fictional information."

"There is not the smallest doubt that this is yet another element of hybrid warfare," he said. "Russia is trying to influence Ukrainian society, sow fear, panic, mistrust and doubt. It's typical behavior."

But Ukraine has already altered some of its military plans because of the leak, a source close to Zelensky told CNN.

Agencies contributed to this story.

## Emotions raw in California at justice rally for boy fatally shot in car seat

By CHANG JUN in Oakland, California  
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Hundreds of community members rallied Monday outside the Alameda County Courthouse to seek justice for Jasper Wu, a 23-month-old boy who was fatally shot as he slept in his car seat during a freeway shooting in 2021.

Standing on the steps of the courthouse and holding signs high, the diverse crowd chanted "Justice for Jasper" in unison, and "He is a baby", and "We are angry".

They demanded that Alameda District Attorney Pamela Price, the first black DA in Alameda, who recently took office and is in charge of prosecuting Wu's case, to explain how her office will handle the case and whether the three suspects will face jail time.

Jasper, born to immigrant Chinese American parents, was sleeping in his car seat in the back seat of his mother's car on Nov 6, 2021, when a

stray bullet hit him in the head. They were driving on Interstate 880 to their home in Fremont when a rolling gun battle among rival gangs erupted on the other side of the freeway.

Jasper Wu died later that day in his mom's arms.

The community became concerned after an internal memo, which indicated Price's intentions in the case, was recently made public.

In the memo, Price has directed her assistant attorneys to "bring balance back to sentencing and reduce recidivism" by not allowing prosecutors to "file or require defendants plead to sentencing enhancements".

Gang activity and gun possession were included as offenses to be taken into judicial consideration for a reduction in prison time.

In a recent meeting with Jasper Wu's parents, Price was reluctant to share what kind of punishment she would pursue against the three suspects.

Wu's relatives contend that Price may drastically reduce charges

against the three suspects under her new policies.

An Wu, Jasper's mother, talked to the media after the meeting with Price. "I worry it won't be the full extent of sentencing. I cannot stop worrying about the possibility of her (Price) not pursuing the maximum penalty to the three suspects and bringing justice," she said.

The suspects — Trevor Green, 22, of Richmond; Ivory Bivins, 24, of Vallejo; and Johnny Jackson, 28, of Richmond — all have criminal records. They were arrested in December and charged with murder, shooting at an occupied vehicle, and committing a felony in possession of a firearm in the freeway shooting. They were scheduled to appear in court Monday.

They were arrested in late 2022, during the final weeks of former district attorney Nancy O'Malley's tenure. The men were initially charged with special circumstances murder, making them eligible for sentences of life without parole if convicted.

In a written message read to the

public at Monday's rally, An Wu reiterated her stance as "a mother" that "I would like to see the maximum sentencing to the fullest extent be charged in Jasper's case under the law. I don't want another family to go through this."

In a pre-recorded video released to the public last week, Price defended herself. "There are a lot of rumors buzzing through this community," she said. "Much of it is simply not true. Some people, including reporters, are saying things that are not based on facts."

"I want to clear the record. I assured the parents of Jasper Wu that the men we believe are responsible for his death are charged with serious crimes, and they will be held accountable," Price said in her statement. She also said "we have not made any decisions about what charges to pursue, or not to pursue."

"What I saw in that video shocked me — it outraged me," said Bobby Ye, who helped organize the event, along with the National Asian Pacific

Islander Prosecutors Association, reported the East Bay Times.

Butch Ford, a veteran prosecutor in Alameda County who was directed by Price to take paid administrative leave for at least 13 weeks, spoke out at the protest. He said that although some warned him not to talk publicly, he believes "silence toward crime itself is crime". He called on Price to act because, "This is about victims," he said. "This is about the safety of our community."

Ford said that the prosecutor handling Wu's case had recently been reassigned.

Yang Shao, a Fremont City Council member, accused Price of being lenient on criminals by "putting killers and attackers back to the street", causing public safety issues.

Shao emphasized that the rally for Jasper took place as Eliyanah Crisostomo, 5, was fatally shot by a stray bullet on the same freeway on Saturday afternoon when she was riding in the car with her parents to join a family birthday party.

"Price is the DA for Alameda County, and she should have known the chilly chain reactions if she continues her wrong policies," Shao said. "We need to hold her accountable."

In another video, Price said: "This particular tragedy is being used by people with a political agenda. Racist messages that my office has received and directed at me are unprecedented."

Shao replied: "It is Price who is using race and politics in this case to avoid bringing the long-due justice for the Wu family. Justice is justice. A good DA always will uphold justice regardless of race, skin color and politics of suspects."

"Who are those 'people with a political agenda'?" asked Chen Xipeng, chairman of the Oakland Chinatown Chamber of Commerce.

"Actions speak louder than words," said Yajing Zhang, a member of the Fremont Board of Education who attended the rally. "If Price does not do her work as the DA, she'd better understand that voters can recall."

## BUSINESS

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## HIGHER GROUND

## IPO system reaches big milestone

Trading in 10 main board stocks shows high-quality development of market

By SHI JING in Shanghai  
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The highly anticipated market-wide implementation of the registration-based IPO mechanism got off to a sound start on Monday as the first 10 main board companies to list under this mechanism started trading.

Of the 10 companies that debuted on Monday, five are listed on the main board of the Shanghai Stock Exchange while the rest trade on the Shenzhen bourse.

Data from market tracker Wind Info showed total financing received by the 10 companies through their IPOs exceeded 21.2 billion yuan (\$3.1 billion).

The adoption of the new IPO system across the entire A-share market is a significant milestone, and is expected to facilitate the high-quality development of the Chinese capital market, said experts.

Under the new mechanism, no price fluctuation limit is set for the first five trading days. The 10 debutant companies reported an average price spike of 96.5 percent on Monday, with electronic component maker Shenzhen CECport Technologies reporting the biggest daily price surge of 221.55 percent.

The benchmark Shanghai Composite Index and Shenzhen Component Index shed 0.37 percent and 0.8 percent, respectively, on Monday.

During the listing ceremony held simultaneously in Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen, Guangdong province on Monday, Yi Huiman, chairman of the China Securities Regulatory Commission, the country's top securities watchdog, said the registration-based IPO mechanism, which underlines information disclosure, has stood the test of the market, facilitating progress in trading and delisting.

The mechanism has already helped the capital market better serve the real economy and promoted technological innovation. The structure and ecosystem of the Chinese capital market have thus experienced profound changes, significantly enhancing market vitality and resilience, he said.

The registration-based IPO mechanism was first launched on the STAR Market of the Shanghai bourse in July 2019. This move is projected to nurture "hard tech-

nology" companies specializing in biomedicine, artificial intelligence or chipmaking.

In August 2020, the mechanism was introduced on ChiNext in Shenzhen where a large number of companies that combine traditional industries with state-of-the-art technologies and business models are traded.

Next, in November 2021, the Beijing Stock Exchange, which was launched to nurture technologically advanced small and medium-sized enterprises, implemented the mechanism right from its inception.

Under the registration-based IPO mechanism, profitability requirements for companies seeking to list are relaxed. Companies with dual-class ownership are allowed to list.

The 10 companies that debuted on Monday had a combined sales revenue of over 193.5 billion yuan in 2022, up nearly 10 percent from a year earlier, while their total net income spiked 81 percent year-on-year to 6.6 billion yuan.

The compound annual growth rate of sales revenue for the 10 companies came in at more than 27 percent over the past three years (2020-22), while that of net income was as high as nearly 51 percent, according to Wind Info.

The 10 companies are mainly from industries like engineering equipment, retail, basic chemical products, construction, electronics, medicine and energy.

Chen Li, chief economist of Chuancai Securities, said the 10 companies are industry leaders with positive growth outlooks. This is in line with the characteristics of the A-share main board, which mainly accommodates large-cap blue-chip companies, he said.

Analysts from China International Capital Corp Ltd said marketwide implementation of the registration-based IPO mechanism will further facilitate the high-quality development of the Chinese capital market.

As the mechanism is based on information disclosure, market forces will come to wield more decisive power from now on. With the normalized delisting mechanism, underperforming companies will get weeded out in due course and the environment of the overall capital market will be optimized in general, they said.



An attendee takes a picture of an animal-shaped robot powered by ModelArts of Huawei Cloud at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona earlier this year. AFP

## AI to help drive tech revolution

By FAN FEIFEI  
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Artificial intelligence is expected to usher in speedy growth in China and become a key driving force for a new round of technological and industrial revolution, as major Chinese tech heavyweights have accelerated efforts to develop their own AI-powered large models amid a worldwide frenzy around the ChatGPT chatbot, experts said.

AI and ChatGPT-related technologies will likely free human beings from tedious tasks and enable them to focus on creative thinking, with immense application potential in fields like culture, retail, finance, healthcare and education, they added.

They called for Chinese AI companies to pool more resources into improving computing power, algorithms and quality of data, and ramp up investment in basic scientific research, including mathematics, statistics and computer science to gain a competitive edge in the AI chatbot race.

AI is gaining momentum and finding a wide range of applications across various industries, with the penetration rate expected to reach 20 percent in 2026, said Tian Qi, chief scientist in AI at Huawei Cloud.

Tian, who is a fellow of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) — the world's largest technical professional organization — made the remarks at a forum on AI large model technology held by the Chinese Association for Artificial Intelligence in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Saturday.

He said AI is speeding up integration with traditional scientific calculations in the fields of meteorology, oceanography, agriculture, machinery, aviation, aerospace and geology, emphasizing the pro-

cess of training AI models has higher requirements for capital input and computing power.

Tian said Huawei has been investing in its Pangu AI large models over the past few years, and has built AI models for industrial applications covering pharmaceuticals, electric power, meteorology, mining and finance.

He Xiaodong, vice-president of Chinese e-commerce giant JD, said at the forum that JD will launch its new-generation large model dubbed ChatJD, a ChatGPT-like product for industrial use, sometime this year.

A host of Chinese tech companies including Alibaba Group, Baidu Inc and NetEase have jumped onto the AI chatbot bandwagon, as ChatGPT has taken the world by storm.

Alibaba said on Friday that it has invited enterprise users to test a self-developed large model called Tongyi Qianwen. Last month, Baidu unveiled its large language model and Chinese-language ChatGPT alternative, Ernie Bot, which could be implemented in a variety of functions including searches, autonomous driving and smart devices.

"China has gained an upper hand in bolstering the industrial application of AI compared with its foreign counterparts, given that the country boasts relatively complete industrial categories, an ultra-large consumer market and a strong development foundation," said Pan Helin, co-director of the Digital Economy and Financial Innovation Research Center at Zhejiang University's International Business School.

Noting Chinese tech heavyweights and AI unicorns have invested heavily in building AI large models, Pan is bullish on the prospects of the AI-generated content sector and the application of ChatGPT-style conversational

chatbots in China.

Global market research firm International Data Corp said China's spending on AI will likely hit \$14.75 billion in 2023, accounting for about one-tenth of the global AI market. The scale of China's AI market is expected to reach \$26.44 billion in 2026, with a compound annual growth rate of over 20 percent between 2021 and 2026.

China has made significant progress in developing AI technology. A Stanford University report showed that China filed more than half of the world's AI patent applications in 2021 and continued to lead the world in the number of AI journals, conference papers and related publications.

However, a new set of problems will likely emerge, including ethics, privacy leakage and data security, accompanied by the commercial use of AI large models, experts said.

The Payment & Clearing Association of China on Monday called on participants in the payment industry to use ChatGPT with caution, considering the risks of cross-border data leakage.

The risks of using ChatGPT and other tools to process work content should be comprehensively assessed, and such tools should be used in accordance with laws and regulations, the association said in a statement, underlining participants in the payment industry should not upload key and sensitive information when using ChatGPT.

