

Noteworthy moment

Concert debut by students in rural town wins praise

CHINA, PAGE 5



Exporters brave the odds, look to sustained growth

BUSINESS, PAGE 9



Tempers flare in France

Macron signs law on controversial pension changes amid protests

WORLD, PAGE 7

# CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 MONDAY, APRIL 17, 2023

## China, Brazil agree to deepen strategic ties

Two sides to boost cooperation in poverty alleviation, social development, innovation

By MO JINGXI  
mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

China and Brazil agreed to deepen their comprehensive strategic partnership — featuring openness, inclusiveness and win-win cooperation — during Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's state visit to China, which concluded on Saturday.

The two countries are expected to forge a new future in their relationship, which will bring greater benefits to the two peoples and play an important and positive role for peace, stability and prosperity in their regions and around the world, experts said.

When leaving China on Saturday morning, Lula said he was satisfied with the trip and was pleased that the strategic relationship between Brazil and China is improving.

The two nations issued a 49-point joint statement on deepening ties. They agreed to deepen cooperation in areas such as poverty alleviation, social development and scientific and technological innovation. They also issued a separate joint statement on combating climate change.

On the Ukraine crisis, both sides agreed that dialogue and negotiation are the only feasible ways to solve the issue, and they called on more countries to play a constructive role in promoting a political settlement of the conflict.

President Xi Jinping, who gave Lula a grand welcoming ceremony, said during their talks that the overarching, strategic and global influence of China-Brazil relations continues to grow. China sees the relationship as a high priority on its diplomatic agenda, he added.

Xi said China welcomes more high-quality products from Brazil into its market and will actively explore greater synergy between the Belt and Road Initiative and Brazil's re-industrialization strategy. He called on the two countries to capitalize on the 50th anniversary of their diplomatic relations next year to carry out more people-to-people exchanges.

Xi pledged China's firm support for Latin American and Caribbean countries to cement the momentum of peace, stability, independence, solidarity and development, advance regional integration and play a greater role in international affairs.

Lula said Brazil's legislature and society share a strong desire for strengthening relations with China on all fronts.

Noting that both Brazil and China uphold multilateralism and international fairness and justice, Lula said Brazil is ready to work with China to make contributions to developing countries' efforts to shake off unfair rules and realize more equitable and balanced development.

The four-day visit was Lula's first trip outside the Americas since he took office for a third term in January. Besides Beijing, he also traveled to Shanghai, where he participated in former Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff's inauguration as head of BRICS' New Development Bank, visited Huawei and met with Chinese business representatives.

Song Junying, head of the China Institute of International Studies' Latin American and Caribbean

See **Ties**, page 3

## The feeling of freedom



Yemeni Houthi prisoners rejoice as they disembark from a plane at Houthis-held Sanaa on Saturday. Saudi Arabia and Iran-backed Houthi rebels have freed hundreds of prisoners of war as part of a three-day exchange amid concerted efforts to end Yemen's protracted civil war, the International Committee of the Red Cross said. MOHAMMED HUWAIIS / AFP See story, page 7

## Deal reflects Beijing's growing influence in Mideast

World leaders were surprised when Saudi Arabia and Iran — often bitter rivals — agreed to reopen diplomatic relations and revive a mutual security pact. The surprise was that the agreement was brokered by China and announced in Beijing.

China's successful diplomacy may represent a fundamental shift away from US dominance in the Middle East.

The Saudis and Iranians broke off their diplomatic relationship in 2016 after the Saudis executed a Shia cleric and the Saudi embassy in Teheran was attacked. The two states clashed directly in Yemen, where the Saudi-backed govern-

WORLD WATCH  
By Jack Midgley

ment was overthrown by Iran-backed Houthi rebels, leading to years of costly war. By 2019, the bilateral relationship hit rock bottom when the Saudis accused Iran of attacking facilities of petroleum and natural gas company Aramco inside Saudi Arabia.

The Beijing agreement has created new conditions under which the two countries can return to a more stable and productive relationship. Why did the two Middle

Eastern powers turn to Beijing to help restore their diplomatic, economic and security ties?

The answer is a combination of hard economic realities and deliberate policy choices by the United States and China. Practical economic considerations have brought Saudi Arabia and Iran closer to China than either country is to the US.

The Iranians suffer from tight US sanctions, and no economic relationship has existed with the US since the 1979 hostage crisis. In contrast, China has emerged as Iran's largest trading partner, with annual total bilateral trade value of nearly \$16 billion. This key rela-

tionship is based on Iranian oil, unavailable to most of the world because of US sanctions. China and Iran concluded a strategic cooperation agreement in 2021 covering a broad range of industrial development and joint investment initiatives, further increasing the value of the bilateral economic relationship.

China has also emerged as Saudi Arabia's most important economic partner. China's trade with Saudi Arabia exceeded \$87 billion in 2021 — an amount greater than total Saudi trade with the US and the European

See **Mideast**, page 3

## AIIB head calls climate change 'wolf' at door

By ZHAO HUANXIN  
in Washington  
huanxinzhao@chinadailyusa.com



Jin Liqun

Jin said.

The International Energy Agency said in its latest assessment that to reach net-zero emissions by 2050, annual clean energy investment worldwide would need to more than triple by 2030, to around \$4 trillion.

The Climate Policy Initiative, a nonprofit research group and international climate policy organization based in San Francisco, also said in a 2022 report that the world need at least \$4.3 trillion in annual finance flows by 2030 to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, up from \$653 billion in 2020.

Jin said that the AIIB is doubling down on efforts in climate financing. It has set a very ambitious target of reaching at least 50 percent climate finance share by 2025, cumulatively to about \$50 billion by the end of this decade.

"In 2022, we delivered a record \$2.4 billion in climate finance, or 56 percent of our total financing, reaching our climate finance goal three years early," he said.

Meanwhile, the AIIB plans to direct 50 percent of its funding to the private sector by 2030 to help it play a larger role in climate mitigation.

"The private sector must play its part. AIIB is laser-focused on mobilizing private sector expertise and capital," Jin said. "We are investing in opportunities with the potential to leverage even greater amounts of

private capital toward green infrastructure investment."

That echoed a call from IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva that everyone — multilateral institutions, national authorities, and the private sector — has a role to play to finance countries' climate action.

Jin, who had worked for nearly two decades in China's Ministry of Finance and at two other multilateral development banks (MDBs) before becoming the inaugural president of the AIIB in 2016, said he wants to take a further step to enhance the role of multilateral institutions in providing concrete solutions.

"How the multilateral system performs in this dawning era of uncertainty will shape the future of human prosperity," Jin said in a keynote speech at a discussion at The Rockefeller Foundation office in Washington on Wednesday.

"To meet the challenges ahead, our multilateral system must focus on getting fit," he said.

Jin proposed creating an institutionalized forum for international financial institutions to discuss progress and actions on climate finance.

"If humanity's moonshot to net-zero is to be successful, then coordination and collaboration in climate finance is mission critical," he said.

In that regard, MDBs must strengthen their ability to operate holistically as a coordinated system, which could start with holding a joint annual meeting of the heads of the MDBs every two years.

"We could target 2025 — the year that global emissions must peak to meet our 1.5 C degree warming

pathway — as the year that MDBs come together to deepen their coordination on climate action," he said.

Jin also suggested setting up a marketplace for climate projects, which would be a platform that matches financing for technical assistance and projects.

"The climate-financing obstacles ahead are tough, but they are not insurmountable. Reform of the multilateral system and the international financial system should be welcomed, and it must be ongoing," he said.

The AIIB was initiated by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013 and began operations in 2016. Membership has grown from 57 to 106, and it has been triple-A-rated by the major international credit rating agencies.

Jin said that the AIIB is now "broadly recognized" as a multilateral development bank with the same high standards as the World Bank, the Asia Development Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

The bank's commitment to environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards; the development objective to help its members to achieve net-zero transition; and its efforts in helping many members to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic have produced "tangible results," he said.

"The fundamental reason for the success of this bank is that we've followed President Xi's instruction that the bank must operate by international best practices and must adhere to high standards," Jin said.

## NEW CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED TO STUDY XI'S THOUGHT

Party forges ahead with solving problems, decision-making

By CAO DESHENG  
caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn



When the Communist Party of China launched a Party-wide thematic education campaign this month, international attention focused on what the theoretical study program means to its 96 million members and how the campaign will affect the world's second-largest economy.

As part of the campaign to study and implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, the CPC launched a new research and fact-finding drive with the aim of solving new problems and serving scientific decision-making.

Initiating a campaign centered around the Party's new theories is

deemed of paramount importance and urgency for the CPC, as it comes at a crucial time for advancing national rejuvenation through the Chinese path toward modernization amid new challenges arising from domestic and international situations.

Analysts said the campaign will enable Party members to equip themselves with the CPC's new theories, help the entire Party achieve unity in thought, will and action, and ultimately ensure that it strengthens its solidarity and better leads the Chinese people in forging ahead on a new journey.

See **Party**, page 2



www.chinadailyglobal.com  
A member of ANN ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Newsstand prices:  
US \$1 Canada C\$1  
UK 1.1€ EU 1.1€  
Kenya 50 Kenya Shilling  
Asia Pacific: Thailand 120  
thb; Philippines 120 php; Myanmar 2000 kyat;  
Japan 210 yen; Dubai 10 dirham; Pakistan 300 rupee

## PAGE TWO

## Party: Action taken to meet new challenges

From page 1

Charles Onunaju, director of the Center for China Studies in Nigeria, said Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, as a fundamental guideline in China's governance philosophy, reflects the way in which the CPC seeks to modernize its governance system and actively take part in global governance.

The Thought was established as the guiding ideology of the entire Party at the 19th CPC National Congress, and has become the "new compass" for the CPC in governing the nation, Onunaju said.

In 2012, the 18th CPC National Congress was a landmark event, as it looked at the real challenges China faced and drew up a blueprint for governance, launching a new decade for the Party.

After the Congress, under the leadership of the CPC Central Committee with Xi Jinping at its core, the Party has made remarkable achievements in a wide range of areas. These include strengthening internal discipline, boosting high-quality socioeconomic development, and promoting the democratization of international relations, highlighting the importance of the CPC's scientific and democratic governance to China's modernization and to world peace and development.

The Thought covers various areas, including reform, development, social stability, domestic affairs, foreign relations, national defense, and governance of the Party, the State and the military, which constitute a comprehensive scientific system.

Explaining the campaign and how to carry it out, Xi, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, said the Party faced complex situations at home and abroad on the new journey in the new era, with challenging tasks related to domestic reform, development and stability, as well as uncertain and unpredictable risks and challenges lying ahead.

Presiding over a group study session of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee on March 31, Xi said the goal of studying the Thought lies in its application. Efforts should be made to use the Thought to achieve new progress and breakthroughs in Chinese modernization, solve conflicts and problems facing socioeconomic development, prevent and defuse major risks, and advance the Party's full and rigorous self-governance, he said.

Liu Jianguo, director of the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Hefei Institutes of Physical Science, said that guided by the Thought, China's technological innovation has made great headway in the past decade.

As one of the important scientific research institutions in China, his institutes will strengthen the confidence to overcome difficulties in core technology in key fields and strive to contribute more technological progress to the nation's high-quality development, Liu told Xinhua News Agency.

Zhang Jian, a professor at Nankai University's School of Marxism in Tianjin, said he wants to use the great achievements the nation has made in the new era as examples to enable the public to have a profound understanding of why the CPC is so capable, why Marxism works, and why socialism with Chinese characteristics excels. Zhang is a member of the team tasked with promoting the guiding principles of the 20th CPC National Congress nationwide.

#### Tradition of learning

Xi has said on various occasions that the Chinese Communists have relied on continuous learning to get to where they are today, and this will inevitably continue to be the case in the future.

Generations of leaders have paid great attention to intra-party education to make the CPC a political party committed to learning in order to equip its members and officials with strong political beliefs, theoretical mindsets and the latest know-how essential



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

to ruling the country over the long term and better serve the people.

Based on such a tradition, the CPC has made it a regular practice and an institutionalized requirement for all Party members to gain a good command of the Party Constitution, Party regulations and related major policies, meet Party standards, and build itself into a Marxist learning party.

Wei Qiang, an associate professor at Chongqing University's School of Marxism, said that looking back at the history of the Party's struggle in the past century, the CPC has developed through continuous learning, and it is a valuable historical experience for the Party to attach importance to and be good at learning.

Through education campaigns, the CPC can realize unified thinking and coordinated actions, and pool strength among its members to prevail over difficulties on the road ahead, Wei said.

To put the Party's theoretical innovation achievements into practice, the CPC Central Committee has called on all Party members to focus on pursuing high-quality development, which is the primary task of building a modern socialist country in all respects. They should also improve their performances in practice with enhanced theoretical attainments, and solve problems in development through in-depth research.

#### Investigation and research

On April 3, Xi said at a meeting on the thematic education campaign that all Party members should go to the grassroots level and apply the CPC's new theories in analyzing new situations and solving new problems.

Acting on these instructions, Party officials at various levels are engaged in extensive research and studies, showing the CPC is down-to-earth in securing a good start to Chinese modernization.

In addition to domestic inspection or research tours by top Party and government officials, CPC officials at provincial and lower levels have visited businesses, commercial streets and factories, and held talks with entrepreneurs and business owners.

Carrying out research and studies is part of the CPC's heritage and reflects the Party's people-centered development philosophy and its dedication to serving the people wholeheartedly.

Engaging in more extensive research and studies will help CPC cadres learn more about people's pressing concerns, and identify and address the essence of tough issues in various areas, such as innovation and reform and opening-up, observers said.

The problem-oriented drive shows that the CPC is firm in tackling bottlenecks and unfavorable factors in development and achieving solid progress in the modernization drive, ensuring success by maintaining

close ties with the people, relying on them and mobilizing their initiative, enthusiasm and creativity, they said.

Sun Qingju, a researcher at the Center for Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era at the Party School of the CPC Central Committee, said putting people first and upholding people-centered development are fundamental to the Thought.

In an article published in People's Daily, Sun said Xi is devoted to the people's interests, shows great attention to their well-being and has a sincere sentimental attachment to people's happiness and hardships.

Upholding people-centered development is not only a theoretical advocate for serving the people wholeheartedly, but matters to the value of the Party's governance philosophy, in which all is for the benefit of the people, Sun said.

## CPC empowers itself with series of Party-wide education campaigns

General Secretary Xi Jinping attaches great importance to intra-Party education campaigns. He has said the Chinese Communists have relied on learning to get to where they are today, and this will inevitably continue to be the case in the future.

Since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core has carried out a series of themed education campaigns.

#### Campaign for advancing study and implementation of the mass line:

Based on arrangements made at the 18th National Congress of the CPC in November 2012, the campaign began in June 2013 with the aim of cultivating closer ties with the people.

"Mass line" refers to a guideline under which CPC officials and members are required to prioritize the interests of the

people and exercise power on their behalf.

A thorough cleanup of undesirable work styles was carried out, with officials required to reflect on their work and correct any bad practices.

#### Campaign for the observance of the Three Stricts and Three Earnests:

The "Three Stricts and Three Earnests" refers to Party members being strict with themselves in practicing self-cultivation, exercising power, maintaining self-discipline, and being earnest in their thinking, work and behavior.

An education campaign on these requirements for officials at or above county level was launched in April 2015 to improve their lifestyle and work. It was also a continuation of the campaign for advancing study and implementation of the mass line.

#### Campaign for requiring Party members to study the Party Constitution, Party regulations, and General Secretary Xi Jinping's major policy addresses and to meet Party standards:

In 2016, the CPC Central Committee decided to launch the campaign among all members of the Party.

It was an important step for the CPC to extend its internal education programs from among the "key few" to all Party members and to push for a shift of the mechanism from one that features centralized education to a regular practice.

In an instruction delivered in April 2017, Xi lauded the remarkable results achieved through the campaign, saying that it had helped with the strict management of the CPC, and must be continued.

#### Campaign for raising awareness

#### of the need to stay true to the Party's founding mission:

On May 13, 2019, the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee held a meeting at which it was decided that an education campaign on the theme of "staying true to the Party's founding mission" would start in June that year.

It was considered high time for the CPC to launch such a campaign, as 2019 marked the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and the 70th anniversary of the CPC becoming the governing party of the whole country.

The fundamental task of the campaign was to conduct in-depth studies on and implement Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, forge the political character of loyalty, integrity and a keen sense of responsibility, and unite the Chinese people of all ethnic groups and lead them to strive together for

the realization of the great dream of national rejuvenation.

In January 2020, a meeting held to summarize the campaign called for continued efforts to ensure that the whole Party remains true to its original aspiration and keeps its mission firmly in mind.

#### Campaign for encouraging the study of the Party's history:

In February 2021, the CPC launched a campaign on Party history learning and education among all its members.

Xi stressed the vital necessity of launching the campaign as the CPC stands at a critical juncture where the timeframes of its two centenary goals converge.

Party members were called on to study the Party's history, understand its theories, do practical work and make new advances.

XINHUA

## TOP NEWS

## Overseas study likely to regain popularity

Demand for high-quality education abroad has not decreased, consultancies say

By ZOU SHUO  
zoushuo@chinadaily.com.cn

Last year, Liu Zitong shelved her plan to study abroad due to COVID-19 and other safety concerns, and instead prepared for the national postgraduate entrance exam to enroll in a Chinese university.

However, after the 22-year-old senior undergraduate student performed poorly in the exam, she decided to sign up for tutoring courses at Beijing-based overseas education consultancy EIC Education.

"I have always longed to study abroad to experience a different lifestyle and broaden my horizons. English was my preferred subject in school, so it is easy for me to pass the language threshold for overseas study," she said.

Liu is looking at options in Singapore and Hong Kong because her parents are worried about her safety in other countries and regions where Chinese students have been discriminated against.

Like Liu, many Chinese students, who found it unsafe to go to study abroad in the past three years, are reconsidering their decision.

The number of Chinese students studying abroad this year is likely to reach or even exceed the level before COVID-19 hit in 2019, with a strong recovery already seen in the sector after travel restrictions were lifted, according to several overseas education consultancies.

Liu Wei, vice-president of New Channel International Education Group, said the number of online, in-person and phone call inquiries for overseas study increased by 45 percent year-on-year in the first quarter of 2023.