Lu Yanxia, research director at IDC China, said Chinese tech companies possess the advantages of offering users AI-powered conversational results based on Chinese language, adding that generative AI has triggered a new AI wave and brought about new business opportunities for domestic AI servers, cloud computing and chip companies.

## Chinese, foreign banks bolster BRI

By JIANG XUEQING  
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Some of China's large State-owned commercial banks and foreign lenders have continuously consolidated the Belt and Road Initiative and expanded into new areas of business to align with China's new development pattern and advance the country's high-level opening up.

In recent years, Bank of China has supported a number of BRI projects in the areas of health, green development, digitalization and innovation.

As of the end of last year, the bank had followed up on more than 900 corporate credit granting projects in BRI-involved countries and regions, with total credit exceeding \$269 billion.

Between 2015 and 2019, BOC issued five series of BRI-themed bonds in seven currencies. The total amount was equivalent to \$14.5 billion.

"With the aim of achieving sustainability and benefiting the people, BOC will stick to high standards during the implementation of the BRI and further consolidate the foundation of cooperation in the countries and regions involved in the BRI. The bank will steadily expand into new areas of business, actively serve China's new development pattern and high-level opening up, and promote high-quality development of the initiative," said Zhang Xiaodong, executive vice-president of the bank.

China Construction Bank, another Beijing-based large State-owned commercial lender, also provided financing for projects in BRI-involved countries and regions through a number of medium and long-term financial services, including international syndicated loans, cross-border mergers and acquisitions, export credit, project financing and financial leasing.

As of the end of last year, CCB had supported 342 projects in 60 BRI countries and regions, with a total financing quota of more than \$50 billion.

In addition, the outstanding balance of its international business guarantees reached \$17 billion, covering projects in 112 BRI countries and regions.

The bank also provided cross-border payment services in more than 140 small currencies and raised \$1.67 billion via the issuance of BRI-themed bonds, said Wang Bing, executive vice-president of CCB.

Standard Chartered, a UK-based international banking group, has extensive cooperation with domestic financial institutions and corporate clients in BRI countries and regions, said Jerry Zhang, executive vice-chairman and CEO of Standard Chartered Bank (China) Ltd, the group's local subsidiary.

Last year, the banking group completed more than 130 projects in BRI countries and regions, and 40 percent of the projects met the environmental, social and governance — ESG — standards of the United Nations. It is committed to incorporating more green development concepts into BRI-related projects in the future, she said.

Standard Chartered participated in a large solar power project in the Middle East. The contractors concerned were Chinese companies. While some of the financing was provided by the Export-Import Bank of China and the China Development Bank, European manufacturers also contributed to the project, which involved multilateral development banks, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the African Development Bank.

"Our role in the project was to put the whole financing package together. That's very consistent with the objectives of the Belt and Road Initiative, which is to combine Chinese expertise in manufacturing or project building with Chinese and other capital to generate sustainable projects across the countries and regions involved in the initiative, with the appropriate amount of political and other risk protections," said Bill Winters, group chief executive of Standard Chartered PLC.

## Briefly

## Reverse repos add 18b yuan to liquidity

The People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, said it injected 18 billion yuan (\$2.62 billion) into the financial system through open market operations for seven-day, 2 percent reverse repos on Monday. A reverse repo is a process in which the central bank purchases securities from commercial banks through bidding, with an agreement to sell them back in the future.

## Civil aviation sector maintains growth

In March, there were 11,657 daily domestic flights on average, up 133.5 percent year-on-year, showing steady growth of China's civil aviation sector, an industry report showed. According to a report released by VariFlight, a China-based civil aviation data service provider, the figure is up by 3 percent over that of March 2019.

XINHUA · CHINA DAILY

## Rio Tinto sanguine on China's ironclad demand

By ZHENG XIN  
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Rio Tinto, the world's largest iron ore miner, said it anticipates more growth, investment and local partnership opportunities in China, as signs have been indicating that the Chinese economy has been gradually recovering, a top company official said.

China accounted for more than half of Rio Tinto's global revenue in 2022, with China having positioned itself as an industrial hub in the world, said Jakob Stausholm, CEO of Rio Tinto, during the China Development Forum held in Beijing in March.

"Based on the current robust cooperation with China, Rio Tinto is confident in the new GDP growth target set for China and we believe China is expected to make a significant contribution to global economic growth this year once again," Stausholm said.

"All the indicators we see, not just macro, but also in our businesses, suggest that the Chinese economy

has been recovering and I feel confident about the targets set by the Chinese government."

He said Rio Tinto will further deepen its partnerships with local players, as "partnering up with Chinese companies is helping Rio Tinto create stability."

The Western Range iron ore mine project in Pilbara, Australia, jointly developed by Rio Tinto and State-owned China Baowu Steel Group, kicked off construction last month. Production of the project, with a total investment of \$2 billion and annual production capacity of 25 million metric tons, is anticipated in 2025. Rio Tinto holds a 54 percent stake and Baowu has 46 percent.

The two sides have also forged an agreement to sell up to 126.5 million tons of iron ore at market prices over 13 years.

"China wants to strengthen its domestic production and security of supply, including international expansion, and that's actually what we are doing hand in hand with the Chinese partner," Stausholm added.



The booth of Rio Tinto during an expo in Shanghai.

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An analyst said while China is the world's largest producer and consumer of metals, it still relies on imported raw materials such as iron ore, bauxite and copper concentrate that are further processed into steel, aluminum and refined copper for downstream users in real estate, auto, shipbuilding and consumer electronics.

"Therefore, Chinese producers invest overseas for mining assets, in an effort to secure raw material supplies at a competitive cost," said Zhu Yi, a senior analyst with metals and

mining at Bloomberg Intelligence, a market monitor.

"For instance, the Simandou iron ore project (in Guinea), which involves Chinese companies and Rio Tinto, produces 65.5 percent grade iron ore, and has relatively low alumina and silica impurity levels, helping boost the steel industry's efforts to reduce carbon emissions," Zhu said.

Simandou, Stausholm said, is part of the company's efforts to further get involved in China's high-quality development, helping secure China's supply chain security.

# BUSINESS

## Joy game is on for toy, gift makers in Shantou

Players show stronger confidence over quick-recovering market demand

By QIU QUANLIN  
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The toy and gift industry is expected to witness a quick rebound following the optimization of COVID-19 control measures, as domestic and overseas buyers and manufacturers exhibited a positive approach in terms of business growth during an expo in Shantou, Guangdong province.

Intended purchase agreements during the 22nd China Shantou (Chenghai) Toys and Gifts Expo, which concluded on Monday in Chenghai district of Shantou, a major toy and gift manufacturing base, reached 10.8 billion yuan (\$1.57 billion), a historical record for the event, according to the expo's organizers.

Dubbed China's "toy and gift capital", Chenghai, located in the eastern coastal area of Guangdong, is home to over 50,000 toy companies, with exports of toys and gifts growing 33 percent year-on-year to 14 billion yuan in 2022.

Sully Sullivan, director of Hangzhou Zekesi Trading Co Ltd, said there will be a quick rebound of the toy and gift industry in the United States, after three years of the COVID-19 pandemic.



This year may not be the best year for toy businesses, but it is for sure that the industry will grow steadily in the future. We believe the global toy market will be even better next year."

Sully Sullivan, director of Hangzhou Zekesi Trading Co Ltd

"This year may not be the best year for toy businesses, but it is for sure that the industry will grow steadily in the future. We believe the global toy market will be even better next year," he said.

Sullivan was one of more than 9,000 overseas and domestic professional representatives to sign purchasing contracts with local toy and gift manufacturers during the expo, which had an exhibition area of 50,000 square meters with more than 180,000 toy and gift products.

In addition to the intended purchase agreements that were signed during the event's opening ceremony, the estimated transaction amount during the exhibition reached 3 billion yuan, with 1,238 overseas buyers, according to the organizers.

Tu Taoying, sales director of distribution channels for Sembo Block, a Chenghai-based company specializing in designing and producing high-quality building blocks, said sales of toys began to increase in December following changes to the COVID-19 policy.

"Sales of toys increased sharply, especially during the Spring Festival holiday, usually a sales peak time in the domestic market — many toy shelves in shopping malls were almost out of stock," he said.

Tu said another sales boom will appear in the following months. "We have cooperated with many owners of big movie intellectual properties such as *The Wandering Earth* to design and produce more competitive blocks," he said.

Tu said the overseas market

would be a new growth engine for the company's business in the future. "We plan to increase the proportion of exports to about 10 percent of our total sales this year," he said.

Russia will be a big potential market for the company's exports of its blocks using the IP of *The Wandering Earth*, Tu said.

"We will also ship more self-developed flower toys to European and North American markets, which have developed increasing demand for such products on online sales platforms such as Amazon," he said.

To facilitate the development of building blocks, the local authorities have planned to build a toy paradise project in Chenghai, to display the district's transformation from traditional toy manufacturing to the high-quality and smart development of the industry.

Liu Weihe, sales manager of Yuxin Science and Education Toys Co Ltd, also said sales of toys are expected to increase significantly both in the domestic and international markets this year.

"After decades of development, toys made in Chenghai are of better quality and more diverse — domestic and overseas buyers will have more choices in the selection of local toys," he said.

Following changes to the COVID-19 policy, the toy industry will grow both in production and sales as demand for high-quality products is expected to increase, Liu said.

"Toys will be more finely differentiated and positioned in more diverse ways," he added.

Citing the toy industry's market position mainly targeting children in the past, Liu said the company would design and develop more toys for people aged above 15 in the future.

Toy and gift makers in Chenghai were also encouraged to expand their presence in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area by investing more in design and trade services in Guangzhou and Shenzhen, two important toy manufacturing regions.

"While focusing on production locally, makers based in Chenghai should cooperate in design and trade services with their counterparts in the Greater Bay Area," said Lin Weibin, director of the Guangzhou Toys and Gifts Industry Association.

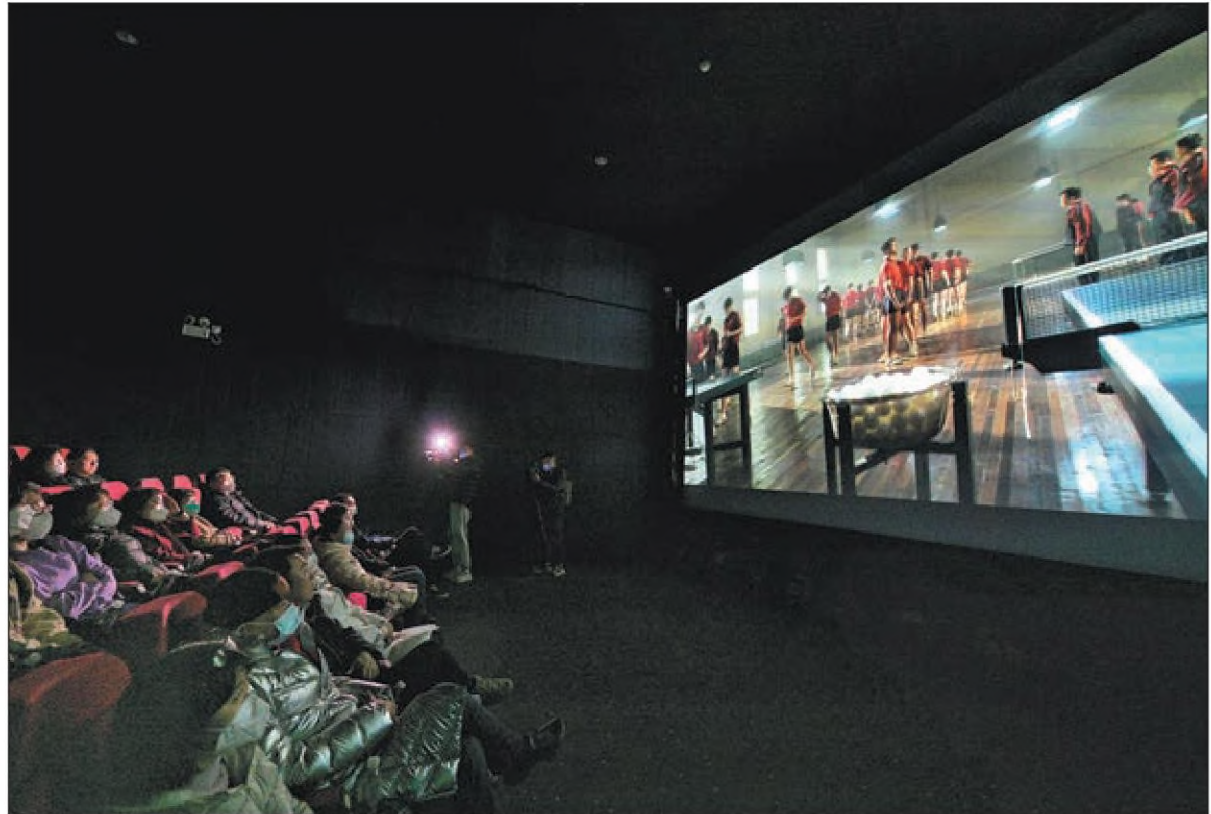
The toy industry in Shenzhen and Guangzhou has developed advantages in its industrial chain, especially in design, trade and supplies of electronic components, Lin said.