"The overseas study market is highly likely to return to its pre-pandemic levels this year and the number of students pursuing their studies abroad will increase steadily in the future," he said.

This is mainly due to the fact that the demand for international education has not decreased. The tough competition in getting into good schools and finding decent jobs in China has also prompted students to look for high-quality education opportunities abroad, he said.

The pandemic had dealt a major blow to enrollment in foreign universities, so now it is a good time for Chinese students to study abroad, he added.

Wang Ting, deputy general manager of EIC Education Beijing Branch, said their number of applications for overseas study grew by 46 percent in the first quarter of 2023 compared with the same period last year.

Applications for Australia and New Zealand grew by 129 percent year-on-year in the first quarter, for the United Kingdom 44 percent and for Canada 95 percent, she said.

While the United States is still the most popular overseas destination among Chinese students, given the quality of its higher education, the growth rate is decreasing due to incidents of discrimination, visa restrictions and safety concerns, Wang said.

With more countries implementing favorable policies to attract international candidates, Chinese students have diversified their interests in overseas study destinations.

Zhang Chaowei, a third-year undergraduate student at Beijing Foreign Studies University, was thrilled when China optimized its epidemic control measures, making it easier for him to study abroad.

As an avid fan of Manchester United soccer club, he said he wants to go to the UK for his postgraduate studies, but admits that Hong Kong and Singapore are also good options. "The pressure of getting into a good university in China is too high, so studying overseas is a always a good option," he said.

Living in a foreign country is different than traveling for a short period, as one gets to have a better experience of the country's culture, Zhang added.

Bai Yuqian, 20, wants to study finance at a US university. Her ideal schools are Columbia University, the University of Chicago and the University of Pennsylvania.

"I just want to go see the world. By studying in the US, I can get more internship opportunities at financial companies and also practice my English," she said.

As her parents are worried about her safety in the US, she is not ruling out schools in the UK, Singapore and Hong Kong.

"Even if I go abroad to study, I will return to China for work after graduation to be closer to my parents and use what I have learned to contribute to my country's development," she said.



## Dhaka blaze aftermath

Traders try to salvage their goods from a three-story shopping complex in Dhaka, Bangladesh, that was gutted by fire on Saturday. About 30 people, mostly firefighters, were injured during the 27-hour battle to douse the flames. SAZZAD HOSSAIN / SOFA IMAGES / LIGHTROCKET VIA GETTY IMAGES

## Experts discuss ways to draw youths to agriculture

By MAY ZHOU in Houston  
mayzhou@chinadailyusa.com

About half a dozen educators, experts and students from the field of agriculture in the United States and China recently came together to discuss in a virtual meeting the primary challenge both countries and the world are facing — how to encourage young people to participate in agricultural endeavors as the current population of farmers ages.

The event, organized by the US Heartland China Association on Thursday night, was the last segment of the 2023 US-China Agriculture Roundtable series.

Olga Bolden-Tiller, dean of the College of Agriculture, Environment and Nutrition Sciences at Tuskegee University, said that currently, the average age of farmers across the world is 60, and young blood is needed to boost agricultural manpower.

There are several reasons why young people do not see agriculture as a career option. They want an urban lifestyle, and farm work is viewed as hard, unprofitable and lacking prestige. Also, while some young people are keen to sell their family farmlands, others don't have the access to capital to invest in farmlands.

In China, agriculture is experiencing a decline, according to Li Xiaoyun, a professor at Huazhong Agricultural University's College of Economics & Management.

The agricultural population in China is both dwindling and aging, leaving cultivable land abandoned. In addition, rural areas often lack employment opportunities, which drives young people away, Li said.

However, the country has come up with a long-term plan outlined in its "No 1 Central Document for 2023" — the first policy statement released annually by the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council, China's Cabinet — to meet those challenges, Li said.

Integrating development of urban and rural areas has been a core strategy of China's rural revitalization since 2017.

The plan aims to modernize agriculture and rural areas by 2035, providing equal access to basic public services by integrating rural and urban zones.

By 2050, the rural areas should see all-around revitalization, featuring strong agriculture, a beautiful countryside and well-off farmers, Li added.

Both the US and China are facing the challenge of engaging young people in agriculture,

experts at the discussion said.

They suggested community involvement, engaging students in agriculture from high school and providing capital access to young people in agriculture as ways to attract the youth to this field.

Shi Yan, founder and executive director of Shared Harvest Farm, the first community supported agricultural farm in China, shared her experiences. The farm was started 10 years ago outside of Beijing and has grown from 3 to 20 hectares. Half of its 80 employees were born in the 1990s and have had urban upbringing.

Shi said the farm's success came from making agriculture profitable by producing a wide variety of products and creating a value-added supply chain through their own processed food.

The farm also raises awareness among the youth by hosting events, such as summer camps and school field trips, and engages young people in modern farming methods such as rooftop gardening in urban Beijing.

Yao Liuyang, a professor at Northwest A&F University's College of Economics and Management, said that livestreaming can be a good way for young people in China to market their farm produce.

He shared the example of a

25-year-old man, surnamed Liu, from Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, who became hugely popular last year after he started live-streaming about his agricultural produce from the countryside.

Liu gained 3 million followers on short-video platform Douyin, and sold 10 million yuan (\$1.46 million) worth of agricultural products online.

In China, the livestreaming industry's market size exceeded 3.4 trillion yuan in 2022, an annual growth rate of 53 percent, and it is projected to reach 4.9 trillion in 2023.

Yao said that livestreaming about agricultural products can bring high income and prestige, as well as a sense of achievement and social identity. It can alter public perception of agriculture and attract young people to the field.

Zhang Wendong, assistant professor of applied economics and policy at Cornell University, said that agriculture is an area where the US and China can find a potential win-win solution out of common challenges.

"Agricultural trade (between the US and China) is generating a surplus for the US, and this could be a complementary relationship," Zhang said, adding that the two countries can work together to advance smart technologies in agriculture.

## Mideast: Chinese policy growth-oriented

From page 1

Union combined (\$78 billion).

In December, President Xi Jinping and Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud

launched a comprehensive partnership agreement, including a wide range of investment initiatives extending the economic relationship into infrastructure development and other dimensions.

Oil and other mutual economic interests have made China the most important trading partner of both Iran and Saudi Arabia, while US economic participation in the region has steadily receded. At the same time, both China and the US have made deliberate policy choices that have further reshaped the dynamics of the Middle East, reducing US influence. The first of these was the choice between economic sanctions or economic development to influence the behavior of trading partners. The US relies heavily on economic sanctions to punish governments and individuals declared to be misaligned with US interests.

Today, the US government administers some 38 active sanctions programs barring or regulat-

ing trade. Some are broad-based and oriented geographically, such as those against Iran. Others are "targeted", such as those countering terrorism or narcotics, and focus on specific individuals and entities.

While China has also applied limited sanctions in a few cases, the overarching framework of Chinese policy is development-oriented and based on investment and mutual interests. In Saudi Arabia, the Saudi-China Joint Committee explores joint investment opportunities in oil and non-oil projects ranging from hydrogen energy to artificial intelligence and climate change. Chinese companies such as Huawei, Chang'an and Hongqi are well known in Saudi Arabia, and Chinese products are widely used, further cementing the economic relationship.

China has taken a similar approach in Iran, signing a long-term strategic cooperation agreement valued at more than \$400 billion and including oil, mining, transportation and agricultural development projects. Positive influence from development assistance and investment, rather than negative influence from sanctions, has elevated China's soft power in the Middle East, while US sanctions

have limited American access and its ability to influence political and diplomatic developments.

The second policy choice — use of arms sales and security assistance — has further boosted Chinese influence at the US' expense.

The US relies heavily on arms sales to gain political influence, but this approach seems to be losing effectiveness in the Middle East. Between 2013 and 2022, US arms transfers totaled over \$104 billion to 124 countries. Saudi Arabia was by far the biggest market for US arms transfers. At \$19 billion over 10 years, US arms transfers to Saudi Arabia totaled more than the value of all Chinese military assistance worldwide. In fact, Saudi Arabia received more US arms transfers than the next three largest US arms customers (Australia, Japan and the United Arab Emirates) combined. Despite the vast scale of arms transfers to Saudi Arabia, US influence has clearly eroded, as the kingdom turned to China for the Iran deal.

For its part, China's use of arms transfers is more modest, totaling about \$16 billion to 70 countries over 10 years, or about 15 percent of US arms transfers. Saudi Arabia

received only about \$350 million in Chinese arms transfers, or about 2 percent of the value of US arms transfers to the kingdom. Iran received only about \$30 million in arms transfers over the past decade. Despite — or perhaps because of — the modest scale of Chinese defense assistance, Saudi Arabia and Iran chose to work with Beijing to settle their dispute.

Economic realities have pushed Saudi Arabia, Iran and China into closer and more comprehensive relations. Policy choices around the use of development assistance, sanctions and arms transfers have further increased Chinese influence and prestige, even as the US role in the Middle East has declined.

The global competition between major powers seems increasingly to be based on economic development, investment, and pragmatic, positive measures to enhance cooperation. China's important accomplishment in bringing Iran and Saudi Arabia into a new era of mutually beneficial relationships may point the way toward a future of global economic collaboration.

The author is principal of Midgley & Co, a global strategy consultancy based in Washington, DC. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



A student talks to a staff member of a New Zealand-based school at the China Education Expo in Beijing on Feb 17. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

## Ties: Cooperation has positive impact for intl relations, global trade

From page 1

Studies Department, said Lula's visit demonstrated both sides' strong desire for developing bilateral ties and enhancing cooperation, given that his original March visit was rescheduled so soon, after Lula postponed it due to illness.

China-Brazil cooperation, which now involves more and diversified areas, will provide a big boost for the two countries' economic and social

development and also bring more benefits to their peoples, Song said in a recent interview.

China has been Brazil's largest trade partner for 14 consecutive years. According to the General Administration of Customs, bilateral trade reached \$171.49 billion in 2022, a year-on-year increase of 4.9 percent.

Earlier this year, the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, signed a memorandum of cooperation with the Central Bank of Brazil

to establish renminbi clearing arrangements in Brazil, a move that will bolster bilateral trade and investment facilitation.

"As two representative countries in BRICS cooperation, the fact that China and Brazil promote trade and investment facilitation in bilateral relations, oppose protectionism and exclusionism of developed countries in the international trade arena, and adhere to multilateral cooperation in global governance, has a positive

impact and significant implications for current international relations and global trade," said Zhou Zhiwei, a senior research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Latin American Studies.

Wang Lei, an associate professor at Beijing Normal University's School of Government and director of the BRICS Cooperation Center, said the positive sign of willingness for cooperation between China and Brazil will help consolidate finan-

cial cooperation among BRICS countries — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. It will also push BRICS cooperation that is mutually beneficial and seeks common development.

Under the increasingly complex international situation, BRICS countries are able to unite and address major global challenges of various kinds, promote regional stability and contribute to a more fair and just world order, he said.

Lula's visit to China highlighted the two nations' people-centered policies and common approaches to multilateralism in global affairs, said Alessandro Golombiewski Teixeira, a former Brazilian tourism minister. "That's very important," he said, "So I think (this) makes a lot of difference (to the world)."

As strong voices for developing countries, China and Brazil are also helping other countries on a multilateral level by enhancing their bilateral ties, he added.

Xu Weizhi in Hong Kong contributed to this story.

## CHINA

## Report: Salaries for new recruits rise, but slower

As job market recovers, candidates told to be more realistic about remuneration

By CHENG SI  
chengsi@chinadaily.com.cn

The average monthly salary for new recruits in 38 major cities including Beijing and Shanghai saw a slight rise in the first quarter of this year as employers remain cautious about labor costs due to the current status of the economy, industry insiders said.

Recruitment platform Zhaopin recently released a report saying

that the average salary for new recruits in 38 major cities was 10,101 yuan per month (\$1,470) in the first quarter, a slight rise of 0.9 percent year-on-year.

However, the year-on-year growth rate continued its trend dropping from about 10 percent during the first two quarters last year, to about 4 percent in the latter half of last year, then to 0.9 percent in the first quarter this year. The salary is also 4.3 percent lower than in the fourth

quarter of last year, after companies optimized recruiting plans.

Of the 38, which also include cities such as Changsha and Wuhan and cities with stronger economic strength like Hangzhou and Xiamen, employers in Shanghai offer the highest average new monthly salary of 13,433 yuan, followed by Beijing at 13,251 yuan per month and Shenzhen at 12,668 yuan per month.

The report said that vacancies in sectors like new energy and tourism are subject to higher recruitment salaries because of State-level support policies for national emis-

sions peak and carbon neutrality goals, and also because of the relaxation of COVID-19 policies.

Employers on the platform offer an average monthly salary of 11,233 yuan for job seekers applying for positions related to new energy, ranking the industry eighth among the 10 with the highest salaries for new recruits.

Jobs such as tour guides and consultants saw new salaries increase by 8.9 percent year-on-year, averaging 7,678 yuan per month.

Yang Li, a 37-year-old from Shaanxi province who switched from being a bespoke travel plan-

ner to a livestreaming anchor in 2022 due to the pandemic, is ready to get back into tourism.

"I loved my previous job and I've been eager to get back into the sector as tourism is booming thanks to the new COVID-19 control policies. I used to earn over 10,000 yuan a month before the pandemic, and I've had three job invitations from travel agencies with good offers."

Yan Xiangjun, president of the Shandong College of Tourism and Hospitality, said that employers now look for job seekers with multiple skills for tourism-related vacancies, especially

the ability to produce short videos and do livestreaming.

According to the Zhaopin report, educational background also matters and vacancies requiring a higher education offer higher initial salaries. Jobs requiring a doctoral degree offer an average monthly salary of 30,578 yuan on Zhaopin, and 17,983 yuan for those with a master's degree.

The platform said that there will be increasing competition in the job market as the economy recovers, so job seekers should adjust salary expectations in accordance with their abilities and companies' needs.



A live feed of astronaut Fei Junlong's spacewalk is displayed on a monitor at mission command in Beijing on Saturday. XU BU / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Spacewalks become 'routine' after 12th mission

By ZHAO LEI  
zhaolei@chinadaily.com.cn

Shenzhou XV mission members conducted their fourth spacewalk on Saturday, surpassing previous crews, according to China Manned Space Agency.

In a news release on Sunday afternoon, the agency said that mission commander Major General Fei Junlong and Senior Colonel Zhang Lu completed the spacewalk and

then returned to the Wentian science module. The third crew member, Senior Colonel Deng Qingming, stayed inside Tiangong providing support.

This was the 12th spacewalk conducted by Chinese astronauts.

The agency did not specify when the spacewalk took place or for how long, nor did it discuss the specific tasks performed by the crew.

During their spacewalks, the Shenzhou XV team have mounted

equipment required for extravehicular scientific experiments and technological demonstrations.

Agency officials said that spacewalks have become a routine task and that they will be conducted on a regular basis in accordance with mission needs.

Fei's team arrived at the station on Nov 30. They are expected to remain until May, when the Shenzhou XVI crew is scheduled to take over.

As of Sunday, the three astro-

nauts had been aboard the space station for 137 days.

In another development, the Long March 7 carrier rocket tasked with lifting the Tianzhou 6 cargo spaceship arrived at the Wenchang Space Launch Center in Hainan province on Thursday.

The rocket and the cargo ship will undergo final checks, the agency said.

Tianzhou 6 is scheduled to dock with Tiangong in May.

## Shenzhen forum attracts overseas professionals

By CHAI HUA in Shenzhen  
grace@chinadailyhk.com

6,000 resumes

were received at a job fair focused on middle- and high-end positions at the 21st Conference on International Exchange of Professionals held in Shenzhen, Guangdong province over the weekend, an event that also emphasized scientific exchange and international collaboration.

Under the theme of "pursuing common development and benefiting worldwide professionals in the drive to scientific and technological innovation", the conference featured a variety of forums, job fairs and exhibitions. It attracted 325 employers and about 10,000 government representatives, experts, scholars and top-notch talent from 28 countries and regions.

During his opening remarks, Zhang Guangjun, vice-minister of science and technology, emphasized the significant role of science and technology in China and highlighted the fact that the Ministry of Science and Technology has always placed great importance on this.

Looking to the future, Zhang said that China hopes to continue to expand cooperation and exchanges with countries worldwide, accelerate the development of key talent centers and innovation hubs, and create a platform for Chinese and foreign individuals to make scientific contributions and achieve personal fulfillment.

Efforts will be made to create a strategic training system led by scientists, supported by leading technology experts and innovation teams, with young tech talent as the backbone and agricultural engineers as the foundation, he added.

He also mentioned the establishment of a global scientific assistance fund, and increasing the openness of national science and technology

plans. He encouraged more scientists from around the world to collaborate on major issues and called on innovators and researchers to engage in international exchange and cooperation.

One of the event's job fairs focused on middle- and high-end positions drew more than 8,000 visitors and received 6,000 resumes on the first day alone. Half of the applicants held bachelor's degrees and 44 percent had a master's degree or above.

About 40 percent of the vacancies offered annual salaries of 200,000-500,000 yuan (\$29,100-\$72,800), with another 28 percent offering up to a million yuan per year.

Feng Shengzhong, director of the National Supercomputing Center in Shenzhen, expressed hopes that CIEP 2023 will serve as a showcase for innovation and entrepreneurship and send this message to talented global individuals.

Some laboratories and large-scale projects currently under construction require supercomputing support, but talent is at a premium globally, Feng said.

Tysan Holdings, a Hong Kong-listed company, was also present at the conference. Xu Qiang, a deputy engineering manager, said the company planned to recruit civil engineers and geologists who are in short supply in Hong Kong.

Xu said that with some 12 million university graduates on the mainland this year, there is a wealth of mid-to-high-level talent to choose from.

## First criticized, green toilet now flush with fans

By HOU LIQIANG  
houliqiang@chinadaily.com.cn

A toilet in Sichuan province has recently gone viral on the Chinese internet.

It began with an online video saying that an empty plastic bottle was needed to use the facility, which made it the target of criticism. Soon, however, a twist emerged and the toilet received a flood of likes for its innovative way of curbing pollution.

"Not everyone on a tour will be carrying a bottle with them," a netizen said in a video uploaded online on April 9. "That's not very people-friendly."

The video turned the toilet, which is located in the Zheduo Mountain in Sichuan's Garze Tibetan autonomous prefecture, into a trending topic on Sina Weibo, a Chinese Twitter-like platform, with some netizens blasting the inconvenience.

In a post made in response to the controversy on Monday, the toilet's operator, Green River, a Sichuan-based NGO, stressed that rather than being a free public facility, the toilet is designed with environmental protection in mind.

Dubbed the Green Coin Toilet, it requires people to deposit an emp-

ty bottle or other waste in intelligent vending machine-like boxes to earn a "green coin" that will grant them free access to the facility.

The NGO noted that securing a "green coin" is not mandatory and that if there are too many tourists coming to use the facility, for instance, they can enter without having to exchange waste for a coin.

The toilet is located at one of two green courier stations the NGO launched in cooperation with the local government in November along the Sichuan-Tibet Highway. Aside from using their coins to access the toilets, tourists can also use them to park their vehicles.

The NGO said the two green courier stations were based on experience it had gained from running similar stations along the Qinghai-Tibet Highway over the past 10 years.

According to another post from the NGO on April 3, a survey it carried out in 2002 found that on average, there was a piece of waste every 10 meters along the almost 1,940-kilometer highway that connects Xining, capital of Qinghai, and Lhasa, capital of the Tibet autonomous region. A second survey conducted in 2012 found that there was an average of one piece

of waste every meter along the highway.

Hoping to address the waste problem, Green River set up an environmental protection station in Qinghai beside the Tuotuo, the source of the Yangtze River, in 2011. People can exchange waste for daily necessities at the station and all the waste collected is sent to Golmud in Qinghai for disposal on empty trucks on their way back after delivering goods.

In 2017, six green courier stations were set up along the Qinghai-Tibet Highway. Tourists are able to use the toilet and parking lot for free and get hot water in exchange for depositing their waste at a station, or for helping to remove a bag of garbage for disposal, it said. The system has led to 100,000 pieces of waste being disposed of every year.

Yang Xin, head of Green River, said that what makes the two green courier stations along the Sichuan-Tibet Highway different are the intelligent vending machine-like boxes. Tourists have to sort their waste before depositing it, if not, it is not accepted.

Yang stressed that the two new stations follow a "free of charge, but not free of duty" principle and added that everyone has a duty to protect the environment.

Currently, there are volunteers working outside the toilet, but turnstiles will soon be installed, making unmanned operation possible. Tourists will pass through the turnstiles with codes they are given after making a deposit in the intelligent boxes.

The NGO said that based on the experience it gains from the two new stations, it will build more, and train more local residents to manage them.

In addition to addressing the factors hindering garbage collection and recycling, the NGO also said that it hopes to attract tourists with facilities that help promote rural vitalization.

Many netizens have lauded the Green Coin Toilet concept on Sina Weibo since learning how it works.

"The Green Coin Toilet follows a good concept, it's a very forward-thinking idea," one commenter wrote.

"I really feel that it's a good idea. We should strengthen awareness of environmental protection. Tourists probably have bottled water in their cars," another netizen wrote.

"This not only addresses people's difficulties in finding a toilet, but also pollution caused by the litter tourists drop. We should support it," yet another commenter wrote.



Returning overseas students discuss job prospects at the 21st Conference on International Exchange of Professionals in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, on Saturday. XUAN HUI / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Shandong city seeks to capitalize on barbecue fame

By ZHAO RUIXUE in Jinan  
zhaoruixue@chinadaily.com.cn

Zibo city in Shandong province has unexpectedly gone viral on Chinese social media since late February for its local barbecue specialty, and continues to trend as the local government takes the opportunity to spur tourism and spending.

The latest promotion gives visitors free admission to 10 scenic spots in the city with their train

ticket as long as their final destination is Zibo, according to the city's culture and tourism bureau.

This move follows another on March 31 under which the Jinan bureau of China Railway added a weekend special round-trip "barbecue tour" train between Jinan, the capital city of Shandong and Zibo.

Passengers who board the train are greeted by a banner reading "Welcome to the Special BBQ Train" at the entrance of the carriage. They

also receive items including leaflets about Zibo's culture and tourism draws, as well as small souvenirs and snacks. Many also took videos and posted them on social media, drawing more visitors.

"The high-speed trains are packed with passengers and the air smells of cumin," wrote one netizen.

Barbecue is popular in China, but Zibo's barbecue is different on three counts: it's made on a stove, and is

served with flatbread and dressings. The skewers are 70-80 percent cooked before they are brought to the table, where diners can finish cooking them on their own stoves, which lends a sense of participation. Diners are served flatbreads, scallions and other dressings at the table so they are able to assemble their own barbecue parcels, in much the same way Peking duck is eaten.

The barbecue suddenly went

viral after a group of college students shot videos of themselves enjoying a meal and posted them on social media in late February.

Since then, many people, mostly young, have flocked to the city from all over the country to try the dish.

According to local media reports on Wednesday, searches for "barbecue" increased by 370 percent in March, and searches for "Zibo barbecue" on the platform as a whole have increased by 770 percent year-on-year.

On several streets, lines can be seen outside barbecue restaurants, which stretch for more than 100

meters on the weekend.

"Zibo barbecue is bringing more and more people to the city, and the local government needs to think about how to promote the city as a whole, its culture and tourism, as well as its living and business environment," said Sun Xiaorong, a member of the expert panel of tourism marketing and promotion that is supervised by the Shandong Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism.

The trend will eventually end if the local government doesn't take proper follow-up measures, he added.

## CHINA

With no dedicated music teacher at Jieban Primary School, its piano sat idle, gathering dust for years.

Meanwhile, even though there is a music teacher at Huanxi Primary School, which has more than 200 students, his role is simply to teach the children songs to sing.

Before 2020, almost none of the students at the mountain-encompassed schools in Fuzhou, capital of the eastern province of Fujian, had ever touched a musical instrument.

However, early last month, a combined orchestra performed eight traditional folk tunes with professional musicians at a concert venue.

This seemingly impossible achievement was made possible by a group of musicians, mostly music teachers, who visited Huanxi every Friday afternoon for three years and provided free music classes for the students.

The idea of founding an orchestra occurred to them in April 2019. Yang Xiumei, a local housewife and also one of the orchestra's founders, invited her flute teacher to visit her home area during spring.

After finding that the township has delightful natural scenery, the teacher invited some musician friends to a gathering in Huanxi, and they all fell in love with the place, according to Yang.

"While dining and having tea together, some of the musicians casually proposed setting up an orchestra for the children," she said.

#### Positive response

Without giving the idea much thought, she responded positively. "I just thought it would be good for children in this mountainous area to learn musical instruments. I didn't imagine they would reach such a level," she said with a smile.

As a native, Yang automatically became the contact point between the musicians and local schools, and a recruitment drive was quickly held at Huanxi Middle School.

Though the classroom was packed with students and their parents, only one girl and her brother had a slight familiarity with the *erhu*, a traditional two-stringed instrument played with a bow, and the *hulusi*, a gourd flute.

The other students had never touched an instrument before.

"Actually, the siblings didn't know much, either. You could hardly say they knew more than those who had never learned to play an instrument," Yang said.

Neither the students who signed up to join the orchestra nor their parents had any idea of what an orchestra was, and they didn't know how long the children would persist with the music classes, she added.

In total, there are no more than 300 students at the two schools, she said. After excluding those from higher grades who are busy with classes and those in lower grades who are too young to learn, there is a very limited number of candidates for the orchestra.

Moreover, members leave constantly: some go after graduating, while the children of migrant workers quit because they have to return to their hometowns. These factors have made it difficult for the orchestra to operate, Yang said.

Nie Zhiyong, the orchestra's conductor and one of its founders, said that though they would like to recruit members and decide what instruments are suitable for them based on physical attributes, such as hand size, it would be hard to get enough members if those standards



Students from Huanxi town, Jin'an district, Fuzhou city, Fujian province, perform with professional musicians at the Jiuritai Concert Hall in Fuzhou on March 5. PHOTOS BY ZHANG XUYANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Rural students win praise after making concert debut

Free lessons help children from an isolated mountain town make a mark at a leading venue. **Hu Meidong** reports from Fuzhou with **Hou Liqiang** in Beijing.



From left: Students from Huanxi play the *ruan* and the *pipa*, traditional stringed instruments, during the concert held at the concert hall in Fuzhou on March 5. Tang Dianhui from Huanxi plays the bamboo flute at the concert.



were applied too rigorously.

"So, if some students have a strong passion and really want to join, we usually tell them that they are welcome," he said.

He noted a series of other factors that hamper the orchestra's operations. For example, not all the musicians are able to drive more than 30 kilometers to Huanxi — part of the journey is along winding mountain

roads — every week, he said.

To date, 20 to 30 musicians have volunteered to teach, but only seven visited regularly in the past three years. Usually, they make 400 to 800 yuan (\$58 to \$116) per 90-minute class, but they only received a subsidy of 200 yuan for some of the classes they gave in Huanxi, each lasting 2.5 to 3 hours, he added.

The township government provided the subsidies for the first three months, while the Fuzhou Cultural Center covered the cost for one month. Now, though, the Fuzhou Committee of the Communist Youth League of China regularly provides funding.

Nie recalled that the musicians taught without receiving any subsidies for an extended period of time.

Initially, funding from the township government ensured that all the musicians received free dinners if they went to give classes, but the

money soon stopped. Nie estimates that Yang has spent 20,000 to 30,000 yuan to provide food for the musicians. "She knew we had not asked for payment for the classes, and she insisted that we should not have to pay for our food as well," he said.

He added that a lack of equipment poses another challenge, as a standard traditional Chinese orchestra requires more than 10 types of instruments, he said. Many of the originals — some bought by the Huanxi township government in 2019 and others donated by the Fuzhou Cultural Center in 2020 — are badly worn and need to be replaced. "As we recruit more members, we obviously don't have enough instruments," Nie said.

#### Magical transformation

He noted that the children in Huanxi are not as confident as their

urban peers, so it was understandable that they were nervous when they went to rehearse at the Jiuritai Concert Hall in urban Fuzhou on March 4 for their performance the following day. "Despite there being not even a single audience member, they looked extremely uneasy when they took the stage," he said.

He has discovered that music has the magic to transform these children, which has encouraged him and the other musicians to remain devoted to the orchestra, despite all the difficulties.

A Grade 5 boy in the orchestra used to be socially awkward, and he even felt uneasy when he had to stand next to a girl, Nie said. However, he is a different person now: he is poised when communicating with others, and he outperforms his peers in playing the *sheng*, a reed pipe wind instrument.

Since the March 5 performance,

Nie has noticed that many of the students are more confident and mature.

"You can feel from the way they play that they are relaxed," he said, adding that their performance is now even better than that of some university orchestras in Fuzhou.

Chen Zhongsheng, principal of Jieban Primary School, is also impressed by the changes in his students. "I have seen their determination improve, and they have become increasingly capable of deep concentration," he said.

He added that his school's poor musical education facilities have made him appreciate and cherish the opportunities offered by the musicians.

More than 20 of his 69 students joined the free music classes at the beginning, he said. However, he noted that many of the children have had to stop because of inadequate transportation.

Some of the students live 30 minutes from the school by foot, he said, and though local buses between the school and Huanxi township often visit to pick the children up and then take them back when the class ends at 6 pm, it is quite late when they get home.

Moreover, in winter, the sun sets at 6 pm, so it is difficult for the students to get home on the dark, hilly roads, he added.

Chen Shuming, principal of Huanxi Primary School, is proud of his students because he never imagined that they would one day stage a performance in a professional concert hall.

"None of them had any background in playing musical instruments, and most had never even heard of the *sheng*," he said, recalling the time the Friday classes were launched at his school.

"It was a great achievement for them to stage a performance at the Jiuritai Concert Hall, but they went even further by performing eight songs," he said. "They are much more confident now."

#### Dreams, influence

Despite never having touched a musical instrument before, Chi Yuxin was one of the first students from Huanxi Primary School to join the music classes in 2019. Now age 12, she has discovered a world of joy through music.

First, she studied the *erhu* for about two years, before changing to percussion. Now, she concentrates on percussion, but still plays the *erhu* when she has enough free time.

"If I'm busy with homework, I practice (percussion) for half an hour a day. If not, I spend an hour," she said, adding that she has bought a drum pad to improve her skills at home.

Chi has enjoyed singing since she was very young, and has seen her sense of rhythm grow stronger since she joined the classes. "Every day when I am taking a shower, I sing songs. I really enjoy that," she said.

She is happy that her brother, a third grader, has joined the orchestra this year. He has chosen to learn the *ruan*, a traditional plucked stringed instrument. "He chose to join, probably under my influence," she said.

Chi said she plans to keep learning music after she enters middle school. "My dream is to be a doctor. That dream has not changed, but music will enrich my spare time," she said.

Yang Jie in Fuzhou contributed to this story.

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

## Mainland life strikes a chord with musical couple

By **HU MEIDONG** in Fuzhou and **ZHENG CAIXONG**

"Let's build a romantic home together. Love is singing a touching song every day. You keep the wind and rain outside the universe, leaving a gentle and romantic home for us..." So goes the song *Romantic Home*.

Chang Chia-hao, 38, and Lin Chia-chen, 31, know the lyrics well as they frequently sing the song and practice it together at home in Fuzhou, capital of East China's Fujian province.

The musicians from Taiwan have turned the study of their home into a piano room, where they arrange music and play instruments in their free time, pursuing their musical dreams on the mainland.

They call their rented apartment, which has three bedrooms and a living room, "a nest of romance". Despite its simple furniture and decor, the apartment serves as both

home and musical workshop for Chang and Lin.

Lin, a violinist from Kaohsiung, Taiwan, stayed on campus as a music teacher after receiving her master's degree in violin performance, occasionally giving paid performances overseas.

In 2019, Lin was giving a performance in Cambodia when she met Chang — a native of Taoyuan in Taiwan — who was playing bass guitar in a different band.

Having the same aspirations and musical interests, they quickly fell in love and tied the knot in April 2021.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Chang had traveled around to give more performances in Asia than Lin. He sought personal career development opportunities in Fuzhou after being persuaded and introduced by friends from Taiwan, who had started a business in the city.

At the time, Chang was a well-

known musician in Taiwan, and he once won the Best Bassist Award at the Yamaha Band Competition on the island. However, he had little business at home due to the pandemic.

"Fuzhou is very close to Taiwan, so I wanted to try life in the city," Chang said, adding that Lin fully supported his decision.

Since his arrival in Fuzhou, often called the "city of the banyan tree", Chang has worked as a music teacher for a local education group. The monthly rental subsidy provided by his employer has eased a lot of pressure in his life in Fuzhou.

At work, Chang immersed himself among his students. He quickly organized a band of musicians to perform at a local venue after work, and his name gradually became known in the city.

In January last year, Lin decided to join Chang in Fuzhou after hearing about his life in the city.

Chang said they had to ease the pain of lovesickness via phone calls every night during the six months they were separated.

Lin quickly joined a symphony orchestra composed of musicians from both sides of the Taiwan Strait. The couple is now busy, but also full of joy in Fuzhou.

"The mainland's music market is large and diverse, with great creative freedom," Chang said. "For young musicians, there is great space for development in the mainland, and great opportunities."

During the 10th Straits Youth Day in May last year, Chang and Lin performed a folk song *Moli Hua*, or *Jasmine Flowers*, expressing the idea of "one family on both sides of the Taiwan Strait" through music. "I think I will see reunification across the Taiwan Strait," Chang said.

In addition to teaching, the couple plan to participate in more competi-



Chang Chia-hao (left) and Lin Chia-chen visit the Fuzhou Jinshan Park in Fuzhou, Fujian province, on March 15. LYU MING / FOR CHINA DAILY

tions and undertake many different performances in the coming years.

Chang said he will attend more exchange events between Taiwan and the mainland, and tell his friends in Taiwan about the situation and life on the mainland. He added that he and Lin will stay in

the mainland for at least the next few years to develop their careers.

Yang Jie in Fuzhou contributed to this story.

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

## WORLD

## Germany closes its last three nuclear power plants

BERLIN — Germany has switched off its remaining three nuclear power plants as part of a long-planned transition to renewable energy.

The Emsland, Neckarwestheim II and Isar II stations were shut down shortly before midnight on Saturday.

It was the end of an era, the energy utility RWE said, confirming the three reactors had been disconnected from the grid.

Decades of antinuclear protests in Germany, stoked by disasters at Three Mile Island in the US, Chernobyl in Ukraine and Fukushima in Japan, had put pressure on successive governments to end the use of a technology that critics argue is unsafe and unsustainable.

Defenders of atomic energy say fossil fuels should be phased out first as part of global efforts to curb climate change, and that nuclear power produces far fewer greenhouse gas emissions and is safe if it is properly managed.

As energy prices rose last year because of the conflict in Ukraine, some members of German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's government got cold feet about closing the nuclear plants as planned on Dec 31. In a compromise, Scholz agreed to a one-time extension of the deadline, but insisted that the final countdown would happen on April 15.

Europe's largest economy has been looking to abandon nuclear power since 2002, but the phaseout was accelerated by then chancellor



Juergen Trittin (right), a member of the German Bundestag and former environment minister, stands next to an activist in front of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin on Saturday. CHRISTOPH SOEDER / DPA VIA AP

Angela Merkel in 2011 after the Fukushima nuclear disaster that year. Antinuclear demonstrators took to the streets in several German cities to mark the closures.

Germany also powered up some of its mothballed coal-fueled plants to cover the potential gap left by gas.

## Calls for delay

The challenging energy situation had increased calls domestically for the exit from nuclear power to be delayed.

Germany had to "expand the supply of energy and not restrict it any further" in light of potential shortages and high prices, Peter Adrian, the president of the German chamber of commerce, told

the newspaper Rheinische Post.

Friedrich Merz, leader of the opposition CDU party, said abandoning nuclear power was the result of an "almost fanatical bias."

The three final plants provided just 6 percent of Germany's energy last year, compared with 30.8 percent from all nuclear plants in 1997. "Sooner or later" the reactors will start being dismantled, Economy Minister Robert Habeck said before the scheduled decommissioning, brushing aside the idea of an extension.

Instead, Habeck is focused on getting Germany to produce 80 percent of its energy from renewable sources by 2030.

To this end, Scholz has called for

the installation of "four to five wind turbines a day" over the next few years, a tall order given that just 551 were installed last year.