Wen Zhanbin, Party secretary of Shantou, said the city will make more efforts to build the toy and gift industry into an industrial cluster worth 100 billion yuan.

The China Toy & Juvenile Products Association signed a strategic cooperation agreement with the local government during the expo to cultivate a group of specialized and sophisticated enterprises in the future. The local government also signed an agreement with technology giant Baidu Inc to promote intelligent manufacturing in the toy and gift industry.

The city will also introduce a series of incentive policies to improve the innovation and incubation chain of the toy and gift industry and promote new business forms and models such as cross-border e-commerce and supply chain services.

Dong Anqi contributed to this story.



Moviegoers are seen at an IMAX cinema in Tianjin in January. TONG YU / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

## IMAX mulls network expansion in China

By LIU YUKUN  
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The China branch of IMAX, a film technology company, is confident in the local market's recovery with plans to further expand its network this year, after a record-breaking start thanks to pent-up demand for premium theater experiences as the country optimized its COVID-19 control measures, its top executive said.

Daniel Manwaring, CEO of IMAX China, said the company's China box offices are likely to approach pre-pandemic levels this year supported by recovering demand for moviegoing, a wide cinema network and a strong pipeline packed with films from both home and abroad.

"The post-pandemic film market has been a major boon to (IMAX's) premium (theater) experience growth ... We are very optimistic about China's economic growth and the recovery of consumption this year. The film industry in particular has shown strong resilience and bounced back in recent months," Manwaring said.

A recent survey conducted by media platform Yicai showed that among 1,200 respondents, 90 percent of people now ranked going to the cinema as the number two consumption choice at the beginning of this year, lagging behind travel.

Estimates from Shenzhen-based East Asia Qianhai Securities Co Ltd showed that total box office revenue in 2023 is likely to reach 54.6 billion yuan (\$7.94 billion), around 85.18 percent of that in 2019.

"We are also encouraged by a series of government measures that reinforce China's achievements in opening-up, providing more opportunities for foreign enterprises.

"Our mission is to continue to build upon the IMAX experience for all audiences and further expand our network," Manwaring added.

Over the seven-day Chinese New Year holiday concluding on Jan 27, IMAX China delivered over \$86 million at the box office, up 54 percent year-on-year and equal to more than 50 percent of the company's box office for all of 2022.

Total box office revenue generated from films on big screens in China reached nearly 6.76 billion yuan during the period, ranking the second-highest in the country's history.

IMAX China said *The Wandering Earth 2*, which was on show during Spring Festival, became the highest-grossing local-language film of all time in IMAX.

"Despite making up just 1 percent of (cinema) screens in China, IMAX took 22 percent of the total box office of *Avatar: The Way of Water*, and 9 percent for *The Wandering Earth 2*. We hope this year's box office will reach the pre-pandemic level," Manwaring said.

Zhi Feina, a professor at the Chinese National Academy of Arts, said there are clear signs of recovery in this year's film market. "The approvals of film projects have been accelerated and companies are stepping up efforts in content creation and film marketing. As of the end of March, there were 40 films whose box office revenue surpassed 1 million yuan.

Zhi said: "Financial pressure of

cinemas has also been greatly eased. By the end of March, total box office revenue reached nearly 16 billion yuan with 335 million visits to cinemas."

Manwaring said: "China has become the largest market for IMAX globally in regards to the theater network and this has provided consumers with abundant access to meet the pent-up demand."

The company's network footprint reached nearly 1,000 theaters in China to date, with 794 installations and 204 backlogs.

"We are confident that a strong supply of top-quality content will quench the thirst of audiences of all kinds. Looking into 2023, the global film slate has no shortage of high-quality original films and franchises, including the latest installments of *Guardians of the Galaxy*, *Fast & Furious*, *Transformers*, *Mission: Impossible* and non-English language films such as *The First Slam Dunk*, *Born to Fly* and many other Chinese language titles that are expected to receive release dates in the coming months," he said.

## Transportation projects gather speed nationwide

By ZHUANG QIANG  
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Transportation infrastructure construction has maintained a high level of operation in China in recent years, especially amid COVID headwinds, which has proved to be key in stabilizing the economy in the short term and will better serve the country's major strategies, economic and social development and people's livelihood over the medium and long term, experts said.

According to latest data from the Ministry of Transport, China's investment in transportation fixed assets has continued to grow rapidly in the past 10 years, with a total investment of 3.6 trillion yuan (\$523.8 billion) in 2021, an increase of more than 50 percent compared to some 2.05 trillion yuan in 2011. From January 2022 to November, China completed 3.5 trillion yuan of fixed asset investment in transportation, a year-on-year increase of 5.8 percent.

Many provincial regions nationwide maintained strong efforts in the sector this year, according to transportation investment plans and construction tasks revealed by local transport authorities.

Among such regions, East China's Zhejiang province said in a plan in January that it will set a higher growth target for fixed asset investment this year than that for the overall economy, and planned to invest over 1 trillion yuan in some 1,000 major projects, with the first project batch numbering at 791, including 540 ongoing ones and 251 newly launched ones.

According to government information, investment in the first batch of projects reaches 833.7 billion yuan.

There have been signs of enhanced efforts to this end, as a



Construction workers of China Railway 24th Bureau Group Corp Ltd work at the Maguling Tunnel on the Hangzhou-Wenzhou High-speed Railway in Zhejiang province on April 3. JIANG HAN / XINHUA

major local high-speed railway project in Zhejiang reported milestones earlier this month.

China Railway 24th Bureau Group Corp Ltd (CR24), a unit of China Railway Construction Corp, said its workers, after two years of "tough tunneling work", have dug the Maguling Tunnel on the Hangzhou-Wenzhou High-speed Railway on April 3.

The completion of the tunnel project also marks the full completion of all tunneling work of the Yongjia section on the railway, laying a solid foundation for the full line to open for traffic by June 2024.

Located in Yongjia county in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, the tunnel is a single-hole double-track undertaking with a total length of 6.09 kilometers and is designed for bullet trains running at 350 kilometers per hour. The tunnel was constructed using an excavation method from both ends.

Digging through the tunnel was faced with several challenges, including a maximum burial depth of 496.2 meters, fragmented rock formations, fault zones and other complex geological conditions. To overcome these difficulties, the team established a geological alert system to strengthen rock monitoring and management.

CR24 said it implemented several measures to ensure safe and smooth construction, including establishing an information management platform to enhance in-tunnel construction control and strengthening pre-shift safety education as part of its on-site duty shift operation.

Prior to the tunneling completion, CR24 said another project, also on the Yongjia section — the Doumen Creek Bridge — finished full linkage on April 1.

The 76-meter-high bridge located in Yongjia county in Wenzhou is another milestone project due to its

risky height and high requirements among all the construction "head-aches".

"Considering the building difficulties, we gave safety operation instruction documents for every construction team when it comes to every construction procedure, to prioritize safety on this project, for the safety is key to on-time completion of the bridge and to the overall progress," said the CR24 project manager.

The manager said the team implemented full-process control in the construction work, from the emergency response system, fire protection and safe electricity use to the arrangement for the cable trench and work at heights.

The Hangzhou-Wenzhou High-speed Railway is a vital conduit in the Yangtze River Delta region and will be the fastest way for passengers traveling among the cities of Hangzhou, Jinhua, Yiwu, and Wenzhou in Zhejiang. Upon completion, the railway will connect a wealth of tourism resources in these cities and promote the coordinated development of the Yangtze River Delta region.

With its completion, the high-speed railway will greatly improve the regional transportation network and promote the development of the region's economy and tourism industry.

The vital role played by infrastructure in supporting economic growth and mitigating the contraction in consumption has been highlighted in this year's Government Work Report. This year, it will continue to serve the implementation of the country's major strategies, high-quality development, and more importantly, people's livelihoods, boosting employment and relevant industries along the supply chains, said Sealand Securities.

# BUSINESSFOCUS



BOAO, Hainan — With the Philippines beginning to ship fresh durian to China in March, 29-year-old Jomar Abdon, a Filipino durian grower, called access to the enormous Chinese market a bonanza.

Thanks to the deal signed during Philippine President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr's visit to Beijing in early January, around 9,696 direct jobs and 1,126 indirect jobs will be generated after Philippine durians are cleared for export to China, according to the Philippine Department of Agriculture.

This is the latest sign of the vibrant Asian economic recovery after China optimized its pandemic prevention and control measures. This year, the weighted real GDP growth rate of Asia is expected to be 4.5 percent, an increase from 4.2 percent in 2022, according to a report released on April 4 by the Boao Forum for Asia during its annual conference held from March 28-31 in Boao, a coastal town of Qionghai in China's island province of Hainan.

In particular, a 1-percentage-point increase in China's GDP growth leads to a 0.3-percentage-point increase in growth in other Asian economies, said the report titled "Asian Economic Outlook and Integration Progress", citing data from the International Monetary Fund.

China's robust economic rebound has delivered very positive signals to not only Asia, but also the world, providing valuable certainty for a world afflicted with uncertainties, said BFA Secretary-General Li Baodong during the forum.

China has served as a stabilizer for economic growth of both Asia and the world, thanks to its high-quality development, cooperation-oriented policy measures and high-standard opening-up, which also led to its own rapid recovery, Zhang Yuyan, director of the Institute of World Economics and Politics of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said at a news conference following the release of the report.

## Weightier Asian growth

Hailing Asia as "a bright spot in the bleak global economic landscape", the report highlighted that global economic governance has entered into an "Asian moment", and regional economic integration has been advancing with trade interdependence between regional economies standing at a relatively high level.

Since the beginning of this year, more Asian countries have perceived China's renewed economic vigor and its driving force behind regional recovery. With strong trade and cooperation linkages with regional countries, China's high-quality development is widely expected to represent a larger share of Asia's growth in 2023.

The status of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and China as hubs for trade in goods remained unchanged, said the report. The highest level of dependence on China

## China's dynamic economy pivotal to regional growth, integration

Momentum seen after nation optimizes pandemic prevention, control measures



was found among ASEAN members, reaching 21 percent in 2021. Japan and South Korea also had a dependence on China of over 20 percent.

China-ASEAN cooperation has made Asia the most dynamic region in the world, said Kin Phea, director-general of the International Relations Institute of Cambodia, an arm of the Royal Academy of Cambodia.

He said China's high-quality development will inject new impetus into ASEAN's economic development in the post-pandemic era by promoting high-quality, environmentally friendly and innovative investment projects, as well as bringing the latest technologies to ASEAN, which will contribute to the building of a closer China-ASEAN community with a shared future.

In addition, China's resumption of outbound tourism is also expected to strongly stimulate the recovery of tourism and investment across Asia.