But the current rate of progress on renewables could well be too slow for Germany to meet its climate protection goals.

Despite planning to abandon nuclear energy, Germany has not "pushed ahead enough with the expansion of renewables in the last 10 years", Agence France-Presse quoted Simon Mueller of the think tank Agora Energiewende as saying.

To build enough onshore wind capacity, Germany now has to "pull out all the stops", he said.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

## Lula visit seen as victory for partnership

Brazil and China can look forward to closer bilateral relations, experts say

By SERGIO HELD in Bogota  
For China Daily

The relationship between Brazil and China has been further cemented following President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's recent four-day visit to China, analysts say.

It was Lula's first foreign trip outside the Americas since he was installed as president for his third term on Jan 1. In a joint statement issued after he met President Xi Jinping, the two leaders agreed to deepen coordination in multinational bodies such as the BRICS and the G20. The BRICS grouping consists of Brazil, China, India, Russia and South Africa.

Lula's visit is historic because it represents a piece of a more complex puzzle of the world order, said David Castrillon, a research professor at the School of Finance, Government, and International Relations of Externado University of Colombia.

Countries such as Brazil and France have been calling for a multipolar international order in which no one country can impose its voice and its models on the rest of the world, Castrillon said.

Recent visits give support to this argument (of multilateralism) that China has been pushing for decades, Castrillon said, referring to Lula's trip and the recent visit to China of France's President Emmanuel Macron.

The most stable international order is one in which everyone has a voice and in which everyone follows models that correspond with their particularities, he said. "Therein lies the great long-term importance of this visit."

Henrique Reis, international relations manager at the China Trade Center Group in Sao Paulo, said Lula's visit is politically important and shows the world an image of a political partnership between the two countries.

Trade between the two countries is robust and will continue to grow, he said.

China has been Brazil's main trading partner since 2009. Last year China imported more than \$89.7 billion of Brazilian products, especially soy and minerals, and exported goods worth almost \$60.7 billion to the domestic market.

The value of trade, \$150.4 billion, grew 21 times from the time

of Lula's first visit to the country, in 2004, the Brazilian government said.

About 20 bilateral agreements were signed during Lula's recent visit, including for the construction of CBERS-6, the sixth in a line of satellites built in partnership between Brazil and China that will help to monitor the Amazon jungle.

"The differential of the new model is a technology that allows the monitoring of biomes such as the Amazon rainforest even when it is cloudy," the Brazilian government said in a statement.

Castrillon said this is just one example of the short-term results of Lula's visit to China, which underscores a comprehensive strategic relationship at the highest level.

## Deepened ties

In recent years the relationship has deepened and, with this visit, the two countries have taken an additional step in broadening the foundations of the relationship, which is one of trust and is comprehensive, Castrillon said.

"The two leaders reached agreements in innovative areas, such as 5G, in digital economy issues, in innovation issues, in food security issues, in which tech and innovation are integrated.

"In the short term, this visit takes a step forward in that direction and is a good example of the benefits of this order supported by China and now also by Brazil."

During Lula's visit he stressed that Beijing was essential for the creation of the BRICS, and that the relationship between the two countries has the potential to consolidate a new South-South relationship.

For his part, Xi said this is the first year of comprehensively implementing the spirit of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China.

On this new journey China is striving to enhance high-quality development, accelerate the establishment of a new pattern of development and promote a high level of opening-up to the outside world, which will bring more opportunities to all countries, including Brazil, Xi said.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

## US show marches to beat of Chinese instruments

LOS ANGELES — China-made musical instruments are stealing the limelight at a music industry exhibition in southern California, attracting a lot of attention and recognition from overseas customers and distributors.

About 1,200 exhibitors from across the globe participated in the 2023 National Association of Music Merchants Show, one of the world's largest music industry trade shows, held at the Anaheim Convention Center, California, from Thursday to Saturday.

"We had our biggest NAMM show ever in 2020, with more than 115,000 NAMM members attending from more than 120 countries and territories," said NAMM President Joe Lamond. "Then COVID hit and our ongoing four-year journey to get back to normal began."

"This is the first NAMM show since COVID where we will get the music world back together in person," Lamond said, adding that the participation registration from outside the US was up 50 percent from last year.

More than 150 Chinese music companies are participating in the show, the largest lineup since the outbreak of the pandemic, said Wang Yingyao, department manager of China International Exhibition



A visitor stops at the booth of Shenzhen Dale Somatosensory Technology Co Ltd at the National Association of Music Merchants Show in Anaheim, California, on Thursday. ZENG HUI / XINHUA

Center Group Corporation Limited.

"Having been impacted by the pandemic over the past three years, as well as changes in China-US relations and adjustments in global supply chains, Chinese music companies expect to take the opportunity of participating in the show to directly reach out to overseas clients and distributors, and experience changes in the global markets," Wang told Xinhua in an interview. Chinese brands have gained a

strong foothold at the show in recent years, showcasing their latest music, sound and entertainment products and technologies. A record number of about 220 Chinese companies took part in the 2020 show.

This year, a total of 38 companies in the guitar industry of Zheng'an, a poverty-stricken county in Southwest China's Guizhou province, made their presence at the show, in an effort to expand business in overseas markets.

"The joint appearance of Guizhou companies at the show helps to showcase our overall competitiveness, and present the whole industrial chain to our global customers," said Zheng Chuanjiu, general manager of Zunyi Shenqu Musical Instruments Manufacturing, a major guitar manufacturer in the county.

A new electric guitar from Shenzhen Dale Somatosensory Technology Co Ltd also attracted much attention.

Featuring 12 colorful fret indicators and pressure-sensitive silicone strings, the guitar allows users to pick up their favorite song in three minutes with an easy chord mode, suitable for both beginners and music producers, said Yuchen Sun, the company's sales manager.

Carl Protho, a music composition instructor living in Los Angeles, said he was interested to see demonstrations of the smart guitar, adding that he expects to see new features designed to teach beginners to play.

The three-day show also offered participants a dynamic way to experience the latest music products and technologies, educational sessions and live concerts.

XINHUA

## Cross-border rail adds to the joy of Thai festivities

NONG KHAI, Thailand — The northeastern Thai province of Nong Khai has been reveling in the joy of the Songkran Festival with neighboring Laos since the cross-border passenger service of the China-Laos Railway began on Thursday.

Many were equally thrilled about the launching of the cross-border passenger service on the China-Laos Railway on the occasion of the most important festival for Thailand and Laos, on the other side of the Mekong River.

Jiranun Sakultangphaisal, an adviser to the Nong Khai tourism association, said many in the local tourism industry had received inquiries from Thai tourists about the cross-border passenger service of the China-Laos Railway.

The enthusiasm was no surprise for Jiranun, who runs a hotel in Nong Khai, because she had witnessed how Thai tourists poured in on holidays to cross the border to experience the China-Laos Railway since it was inaugurated in December 2021.

"People from Thailand come to Nong Khai to ask how to take the China-Laos Railway. Sometimes we have more customers than we can serve."

Many tourists stay overnight in Nong Khai before traveling to the Lao capital of Vientiane, about 20 kilometers away. It has given a fillip to Jiranun's hotel business and the local tourism sector seeking to recover from the pandemic.

Monnipa Kovitsirikul, chairwoman of the Nong Khai Chamber of Commerce, said she hopes Chinese tourists who arrive in Laos will travel further to tour Nong Khai and the wider northeastern region of Thailand.

"We are getting ready for more Chinese tourists, preparing more transport and Chinese-speaking staff."

Many industries in Nong Khai have benefited from the China-Laos Railway, creating jobs and bringing new opportunities for businesses, Monnipa said.

She has seen new investment from within Thailand into Nong



Foreign tourists converse with a local merchant in northeastern Thailand's Nong Khai on Wednesday. Nong Khai is a border city on the bank of the Mekong River opposite Laos. LIN HAO / XINHUA

Khai and greater efforts by the Thai government to upgrade local infrastructure, she said.

The China-Laos Railway has also provided another transport route for Thailand to access the vast Chinese market.

"The transport of goods between China, Laos and Thailand used to take longer because of poor roads," said Wittawat Pleumram, a customs official in Nong Khai. "The China-Laos Railway has cut travel time to about 10 hours, facilitating the

transport of goods such as fruit that requires speedy delivery."

For Jiranun, the tourism association adviser, the China-Laos Railway is also a road of friendship that brings Thailand, China and Laos closer together by increasing connectivity and people-to-people exchange.

"More exchanges will facilitate greater understanding, which will, in turn, facilitate more collaboration."

XINHUA

## Brazil and UAE leaders seal climate, biofuel deals

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates — Brazil and the United Arab Emirates announced a series of deals on combating climate change and advancing biofuels on Saturday as President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva paid an official visit to the oil-rich country.

"It was a highly fruitful visit," Lula said in brief comments to Brazil's TV Globo after meeting UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi on his way home after visiting China.

The countries said in a joint statement that the leaders had discussed a range of subjects, including trade, technology, defense, aviation and food security.

They also announced a series of deals, including one for the UAE-controlled Mataripe refinery in northeastern Brazil to invest up to \$2.5 billion in a biodiesel project in the region, and another on working together on combating climate change.

The UAE is due to host the 28th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, or COP28, later this year, and Brazil is a candidate to host the 2025 edition.

The countries said they had agreed to work together to "encourage ambitious climate

action" from the rest of the world.

Sheikh Mohamed greeted Lula at the presidential palace, where a 21-gun salute rang out and formation jets trailed Brazil's national colors.

Lula, who returned to power in January after two terms as president between 2003 and 2010, was played the Brazilian national anthem, and inspected an honor guard.

## Growing trade

The strategically located Gulf monarchy is Brazil's second-largest trading partner in the Middle East, according to the official WAM news agency.

Bilateral trade, excluding oil products, totaled more than \$4 million last year, representing a 32-percent rise from 2021, WAM said.

In Beijing, where Lula sought to consolidate economic ties with Brazil's biggest trading partner, he said his country was "back on the international stage" and ready to mediate an end to the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

He also accused the United States of "encouraging" the war and said it should "start talking about peace."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## WORLD

# Prisoners of Yemen war exchanged

UN welcomes move, Saudi Arabia's efforts to restore peace commended

SANAA — The Yemeni government and Houthi militias freed scores of prisoners on Sunday on the last of a three-day exchange of nearly 900 detainees, boosting hopes of ending their protracted civil war.

Planes carrying detainees took off at the same time from the Houthi-held capital of Sanaa and the government-controlled northern city of Marib, the International Committee of the Red Cross said.

The first flight from Marib and the first flight from Sanaa have left, said ICRC media adviser Jessica Moussan. "Forty eight former detainees were on board the Marib-Sanaa flight, and 42 on the Sanaa-Marib flight."

Three other flights during the day were to complete the deal reached in Switzerland last month to exchange 181 government forces for 706 Houthi militias.

Mahdi al-Mashat, chairman of Houthi's political council, said the next round of talks with Saudi Arabia, which leads the military coalition against the Houthis, would start after the Eid al-Fitr holiday expected on Friday, Yemen's Saba news agency reported.

## Reuniting with families

The last talks ended hours before 318 prisoners were transported on four flights on Friday between government-controlled Aden and Sanaa, reuniting detainees with their families.

On Saturday, 357 detainees took flights between the Saudi city of Abha and Sanaa. Saudis were among the prisoners freed.

It is not known how many prisoners each side still has.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomed the swap, his spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Friday.

"The secretary-general joins the (UN) Special Envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, today welcoming the start of the release operation of conflict-related detainees. Nearly 900 are being released by the parties over three days, starting today."

The swap comes under the implementation of a plan agreed on by the parties at the last meet-

ing of the Supervisory Committee on the Detainees' Exchange Agreement, which took place in Switzerland in March, he said.

The prisoner exchange came after the Houthis and Saudi Arabia on Friday wrapped up an intensive round of negotiations in Sanaa to revive an expired ceasefire and embark on talks to settle the conflict, the Houthis said. Both sides would meet again for further talks, the Houthis said.

Asked whether Grundberg and Guterres believe there are prospects of a broader and permanent deal in Yemen by Eid al-Fitr on Friday, the spokesman said that making calendar predictions is a dangerous game.

"That is not to underestimate the importance of what is happening today and over the next two days, as well as the talks we've seen hosted by the Omani authorities. It is all very hopeful. But it demands a continued political determination from all the parties to rally around and support the UN-supported political process," said the spokesman.

On Saturday, the Yemeni government also welcomed Saudi Arabia's efforts to revitalize the peace process in Yemen after the recent visit of a Saudi diplomatic delegation to Yemen's Sanaa.

In a statement, the Yemeni ministry commended "the continuous efforts of Saudi Arabia in alleviating human suffering and reinvigorating the peace process in Yemen."

The Saudi-Houthi negotiations, brokered by Oman, have gained momentum following a deal last month between Saudi Arabia and Iran to restore their diplomatic ties.

The Saudi exit strategy appears to have gained new impetus from a landmark rapprochement deal announced with Iran last month.

The China-brokered agreement calls for the two countries to fully restore diplomatic ties following a seven-year rupture, and has the potential to rebuild regional ties.

More than 150,000 people have been killed in the conflict in Yemen, and it has created one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters.

XINHUA—AGENCIES



Protesters clash with police officers outside Place de la Republique in Rennes, France, on Saturday, during a demonstration against the pension reform hours after it was signed into law. LOU BENOIST / AFP

## Macron signs pension law amid protests

By CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels  
chenweihua@chinadaily.com.cn

France's President Emmanuel Macron is set to address the nation on Monday evening to calm tempers after signing into law on Saturday controversial pension changes following a ruling by the country's top court.

The country's trade unions have announced a national strike on May 1 in protest against the changes after months of demonstrations since the law was introduced in January.

The Constitutional Council approved major measures in the pension law on Friday, including raising the retirement age from 62 to 64 despite polls that constantly show two-thirds of people oppose them.

The ruling is seen as a win for Macron, who has made pension reform a top priority for his second term in office, but it has also cut deeply into his popularity.

The Constitutional Council also blocked six measures in the pension

reform, including a "senior index" aimed at encouraging the employment of older people.

In a separate decision, the council rejected a request by opposition lawmakers for a referendum on making 62 the maximum official retirement age. It will rule on another similar request next month.

Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne said Friday's decision "marks the end of the institutional and democratic path of this reform." There were "no victors and no vanquished" after months of a nationwide standoff, she said.

The new pension law is due to come into force on Sept 1.

Macron has said the retirement age needs to be raised to avoid annual pension deficits forecast to reach 13.5 billion euros (\$14.8 billion) by 2030.

"With this reform, the finances of the pension system will be balanced in 2030," a government statement said. "The government now wants to continue talks with (unions and

others) to make work meaningful, improve working conditions and reach full employment."

France's present retirement age of 62 is lower than that of most member states of the European Union, which have lifted the age to 65 or higher.

The trade unions have argued that extra funding for pensions should come elsewhere instead of raising taxes paid by the rich.

Marine Le Pen, leader of the far-right National Rally party, said "the political fate of the pension reform is not sealed", adding that the reform "will mark the definitive break between the French people and Emmanuel Macron".

The ruling was greeted by booing in front of Paris City Hall, where about 4,000 demonstrators had gathered. Protests erupted in the capital and many other French cities before and after the ruling.

Agencies contributed to the story.

## Train off track

The wagons of a train that derailed near Rockwood, US state of Maine, on Saturday, producing a fire that sent plumes of black smoke into the air.

REUTERS



## Europe looks forward to return of Chinese tourists after pandemic

BRUSSELS — After three years of job switching, Slovenian tour guide Luka eagerly awaits the arrival of first group of Chinese tourists as the COVID-19 pandemic situation has improved.

As one of the few registered Chinese-English tour guides in Slovenia, Luka is brushing up on his spoken Chinese, as droves of tourists from China are expected to arrive for the summer holidays.

In 2019, 13 million Chinese tourists landed in European Union member states, according to a report by the Brussels-based European Travel Commission, or ETC.

This number has plunged since

the pandemic, until the reopening of European countries and the relaxation of China's outbound travel restrictions.

At the beginning of this year, China resumed its outbound travel business. Currently, China allows group tours to 60 countries.

In late March, Hungary welcomed its first group of Chinese tourists after three pandemic years. The 22 visitors, who arrived in the country for a nine-day stay, were greeted by Hungarian government officials at Budapest Airport.

"This is my third visit to Hungary," said Lou Zhiyuan, 60, who flew from China's Guangzhou city

and had just retired. She signed up for the tour group immediately when the possibility opened up. She last visited Hungary eight years ago.

European tourism, which was badly hit by the pandemic, is expected to recover speedily with the return of Chinese tourists.

Chinese tourists made 22.2 million overnight stays in the EU in 2019. Due to the pandemic, this number fell to 3 million in 2020 and declined further to 1.6 million in 2021, according to the EU's statistical office Eurostat.

Before the pandemic, Croatia welcomed more than 300,000 visitors

from China each year. "We will do everything in our power to facilitate the arrival and stay of Chinese tourists in Croatia," said Kristjan Stanic, director of the Croatian National Tourist Board.

Direct flights between Athens and Shanghai were also launched in December, after direct flights between Athens and Beijing began in 2017.

"We are a Chinese-ready airport," said Ioanna Papadopoulou, director of communications and marketing at Athens International Airport, where virtual assistants help Chinese tourists with information in their own language.

According to the ETC, Chinese tourists are still rare in France, although it was the most popular destination for them outside Asia before the pandemic.

"After three years of pandemic life, Chinese travel agencies have lost contact with Europe's hotels and car rental agencies. In the short term, it is difficult to return to the preferential prices we could offer them before the pandemic," said Liu Yuan, a tour operator in France.

But for Luka, at least he could count on the returning Chinese tourists for a much more stable job.

XINHUA

## S. Africa's investment pledges set new record

By NDUMISO MLILO  
For China Daily

South Africa has received investment pledges to the tune of \$83.9 billion in the past five years, which is 26 percent more than its target of \$66.7 billion, said President Cyril Ramaphosa.

Last week, South Africa held the fifth South Africa Investment Conference in Johannesburg, where many companies across the world pledged to invest in the country. In 2018, Ramaphosa announced that an investment target of \$66.7 billion has been set for the next five years.

"We have now reached \$83.9 billion in pledges, overshooting our initial \$66.7 billion target by 26 percent. For us to have been able to meet our five-year target despite major challenges and disruptions, including the pandemic, is no mean feat. A number of these investments are not only bringing much-needed economic activity to different localities, but also supporting our overall national development goals," said Ramaphosa on Thursday.

More than 70 percent of the projects announced since 2018 have been completed or on their way to completion, Ramaphosa said, and measures have been put in place to address energy shortages to make the environment conducive to investment.

Citing examples of tax incentives for households and businesses to invest in rooftop solar units, he said the government has signed contracts with independent power producers. The government is addressing logistical bottlenecks affecting the country's ports, while tackling crime and corruption, he said.

Vuslat Bayoglu, managing director of the investment company Menar Holding, said the country has received investment pledges because it offers a positive business environment. He said the company will employ a total of 600 workers in its coal mine.

Nolitha Fakude, president of the Minerals Council South Africa, said the mining sector will invest \$8.89 billion in more than 100 renewable energy projects in the next 10 to 15 years. She stated that South Africa is a good place for investment but the government has to address energy shortages and logistical challenges.

Emrie Brown, CEO of Rand Merchant Bank, called on the government to tackle the challenges affecting the investment climate.

"The government has to collaborate with the private sector to address challenges related to energy security, logistics and water supply. This country has great potential."

Mmamoloko Kubayi, Minister of Human Settlements and co-chairperson of economic sector, employment and infrastructure development, said the government has made it easier to do business, citing the examples of strengthening law enforcement agencies and improving infrastructure.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

### CHINA DAILY USA

#### NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS

1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,  
New York, NY 10036

Telephone: 212-537-8888

Fax: 212-537-8898

editor@chinadailyusa.com

readers@chinadailyusa.com

Subscription: 212-537-8899

Advertising: 212-537-8916

#### Follow us on:

twitter.com/chinadaily

facebook.com/chinadaily

usa.chinadaily.com.cn

These materials are distributed by China Daily Distribution Corp. on behalf of China Daily USA, Washington, DC 20045. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.

WASHINGTON  
National Press Bldg, Suite 1108 529 14th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20045  
Tel: 202-662-7249  
Fax: 202-662-7247

### SAN FRANCISCO

235 Montgomery Street, Suite 900  
San Francisco, CA 94104  
Tel: 415-348-8388  
Fax: 415-348-8388

### SEATTLE

800 Fifth Ave, Suite 4100  
Seattle, WA 98104  
Tel: 206-922-3666

### HOUSTON

1001 South Dairy Ashford Suite 100  
Houston, TX 77077  
Tel: 713-995-7660

### CANADA / TORONTO

4711 Yonge Street, 10th Floor  
Toronto, Ontario, M2N 6K8  
Tel: 416-481-5706

CHINA DAILY (ISSN 0748-6154) is published daily except weekends by China Daily USA, 1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036. Periodical postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to CHINA DAILY USA, 1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036.

Vol. 38 — No.1068

## Arrest of separatist leader hailed as 'great success'

By KASWAR KLASRA in Islamabad  
For China Daily

The recent arrests of the leader of banned Baloch National Army, Gulzar Imam alias Shambay, who was linked to terrorist attacks, and other operatives are a great success for Pakistan's security agencies and a serious blow to the BNA and other militant groups, say officials and analysts.

Muhammad Hamza Shafqaat, secretary for information, Balochistan, said Gulzar's arrest is "a great success".

Gulzar was said to be instrumental in the formation of Baloch Raji

Aajoi Sangar, a group that helped unify Baloch separatist groups in Balochistan, and remained its operational head. He also helped form the new militant BNA.

The Inter-Services Public Relations, the media wing of the Pakistan army, said in a statement on April 7 that the intelligence agency apprehended a high-value target named Gulzar Imam, a hardcore militant involved in activities in the country's southwest Balochistan Province.

Authorities said the BNA had been responsible for a number of attacks in Pakistan, including those on Chinese nationals and

army installations in Panjgur and Noshki, both in Balochistan.

The BNA claimed responsibility for a bomb attack that killed two people in Anar Kali Bazar in Lahore on Jan 20, 2022, and a powerful blast on Feb 16 that left two dead and four injured on the Jaffar Express running between Balochistan and Peshawar.

Gulzar served as deputy to Baloch separatist leader Brahmardagh Bugti until 2018.

Ahmad Quraishi, senior fellow at Project Pakistan 21, a research group in Islamabad, said Gulzar's arrest could help in better understanding his support network, and

the linkages across the borders, including in Afghanistan.

Dozens of other operatives were also arrested.

Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, a professor of school of politics and international relations at Quaid-i-Azam University, said, "It's a great achievement for Pakistan's law enforcement agencies."

The arrest will help in identifying and breaking Baloch insurgents' support base, and testifies to Pakistani law enforcement agencies' resolve and ability to crush the menace of terrorism from Pakistan, he said.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

## WORLD

## Security tight as G7 diplomats gather

US intelligence leaks, blast near PM cast shadow over talks in Japan

By CHINA DAILY

Foreign ministers of the G7 nations were scheduled to focus on the security of both Europe and the so-called Indo-Pacific as they gathered in Japan on Sunday.

They dived right in, with a private working dinner, but even before the talks began, outside events threatened to overshadow the diplomacy, including questions about United States' intelligence leaks that cast doubt over crucial alliances, and security worries after an explosive device detonated near the Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida during a campaign event.

Security is tight in Karuizawa, about 160 kilometers northwest of Tokyo. Japan has been forced to address safety concerns after the explosive device was thrown toward Kishida on the eve of the diplomats' arrival.

A police officer was slightly hurt, but the chaotic scene was reminiscent of the assassination nine months ago of former prime minister Shinzo Abe, which also came on a campaign tour and continues to reverberate in Japanese politics.

Kishida was visiting Saikazaki port in Wakayama prefecture to support his ruling party's candidate in a local election, and the explosion occurred just before he was to begin his speech.

A young man believed to be the suspect was arrested at the scene after he allegedly threw "the suspicious object", Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno told reporters. Matsuno refused to comment on the suspect's motive and background, saying police were still investigating.



Police officers investigate the site of an explosion at a fishing port in the city of Wakayama on Sunday, a day after an explosive was thrown at the site where Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida was to give a campaign speech for by-election to the Lower House. Security has been tightened as G7 foreign ministers meet in the resort town of Karuizawa. THE YOMIURI SHIMBUN VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kishida continued campaigning, but the attack is an unwanted development for Tokyo.

"Starting with the summit, we have to make every effort to ensure security and safety ... (as) dignitaries from all over the world gather," Kishida said on Sunday.

#### Documents impact

The three-day talks will also present the first real test of the assertion of US President Joe Biden's administration that there has been minimal damage from the disclosure of highly classified documents related to the conflict in Ukraine and US views of its allies and partners.

Before traveling to Japan, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said

on Saturday from Hanoi that he had heard no concerns from allies, but the revelations will loom over the G7 meeting, the first major international diplomatic conference since the documents were discovered online and made public.

On the diplomatic front, the talks will be dominated by the conflict in Ukraine, tension across the Taiwan Strait and the Korean Peninsula issue, according to media outlets.

Japan is eager to use a smoothly run G7, which includes a host of gatherings on climate, finance and other issues before a leaders' summit in Hiroshima next month to pursue a stronger unified front against what Tokyo and its Western allies call threats, The Associated Press reported.

Energy and environment ministers of G7 vowed on Sunday to work to hasten the shift toward cleaner, renewable energy but set no timetable for phasing out coal-fired power plants. The officials issued a 36-page communique laying out their commitments.

Germany's Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection Steffi Lemke on Sunday slammed the expression that Japan's release of treated nuclear-tainted water into the ocean was "welcomed" when attending a news conference after the two-day G7 ministers' meeting on climate.

As for the foreign ministers' meeting, many will be watching to see what, if anything, G7 ministers from

Japan, the US, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada, Italy and the European Union may do.

Some observers expect that G7 nations will take the chance to announce an increase in aid to Ukraine.

Though diplomats from Beijing will not be present in Japan, China also plays a large part in discussions.

On Friday, China's State Councilor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang told the visiting German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock in Beijing that the only way to find a solution to the Ukraine conflict is to promote peace talks, reiterating China's consistent willingness to help find a peaceful resolution, and adding that China will never do anything to add fuel to the fire.

As Baerbock expressed concerns on the Taiwan question, Qin said the fundamental cause of tension in the Taiwan Strait lies in separatist activities by "Taiwan independence" forces and external forces that support them.

Japan has made a major break from its self-defense-only post-World War II principles as it works to acquire preemptive strike capabilities and cruise missiles.

Western diplomats will also discuss the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The DPRK has test-fired many missiles recently, and has accused the US and the Republic of Korea of escalating tension to the brink of nuclear war through their joint military drills involving US strategic assets, calling them a rehearsal for invasion.

US and ROK forces have been conducting a series of annual springtime exercises since last month, including air and sea drills involving a US aircraft carrier and B-1B and B-52 bombers, and their first large-scale amphibious landing drills in five years.

Agencies and Xinhua contributed to this story.

#### Airman charged for disclosure

A young national guardsman has been charged with orchestrating the most damaging leak of United States' classified documents in a decade, as the government signaled it intends to make an example of the 21-year-old.

Jack Teixeira was arrested on Thursday following a weeklong probe into the leak of documents — which unraveled US concerns over Ukraine's ability in the conflict with Russia, and showed Washington has spied on its allies Israel and the Republic of Korea.

Yet the US has had similar problems before, most notably when then secretary of state Hillary Rodham Clinton was forced to apologize for numerous embarrassing revelations in leaks of US diplomatic cables by WikiLeaks in 2010.

Regardless of the legal implications for Teixeira and the findings of the internal administrative investigation, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and top aides are unlikely to escape questioning about the leaks, which are at least the fourth from US sources since 2010.

Teixeira, who wore a beige jumpsuit and appeared glum at his first court appearance in Boston on Friday, was charged with the "unauthorized retention and transmission of national defense information".

He is also accused of the "unauthorized removal and retention of classified documents or material". The courts carry maximum prison sentences of 10 years and five years respectively.

The 2010 WikiLeaks release involved 251,287 State Department cables, written by 271 US embassies and consulates in 180 countries and were dated December 1966 to February 2010. The cables were passed by WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange to his three media partners, plus El Pais and others, and published in stages from Nov 28, 2010, with the names of sources removed.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

#### Briefly

##### UNITED STATES

#### Video: Police at wrong house before shooting

New Mexico police officers realized they were at the wrong address just moments before the front door opened and they fatally shot the armed homeowner, then exchanged gunfire with his wife, according to newly released body camera video of the April 5 shooting. Robert Dotson, 52, was killed by police in Farmington, New Mexico after officers responding to a domestic violence report arrived at the wrong house. The Farmington Police Department

released several videos on Friday, including footage captured by body cameras worn by the three officers who fired their weapons. It remains unclear why the officers, who are on paid leave for the length of the investigation, approached the wrong address, police said.

##### CAMBODIA

#### Country's world record broken for largest dance

Cambodia on Saturday broke its own Guinness World Record for the largest Madison dance with a performance involving 4,999 partici-

pants, a Guinness World Record adjudicator announced. The participants performed the five-minute Madison dance at the famed Angkor Archeological Park complex in northwest Cambodia's Siem Reap city to celebrate the traditional Khmer New Year, which kicked off on Friday for three days. Guinness World Record official adjudicator Tomomi Sekioka said she had concluded going over all the evidence and was amazed by the incredible teamwork and seriousness of people participating.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## Deadly conflict in Sudan sparks global concerns

By OTIATO OPALI in Nairobi, Kenya  
otiato@chinadaily.com.cn

The deadly conflict in Sudan between the army and the paramilitary group stretched into a second day on Sunday, raising international concerns about escalation.

At least 56 civilians have been killed and 595 people wounded in the fighting between the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces, which started on Saturday, according to a doctors' organization.

Heavy artillery firing was heard in Omdurman, which adjoins the capital Khartoum, and nearby Bahri in the early hours of Sunday. Witnesses also reported gunfire in the Red Sea city of Port Sudan.

The RSF said it had taken control of the presidential palace, the residence of the army chief and Khartoum international airport.

The African Union Commission's chairman Moussa Faki Mahamat released a statement on Saturday calling on RSF chief Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo's forces and the Sudanese Army to end the clashes and reach a cease-fire agreement. He further urged the political and military parties to find a fair political solution to the crisis.

"We appeal to all parties involved in the violence and the Rapid Support Forces in particular, to immediately stop the destruction of the country, the terrorization of its population, and the bloodshed during the last 10 days of Ramadan," Mahamat said in



People run past a military vehicle in Khartoum, Sudan, on Saturday amid clashes in the city, which killed at least 56 people. AFP

the statement. The African Union's Peace and Security Council has called an emergency session on Sunday to discuss political and security developments in Sudan, it said on Twitter.

The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, formed in 2013 predominantly with fighters from the Janjaweed militia that brutally fought off rebels in Darfur, have been at the center of Sudan's long-standing dispute.

#### UN slams violence

Following the reports of armed fighting in Khartoum, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Saturday issued a statement strongly condemning the violence.

Guterres said he was engaging with leaders in the region and reaffirmed the commitment of the UN to support the people of Sudan in their efforts to restore a democratic transi-

tion and realize their aspirations for building a peaceful and secure future.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson urged both sides in Sudan's armed conflict to cease fire as soon as possible and to avoid further escalation.

The spokesperson called on the two parties to the conflict to end fighting as soon as possible and prevent the escalation of tensions, hoping the parties in Sudan will increase dialogue and jointly move forward the political transition process.

Countries in the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar, also expressed concerns over the conflict, and called for an immediate cease-fire and resolution of differences through dialogue.

Agencies and Xinhua contributed to this story.

## Think tank founder: Europe needs to 'work with China'

By YIFAN XU in Washington  
yifanxu@chinadailyusa.com

Portraying China as the engine of the global economy, a scholar says that European countries should cooperate more with China economically.

"China is the locomotive of the world economy. If Europe wants to survive economically, they have to work with China," said Helga Zepp-LaRouche, the founder of the Schiller Institute, a political and economic think tank in Germany, at her dialogue event on April 5.

She said that "it is not going to work" for the European countries to replace China with the idea of becoming "independent".

"Because if you look at regions like Shenzhen and Zhuhai and Guangdong, that is like the motor of the world economy. And all of Asia is much more optimistic. China will have a growth rate even, according to the World Bank, of more than 5 percent this year," said Zepp-LaRouche, noting that it is "in stark contrast" to the expectation for Europe.

European leaders, including French President Emmanuel Macron, have been making frequent visits to China recently.

The leaders also emphasized the need for a new dynamic in the relationship between China and Europe.

The European Union (EU)'s top foreign affairs official Josep Borrell is visiting China and having a strategic dialogue with Chinese officials in Beijing before attending the G7 foreign ministers' meeting in Japan.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez made a visit to China in late March.

The pattern actually started at the end of 2022, as German Chancellor Olaf Scholz visited China in November, and European Council President Charles Michel visited Beijing in December.

Zepp-LaRouche mentioned a positive tradition of international economic relations by European countries.

She said that France had a

mission in the world by bringing development to other countries; Made in Germany stood for precision, industriousness and excellent technology; Italy regarded itself as a bridge between Africa and the Middle East.

The way to revive those traditions, she said, is to put human beings at the center of economics and build infrastructure.

Zepp-LaRouche said that people would mostly agree that the world is in urgent need of development considering the large number of food-insecure people; those under low health conditions; at a starvation level; or below the poverty line.

"Now, that cannot remain," she said.

"So, what we need is a plan to have economic reconstruction or building up in every continent. The way it's being done is fairly obvious because every country which ever had an industrial revolution started with basic infrastructure."

Zepp-LaRouche said that the Schiller Institute has been fighting for better and necessary infrastructure like roads, highways and integrated waterways globally, and when President Xi Jinping announced the New Silk Road (the Belt and Road Initiative) in 2013, "we upgraded and actualized all our development programs which we had been working on for decades".

"That is a blueprint of what could be done tomorrow or today if there would be a design and willingness to build up the world economy," she said.

David Malpass, the outgoing president of the World Bank, expressed concern about a potential "reversal in development" caused by the COVID pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict. He said that "there were no more donations from the advanced economies". The World Bank had to leverage its balance sheet to expand funding for development programs fighting extreme poverty.

"China has substantially increased its contribution to the World Bank," Malpass said. He also said that because China is

the second-largest economy in the world, "there needs to be some component of China's involvement and engagement".

Zepp-LaRouche warned that the entire transatlantic financial system is "a casino economy which is about to blow". She stated a new international financial system should be built because the present one is "hopelessly bankrupt", and one of the pieces of evidence is that countries such as Brazil, China, and even Japan are selling their US Treasury bonds.

"Because the US basically has been printing money while other countries like China have been forbidding speculation," she said.

Zepp-LaRouche said that the infrastructure building of the Belt and Road Initiative is in the interest of humanity as a whole. "It's not in the interest of the speculators because they want to have returns of 20 percent a year or something, which you do not get from infrastructure."

"But infrastructure should not be looked at as a profit-making investment because infrastructure is what creates the precondition for industry and agriculture to function," she said.

"It can be done because the majority of the world is moving in this direction — the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), the countries who have applied for membership in the BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Eurasian Economic Union, ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), most of what I know about the African Union," she said.

"And what we have to accomplish is that the European countries and hopefully the United States realize in time that we have to overcome geopolitics and we have to find a common solution."

Zepp-LaRouche said that "the new word for peace is development because there can be no peace if we don't address the absolute urgent questions of poverty, health problems, lack of food, lack of clean water, all of these things".

## BUSINESS

FIND US ON FACEBOOK AND JOIN THE CONVERSATION • CHINA DAILY

## Exporters brave odds, eye sustained growth

Agile firms ride policies, domestic strengths to upgrade products, tap new channels

By LIU ZHIHUA and WANG KEJU

When some US corporate executives recently visited Safewell, a manufacturer of high-security safes and vaults located in Ningbo, East China's Zhejiang province, the company's senior president, Wang Wei, showed them around the assembly lines and explained various application scenarios.

"We hope to work together to extend business and further open up the Asia-Pacific market in the future," said Wang, adding that such market expansion initiatives have been in full swing recently.

The company registered a 15 percent year-on-year increase in its first-quarter orders. Some of the new orders were placed by firms in Ireland, the United States and some Southeast Asian countries.