Since the beginning of this year, a large number of Chinese tourists, especially business groups, have come to Laos to explore investment and trade opportunities. Recently, a large number of agricultural, forestry, industrial and mining projects, with planned investment of over \$100 million, have taken shape in Laos targeting the Chinese market, said Orlathy Santikhongkha, vice-president of the Young Entrepreneur Association of Laos.

The expert said that cross-border

passenger trains are scheduled to begin service on the China-Laos railway this year, further boosting the free flow of people, materials and capital between the two countries, and bringing much-needed vitality to regional growth.

## Global public goods

With the steady growth of its own economy, China — a champion of multilateralism — is committed to sharing its development dividends with all partners, both regional and global, by offering global public goods.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative, a flagship public goods project designed to enrich the mechanism and content of international cooperation, as well as promote common prosperity for all.

Over the past decade, China has been dedicated to delivering public goods to the international community, including the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilization Initiative and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which are widely recognized as the country's unremitting efforts to advance Asian integration and globalization.

"China's series of initiatives based in Asia basically promote deeper economic integration, including improving policy coherence, promoting an enhanced cooperation platform and stronger collabora-

tion. I think this is a welcome development," said Allan Gepty, assistant secretary of the Philippine Department of Trade and Industry.

By improving infrastructure construction, promoting connectivity, and strengthening people-to-people and cultural exchanges, the BRI has not only promoted a rules-based free trade system, but also made Asia a more prosperous region, Gepty said.

Over the past decade, China has signed cooperation agreements with 151 countries and 32 international organizations, and trade with countries participating in the BRI was up 19.4 percent in 2022 over the previous year.

The BRI paints a vision of connectivity and shows foresight, said Renat Bekturov, governor of Astana International Financial Centre, during a sub-forum at the BFA recently.

Over the past decade, from ports to railways, a series of projects have built corridors in Europe and Asia, allowing the flow of people and goods between the East and West to be unimpeded and making such a vision a reality, he said.

For Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary, minister for planning, development and special initiatives of Pakistan, the essence of the BRI lies in sharing.

He stressed that China is ready to share its successful experience in poverty alleviation with countries involved in the initiative without reservations or strings attached, so as to build a community with a shared future for mankind through promoting common prosperity.

The global public goods provided by China adhere to real multilateralism, which conforms to the trend of the times by upholding peaceful development and win-win cooperation, Xu Xiujun, a research fellow with the Institute of World Economics and Politics at the CASS, told Xinhua News Agency.

In addition, China's public goods are completely open, not only to developing countries, but also to all developed nations. It is not exclusive, he said, adding that BRI cooperation enjoys a very strong continuity, and has entered a stage of high-quality development.

Phea from Cambodia pointed out that such global public goods as the BRI and the GDI are vital for practicing the concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind.

"China has played and will continue to play a vital role in promoting free trade, multilateralism and

globalization, which are essential to building a just, equitable, open and inclusive world," he said.

## Greater openness

As China has been pursuing a proactive strategy of opening-up, its global public goods have been welcomed by the international community.

Moreover, as a major trading partner for more than 140 countries and regions, China has worked to build a globally oriented network of high-standard free trade areas and accelerated the development of pilot free trade zones and the Hainan Free Trade Port, leading the world in total volume of trade in goods. It is also a major destination for global investment and a leading country in terms of outbound investment.

"With a foreign policy that places peace and development at the core of its international engagements, China has demonstrated a willingness to share the outcomes of its development with the rest of the world, in an effort to achieve global development targets such as those codified under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals," said Cavince Adhere, a Kenya-based international relations scholar.

Adhere said that the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement, the world's largest free trade deal — which took effect in January 2022 — not only benefits member states, but also serves as an important benchmark for other regions seeking to consolidate economic integration.

The emergence of the RCEP provides a reference for the world in building free trade agreements at a higher level, with a wider scope and adhering to unified rules in the future, said Masahiro Morinaga, chief delegate of the Japan External Trade Organization's office in Chengdu, Sichuan province.

In this aspect, Santikhongkha from Laos observed that the RCEP has offered an open and fair platform for calibrating regional and global trade rules and order, and more importantly, giving participating countries a chance to find new cooperation breakthroughs through the platform.

It has prompted contemplation on how to make the best use of free trade mechanisms like the RCEP, which will be conducive to upgrading related policy measures and further benefitting more markets around the world, said the expert.

"Asia is home to two of the world's leading trade agreements, the RCEP as well as the CPTPP (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership), which really underscores the fact that the region is committed to globalization and committed to trade as a driver of growth," said Ben Simpfordorfer, a partner at leading international management consulting firm Oliver Wyman, adding it "will ultimately be positive for global growth".

XINHUA

**Top:** Visitors gather at the Philippines booth during the 2022 China International Fair for Trade in Services in Beijing in September.

**Above:** Employees from a Chinese State-owned company work at a bridge construction site in Kratie, Cambodia, in January.

WAN PO / XINHUA



China has played and will continue to play a vital role in promoting free trade, multilateralism and globalization, which are essential to building a just, equitable, open and inclusive world."

**Kin Phea**, director-general of the International Relations Institute of Cambodia

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Middle East detente shows dialogue, not war, only way to resolve disputes

With Riyadh and Teheran announcing in Beijing on Thursday the official re-establishment of their diplomatic relations, there are hopes that a permanent cease-fire can be agreed to put an end to the Yemen conflict, a de facto proxy war between the two Middle East giants that has been fought for nine years.

It is good to hear that Saudi and Omani delegations arrived in Yemen's capital Sana'a over the weekend to negotiate a permanent cease-fire deal with Houthi officials, which aims to end hostilities and rebuild efforts and a timeline for foreign forces to exit the country. If the talks go well, reportedly, an agreement is expected to be announced before the Eid al-Fitr holiday, which begins on April 20.

This means that thanks to China's pro-peace efforts and mediation, with the reconciliation of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and the positive role Oman has been playing in the process as well as the United Nations' support, the stage has been set to end the conflict in Yemen.

As a matter of fact, ending the war in Yemen has always been in China's consideration in its mediation between Saudi Arabia and Iran. As Geng Shuang, deputy permanent representative of the Chinese mission to the United Nations, pointed out on March 15, dialogue and negotiation are the only realistic way out of the Yemen issue, and China hopes that the resumption of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran will create favorable

conditions for the improvement of the situation in Yemen.

Before the arrival of the delegations, the two sides have already shown their respective goodwill to each other. The Saudi coalition lifted eight years of restrictions on imports through Houthi-controlled ports, and almost at the same time, the Houthi forces announced that they would unilaterally halt missile and drone strikes against Saudi Arabia and all offensive operations on the battlefield, pledging that if Saudi Arabia promised to lift its blockade of Yemen and halt its air campaign, it will permanently cease fire.

It is fair to say that by turning swords into ploughshares in Yemen, one of the poorest countries in the world with a population of nearly 30 million, about 80 percent of whom are dependent on humanitarian aid because of the war, the Beijing-brokered resumption of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran is serving as a starting point for a series of positive chain reactions in the Middle East.

All these have happened after the United States' "strategic withdrawal" from the region where for too long it had thought it could waywardly play countries off against one another and speculate on the mess. And it was during its "stay" that the regional conflicts and issues worsened and were made seemingly insoluble, except by war.

The series of positive changes the region has experienced and has enough reason to expect in the foreseeable future show to the world that the right way to solve disputes should always be dialogue, not war.

## With a friend like Washington...

Although the Republic of Korea has tried to play down any possibility of a rift with the United States over media reports that US intelligence agencies eavesdropped on its top officials' discussions about Ukraine, the issue could still crop up and even overshadow ROK President Yoon Suk-yeol's upcoming visit to the US later this month.

Since taking office, the Yoon government has adopted a foreign policy that draws it closer to its Western allies, especially Washington, and distances itself from its Asian neighbor, China. The latest leaked documents should serve as a wake-up call to Seoul that in the US alliance system, it can never become an equal, respected partner.

Referring to the spying allegation as "not a confirmed matter", the ROK's presidential office said in a statement on Sunday that the country "will review past precedents and cases from other countries to come up with countermeasures, and will hold consultations with the US on the issue".

Given its current pro-US stance, the Yoon government clearly does not want the surveillance issue to snowball into a diplomatic spat. But for the public in the ROK, the fact that the Pentagon's leaked confidential documents reveal that the US is not only deeply involved in the Ukraine crisis but also its intelligence community is conducting sur-

veillance and eavesdropping on its own allies, is something hard to chew.

From Edward Snowden to Julian Assange, revelations of the US spying on its allies have repeatedly been exposed in the global spotlight in recent years, indicating the US intelligence community has long woven a global web in which no country and no individual, including the leaders of its allies, is spared from the US surveillance.

Despite its self-proclaimed role as the beacon of freedom and democracy, the US is an empire of spooks unscrupulously wielding its monopolistic technological might to conduct cyber espionage, surveillance and even attacks on foreign governments, enterprises and individuals, in flagrant violation of international law and the basic norms of international relations.

Each time another incident is revealed, it only highlights the extent to which the US' cyber tentacles have ensnared the world. Each time it further erodes the credibility of the US administration's claims of shared values.

In an increasingly turbulent world which is being fueled by the US-instigated bloc confrontation, it seems not even its allies can escape the eyes of the US intelligence community, which, in the name of safeguarding US national security, is constantly compromising the national security of other countries.

## US involvement in Ukraine conflict odious

A small number of Pentagon documents on the Russia-Ukraine military conflict, including some marked "top secret", were posted on Twitter and Telegram on Wednesday. Since then, journalists, researchers and social media sleuths have uncovered additional classified documents posted as early as March 1 on additional sites.

But it is not the leak that is the most surprising aspect about the classified documents but how deeply the United States is involved in the conflict and how much it is doing to help Ukraine. Despite its denial of direct involvement, the US is already a de facto participant in the conflict, considering both the military and intelligence aid it has offered to Ukraine.

The documents that have appeared on social media only serve to tell the world that the US is part of the hostilities, and what it has been doing is meant to make the conflict continue. Behind the rhetoric of "supporting Ukraine against Russian aggression" is the US' geopolitical thinking of dividing the world into two camps as it did during the Cold War.

With another camp which is supposed to pose a threat both militarily and ideologically to the camp headed by the US, Washington can continue to make the case that the European Union countries must unite under the banner of North Atlantic Treaty Organization to seek the protection of the US.

Only under such a "duel-polar" global framework will the US be able to maintain its hegemony, which has been almost shattered by the globaliza-

tion of the world economy and the increasingly multipolarized world.

If anything, the military conflict between Russia and Ukraine has provided Washington with a glimmer of hope that it may be possible to make the military conflict a protracted war and thus divide the world into two camps: the one that supports Ukraine and the other that supports Russia.

That explains why Washington has made no efforts at all to mediate between the two parties and has excluded any possibility of a political settlement of the conflict.

Think what will happen if the war continues for years to come and EU countries have to continue their military aid to Ukraine, and the world is deeply divided because of the conflict.

The global industry and supply chains will be disrupted or even shattered. The EU's economy will be seriously affected. The development of the global economy which has already suffered considerably because of the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia-Ukraine conflict will see no hope of recovery. Neither will those in need of help for survival in developing countries see any hope of shaking off poverty.

It is both selfish and callous of Washington to do whatever it can to make the hostilities continue and do nothing to seek a political settlement of the conflict. Global efforts are needed to bring Ukraine and Russia to the negotiation table for a political solution as early as possible. That is the way to maintain world peace and development, and that is what China is doing.

Song Chen



## Opinion Line

## Job losses, banking crisis will take huge toll on innovation

Amazon and Meta recently announced their second round of layoffs, sacking 9,000 and 10,000 employees respectively, just months after the two giants curtailed 18,000 and 11,000 jobs respectively, adding more uncertainties to the outlook of the US economy after its market confidence was rocked by a banking crisis.