With external demand weak and other negatives emerging, including rising protectionism and geopolitical issues, Chinese exporters such as Safewell are ramping up efforts to expand their shipments. Some of their efforts have already generated success in the form of new orders.

Business leaders and trade experts said China's exports will likely continue growing despite challenges, and contribute to overall economic growth this year.

Yet, it is important for China to produce and export products the world needs to stabilize export growth. At the same time, the country must further tap potentials of both developed and emerging markets while making the most of new business models and novel business formats in the export sector, they said.

Citing Customs data from Yiwu, Zhejiang province, Chinese media outlet Caixin reported that in late March, around 800 container trucks completed Customs clearance procedures there per day, up from the average level of 400 in February.

With an abundant variety of commodities and convenient international logistics, Yiwu is often referred to as "the world's supermarket". It is also seen as a barometer of China's export activity.

Data from the General Administration of Customs showed China's goods exports increased 0.9 percent year-on-year to 3.5 trillion yuan (\$511.4 billion) in the January-February period, beating market expectations. In the first quarter, the country's exports surged 8.4 percent year-on-year to 5.65 trillion yuan.

"With the global economy slowing, Chinese enterprises must take stronger measures to tap the potential of external demand to shore up exports' role in overall economic growth," said Ning Jizhe, deputy head of the Committee on Economic Affairs of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, and vice-chairman of the China Center for International Economic Exchanges.

"China has the world's largest and most comprehensive industrial system. It can produce high-quality and cost-effective products the world needs. Chinese enterprises are very agile and flexible to adjust their products and services to meet



MSC Irina, the world's largest container vessel, docks at Ningbo Zhoushan Port in Zhejiang province on April 2. JIANG XIAODONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

new needs and demands as the external environment changes."

Xu Hongcai, deputy director of the China Association of Policy Science's Economic Policy Committee, said the dampening demand worldwide has been a major drag on China's foreign trade this year, and maintaining stable growth of foreign trade and balance of payments will be high on the country's agenda.

"On top of this, upgrading the quality of foreign trade should run in parallel. Chinese companies should improve the quality of their own products, so that other countries are willing to place orders. China should be ready to export quality products whenever the global market calls for them."

Safewell's Wang said the company is attuned to the situation, which is reflected in the upturn in new orders. He attributed this to efforts to complete long-needed upgrades during the COVID-19 period as the government rolled out a flurry of relief policies like financial support and tax and fee cuts. Such policies, he said, helped businesses such as Safewell to survive and thrive in trying times.

To be sure, Safewell faced hardship during the pandemic period. But, by leveraging tax breaks and extra deductions of R&D expenses, the company fully harnessed its adequate cash flow to upgrade existing products with additional features, to better meet customers' needs.

"The shutdown is not a boon to manufacturing plants, but that does not mean it is devoid of opportunity for plants to improve their products," he said. "When plants reopen, there will be a pent-up demand for products. Upgrades of products will pay for themselves many times over."

Wang said Safewell's new product, though priced higher than the



Top: A China Railway Express train loaded with cars for export pulls out of the Xi'an International Port Station on its way to Russia on March 23. LI YIBO / XINHUA



Above: Workers produce sportswear for export at a garment manufacturing enterprise in Taicang, Jiangsu province, on April 6. JI HAIXIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

previous version, has won broad recognition from its existing as well as new customers. Armed with orders from many firms this year, Safewell has gone in for mass production of the new product.

The company is not a case in isolation.

Jia Shi Da Robot Technology, a robot manufacturer and exporter based in Taiyuan, Shanxi province, has shown that resilience and diligence do pay off.

In 2022, the company's sales hit almost 200 million yuan, with

exports accounting for only 10 million yuan. Yet, during the first two months of the year, its shipments to overseas markets surged 200 percent year-on-year, and the company predicts its total exports this year will exceed 30 million yuan.

Jia Shi Da Robot said the surge in new orders is a result of its sharpened focus on research and development of new products, marketing innovation, and utilization of cross-border e-commerce channels, apart from the optimization of China's COVID-19 measures that has led to improvement in logistics and a revival of customer confidence.

Safewell's Wang said the company has sent its employees to Europe for market research to weather the difficulties arising from weakening global demand.

"I plan to visit the first-tier companies in the industry in the months to come to better understand the product needs of customers," he said. "We do not solely pursue quantity now, but constantly seek advances in technology, which will eventually help us gain a greater market share."

Experts said they expect Chinese enterprises to make better use of the benefits from the free trade agreements China has signed, especially the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, to offset impacts from the weakening global economy and demand.

Gao Lingyun, director of the international investment division at the Institute of World Economics and Politics, which is part of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said China serves as a core link on the industrial chain in East Asia and Southeast Asia, which makes the country better positioned to pool resources of all kinds together and maximize output.

Xu of the Economic Policy Com-

mission said the diversification of international markets effectively reduces the dependence of foreign-trade enterprises on traditional markets and cushions the blow dealt by weakening external demand in the European and American markets.

For now, though the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' contribution to China's trade surplus is still limited, there is great potential for future growth that can be further unlocked, he said.

Jia Shi Da Robot said the tariff reductions under the RCEP, which took effect in January last year, have boosted its price competence in the Southeast Asian markets.

Customs data showed that during the first quarter, China's imports and exports with economies participating in the Belt and Road Initiative surged 16.8 percent year-on-year to account for 34.6 percent of its foreign trade, while trade with other participating countries of the RCEP rose 7.3 percent from a year earlier.

Yet, some labor-intensive industries like apparel and footwear still face huge downward pressure on exports, due to factors like the additional US tariffs and a decline in demand from developed economies facing high inflation and interest rate hikes, said Wu Dazhi, president of the Guangzhou Leather & Footwear Association.

The consumption slump in the Western countries has nearly halved their consumers' purchasing power for imported products in the apparel and footwear industry, he said, predicting China's exports of apparel and footwear will likely decline in the first half of the year.

Contact the writers at liuzhihua@chinanews.com.cn

## Long-term focus can offset short-term challenges to export sector

## REPORTER'S LOG

By Liu Zhihua

China's exports in the past few years have been resilient, making valuable contributions to the country's economic growth that faced a pile of negative factors, including disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic and continuing geopolitical tensions.

How will China's exports perform this year? Will outbound shipments keep growing or will they decline?

Customs data showed exports increased just under 1 percent year-

on-year during the first two months of this year in renminbi terms, which was better than the previous forecasts.

Some experts recently predicted the country's exports will decline during the second quarter and then rebound during the third quarter.

There are also people who are quite pessimistic in their outlook, saying the country's first-quarter exports will probably decline.

Their arguments seem reasonable. The global economy, they argue, faces an increasing recession threat; and external demand for Chinese products is, therefore, weak, exerting pressure on China's export growth.

That was, in a sense, true until a few days ago. Many ports at home and abroad faced sluggish contain-

er throughput with empty containers piling up in the first two months of the year.

Yet, in recent days, container throughput at many Chinese ports has improved much.

From the north to the south, ports in coastal areas of China have seen a decline in the levels of empty container stockpiles, with some ports' container throughput rising on a yearly basis, according to a report by business and financial news provider CLS.

There is no denying, however, that China's exports face relatively huge uncertainties, mostly because the gloomy global economic prospects weigh on both the prices and volumes of Chinese goods exports.

However, the external pressure is

short-term, and will end gradually if developed economies stop increasing interest rates and the Russia-Ukraine conflict eases.

Besides, the sluggish external demand not only affects China's exports, but also hurts Southeast Asian countries like Vietnam even harder, as they lack the resilience in foreign trade of the kind that China has, due to their relatively weaker industrial and supply infrastructure.

The high-quality development of China's foreign trade in the long run is what really matters.

In the short term, it is important for China to step up efforts to stabilize export growth while improving foreign trade structure.

To that end, it is crucial for the

country to take more action to maintain stable exports to major trading partners such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the European Union, the United States, Japan and South Korea.

At the same time, the country is expected to further tap new market potential in economies participating in the Belt and Road Initiative, as well as economies in the Middle East, Africa and Latin America.

Such efforts will produce effects conducive to the long-term high-quality development of the country's foreign trade, adding more resilience to the sector.

China needs to implement more supportive measures to promote

healthy development of new business formats and novel forms of foreign trade, such as cross-border e-commerce, and trade at specially designated marketplaces.

It also needs to actively optimize the business environment to promote the growth of foreign trade market entities.

After all, firm confidence and stable expectations are what drive enterprises to expand investment and seek growth.

The most important thing is to accelerate the building of a unified national market, and create a more transparent, stable and enabling business environment that is law-based, market-oriented and up to international standards.

## BUSINESSINSIGHT

## Greener world calls for closer ties between China, EU

## EAGLE EYE

By Zhao Xinge and Qiu Ju

The recent visit of French President Emmanuel Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to China is bringing many opportunities for Sino-EU bilateral relations. A 60-member business delegation also came along with the top leaders, including leaders of many world-renowned French/European companies such as Airbus, Louis Vuitton and EDF, showing the good wishes of the French political and business fields for repairing and developing bilateral economic and trade relations.

Against the current global backdrop, such efforts from the EU are notable. In addition to economic and trade exchanges and geopolitical issues, another goal of Macron's visit is to recommit to a common framework of action on major international issues such as the fight against climate change and the protection of biodiversity. Indeed, as the global climate crisis spirals out of control, consolidating and developing bilateral cooperation on climate action is equally urgent, not to mention that future prospects of climate cooperation between the two sides shine brighter globally thanks to the good foundation of previous cooperation and the consensus on the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

## Tie key to climate change

Sino-EU cooperation in addressing climate change has always been a model for the international community. Apart from a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2003, the two sides in 2005 made it a norm for high-level dialogues and multilateral cooperation to this end by inking the Partnership on Climate Change, with the cooperation scope expanding to carbon sequestration, greenhouse gas emissions, low-carbon economic transformation and other fields.

A monumental achievement in global climate negotiations, the Paris Agreement is also a fruitful result of Sino-EU cooperation. In 2010, amid the failure to make substantial progress in the negotiations at the Copenhagen Conference of the Parties, China and the EU issued a joint statement establishing a "climate hotline" between leaderships to coordinate positions in multilateral climate negotiations and maintain closer communication on relevant policies and cooperation.

Before the launch of the UN Climate Change Conference in 2015, China and conference host France had actively engaged in dialogue on relevant preparatory work. At the same time, officials from China and

the United States signed China-US joint statement on climate change. With such efforts from major emitters, the signing of the Paris Agreement was finally achieved.

In 2017, then-US president Donald Trump announced a withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. Though the current US administration rejoined the agreement in 2021, the US move in 2017 brought severe damage to the progress of the agreement. However, China and the EU were still working together to take global action on climate change further.

For example, after the US move in 2017, Macron made a special trip to China to reiterate the significance of the cooperation between China and the EU on climate issues. In 2018, the top leaderships of China and the EU signed a new cooperation agreement, reaffirming their willingness to cooperate to jointly promote global emission reductions and sustainable development.

China and the EU then successively proposed higher climate action targets. In 2019, the EU Green Deal was unveiled, in which the EU said it will reduce greenhouse gas emissions 55 percent by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. In September 2020, China announced its dual carbon goals. Such moves have had a ripple effect, pushing South Korea, Japan and other countries to raise their emission reduction targets.

In recent years, due to global woes such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the global economy has faltered amid recession and high inflation. There has also been rising unilateralism and a sentiment of anti-globalization, which profoundly affected geopolitical trends. Such a series of drastic changes have brought unprecedented challenges to China-EU relations. Facing such headwinds, the EU adjusted its relations with China, and deemed China "a partner for cooperation and negotiation, an economic competitor and a systemic rival"; indicating that China-EU relations have stepped into a new period and the partnership on climate issues was no longer simple.

## Green turf war

With the advances in green technology, the expansion in their scale of production and application, and the strong promotion by governments using taxes and subsidies, the economic growth model based on fossil fuel energy may usher in an inflection point in the near future, while emission reductions and green technology will become new driving forces for economic growth. The competition between the EU and China in green fields will become increasingly fierce.

At the beginning of this year, the US Inflation Reduction Act came into effect, kicking off a turf war in



CAI MENG / CHINA DAILY

green business among major economies. The bill announced about \$370 billion in climate and clean energy investments, including a number of subsidies and tax incentives for players operating in the US. Such large-scale support weighed on both China and the EU due to pressure from green investment and production outflows. The pressure on the EU is so pressing that the European Commission has even proposed the Net Zero Industry Act, a panicked response to restrict green imports and loosen regulations on state aid, which was deemed as a move contradicting free market rules, raising concerns within the EU that the move may distort the unified market.

The EU is also doing this to secure its supply chains. The global supply chain crisis caused by the pandemic and the energy crisis resulting from the Russia-Ukraine conflict have deepened concerns over relying on overseas supply chains. Thus, the EU began to reduce its dependence on imports from single countries amid its energy and sustainable transition moves.

The EU's current moves, as we see, are more like overreactions and are not constructive. As Macron said during his visit to China, the growing concerns have created an "inescapable spiral of mounting tensions", which is not conducive to resolving the issue. Eyeing a brighter future for China-EU climate cooperation, there are three keywords of great significance — competition, security and trust — in which security and trust are the pre-

requisites for building a healthy competitive relationship.

It is important to know that China and the EU will inevitably compete in key green market areas. But if the two sides can restore trust, follow international trade guidelines with the WTO as the core, and form a relationship of healthy competition and cooperation based on win-win thinking, healthy competition between the two sides will be extremely good news for the world and the climate struggle. It will also help promote the accelerated development of the world's sustainable economic transformation.

## Strong complementarity

China and the EU have strong complementarity in developing the green economy. The EU has first-mover advantages in terms of technology and operating schemes, while China boasts advantages in market size and lower costs. Cooperation between the two sides can greatly promote the progress of green technology, stimulate the development of relevant markets and reduce the green premium, thereby accelerating the process of global climate action. Specifically, there are four key areas for cooperation in the future.

The first is to give play to the complementary advantages and promote the energy transformation of both sides. In the process of future energy transition and sustainable economic transformation, China and the EU have huge space for cooperation. Green hydrogen technology is a good example. The EU

regards clean hydrogen energy as the core of Europe's future green economic competitiveness, and investment in green hydrogen technology research and development is ahead of its global peers. As Chinese manufacturers have strong low-cost advantages in the production of hydrogen energy equipment, the manufacturing costs of some key equipment are only 40 percent of that of EU companies. Therefore, consolidating and expanding cooperation in the field of energy will create huge economic and environmental benefits in the future.

This direction has been confirmed by the large energy deals inked between Chinese and French companies promoted by Macron's visit.

The second is to strengthen negotiations in the areas of carbon emissions trading and border regulation rules. China in 2021 launched its carbon trading market, which marks an important achievement of China-EU climate cooperation. The two sides have been working on building emissions trading platforms since 2014. Over the years, the EU has provided China plenty of policy advice and technical support for relevant designs and implementation through policy dialogue, training and information exchanges. However, China's carbon emissions market is still in its infancy. The EU remains an important role model and partner in this field for China. In addition, the EU's carbon border adjustment mechanism will be fully implemented from 2026, and China and the EU should actively work on carbon market connectivity

and border regulation rules to lay the foundation for the formation of international carbon emissions trading and related rules.

The third is to jointly lead the circular economy transformation of the international community. China and the EU are dependent on each other in the development of the circular economy. In January 2018, China and other countries imposed restrictions on solid waste imports, which forced Europe to face the problem of domestic waste disposal and reform its consumption system, which partly promoted the release of the EU's circular economy action plan. The program makes future products entering Europe face higher sustainability standards. The program, in turn, will have a profound impact on the manufacturing of exports in China, promoting the improvement of China's circular economy standard legislation and management system. Taking this as an example, if China and the EU can actively engage in dialogue and coordinate policies and actions in the area of circular economy, they will play a leading international role in driving the global circular economy transformation.

Fourth, the two sides should work together to develop sustainable finance standards. To guide global investors to identify and access green investment opportunities, the EU launched the International Platform for Sustainable Finance in October 2019, with both China and the EU as founding members. At present, the cooperation platform has achieved many results, all of which have an impact on guiding global green investment. In the future, with the IPSF as a vital cooperative platform, China and the EU should continue to expand cooperation in the field of sustainable finance standards and transitional finance, and jointly promote the effective growth of sustainable financing globally.

In October, China and the EU will celebrate the 20th anniversary of their comprehensive strategic partnership. Despite the challenges and obstacles, the vision of China and the EU to promote global sustainable development is the same. Addressing climate change is a major issue related to the destiny of mankind, and China and the EU should further enhance mutual trust and cooperation, jointly become a leading force in international climate action and make positive contributions to the sustainable development of human society.

Zhao Xinge is executive deputy director of the Lujiawan International Institute of Finance, China Europe International Business School. Qiu Ju is a researcher at the institute.

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

## Central bank reforms to strengthen monetary policy efficacy

## MAIN STREET

By He Qing and Hu Tong

In March, the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council, China's Cabinet, published an institutional reform plan, which includes two major reforms for the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank — an adjustment of its responsibilities and a reform of its branch institutions.

The adjustment of the PBOC's responsibilities will help the central bank focus on monetary policy formulation and macroprudential management, establish a modern central bank system and improve its ability to serve the real economy.

In a key report delivered at the 20th National Congress of the CPC, it was stressed that the country should push ahead with several major tasks in deepening structural reform in the financial sector, among which modernizing the central bank system was ranked as the first task.

Accordingly, a central bank mechanism that facilitates currency stability, full employment, financial stability and the balance of international payments should be established — a task that will get a boost from the PBOC's duty adjustments.

Under the reform plan, part of the PBOC's duty — the supervision of financial holding companies and

other financial groups as well as the protection of consumers of financial products — will be transferred to the national financial regulatory administration, a new body that will oversee all parts of the financial sector except the securities industry.

The adjustment will not only promote coordinated supervision of the increasingly intertwined sections of the financial industry, but also help the central bank focus on monetary policy formulation and macroprudential management.

The more focused policymaking function of the PBOC will help modernize the central bank system and should not be simply taken as a lessening of the PBOC's role.

## Enriching the toolbox

With the adjustment taking effect, the central bank will likely continue its efforts to ensure reasonable, stable money supply growth and credit expansion, maintain reasonably ample liquidity via various tools and improve monetary policy formulation to make it more forward-looking, flexible and effective.

Structural monetary policy tools are expected to be further used to incentivize more funding to flow into key areas of the real economy, such as agriculture, private businesses and small and micro enterprises.

The central bank is set to further support financial institutions in providing funding for carbon-reduction projects at preferential lending costs, meet companies' needs to finance

technological innovation and equipment upgrades and put into place measures to ensure the delivery of unfinished housing projects.

In terms of macroprudential management, the central bank is expected to further improve the macroprudential policy framework to enhance its ability to monitor, evaluate and warn against any systemic risks while enriching the relevant toolbox.

Efforts should also be made to strengthen the supervision of systemically important financial institutions, including ensuring that the lenders meet additional regulatory requirements on time.

Another key aspect of the PBOC's agenda in the future will be deepening market-oriented reforms regarding interest and exchange rates.

The central bank is expected to further leverage the market-oriented mechanism of deposit rate adjustments, stabilize banks' liability costs and strengthen the loan prime rate reform, so that the financing costs of businesses and consumers can be tamped down while remaining generally stable.

The principle that market forces play a decisive role in exchange rate formation will be insisted upon in order to maintain reasonable, balanced exchange rates of the renminbi with greater flexibility.

## Strengthening branches

Meanwhile, reform of the PBOC's branch institutions will help strengthen coordination and coop-

eration between PBOC branches and local governments, enhancing the country's ability to prevent and resolve local financial risks.

A key point of branch reform is to remove regional branches that each oversees in multiple provinces and instead set up 31 provincial-level branches along with five separate branches in the cities of Shenzhen, Guangdong province; Dalian, Liaoning province; Ningbo, Zhejiang province; Qingdao, Shandong province and Xiamen, Fujian province.

In addition to rearranging the central bank's branches, the institutional reform plan also requires reforming the local financial supervision system.

The reform seeks to establish a local financial supervisory model dominated by local agencies of central financial regulators. Financial regulatory bodies set up by local governments should specialize in supervision and no longer function in the name of "financial work bureaus" or "financial offices".

This will help solve the conflict between the multiple functions of local governments' financial regulatory bodies, which have been responsible for investment promotion and financial development apart from supervision.

Behind the simultaneous reforms of the central bank and local financial regulatory agencies are the shortcomings of the existing regulatory system.

Such problems as hidden local government debt, defaults of privately offered financing instruments and

unclear boundaries of related-party transactions have exposed the loopholes in the local financial regulatory system, especially uneven regulatory standards among different regions and the inadequate professionalism of some local regulatory bodies.

The above phenomena also reflect that the central bank's regional branch system, established more than two decades ago, is no longer compatible with the current situation of the country's financial system.

## Branch system history

The background of establishing the regional branch system was that in the early 1990s, local governments increasingly intervened in monetary policy formulation and banking supervision by the central bank's local branches. The PBOC, therefore, abolished its 31 provincial-level branches in 1998 and set up nine cross-regional branches.

The regional branch system worked at the beginning, strengthening the central bank's independence. However, with the continuous development of the country's financial system, it has become more difficult for the regional branches to implement cross-provincial supervision.

Regional branches found difficulties striking a balance between the different attributes of the economy in various provinces and coordinating with local governments in policy implementation. In fact, how to reform central bank branches has drawn much attention in recent years.

Now, the decision to restore the provincial branch system can help strengthen coordination and cooperation between the central bank's branches and local governments, thus enhancing the transmission of monetary policy and better serving the real economy.

Meanwhile, abolishing the central bank's county-level sub-branches is conducive to streamlining State institutions and lifting supervisory efficiency.

These reforms of central bank branches will work together with the reform of the local financial regulatory system to better deal with the risks among local financial institutions and markets while strengthening macroeconomic adjustments at the local level.

## Better focus

In short, this round of PBOC reforms will enable the central bank to further focus on monetary policy formulation and macroprudential management, and help better coordinate and cooperate with local governments.

The moves will help create a smoother transmission of monetary policy, strengthen monetary policy's support for the real economy and enhance the country's ability to prevent and resolve local financial risks.

He Qing is a professor at the Renmin University of China's School of Finance and a key member of the China Macroeconomy Forum.

Hu Tong is an assistant researcher at the Renmin University of China's School of Finance. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## No reason for Germany to stick to unhealthy dependency on US strategy

After French President Emmanuel Macron's call for European "strategic autonomy" during his visit to China, there was increased attention on German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock who visited hard on his heels.

Known for her hawkish position on China, it had been expected that the German foreign minister would seek to present the unity and strength of the transatlantic alliance during her just-concluded inaugural China trip.

That she did. And she conveyed the message loud and clear: That a change in Taiwan's status would be "unacceptable"; that a "military escalation" in the Taiwan Strait "would be a horror scenario for the whole world" and have "repercussions" for Europe. She will have been reminded during her visit that it is the secessionists on the island and the support they receive from some external forces that is the root cause of both the changes in the cross-strait status quo and the escalation of tensions. In many cases, it is exactly these external forces who are unwarrantedly hyping up concerns over the "horror scenarios" on the Taiwan question.

She was to a great extent reiterating what has been anticipated in the new German strategy on China her ministry has been preparing. Although the original draft of the document has reportedly had to be revised as it was considered to take too tough a stance and to overemphasize the importance of values, aligning Germany closely with the United States.

Despite all the obvious ambition to reduce Germany's alleged "dependence" on China, which has been a key component of Baerbock's policy portfolio, the

top German diplomat cannot ignore the importance of China as a long-standing economic partner.

Thus, along with the toughness she displayed on such topics as Taiwan, Baerbock expressed Germany's continued interest in cooperating with China. Her government remains dedicated to the one-China policy, and would not pursue economic "de-coupling" from China, she told her Chinese hosts.

As a recent document issued by more than 90 conservative members of the German parliament warned, she will be aware that it would be self-defeating if Germany's new China policy becomes an "anti-China strategy"; because it would be an "economic disaster" for Germany to sever all economic ties with China. At the same time, China is an indispensable partner in addressing such global challenges as climate change, nuclear proliferation and geopolitical crises.

Had the Germans and other Westerners a more objective view of Chinese sensitivities surrounding national reunification, they would see the Taiwan question differently.

In his meeting with Baerbock, Wang Yi, director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, said Taiwan's "return to China" is an important part of the post-World War II international order. Reminding his guest that China once supported the reunification of Germany, Wang expressed the "hope and belief" her country would support the "peaceful reunification" of China.

Hopefully, Baerbock will have returned home with a more open mind on the potential for European strategic autonomy.

## Biden hijacks world with Ukraine dragnet

It seems that it has become a compulsive habit for the Joe Biden administration to say one thing while doing another.

A group of senior officials from the US Department of Commerce visited Beijing and Shanghai last week as part of an effort to lay the groundwork for a potential trip to China by Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo later this year. But even as they were doing so, the Department of Commerce imposed export controls on 12 Chinese companies on Wednesday, along with a dozen of entities from some other countries, for their alleged support of Russia's military and defense industries.

In February, when US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was preparing for his scheduled trip to China, which was unilaterally canceled by Washington on the pretext of the so-called Chinese spy balloon that it allowed to be hyped up to an insane level by the China hawks, the US also sanctioned five Chinese companies citing the same reason, without providing any substantial evidence.

The US' moves, as the Chinese side responded on both occasions, are "outright bullying". Its sanctions on Russia "have no basis in international law and are not authorized by the United Nations Security Council". They are a form of "long-arm jurisdiction" that "seriously damages the legitimate rights and interests of enterprises and affects the security and stability of the global

supply chain". The US has blacklisted more than 400 entities from other countries for their alleged connections with Russia over the past year, a convenient justification for it to hobble the competitors of US companies in key sectors.

The Biden administration's double standard is self-evident in the harsh sanctions it imposes on those it thinks support Moscow, and its own intense efforts to provide Kyiv with support.

It has always been part of the US geopolitical strategy to snare China in its Ukraine dragnet.

In upholding so-called US values and interests the Biden administration is trying to force a square peg into a round hole. Rather than its stated endeavor of "advancing a world that is peaceful, secure, stable, and with more opportunity", the administration has given free rein to warmongers, China hawks and selfish politicians to hijack its agenda at home and abroad to such a degree that its diplomacy is nothing more than a pacifier for the domestic dogfight.

What the US is trying to do is to sever the connections between major countries that have been formed in economic globalization. However, Washington will only find itself cornered at last by its own weaponizing of trade and technology, as well as its own attempts to divide the world according to its own values, as it is acting against the trend of the times and counter to aspirations of people around the world for peace and stability.

## Washington should tell truth about its biolabs

Some politicians in Washington are pushing for the COVID-19 Origin Act of 2023 to be passed, hoping that it will establish a link between the novel coronavirus and a Chinese virology lab.

They may believe that politicizing origin tracing of the virus is the way to smear China. But they are ignoring the fact that it is the United States that has the largest number of biological labs around the world, and that it is the US that rejects the Biological Weapons Convention protocol.

In other words, it is the US that owes the world answers to questions about what the US is doing with its hundreds of biological labs in various parts of the world, whether research has been conducted on biological weapons in these labs and whether some of the infectious diseases are caused by leaked viruses from some of these labs.

The Biological Threat Reduction Program of the US Department of Defense alone is reported to support 336 biolabs in 30 countries, including 26 in Ukraine. Media reports also say that the biological laboratories funded and controlled by the US in Ukraine conducted research that could be behind the increase in the number of cases of diphtheria, rubella, tuberculosis and measles in the country since 2014. Besides, the World Health Organization has included Ukraine in the list of countries with a

high risk of a polio outbreak.

Facing such questions, Washington has never given a convincing answer. It only denies such reports, claiming that they are conspiracy theories. That Washington has never explicitly told the world whether it has the hundreds of labs or not can only make the world believe that it has. If it has hundreds of such labs located in various parts of the world, Washington has the obligation to tell the world why it needs so many biological labs and what these labs are actually doing.

If Washington continues to pull the wool over people's eyes by beating about the bush or just refusing to say a word about it or even tries to divert the world's attention by politicizing virus tracing, it can only make the world believe that research is being conducted on biological and chemical weapons in these labs. As the sole superpower in the world, the US needs to know how it behaves has an impact on global peace and development. It cannot take it for granted that it has the right to do whatever it believes serves its own interests without showing any concern for the well-being of the entire world.

If the US wants the world to respect it as a responsible country, it must reconsider how it behaves toward the rest of the world. On the question of its biological labs, it should tell the truth. It won't be considered trustworthy till it does.

Song Chen



## Opinion Line

## Successful apps caught in spiteful sights of lawmakers

In a report published on April 14, the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission affiliated to the US Congress blamed quick fashion platform Shein, shopping app Temu and other Chinese apps overseas for "data risks, sourcing violations, and trade loopholes".

A glance at the report will find, not coincidentally, that Shein which has a "dominant position" in its sector, also suffers the most. The report noted the fact that Shein has surpassed its competitors such as Zara and H&M, saying that its growth was supported by what it claimed to be "controversial practices", such as analysis of consumers' search history and fast supply chains. This presents a range of challenges to the United States, it claimed.

Similar to the hundreds, even thousands, of reports produced in

the US every year, the USCC one follows the old dirty logic that everything from China is risk-laden. Even the excuses they use are the same, namely data risks or analysis of the users' browsing history.

Certain US think tanks are attempting to distort all Chinese apps into the same rigid mold of being malicious in intent. They neither care about the fact that Chinese companies follow US laws in running their businesses nor that US users benefit from these Chinese apps so much that these apps are extremely popular.

Chinese blood is the original sin of any Chinese company that serves US consumers. It is the "decoupling" approach of US politicians that drives so many organizations into a frenzy to produce the biased reports claiming malpractices.

In the report, the USCC concludes that the low tariff rate of the US caused these Chinese companies to grow. An interesting conclusion that implies the Democrat-led Congress has a similar tendency to that of the Republican-led one during Donald Trump's presidency, as both are rather keen on raising tariff rates so the US can get more money from the foreign commodities that enter the US territory.

They should be taught that tariffs are taxes and the additional tariffs paid by foreign companies will ultimately be paid by US consumers that buy these global products. In franker words, by advocating higher tariff rates they mean to increase the tax paid by US residents.

The Democrats are as narrow-minded as the Republicans.

—ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

## Stain on American soul a human rights issue

Racism in the United States is not only a "stain on its soul" but also a serious human rights issue that has sparked widespread international concern and condemnation. US politicians should face the problem and improve the human rights situation in the country.

At the second session of the so-called Summit for Democracy, the US uttered high-tone words about "enhancing everyone's rights and dignity". These slogans sharply contrast with the reality of the increasing racial discrimination and inequality in the US. US politicians point fingers at the human rights situations in other countries but they are unable or unwilling to improve the human rights situation in their own country.

In the US today, ethnic minorities risk encountering racial discrimination at any time. According to a report by CNN, which conducted interviews with over 3,000 African Americans, 82 percent of respondents believe that racism is the primary problem facing African Americans, and 79 percent said they have experienced discrimination based on race or ethnicity. The US Declaration of Independence, published in 1776, declares that "all men are created equal", but even today US society is still divided by a racial chasm.

In recent years, political polarization in the US has led to increased social division and a continuous rise in racial hate crimes, repeatedly challenging the bottom line of

human civilization. In 2022, all extremist killings identified in the US were linked to right-wing extremism, with a large number of them related to white supremacy. In May of last year, the mass shooting in a Buffalo supermarket shocked the world, with 10 African Americans killed. Statistics show that hate crimes based on racial bias in the US increased significantly between 2020 and 2022. An online survey by an Asian American data collaborative found that in 2021, one in six Asian Americans experienced violence based on their race. When the most important rights to life and survival are measured by skin color, where are the human rights claimed by the US?

—PEOPLE'S DAILY

## What They Say

## Chinese market open to, and shared by, all

Many foreign businesses are optimistic about the Chinese economy, as seen at the third China International Consumer Products Expo held from April 10 to 15. The expo attracted more than 4,000 consumer products from over 60 countries and regions, with many leading international brands in specific industries participating for the first time.

Currently, China is the world's second-largest consumer goods market and the largest online retail market, with final consumption expenditure accounting for over half of its GDP for 12 consecutive years. The Chinese consumer market has steadily recovered in the first quarter of this year, with the retail industry prosperity index reaching 50.6 percent in March, up 0.3 percentage points from the previous month. This provides more opportunities for foreign companies to enter the

large Chinese market.

The World Intellectual Property Organization's "Global Innovation Index Report 2022" shows that China ranked 11th, steadily rising for 10 consecutive years, which brings new impetus for the development of foreign companies.

Since the first expo in 2021, more and more international consumer product companies have landed in Hainan province, integrating into the construction of the Hainan International Tourism Consumption Center. In the eyes of these companies, China's open and inclusive quality business environment, and the various openness measures proposed by the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership make it an attractive place to base themselves to face the world.

This year, China will continue to promote high-level opening-up by taking a series of measures such as

improving the quality and level of trade and investment cooperation, increasing the opening-up of the service sector, implementing the national treatment of foreign-funded enterprises and actively promoting the accession to high-standard economic and trade agreements. These measures will provide greater development space and a more reassuring development environment for foreign businesses.

On April 15, the Consumption Expo closed, while the 133rd China Import and Export Fair opened. One international exhibition after another, China is constantly fulfilling its promise with deeds by making the Chinese market the world's market, a shared market, and everyone's market. In an uncertain world, China's certainty is a pillar for maintaining world peace and development.

—CHINA MEDIA GROUP

## CHINA DAILY WORLDWIDE

Contact us at:

**China Daily**  
15 Huxin Dongjie Chaoyang District,  
Beijing 100029  
News: +86 (0) 10 6491-8366  
editor@chinadaily.com.cn  
Advertisement: +86 (0) 10 6491-8631  
ads@chinadaily.com.cn  
Subscription: +86-400-699-0203  
subscription.chinadaily.com.cn  
App: www.chinadaily.com.cn/mobile/daily.html

**China Daily UK**  
90 Cannon St, London EC4N 6HA, UK  
+44 (0) 207 398 8270  
editor@chinadailyuk.com

**China Daily Asia Pacific**  
**China Daily Hong Kong**  
Unit 1818, Hing Wai Centre, 7 Tin Wan  
Praya Road, Aberdeen, Hong Kong  
+852 2518 5111  
editor@chinadailyhk.com  
editor@chinadailyasia.com

**China Daily USA**  
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,  
New York, NY 10036  
+1 212 537 8888  
editor@chinadailyusa.com

**China Daily Africa**  
P.O. Box 27261-00100, Nairobi, Kenya  
+254 (0) 20 242 8589 (Nairobi)  
editor@chinadailyafrica.com  
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com  
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

## COMMENT



China and the World Roundtable | China-proposed Initiatives

**Editor's note:** China has become an important participant in and contributor to global governance, and Chinese ideas and solutions to major problems have gained greater recognition. China has also put forward the vision of a global community with a shared future for mankind, and has been pursuing the greater common good and safeguarding shared interests. Four experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

Yu Jiang and Jia Ding

## Mutual learning leads to a shared future

At a time when geopolitical conflicts are intensifying across the world, American political scientist Samuel P. Huntington's theory of "clash of civilizations" is regaining popularity in a few Western countries, causing many to once again fall into the fatalistic pessimism of the inevitability of a clash of civilizations.

While pessimism spreads in the West, the wise man of the East, with rational and profound thinking, is leading humankind to a future of peaceful coexistence. On March 15, while delivering a speech at the Communist Party of China in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting in Beijing, Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, made a wonderful exposition on the modernization of human society, and proposed the Global Civilization Initiative, expressing the Party's sincere desire to work with parties in other countries to ensure that modernization across the globe becomes a mighty force driving progress and prosperity and jointly build a community with a shared future for mankind.

By doing so, Xi demonstrated the Party's courage and responsibility to meet the common global challenges at a time when humankind's modernization journey has again reached a crossroad, and help stabilize the complex and turbulent international situation.

The Chinese path to modernization, a key term defining China's journey toward national rejuvenation, was written into the 20th CPC National Congress report in October 2022, with Xi Jinping emphasizing the "central task" of the CPC is to serve the people and calling for efforts to realize national rejuvenation through the Chinese path to modernization.