US high-tech enterprises have been seeing undercurrents since 2022 with signs emerging that the sector's rapid development lasting nearly 20 years has come to an end. The tech sector has seen the most aggressive industrial expansion, and the COVID-19 pandemic offered scope for explosive growth through online trade. However, with the end of the pandemic and the gradual recovery of offline production, the over-expanded virtual economy is contracting, prompting US high-tech enterprises to make structural adjustments.

Weakened long-term demands

and increased risk of recession because of an ever-strong dollar, protracted inflation, and drastically raised interest rates by the Federal Reserve have also impacted US high-tech enterprises considerably.

The latest round of layoffs in the US high-tech sector has further underscored the consequences of the irresponsible policies of the US government. In recent years, the US has politicized and weaponized science, technology and trade issues, used administrative means to impose unjustified sanctions on commercial enterprises, and tried to block normal international cooperation among high-tech companies. A series of irresponsible practices by the US, from formulating the CHIPS and Science Act to introducing the Inflation Reduction Act, have seriously undermined market rules, the international economic and trade order, and the stability of global industry and supply chains.

The all-out efforts made by the US to push for "decoupling" have also hurt its tech sector and the world economy. A US-based semiconductor company has said the new round of export controls imposed on China will cost it billions of dollars in revenue losses while also making it cut funding for research and development. While the high-tech sector is the barometer of the US economy, what makes things worse is the banking crisis.

US President Joe Biden says he had done everything possible to address it, but analysts say the closure of Silicon Valley Bank, which handled start-up investment, could shake up the US' startup ecosystem. This could weaken US high-tech enterprises' will to innovate, creating "butterfly effects" that may change the landscape of global scientific and technological innovation.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

## Labeling Chinese media has boomeranged

After labeling the National Public Radio's Twitter handle as "US state-affiliated media" on April 5, Twitter later changed it to "government funded media", a tag it even affixed to the British Broadcast Corporation and Voice of America handles.

When Twitter handles of Chinese media outlets and individuals were labeled as "China state-affiliated media" in January 2021, many Western outlets went to town with the news, some even asserting that all Chinese handles were controlled by the State. Those saying such things had either never visited China or not done their homework well.

Even though Twitter changed the tag for Western media outlets from

state-affiliated media to government-funded media, it goes to show that singling out and blaming Chinese handles was unfair.

Some Western political forces have long accused Chinese media outlets of being ideology-driven, but it is they who are ideology-driven. They have their blinkers on and are ever ready to believe any rumor against China, such as those floated by Adrian Zenz about the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region and various versions of the COVID-19 "lab leak theory", even though all of those have been proven to be lies.

In contrast, the Chinese media outlets that are accused of being ideology driven are sensitive in all

their reports. When they report about Japan's plan to dump nuclear-contaminated water into the sea, they are concerned about potential victims across the world and not just in China. They also care about the human rights of people in the Middle East and those threatened by guns in the United States. Yes, they also defend Chinese national interests, but that's common practice in the media of any modern nation. Why blame that on ideology?

The act of blaming Chinese media outlets has boomeranged badly on the West. More will follow soon.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

## What They Say

## Australia paying high price for sub deal

In an interview with Sky News Australia on Sunday, when asked whether the outcome of the 2024 presidential election of the United States will affect the AUKUS agreement, and whether that will create uncertainties for Australia buying US nuclear submarines, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese made clear Australia has concerns.

Despite Albanese's negative replies to both questions, it is obvious that Canberra worries that Australia might be left high and dry should a new US leader be forthcoming after the election who annuls the AUKUS agreement.

Such concerns about whether the US will honor the spirit of contract are actually common to almost all the US' allies, including such seemingly faithful pawns as Japan and the United Kingdom, given the US' track record.

Thanks to the restraint Beijing

has exercised toward the US' provocations and containment efforts, the communication channels between China and the US have been kept open, and more importantly, the world's two largest economies have witnessed a fast increase in their bilateral trade in spite of Washington's attempts to decouple their economies from each other, that means the conditions for the rebound of Sino-US relations are always there.

But some of the US' allies, such as Australia and Canada, have seen their trade with China decline dramatically in recent years after they jumped onto Washington's anti-China bandwagon.

That it will take more than two decades for Australia to obtain all of the eight nuclear submarines in the deal, with China as their imaginary enemy, provided by the US and the UK, gives the Australian

side enough reasons to worry about what might happen to the deal if Sino-US relations take a turn for the better over that period of time. If so, not only will the deal, which will cost Australia up to \$245 billion, prove a waste of money, but more importantly it will firmly chain Australia to the US' geopolitical planning as it allows the US military to penetrate into the Australian military and some civil sectors to unprecedented degrees.

Australia's future reliance on the US for technology assistance and maintenance of the submarines, which are unnecessary for Australia given the South Pacific's peace and stability, means it will irreversibly be a player in the US' games, turning an otherwise peaceful continent far from the center of world geopolitical struggles into a potential target of any foes of the US.

— LIYANG, CHINA DAILY

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## COMMENT

Safdar Parvez and Dominik Peschel

## Beijing's road to recovery and resilience

With the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, China's economy looks set for a recovery in 2023 — even as global economic growth is projected to slow down amid tightened monetary policies in several advanced economies in response to high inflation.

Economic conditions in many less developed economies are also challenging. Fiscal balance sheets are stretched due to spending on anti-COVID-19 measures, steep rises in public debt, and headwinds from difficult external conditions. Against this backdrop, a stronger Chinese economy is not only beneficial to the country, but also supports global economic recovery.

Reviving consumer demand is key to recovery and growth in China. Pent-up demand from the past three years — when households cut spending during lockdowns — must be unleashed to stimulate new demand for goods and services. A complete revival of consumption might take time as households readjust to post-COVID-19 opening, and there's always the risk of further surges in infections. But a revival must be pursued nonetheless, as consumption is key to sustainable long-term economic growth in China.

Higher consumption will benefit the service sector amid a structural economic shift that will see this sector replace infrastructure investment and manufacturing as the fulcrum of China's economic growth in the coming decades. This shift will drive growth across a host of business sectors including wholesale and retail trade, transportation, travel and logistics, as well as in education, eldercare, health, information technology and hospitality.

This is not to say that continued public and private investments in infrastructure and manufacturing are not needed; they are, particularly to support growth in the immediate and the short term. The government's efforts to loosen housing market policies, and the intent to streamline regulations for private businesses and reform State-owned enterprises, are also critical to recovery prospects.

But only a vibrant services sector can drive longer-term growth. It's also important from a perspective of combating climate change, as service businesses are generally less energy-intensive than construction and industry. Consequently, a greater policy emphasis on developing services can help China make progress on sustainable growth while achieving its decarbonization and climate change targets.

Three specific policy interventions can instigate sustainable longer-term growth in China that

will benefit the Chinese people while helping spur global prosperity.

The first step is to introduce policies that strengthen the demand side of the economy, especially household consumption. In line with China's vision of "common prosperity," we suggest a focus on redistribution through progressive taxation and social transfers. This will not only boost household demand, particularly among lower-income groups with higher propensities to consume, but also reduce income inequality.

Households will also consume more if they have better access to better quality public services for health emergencies, social protection for the aging population and the unemployed, and education for their children. All these public goods will ease the perceived need to shore up money for a rainy day.

The second entry point is to provide public policy support for the services sector on the same level as industry, including through tax incentives, access to credit, and competition.

While State-owned enterprise reforms have expanded the role of the private sector in manufacturing, many services are still provided by these enterprises, which are sometimes protected from private competition. Supporting the service sector's development will also mean opening more sectors to foreign direct investment to diversify the scope and quality of services provided.

Finally, China needs to prepare for rapid demographic aging that will increasingly curb economic growth. For the first time in 60 years, China's population fell in 2022 as the birth rate dropped to a record low. Though economic uncertainties might have contributed to this, the underlying causes include rising per capita incomes, high housing prices in cities, and insufficient support for families facing high child-rearing costs.

An aging population can inhibit growth and demand higher social expenditure and pension payments, which limit fiscal space for other important public expenditure. Policy meas-

ures are also needed to mitigate the impact of demographic aging on the labor force.

These measures could include increasing the retirement age, improving occupational healthcare so people can work longer, raising the female workforce participation rate through accessible childcare and flexible work hours, and increasing labor mobility by further relaxing the *hukou* (household registration) system.

The end of the lockdowns is an opportunity to consolidate consumption and services as the prime movers of the Chinese economy. By seizing this moment, China's economic recovery can deliver long-term prosperity and resilience at home and abroad.

Safdar Parvez is the country director, and Dominik Peschel is the former head of the Economics Unit, Asian Development Bank in China.

The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Asian Development Bank or China Daily.



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Chen Yuanting

## China and Brazil write a new chapter of partnership

That a 240-member business delegation is accompanying Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on his upcoming state visit to China suggests 2023 will be a milestone year in China-Brazil relations. The year is also important because Xi Jinping was re-elected China's president and Lula took office on Jan 1, starting his new term as Brazilian president.

Lula's visit will push the China-Brazil comprehensive strategic partnership to a higher level, especially because the two countries have established a long-term relationship and Brazil was the first developing country to establish a strategic partnership with China.

Lula laid a solid foundation for strengthening bilateral relations during his two terms as Brazil's president from 2003 to 2010. In fact, China-Brazil relations became a model of South-South cooperation. Lula's presidency also saw a great leap in bilateral trade and institutionalization of inter-government exchanges, with the two sides working together to establish BRICS (a grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa).

The world, including many large developing countries, has undergone drastic changes because of factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Rus-

sia-Ukraine conflict, which have also had huge impacts on the world order.

As such, the strategic need for a stronger China-Brazil relationship has increased. President Xi attached great importance to the development of the China-Brazil comprehensive strategic partnership in the congratulatory message he sent to Lula on his inauguration. Lula responded by bringing a large business delegation with him on his visit to China.

Economic cooperation between the two sides has made considerable progress in recent years, and bilateral trade increased despite the devastating impact of the pandemic on the global economy. For example, bilateral trade exceeded \$100 billion for the first time in 2020 and reached a historic high of \$171.49 billion in 2022.

Sino-Brazilian cooperation has expanded from traditional areas such as agriculture, animal husbandry, energy and infrastructure to emerging areas such as innovations in the field of science and technology, the digital economy and the green economy. Brazil is China's biggest export destination, import source and investment destination in Latin America.

Besides, BRICS has entered the second "golden decade" of cooperation with influences beyond the five mem-

ber states. BRICS has also played a constructive role in the growth of the global economy, and helped improve the global governance system and make international relations more democratic.

By cashing in on new opportunities, China and Brazil can further deepen bilateral cooperation. The two countries are likely to coordinate their development policies, and could facilitate common development through stable effective head-of-state talks, broader economic and trade cooperation, and increasing people-to-people exchanges.

Moreover, by fulfilling their responsibilities toward the international community, the two countries can promote closer multilateral cooperation. Indeed, China and Brazil should make greater contributions to the global economy and the international community, as both have benefited from economic globalization.

To this end, President Xi has put forward the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative. The GDI calls for making more concerted global efforts to accelerate the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and highlights eight priority areas of global

cooperation — poverty alleviation, food security, COVID-19 medicines and vaccines, development financing, fighting climate change and promoting green development, strengthening industrialization, improving the digital economy, and boosting infrastructure connectivity. And the GSI urges the international community to make more efforts to maintain lasting peace by settling disputes through negotiation and consultation. And the GCI advocates nations to promote in-depth inter-civilization exchanges and dialogue to advance human civilizations through inclusiveness and mutual learning.

The initiatives will help resolve disagreements between and among countries, and promote peace and development. And by carrying out practical cooperation for the implementation of the two initiatives, China and Brazil can make big contributions to global prosperity and stability, which in turn will benefit the two countries and their peoples.

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



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## Hainan needs to further improve services to be a tourist paradise

**Editor's note:** Over the past several years, Hainan province has vigorously optimized its business environment and tourism. The construction of the Hainan free trade port has achieved fruitful results and significantly boosted the development of the province, writes a veteran journalist with China Daily.

Having spent a three-week vacation in Hainan, I carried back to Beijing mixed feelings of love and hate about the island, feelings I believe are shared by many visitors and local residents.

Owning a small apartment in Sanya, I used to go to the tropical island province every Spring Festival to escape the freezing cold in Beijing. The country's strict pandemic control measures prevented me from doing so for three years. When I visited Hainan during Spring festival this year, I found a lot of impressive changes.

Dozens of apartment buildings have come up around our building's compound, dwarfing the 20-story building. A trestle bridge now connects the two sides of a river nearby, making it ideal for an after-dinner walk. And a huge supermarket close by has made life more convenient.

News reports also say investments of billions of dollars are pouring into Sanya and the rest of the province, and several high-tech development zones and science parks are under construction. With a new duty-free shop opening earlier this year, the island now has more than 10 such shops that attract hundreds of thousands of customers looking for luxury goods at a lower price every day.

While the "hardware" progress is impressive, Hainan's "software" development has much room for improvement. Most of the people I talked with, including taxi drivers, restaurant waiters, farmers, vendors and retired people who use the island as a winter retreat, gave their thumbs down to the services on the island.

**The central government has implemented a number of preferential policies to facilitate Hainan's development.**

The cabbie who drove me to the airport told me that he had been working extra hours recently to make more money from the temporary brisk business. "Once the Southeast Asian countries are fully open to Chinese tourists, many Chinese tourists would choose to go there rather than coming to Hainan," he said. "Anyway, who will pay more for poorer services?" he said.

When my neighbors — most of whom are from outside the island — sit together near the swimming pool in our building's compound, the topic of discussion is usually about the difficulty in getting a temporary residence permit. Also, people who don't speak the local dialect are asked to pay more for vegetables and fruits by the vendors.

High commodity prices have long been the bane of both visitors and locals in Hainan. Housing prices have increased threefold in the past eight years. Apartments now sell for 20,000-30,000 yuan (\$2,911-\$4,367) per square meter in Sanya, which is higher than that in many provincial capitals. Food in restaurants cost one-third more than in Beijing, whose average income is about twice as much as Hainan's.

Rising prices as well as frequent reports of cheating and overcharging by restaurants, hotels, cabbies and travel agents are damaging the island's image and probably scaring away many potential tourists.

Due to its tropical climate, Hainan is an ideal winter retreat for many retired people from northern China, especially northeastern China where winter lasts five to six months. Statistics show that of the more than 10 million people living in Hainan, an estimated 1 million are from northern China, with many of them being from Northeast China.

Returning to Hainan after three years, I came to know that several people from the northeastern and other parts of China have either annulled their rental housing contracts or sold their apartments in the hope of shifting to other places with sea, sand and sunshine.

The central government has implemented a number of preferential policies to facilitate Hainan's development. Local governments at different levels, too, are trying to implement such policies to turn the island into an ideal tourist destination. Accordingly, campaigns have been launched to check cheating, overcharging, price hiking and dereliction of duty by officials.

But the results, as I saw and heard during my three-week stay on the island, appear far from satisfactory, indicating that local governments still have a lot to do to improve the environment in Hainan. Only when all the businesses and officials ensure that both residents and visitors get the best services can Hainan become an ideal place for residents and a real tourist paradise.

# GLOBAL VIEWS

CHRISTOPH NEDOPIL

## Greener road to the future

Lessons from China's overseas coal exit for better environmental cooperation for the next 10 years of the BRI

The reduction of environmental risks, such as climate change and biodiversity loss, is a challenge requiring global cooperation. The challenge cannot be overcome without active support from China, which is the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases and is exhibiting high vulnerability of its biological diversity. Internationally, China's potential for green development through trade, finance, and investment — not least through its Belt and Road Initiative — is among the biggest in the world.

China achieved an important climate milestone in September 2021 when President Xi Jinping unilaterally announced that China will stop building new coal-fired power plants abroad. As China continues to support new domestic coal plants and hopes to peak domestic emissions before 2030, its overseas coal exit decision was not only welcome from a global climate perspective, but also surprised many international observers of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Indeed, building a green BRI that takes climate and biodiversity, as well as overall improved social development, into its core consideration, is challenging; it will also need continuous improvement and adjustments to different realities in the Belt and Road participating countries with varying degrees of development. So, how was the important decision of exiting overseas coal projects taken?

A new study published in the leading academic journal *Science* provides three main reasons.

First, it was supported by strong cooperation between Chinese and international partners, including the Belt and Road Initiative International Green Development Coalition and the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development under

the Ministry of Ecology and Environment. These coalitions work with Chinese and international partners to better develop, integrate and promote green development standards. In December 2020, 10 months before the official coal exit plan was announced, the coalition supported the Green Development Guidance for Belt and Road projects that labeled coal-related projects as "red" or restricted. Following the publication of this "traffic light system", the coalition completed a special research report recommending a coal exit that "firmly underpinned the decision-making on China's overseas coal-related investments".

Second, a most important factor contributing to this exit decision was that several host countries of coal-fired power plants, many of which are involved in the Belt and Road Initiative, adjusted their energy plans. Rather than aiming to build more coal plants, these countries asked to work with China to emphasize green development through renewable energies. They had different reasons for this "change of heart": Economic considerations, such as the increasing price of coal in global commodity markets compared to decreasing cost of renewable energies, played an important role. There were also social reasons, such as public opinion opposing Kenya's 1.2 gigawatt Lamu coal-fired power plant, which had to be shelved after the Kenyan courts ruled that it violated environmental and social considerations.

Third, the study also finds that China is working within the multilateral system, particularly the United Nations, to announce its environmental ambitions. For example, both the targets to peak its emissions before 2030 and to become carbon neutral before 2060, as well as the coal exit deci-

sions were announced at the United Nations General Assembly in 2020 and 2021, respectively.

Domestically, Chinese planners argue that coal will provide better energy security and energy independence. Additionally, many domestic stakeholders, such as financial institutions, enterprises and employers in coal mining and the operation of coal-fired plants, strongly depend on coal. In China, coal supports about 2 to 3 million workers, which makes a domestic coal exit and just transition more complex. Thus, domestically, China for the time being embarks on the dual strategy to expand support for both coal and renewables to provide electricity with a prospect of coal peaking within the next few years.

Thus, 10 years after the Belt and Road Initiative and for the next 10 years of pursuing the dream of a green BRI, the milestone of China's overseas coal exit also provides important lessons for future collaboration. Importantly, cooperation on greening the Belt and Road Initiative can be successful if Chinese domestic institutions are supportive and working with trusted international partners. This stands in contrast to a likely less successful interventions through external pressure on China to implement green development policies, for example from the G7 countries, without understanding Chinese needs: these foreign recommendations risk being perceived as trying to undermine China's development ambitions or as being hypocritical after many years of environmental pollution by the G7 countries.

International cooperation can also support host countries to accelerate demand for green over "red" projects. This can include financial support by Chinese and international partners to reduce the financing cost for green projects



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

such as renewable energy or public transport. Another recommendation was to raise the costs for developers of environmentally harmful projects. Any cooperation requires continuous trust building, for example through research collaborations and cooperation in specific strategic growth areas, such as green finance. Finally, international partners can improve cooperation results by showing genuine interest for China's existing green successes and cooperate to learn from those

Chinese green successes, for example in the expansion of high-speed rail or the widespread electrification of public transportation buses.

Some international organizations have already successfully implemented good cooperation strategies to work with China on international environmental outcomes such as building a green BRI. As the protection of global climate and biodiversity cannot succeed without China, more, not less, such cooperation for the Belt and Road Initiative and

beyond seems necessary, particularly also in these challenging geopolitical times.

*The author is an associate professor of practice in economics and the director of the Green Finance & Development Center at the Fudan International School of Finance at Fudan University. 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.*

ZHU QINGYI AND HAO ZHIRONG

## Turbocharging EV growth

Promoting close industrial cooperation will ensure accelerated regional rollout

Association of Southeast Asian Nations members are ramping up efforts to promote vehicle electrification, making it the second-largest target market for Chinese electric vehicle makers. Over the past few years, Chinese EV makers have been vigorously exploring the ASEAN market. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement, which came into force on Jan 1, 2022, has greatly reduced trade costs through tariff concessions and cumulative rules of origin. By encouraging the alignment and integration of advanced technologies and advantages in industrialization, the RCEP will also promote trade cooperation and industrial interdependence within the bloc, creating favorable conditions for China-ASEAN cooperation in the EV industry.

ASEAN's EV industry is in a nascent stage. In recent years, auto sales in the region accounted for around 3.5 percent of the global total; however, EV sales account for less than 0.05 percent of the global total and 0.04 to 0.6 percent of the local total auto sales, with the sales volume and rate of penetration much lower than that in China. Currently, only Thailand has a relatively complete industrial chain for EV production, and countries such as Singapore, Myanmar and Laos possess production capacity for EV parts. An EV is priced at \$50,000 to \$100,000 in ASEAN countries, where the per capita GDP stands at only \$4,533, far exceeding the price range of ordinary consumers.

In the meantime, due to outdated power supply systems, scarce charging stations, and unreasonable layout structure, EV consumers in ASEAN countries face severe

"charging anxiety". For instance, Indonesia only has 332 public charging stations for EVs. For the time being, the annual cost of driving an EV is as high as \$9,582 in ASEAN countries, almost twice as much as the cost of driving a petrol vehicle.

The ASEAN EV market is poised for marked growth, as regional countries are beefing up policy support for the EV industry.

For instance, Indonesia has canceled the financing upper limit for EV and EV parts producers, aspiring to become a global hub for battery manufacturing. The Philippines passed the Electric Vehicle Industry Development Act in April 2022, striving to achieve localization of battery production and supply chains. ASEAN countries such as Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand have set phased targets for popularizing EVs and supporting infrastructure construction for EVs. The ASEAN EV market was valued at around \$500 million in 2021 and is expected to reach around \$2.6 billion by 2027. By 2035, the sales volume of EVs in ASEAN will surpass that of combustion engine cars.

China has exported 53,100 units of EVs to ASEAN countries, with the export volume to Thailand and the Philippines both exceeding 10,000 units. Currently, 23 car plants in ASEAN are engaged in production for Chinese car brands, among which nine have started or are planning on production for Chinese EV brands.

Japanese and the Republic of Korea's carmakers, which started to explore the ASEAN auto market many years ago, have established a complete supply chain and a localization development strategy. Japanese cars are inexpensive, reliable



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

and fuel efficient, with spacious interiors for small cars; therefore, they are very popular among ASEAN consumers and account for over 90 percent of the ASEAN gasoline vehicle market. However, Japanese car brands are mainly focused on gasoline-electric hybrids, rather than all-electric vehicles. China, on the other hand, has been adhering to the strategy of developing all-electric vehicles, with breakthroughs in localization of technologies for almost all key components. The country is leading the world in power battery technologies and has developed a competitive edge in the field of all-electric vehicles.

However, although China has built the most complete standard system for the EV industry, most ASEAN countries are using Europe-

an, US or Japanese EV technologies and standards. The difference in standards has substantially raised R&D and certification costs and created problems, including repeated investment, a waste in resources and undermined competitiveness of Chinese EVs. In recent years, China has been pushing for EV industry standards to "go global". China's national standard, "safety requirements for electric buses", has been adopted by the International Organization for Standardization as an international standard. Overall, China-ASEAN EV cooperation still faces standard barriers, especially in the private car sector, which urgently calls for greater connectivity of technology standards among regional countries.

The implementation of the RCEP and China's free trade strategy

have increased the export of China's advantageous products including automobiles and auto components, promoting a shift of manufacturing capacity from China to ASEAN countries that boast resource advantages and market demand. The following aspects could be considered to promote close industrial cooperation and ensure Chinese EVs go far in the ASEAN market.

To start with, there needs to be full comprehension of the characteristics of the ASEAN market and product cooperation should be promoted by giving full play to the differential advantage. Chinese carmakers, charging pile manufacturers, and engineering and power companies should seize the investment opportunity in ASEAN countries' infrastructure construction.

For example, they could start by making breakthroughs in the exports of all-electric, affordable vehicles and technological cooperation in charging pile products.

Second, we should make the most of China-ASEAN complementarity in economic resources to expand capacity cooperation. The two sides should explore the sharing of industry patterns, bolster capacity cooperation, form synergy in the supply chain system, and help China tackle areas of weaknesses in the industry chain such as auto chips, therefore jointly creating a more favorable environment for the development of the EV industry.

Third, making the most of the economies of scale in the EV industry and advantages in key technologies, we should promote China-ASEAN connectivity in EV standards. In particular, China could advance joint R&D and talent cultivation in auto standards, technical regulations, and testing and certification, in collaboration with countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and Thailand, and vigorously participate in the formulation and revision of EV standards and rules in relevant countries.

Last, Chinese carmakers should seize the opportunities for integration of industries promoted by the RCEP and beef up cooperation with ASEAN countries in joint R&D, technological transfers and talent exchanges, to strive for breakthroughs in core technologies for EVs.

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# LIFE



**Above left:** A scene from *The Cord of Life* features the protagonist, an ethnic Mongolian musician, attempting to secure a rope around his waist and his mother's. This is to prevent his mother, who has Alzheimer's, from wandering off. **Top right:** The exhausted mother leans against her son's shoulder. **Right:** The son takes his mother on a quest to seek the elusive "home" that she dreams about.

## A love that binds

New movie explores parent-child relations on Inner Mongolian steppe, **Xu Fan** reports.

Growing up in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, filmmaker Qiao Sixue witnessed a shocking scene at just 4 or 5 years old, which became an inspiration for her directorial debut feature, *The Cord of Life*.

In the family's yard, Qiao's grandfather slaughtered a sheep as part of the ethnic Daur people's long-standing tradition of preparing and storing food for the harsh winter months.

The artist, who describes herself as "a sensitive person", has since then been haunted by this vivid scene of death, especially when picturing such a possibility falling on someone she loves.

"The feeling that witnessing death brings is scary and leaves a big impression. You will come away afraid that the people closest to you will completely leave you one day too," explained Qiao in an interview with China Daily given shortly before the movie's premiere, held in a downtown Beijing cinema.

The movie, with dialogue entirely in Mongolian, was released in domestic theaters on March 18 and has so far obtained a high rating of 7.8 points out of 10 on the popular review aggregator Douban.

Born in Hulunbuir, Inner Mongolia, in 1990, Qiao went to France to learn film editing in the late 2010s. Her childhood fear of death intensified after she encountered a middle-aged woman who appeared to be lost in thought on a street in Paris.

"The year was 2017 or 2018. The woman was about the same age as my mother, dressed thinly and wandering back and forth on the street. When I asked her what she was doing, she murmured she was looking for her home. At that moment, I had a complicated feeling," says Qiao, adding that it spurred her to call her mother, who was then fighting menopause.

Weaving together these memories with other sources of inspiration, the director wrote a script, which caught



Actress Yao Chen (left) and her husband Cao Yu (center), the film's executive producers, with director Qiao Sixue (right), as the movie started shooting in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region in April 2021.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

the attention of Cao Yu, a renowned cinematographer, and his actress wife, Yao Chen, during the 13th FIRST International Film Festival in Xining, Northwest China's Qinghai province, in 2019.

With investment from Bad Rabbit Pictures — a Beijing-based film company co-founded by the celebrity couple — the project shot its major scenes in the vast grassland of Inner Mongolia during the turn of the season from spring to summer in 2020.

Casting ethnic Mongolian actress Badma and ethnic Mongolian singer Yider as the mother and her youngest son, the 96-minute movie recounts the son, a musician living and performing in Beijing, returning to take care of his mother, who reveals signs of Alzheimer's after she causes trouble at his older brother's home.

The musician brings his mother back to their old house in the countryside,

hoping to alleviate the burden on his brother and sister-in-law, but the mother — who is often lost in confusion — insists on returning to her "home", a place seemingly connecting to her childhood memories but perhaps merely existing in her imagination.

After discovering that his mother was repeatedly trying to leave the house to find her so-called "home", the son finally decides to load up some simple essentials — a tent and some kitchenware — onto his motorcycle and embarks on a quest to seek her "home". His only clue as to its whereabouts is an old photo, depicting a nondescript wilderness, the only landmark being a tree with its roots intertwined with another dead tree.

"The tale is very emotional and poetic. One could say it is both real and illusory, or even like a dream," says Cao, known for his iconic cinematography in several blockbusters such as director

Chen Kaige's *Legend of the Demon Cat* and director Lu Chuan's *Kekexili: Mountain Patrol*.

Recalling that he first read the script at the recommendation of producer Liu Hui, Cao says he was attracted by the project for two reasons, one being its theme exploring universal anxieties about separation and passing away, the other being that the tale is about ethnic Mongolians.

"I have always been interested in the culture, landscape, customs and music of ethnic Mongolians. Besides, I haven't shot a movie entirely in a natural environment since *Kekexili: Mountain Patrol*, and I have been yearning to return to work in the wild," he explains.

He also mentions that Badma played a role in *Urga*, also known as *Close to Eden*, one of his favorite movies when he was studying at the Beijing Film Academy. *Urga*, which depicts an Inner

Mongolian shepherd family, won a Golden Lion award at the Venice Film Festival in 1991.

"When I first met her (Badma), I felt that she was taller and had more vitality than I had imagined. But when she smiled, she looked exactly like the character in *Urga* who often wore a childlike smile," recalls Cao.

Also serving as the movie's executive producer, Cao, a Beijing native, says that the film has taught him how human beings are influenced and transformed by their surrounding environment.

While shooting in Inner Mongolia, Cao was captivated by the boundless pasturelands and leisurely grazing flocks, which deepened his understanding of the innate simplicity and tolerance of local herders. This experience made it challenging for him to readjust to the bustling city of Beijing.

For Cao, the film has a deeper meaning as it re-explores the relationship between parents and children. The Chinese title of this film is *Qidai* (the umbilical cord). In the film, the son, to prevent his mother from getting lost or encountering danger, ties a thick rope around both of their waists and keeps it fastened from day to night, even when he is working or sleeping.

"In the final moments of the film, the son seems to have become the father, and the mother has become the child. They are connected to each other by the rope, which symbolizes the 'umbilical cord'," says Cao, adding that he hopes the movie will help young audiences to value their relationship with their parents and reflect more deeply on the meaning of life.

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## LIFE



Craftsman maintains and innovates intricate ancient packaging technique, reports Yang Feiyue.

Gao Fuhao has committed himself to carrying on the ancient craft of delicate palatial containers that range from (clockwise from top left) an eight-cabinet foldable brocade box, a suitcase, a box for storing a traditional Chinese scepter and a round porcelain case. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## CONTAINING, HIS PASSION

During the Warring States Period (475-221 BC), a man from the State of Chu went to great lengths to make a jewelry box out of magnolia to sell a pearl.

He smoked the small receptacle with spices to give it a lasting fragrance and added exquisite ornamental pearls and jade. So effective were his embellishments that when he sold the boxed pearl, the customer returned the content and just kept the box.

The proverbial tale by Chinese philosopher Han Fei, who lived in the third century BC, has been open to many interpretations, one of the most popular being about bad choices and failure to recognize what's more important.

However, it shed light on the act of packaging valuables in beautifully crafted wooden boxes, a craft that appeared in ancient times.

With the vigorous development of textiles and paper manufacture during the Song Dynasty (960-1279), paper boxes came into being. They were favored by the literati for their simple yet beautiful and elegant characteristics.

This type of paper box is made of grass cardboard, with the outside being framed with Song brocade featuring gorgeous colors and a soft texture. The inside is lined with cotton to make a rich, soft pocket, which was originally used to carry fragile items, such as inkstones and ink ingots, and later thread-bound books.

The art form continued to flourish throughout the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, and manifested itself in various shapes and sizes, from jewelry boxes and cabinets, to royal goods and gifts given by dignitaries. The Qing court even brought together artisans in the trade to make such packages.

Today, in Hedong district, North China's Tianjin, Gao Fuhao has committed himself to carrying on this ancient craft, which was named a national intangible cultural heritage in 2021.

"In a narrow sense, the craft is about making a set of packages for cultural and playful items, which are commonly known as 'brocade boxes,'" says Gao, adding that the main purpose is to protect the contents from bumps and prolonged exposure to the external environment.

"In a broad sense, it is beyond just the production of outer packaging and involves a certain level of cultural relics protection and repair;

similar to the business of the workshops at the royal palace in ancient times," he says.

## Boxing clever

The Tianjin native, who just turned 50, is a local inheritor of the craft. He was born into a family of collectors of cultural items and, as a result, has been predisposed to ancient relics since childhood.

"I was particularly attracted to the color and delicate structure of those boxes that hold the treasures," Gao recalls.

His interest grew as his appreciation for art developed and it led him to pursue a career making the historical packing boxes.

Having studied and explored the knowledge and skills of cultural relic repair and binding for years, Gao managed to establish his own studio at a local cultural street in 2008.

"I mainly take care of, and manage, cultural relics for clients," he says. "When a client brings an item to me, he needs me to design and make a corresponding box based on the category and quality of the artifact."

"If it is damaged, I also need to repair it, and if there are any placement requirements, I need to match it with a base," he adds.

Gao considers it a process of artistic re-creation, and he takes it as his mission to deliver a complete work of art.

The process of making an artistic container involves several preliminary steps, including conceptualizing the design, sketching the blueprint, and choosing the materials.

During the actual production process, a dozen steps are taken, such as measuring the dimensions, cutting fabrics, constructing the frame and making the paste, the interior and the clasp.

"When receiving a cultural relic, the first step is to measure its basic dimensions and draw a basic model," Gao says.

A container generally has to be one-third larger than the item's dimensions, which should be precisely measured.

"You need to ensure that, when the item is put inside, it will fit perfectly and be tightly sealed," he says.

"For example, a container for a porcelain bowl can be turned upside down without the bowl falling out. Even if you throw it 10 meters with the lid closed, and the box breaks, the bowl shouldn't crack."

When an item features an irregular shape, data on various parts should be obtained and then a relat-



Clockwise from top: Gao restores a porcelain item at his workshop in Tianjin; Gao works on a *guqin*, a stringed plucked instrument; he sculpts a wooden pedestal for placing cultural relic.



A piece of jewelry is placed on a delicately carved ebony stand made by Gao.

ed model diagram needs to be drawn.

For fabrics, Song brocade, which has a gorgeous color and a soft texture, is commonly used.

"The design must be based on the characteristics of the item it will house, using luxurious and auspicious patterns that render a harmonious effect inside and out," Gao says, adding that traditional cutting techniques are also applied.

For example, he made a container with a mountain and stone background for a butterfly-patterned hairpin.

"The hairpin can be inserted in a slot in the background, so the chances of hands touching it can be reduced and the whole thing creates a whole picture," he explains.

## Developing base skills

As for the materials used for the packaging container, they may vary with the variety of the items, depending on such factors as the collectible's capacity to withstand force.

"Hard materials include paperboard, various types of wood, and composite board, while soft materials range from brocade, satin, silk, linen and cotton," Gao says.

The next step is to glue the panels of the box together, which takes between two and seven days to complete.

"It is key to make sure that the surface is smooth and wrinkle-free after the fabric is pasted onto the periphery of the box, with no corners left exposed, and that the pattern and design are even and natural," Gao says.

The most crucial step, he adds, has to be making the interior.

"It directly relates to the protection of the antique and highlights its features," he explains, adding that the materials should be carefully chosen and meticulously applied.

The final step is to make the clasp and buckle, which can be made out of jade, bone or wood, and can come in various forms.

Challenges arise when items of an unfamiliar nature are handed over to Gao. For instance, when he was asked by a friend two years ago to repair a stoneware item and to make a pedestal to hold it, Gao went out of his way to deliver a natural looking base.

He eventually delivered a nice pedestal, but has still been struggling to restore the stoneware item.

"The process has been tough, but I've picked up new knowledge in the process," Gao says.

He believes that encountering difficulties when handling various types of cultural relics and artifacts is normal, especially at the beginning.

"They have differences and similarities, but if we can master the similarities, it is easier for us to understand new knowledge and techniques," he says.

In fact, one of the biggest joys he gets from his work is the continuous acquisition of new knowledge and skills.

"I hope I can learn new things and improve myself every day," he says.

## Gifting the knowledge

Many craftsmen like Gao have engaged in the ancient craft, which has gained greater attention both at home and abroad.

Zhang Bin from Beijing Meida Technology Co, which employs artisans to make delicate jewelry boxes and cabinets in the old-fashioned way like Gao, says the company has been approached by buyers at major trade fairs held across the country in recent years.

"The public has shown great curiosity and interest in these delicate 'packaging boxes', which they hadn't seen before."

The company's products have been presented to clients in Europe, in places like Poland and Italy, who have expressed a desire to collaborate in the future.

"Next, we will bring more of those products featuring traditional Chinese culture and related elements to the overseas market," Zhang says.

Over the years, Gao has also sensed a significant rise in public interest in cultural relics and history. It has consolidated his conviction about the value of his trade and made him very demanding about his work.

"I insist on ensuring my independence in artistic creation," he says, adding that sometimes it has caused him to offend his clients. He stresses that he feels obliged to take responsibility for every single piece that passes through his hands.

Speaking about the future, Gao says he plans to use the internet, such as the WeChat platform, to share his knowledge and skills of the trade.

"I'd like to do my part to promote awareness, understanding, and appreciation of this art form to a wider audience," Gao says.

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## LIFE

## Digging up the past to help the future

Archaeologists endure backbreaking work and long hours but every now and then they find something to make their efforts worthwhile, **Wang Ru** and **Sun Ruisheng** report in Taiyuan.

Li Lei remembers his first experience with an archaeological exploration in 2007, when he was still an undergraduate working as an intern for a project in Zhangjiakou, Hebei province. After being shown soil coring skills, inserting a Luoyang shovel (curved spade) into the ground and then extracting it to see the layers, he tried to copy it by using the shovel to dig up earth. The hole he excavated was much wider than normal, which caused people standing nearby to laugh.

After years of working in field archaeology, Li, 38, who now works at Hebei Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, could confidently display his full range of skills at the National Vocational Skills Competition on Cultural Relics held in Taiyuan, Shanxi province, in March.

Organized by the National Cultural Heritage Administration, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security and All-China Federation of Trade Unions, the event held competitions on archaeological exploration skills, restoring wooden cultural relics, tiles and brickwork, porcelain and pottery, murals and bronze ware.

"Restoring cultural relics is about craftsmanship. But I guess nobody has a deeper understanding of the newly unearthed artifacts than us, who are engaged with field archaeology," says Li.

The competition on archaeological exploration skills measures a competitor's coring skill, which is part of the archaeological survey usually conducted before excavations to provide reference for further digging.

According to Hai Jinle, former deputy director of the Shanxi Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, who worked as a judge for the competition, archaeological survey usually involves studying the terrain to observe the condition of the land and then select areas for coring.

From the stratigraphic perspective, strata are deposited in a chronological order, with the oldest layer at the bottom. Human activity impacts layers, making them very different from each other in color and texture of the soil and its inclusion. As a result, by coring, people can discover archaeologically interesting layers and identify their time, says Hai.

The work is done by swinging a Luoyang shovel, a semicylindrical ironware with an extended rod, as a traditional tool used for archaeological work in China, to dig into the ground and lift the soil sample out. By observing it, one can judge the time of each layer, and form a picture of what occurred in the given place over a period of time. Usually they dig the hole until they reach the natural layer with no evidence of human impact on the environment.

After the procedures, archaeol-



A competition in March to measure skills of archaeological excavation, part of the National Vocational Skills Competition on Cultural Relics, is underway in Taiyuan, Shanxi province. PHOTOS BY ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY



From left: A competitor works on restoring a tile and brickwork; veteran technician Niu Xiuping shows his coring skills at the competition; and Li Tong tests her skills in the porcelain and pottery restoration section of the competition.



ogists can gain a basic understanding of the size, depth, range and type of a site, and have statistics for possible later excavation, according to Li.

The work must be done carefully, or it may disrupt follow-up work. According to Zhang Wentao, who has worked on archaeological exploration for a company in Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui autonomous region, for 13 years, if the initial data of a site is wrongly recorded, it can increase the excavation workload. There are a number of techniques required in the process. For example, archaeologists need to consider how to gain enough information by punching as few test holes as possible.

"Coring causes unavoidable harm to the underground remains. That's why we try to gain

information of the underground remains with as few holes as possible," says Li. "Moreover, for different types of sites, the ways of distributing holes are different."

Another difficult point lies in observing the soil to judge the time of layers, since it varies in different places.

"China's archaeological excavation skills have been mainly learned from Western countries, but the coring skill with a Luoyang shovel is our own. It is full of Chinese characteristics," says Qiao Liang, a researcher at China Academy of Cultural Heritage, who worked as chief of judges for the competition.

According to Hai, in foreign countries, this step is mainly accomplished by machines, and the difference in methods is relat-

ed to the different situations of layer deposit between East Asian and Western countries.

Although technology has been applied for this work in China as well, it cannot replace manpower as of now. "In China, conducting archaeological exploration with Luoyang shovel is still the most time-consuming and labor-consuming method," says Hai.

"At first, the work was really tiring for me," says Zhang, 35.

He learned the coring technique from senior workers in Shouxian county, Anhui province, for a year, going to the field every day to listen to their teaching and trying by himself. Although he wore gloves at work, he soon had blisters in his hands, which later turned to calluses.

"I didn't want to show my hands

to others at that time," recalls Zhang, who couldn't identify the layers at first, but mastered the skills after about four to five years.

His work brings rewards. "My satisfaction came when our exploration work finished. People excavated the site and discovered that the result of our exploration was close to their final conclusion. It means our work could really provide a reference for them," says Zhang.

For veteran technician Niu Xiuping, 60, who has been devoted to field archaeological projects at the Shanxi Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology for nearly 40 years and is about to retire in June, field archaeology is "quite interesting, but boring as well".

Repetition can lead to boredom.

But when they discover something, everyone is amazed.

He has taken part in a number of important discoveries, like the Gaohong site in Liulin county, Shanxi, Hengshui Western Zhou Dynasty (c. 11th century-771 BC) grave complex in Yuncheng, Shanxi, and the Shizitan Paleolithic site in Jixian county, Shanxi. All were on the list of China's top 10 new archaeological discoveries, an annual compilation often referred to as the "Oscars of Chinese archaeology".

Niu won second prize in the competition. He has received a reemployment request after retirement from where he works, and is ready to continue his work for another five years.

Recalling his past years, Niu says, "The work is good for me. There are so many impressive moments in doing archaeological work. It seems I blinked my eyes and in an instant, decades had passed."

Li grew an interest in archaeology as a middle school student, and this led him to work as a volunteer and an intern in the archaeological field when he was a computer major at the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China in Chengdu, Sichuan province. In 2013, he was recruited by the Hebei Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, and officially began his archaeological career.

His interest has been kept since he is able to decode the past through his work. "For example, when we excavate a tomb, we can know their burial rituals, customs of their lives and even their races and how they migrated in the ancient time. Historical records reveal some things, although they are not always accurate," says Li.

He has applied computer technology, like three-dimensional modeling, to field archaeology, which can make it more precise. "By borrowing methods from many other subjects, archaeology is increasingly multidisciplinary and precise, but field archaeology is the basis of that," says Li.

Now, he spends more than 300 days a year on average working outdoors with his colleagues. They rarely rest, even on weekends. Work is only disrupted by inclement weather.

"Archaeology is laborious. All of the well-known archaeologists in China, like Xia Nai, Su Bingqi, and Zou Heng, spent a great deal of time in the field. They worked like farmers in the fields, but the result of their research is outstanding in the world," says Hai.

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## A career that touches history, puts back the missing parts

By **WANG RU** and **SUN RUISENG** in Taiyuan

When Zhou Yuqi, 24, a restorer of porcelain ware and pottery items, was working on a figurine last year, she was astounded to find a fingerprint after removing accumulated soil inside it. Judging from where the fingerprint was discovered, she guessed it belonged to the craftsman who made the figurine nearly 2,000 years ago.

"The fingerprint was in the internal part of the figurine, and could only be seen with a restorer's equipment. As a restorer, I regard myself as a craftswoman. The discovery made me feel like I was transcending time and space and communicating with my counterpart in the ancient time," says Zhou, who works at Chongqing China Three Gorges Museum.

That was just one of many shining moments for the young woman in her work. Although she has just started her career, she has made

impressive progress.

Zhou took part in the National Vocational Skills Competition on Cultural Relics, held in Taiyuan, Shanxi province, in March, which offered competitors real cultural relics to restore, and won third prize in the porcelain-restoring section, competing with many seniors who have been engaged with the cause for more than a decade.

Zhou drew an overglaze rose porcelain produced during the early 20th century, which is "relatively easy to restore" in her eyes. "I think I restored it well, and finished the work about one or two hours before the end of the competition. The final artifact looked good, and it was not easy to find traces of my repair," says Zhou.

Zhou became interested in pottery and porcelain at a young age, and that urged her to learn how to repair them at college. "The old artifacts at my grandparents' home always attracted me a lot. My parents fancy drinking tea, and they



Restorer of porcelain ware and pottery Zhou Yuqi (front) repairs a porcelain item at the National Vocational Skills Competition on Cultural Relics, held in Taiyuan, Shanxi province, in March.

WANG RU / CHINA DAILY

have collected some tea sets, which were appealing to me as well when I was a child," says Zhou.

"I also love visiting museums since childhood, and feel at ease

there just like being at home. Every time I arrive in a city, I visit local museums first," she adds.

She chose to study the restoration of porcelain and pottery at the

Shanghai Institute of Visual Arts, and has worked at Chongqing China Three Gorges Museum for three years, first as an intern and then an official restorer, becoming one of a few students of this major who chose to work as professional restorers after graduation from her university.

Restoring pottery and porcelain items involves complicated procedures. They first analyze the components of the item, form a plan, and then begin to work on it.

"Most of the artifacts were improperly restored before. We dismantle them first, cleaning up the glue. Then we join the pieces with our glue, which is much better than that used before. Later, we supplement the defective parts, polish the item to make it smooth, and finally complement patterns on it," says Zhou.

She enjoys the final procedure very much. "When other steps are finished, I add the patterns, then the whole item seems to regain its vitality in my hands. That's always impressive," says Zhou.

Restorers repair the items to different degrees based on their functions. For archaeological use, they just piece them together, add the missing parts to show the complete form; for displaying, they add colors so that exhibition visitors can glimpse the original look of the artifacts.

Since 2014, the craft of restoring ancient porcelain and pottery items has become a national-level intangible cultural heritage. According to Jiang Daoyin, an inheritor of this craft and a well-known expert in this area, mastering the craft is very difficult.

"The old porcelain and pottery items are always broken, and can split into a large number of pieces. It's very tiring for a restorer to accomplish all the procedures when restoring one artifact," says Jiang.

"Many people who learn the craft give up halfway since it's demanding. They must understand archaeology, chemistry and fine arts, and have the patience to work on the cultural relics for a long time," he adds.