It is the diversity of civilizations that promotes interaction among them, which in turn facilitates mutual learning and development. The GCI is another major international public good proposed by China after the Belt and Road Initiative, the Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative. They are the answer to the question of the century: What is wrong with the world and what should we do? They reflect China's global vision as a responsible major country.

Delivering a keynote speech at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization at its headquarters in Paris in 2014, Xi said: "We need to encourage different civilizations to respect each other and live together in harmony while promoting their exchanges and mutual learning as



Yu Jiang is full-time deputy secretary-general of the Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy Studies Center and vice-president of the China Institute of International Studies.

a bridge of friendship among peoples, a driving force behind human society, and a strong bond for world peace."

Nine years have passed since then, but Xi's vision of civilization characterized by diversity, equality and inclusiveness, remains significant. Especially, in today's complex and changing world, the only way to resolve humanity's common problems is to rely on the concerted efforts of all civilizations.

Xi summarized the GCI as "four proposals"; that is, advocating respect for the diversity of civilizations, advocating the common values of humanity, advocating the importance of inheritance and innovations of civilizations, and advocating robust international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation.

The four proposals are interconnected, respect the diversity of civilizations, seek the greatest common divisor of civilizations, and strive to realize the dialectical unity of civilizational pluralism and commonality. The GCI not only attaches importance to the inheritance of civilization and emphasizes the historical and cultural traditions of different ethnic groups, but also foresees the future by reviewing the past and encourages all countries to harness the relevance of their histories and cultures to improve their future.



Jia Ding is an assistant research fellow at the Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy Studies Center.

The GCI is aimed at exploring the action plan for building a global network for inter-civilizational dialogue and cooperation, and lays a path for building a community with a shared future for mankind, which is distinctly scientific, contemporary, advanced and practical.

As another important achievement of Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy, the GCI focuses on the common interests of the people around the world and expresses their common aspirations. As such, it will promote the noble cause of peaceful development and exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations.

Chinese civilization is one of the oldest and longest continuous civilizations in the world. As the inheritors of Chinese civilization, the Chinese people have a high degree of confidence in their culture, which will help them realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and build a modern and powerful socialist country. But the Chinese people also know there are more than 200 countries and regions in the world, and different civilizations have their own unique set of values.

But cultural differences should not be a source of global conflict. Instead, they should be turned into a driving force of civilizational advancement. The customs, traditional wisdom and culture, and the spiritual pursuit are

national assets on which a country depends for survival and development.

In its cultural exchanges with other countries, China has always advocated that irrespective of their size, strength and wealth, all countries are equal members of the international community and have equal right to participate in international affairs. China rejects the concept of "cultural superiority" in all its forms, and opposes attempts by any country to impose its system of governance on other countries.

No matter how complex today's world is, only peaceful development and cooperation can bring benefits to all. Humankind has developed into one indivisible community of shared interests in which, according to an ancient Chinese saying, "the prosperity or suffering of one will have ripple effects on others."

In today's world, no country or region can realize true development by isolating itself from the rest of the world. That's why China has devoted itself to the grand cause of building, in partnership with other countries, a community with a shared future for mankind.

The GDI, the GSI and the GCI indicate that under the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era and Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy, China's diplomacy is making, and will continue to make, greater contributions to promoting global peace and development.

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



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Hussein Askary

## Beijing's initiatives can bury 'clash of civilizations'

American political scientist Francis Fukuyama declared in his 1992 book, *End of History and The Last Man*, that the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in 1991 marked "not just the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: That is, the end-point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."

Fukuyama's teacher Samuel Huntington, steeped in geopolitics and perpetual war mentality, dampened his student's apparent "optimistic" views with a call for the liberal democratic West to be on the alert. In his 1996 book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, based on a series of articles published since 1993, Huntington advocated that a clash between the dominant Western liberal democratic order on the one hand and the Muslim world and China (because of the "hierarchical command structures in the Confucian Sinic civilization") on the other was inevitable.

In the three decades since these "prophecies" were pronounced, tens of millions of innocent people have been killed, maimed or rendered homeless, seeking refuge in other countries, economies destroyed, and trillions of dollars wasted on weapons and ammunition. The world looks more dangerous than ever, with a Cold War in the best-case scenario and a hot global war in the worst looming. Those in West-

ern corridors of power, drunk with the fantasy of the superiority of the Western liberal democratic system, are sleep-walking the whole human race into extinction through a thermonuclear holocaust.

The only bright spot in the past three decades of wars and economic/financial crises is the rise of Asia with China at its core. More and more nations are gravitating toward this new center of economic power, thanks to their belief in a common future for all humankind. This process was accelerated with the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative by President Xi Jinping in 2013, Fortaleza Declaration of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) in 2014, and the expansion of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization into a garden of nations.

As the world's challenges increased and became more complex, Xi proposed the Global Development Initiative in 2021, the Global Security Initiative in 2022, and the Global Civilization Initiative at the Communist Party of China in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-Level Meeting on March 15.

The GCI is a unique proposal for setting the goals of global governance and relations among nations and cultures. It raises the bar of political dialogue to address such philosophical issues as the purpose of existence of nations and civilizations and the means through which can be realized peaceful co-existence among countries which are diverse in culture, history, religion, way



The author is vice-president of the Belt and Road Institute in Sweden.

of life, and political and social systems. The GCI revives the optimistic spirit amid a dangerously divided world today. It has the potential to bury both the "clash of civilizations" and "end of history" fantasies.

As to the important questions on the modernization path China and some other countries may take, Xi provided the answers with clear principles:

\* modernization and progress must be people-centered, because "the ultimate goal of modernization is people's free and well-rounded development";

\* the cultural and civilizational aspects of modernization must not be ignored, otherwise a materialistic society will become a soulless consumer society;

\* the focus should be not only on fulfilling the needs of the present generations but of future generations too;

\* countries must seek their independent path toward modernization and there are no "superior" models to copy;

\* in a changing world with new opportunities thanks to scientific and technological progress, and challenges created by man-made or natural disas-

ters, countries and political parties must seek new ways, free of rigid ideologies, to realize their national modernization goals;

\* we must help others to succeed while seeking our own success, and ensure everyone enjoys the fruits of modernization, because humankind is a community with a shared future;

\* the contributions of all civilizations and cultures must be respected and their contributions to human progress throughout history recognized. This will contribute to further promotion of all nations and civilizations.

It is of utmost importance that in these times of deep environmental, economic and security crises, a voice of reason tries to pull humanity back from the edge of the apocalyptic precipice it finds itself on.

Such an initiative to start a "dialogue of civilizations", rather than triggering a "clash of civilizations", reminds people and countries about the purpose of their existence and the meaning of taking the best of what was bestowed upon them by previous generations and civilizations, and what they can contribute to and leave behind for future generations.

There is also a pressing need for discussions on a global scale on the true nature of humankind and its purpose of existence. The Global Civilization Initiative is a timely and perfect launching pad for such discussions.

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

Thorsten J. Pattberg

## China seeks progress of all humanity

President Xi Jinping recently put forward the Global Civilization Initiative, which with the Global Development Initiative and Global Security Initiative, is aimed at building a world where all people work together for the greater good.

Putting forward the Global Civilization Initiative on March 15, Xi emphasized that Chinese modernization is also a path the country should take to "seek progress for humanity and harmony for the entire world", which in turn will benefit the Chinese people as well as boost the common development of the world.

While China's rich cultural traditions will play a role in achieving this vision, it is important to acknowledge that it will not be easy. Those who resist the effort will need to be gently persuaded and shown the error of their ways through peaceful means. Also, it is important to improve global governance and establish a competent bureaucracy to oversee the distribution of resources and maintenance of social order. And information campaigns need to be launched to educate the people of the virtues of this diverse yet complementary world order.

The need is to focus on the positive aspects of the Global Civilization Initiative and work toward building a world where there is no or almost no racial or religious conflict or discrimination, and resources are fairly distributed. Together, we can build a fairer world order that also embodies the best of Chinese values and traditions, and serves as an example to the rest of the world.

Many countries and regions around the world have suffered at the hands of Western powers throughout history.

From colonialism to imperialism, Western powers have often sought to exploit and dominate other countries for their own benefit. China, for example, was forced to open its borders to the Western powers in the 19th century, leading to the loss of its sovereignty and a century of humiliation at the hands of foreign powers.

While India was colonized by the British Empire for more than 200 years, with devastating consequences for its people, Iran has faced countless interventions and interferences from the West, including the overthrow of its democratically elected government in 1953. As for Russia, it has suffered at the hands of Western powers, particularly during the Cold War, when it was the target of aggressive policies aimed at containing the spread of communism. Not to mention the anti-Semitic thinking of some Western observers and politicians.

South America has a long history of interference and exploitation by Western powers, particularly the United States, which has frequently supported brutal dictators and coups to maintain its dominance in the region. Similarly, Africa was subject to centuries of colonization, exploitation, and enslavement by Western powers, leading to long-term economic and social problems that continue to this day.

The recent shift toward correcting these historical wrongs is an important step toward a more just and equitable world. This shift, by the way, started in the West. China does not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries.

So, by acknowledging the harm that has been done and taking steps to redress it, the collective West can move toward a future in which all countries and peoples are treated with dignity and respect. This includes acknowledging the contributions of non-Western cultures and traditions, individuals and brands, as well as promoting greater understanding and cooperation between different countries and regions. By working together to achieve common goals, despite the diversity, we can create a world where everyone has the opportunity to succeed and thrive.

Indeed, the future global civilization is a source of great hope and promise for the billions of non-Western people who bring with them a rich diversity of cultures, traditions and religions. Islam, Orthodoxy, Confucianism, Buddhism, Hinduism and many other belief systems will all play a role in shaping the future of humankind.

However, for Western elites who have long held a position of dominance in the world, this prospect can be horrifying. The idea of a future where their values and beliefs, inventions, opinions and make-beliefs are no longer paramount, and where birth right no longer automatically bears any particular privilege, sends shivers down their spines, and can lead to strong feelings of xenophobia and nihilism.

The truth is that the non-Western people are not a threat to Western civilization; rather, they are a source of renewal and inspiration. For too long, Western powers have taken credit for scientific developments, discoveries and inventions, and for enriching literature and language often at the expense of other cultures and civilizations. Then the United States, by virtue of stolen land and a fantastic strategic location, unraveled the British Empire, helped defeat the German Reich and end the Japanese dominion, and survived the Cold War and then turned around and said: "We won—End of history!"

Do those defeated people really want to be patronized and controlled by their American overlords? Don't think so. There is no end to that history.

That is why China does not want to replace the US as the world's next superpower. Instead, it aims to help build a multipolar world order of sovereign nations. By learning from the experiences and insights of Western and non-Western traditions, we can combine and unlock new sources of knowledge and promote innovation in order to propel humankind to the next level. Civilization is all of us.

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

## GLOBAL VIEWS



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

GERT GROBLER

## US overshadowed by China in the continent

Washington's charm offensive gains little traction as it is aimed at countering Chinese influence not helping Africa

US Vice-President Kamala Harris was the latest of a long list of US dignitaries and officials to visit Africa this year. These visits, in the wake of the US-African Leaders' Summit held in Washington DC in December last year, are clearly aimed at resetting US relations with African countries and looking to make inroads in Africa to advance its strategic objectives. This US "charm offensive" is also directed at counterbalancing Chinese and Russian influence on the continent.

The frantic diplomatic activity of the United States is a further manifestation of a "new scramble for Africa" as the continent is on the threshold of huge economic transformation and development. It is no wonder that an increasing number of countries are recognizing the continent's growing economic and demographic weight. It is forecast that Africa's population will increase to approximately 2.4 billion people by 2050 and that consumer and business spending will rise to roughly \$16 trillion in the same year. Africa is also on the cusp of an exciting process of industrialization, closing its infrastructure gap and unleashing its massive agricultural and resource wealth as well as the potential of its digital industry.

On the global geopolitical divide over the Ukraine conflict, Harris played down the "choose the West" imperative that has been to the fore and opted for a more nuanced exchange of views over the consequences of the crisis on trade and energy prices. Although her African hosts welcomed the prospect of closer cooperation with the US, a clear message was conveyed to her, namely, that Africa should have a free choice in its relationships with the rest of the world.

In fact most African countries are justifiably unapologetic about their close ties with China. Africa recoils from being used as a pawn again, in much the same way as it was during the Cold War.

African leaders also informed Harris that the continent does not take kindly to the proposed US Congressional bills and resolutions in Washington DC which seek to punish African countries cooperating with Russia. In fact African countries regard these actions as a blatant and arrogant disregard of their sovereignty.

Only 16 out of Africa's 54 governments participated in the United States-backed "Summit for Democracy". Most African countries detest being lectured to on democracy by

the West and the continent generally regarded the summit as being instigated by the US with the aim of dividing countries on ideological lines and fueling confrontation under the pretext of democracy.

Although the US has not yet defined a coherent plan, it seems to be contemplating the strengthening of relations based on Africa's development priorities rather than short-term objectives set by the US, depending on the priorities of the administration in power. However, it is no surprise that many comments on the outcome of Harris' visit, by African governments and commentators, also given the lack of the required US commitment and broken economic promises in the past, reflected a distinct degree of skepticism about the "new heightened interest by the US in Africa" and whether Washington will deliver on its promises.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to create challenges for the economies of African countries, which are further compounded by the negative implications of the current conflict in Ukraine as well as the uncertain global economic outlook.

Over the years, the US' role and visibility in Africa have faded considerably, having been overshadowed by countries such as China. China has been eagerly embraced by African countries because of its win-win approach to the continent that upholds non-interference in internal affairs and mutual respect. Most African countries reject the narrative of the US that doing business with China is to Africa's detriment. China, based on its positive track record on the continent, therefore has a huge advantage over the US through the dynamic Forum on China and Africa Cooperation and the Belt and Road Initiative.

It is against this background that Africa and China consistently renew their commitment to jointly seek enhanced cooperation on the FOCAC and the Belt and Road Initiative in order to elevate China-Africa cooperation to an even higher and more strategic level.

Africa strongly supports China's new type of international relations which emphasizes peaceful coexistence and which upholds the common values of humanity. The continent looks forward to the joint implementation of the constructive Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilization Initiative as well as to build on the existing high-quality Belt and Road cooperation which

has already rendered significant concrete results to the continent.

Chinese entities made direct investments of \$44 billion in Africa as of 2020. During 2022, total trade between Africa and China reached \$282 billion, up 11 percent year-on-year, reinforcing China's role as Africa's biggest bilateral trading partner. That's more than four times the amount of trade between the US and Africa.

The Belt and Road Initiative is a major driving force in the rapidly growing China and Africa cooperation with 52 African countries as well as the African Union Commission having signed agreements on cooperation under the framework of the initiative. Since the inception of the Belt and Road Initiative 10 years ago, Africa and China have increasingly pursued high-quality projects with concrete economic benefits. A growing number of key Belt and Road projects have been completed. Among others more than 6,000 kilometers of railroads, 6,000 kilometers of highways, 20 ports, more than 80 power facilities, 130 medical facilities and over 170 schools have been built on the African continent.

BRICS cooperation is a further mechanism that Africa and other developing countries and emerging markets regard as a locomotive for global economic recovery and more vigorous development.

During the visit by Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang to the AU in Addis Ababa in January this year, AU Commission Chairman Moussa Faki Mahamat emphasized that China has stood with Africa both in its struggle for national independence and liberation and in its efforts to accelerate development and revitalization. He added that Africa looks forward to working with China to jointly advance the building of a China-Africa community with a shared future in the new era.

The following tweet by Nigeria's Vice-President Yemi Osinbajo, during Harris' visit, very effectively sums up the depth of China and Africa friendship: "China shows up where and when the West will not and/or are reluctant"

The author is a senior research fellow at the Institute of African Studies at Zhejiang Normal University and a former senior diplomat in the South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation. 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.

ZHAO MINGHAO

## Asia-Pacific needs to rethink

The region should utilize its resources for improving people's lives instead of in military races

The US government has recently announced its federal budgets for fiscal year 2024 stressing an increase in diplomatic and military inputs in the "Indo-Pacific region". It highlighted that the next decade will be decisive for the rivalry between China and the United States.

The US has used the Russia-Ukraine conflict to hype up the "China threat" and develop exclusive military and security blocs through the Pacific Deterrence Initiative and the "Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness" among other schemes, which will increase confrontation and instability in the region.

To improve strategic competition with China, the Biden administration has consolidated bilateral alliances with Japan, the Republic of Korea and the Philippines, and has been making lots of efforts in courting the regional partners of India and Vietnam in the Indo-Pacific. The US has been trying to improve security backup for the "Indo-Pacific strategy" by paying greater attention to the QUAD with Japan, India and Australia, developing trilateral security partnership with the United Kingdom and Australia, and bringing European/NATO forces to Asia.

Under the Biden administration's "Indo-Pacific strategy", the US-Japan-India-Australia Quadrilateral Security is aimed at building an overarching coalition to impose all-round pressure on China. Besides joint military exercises, the QUAD members are also engaged in increasingly close cooperation on economic, maritime and public health security, key and emerging technologies, cybersecurity, chip supply chain and space cooperation. The QUAD is also courting more countries in the "Indo-Pacific region", especially the ROK and Indonesia, to counterbalance China.

The India-Israel-United Arab Emirates-US (I2U2) cooperation mechanism may develop closer ties with the US-Japan-India-Australia mechanism. On Oct 18, 2021, foreign ministers of the US, India, Israel and the UAE held a meeting to discuss political, economic and trade ties, and maritime security

cooperation, marking official establishment of the mechanism.

According to Kabir Taneja, a researcher at the Strategy and Technology Center of India-based Observer Research Foundation, the quadrilateral mechanism in West Asia shows that India-US cooperation has progressed further. The two quadrilateral mechanisms in the East and the West will reinforce each other to curb China's influence.

The US has also stepped up efforts to improve the trilateral security pact between Australia, the UK and the US, known as AUKUS which was established in September 2021. The three countries unveiled detailed measures on March 13 to help Australia acquire nuclear-powered submarines.

AUKUS also focuses on strengthening cooperation on cutting-edge military technology and defense industries, which reflects the US policy of "outsourcing defense capability." The mechanism focuses on cutting-edge military technologies including hypersonic and anti-hypersonic, electronic warfare, cyberwarfare, artificial intelligence and quantum technology. The military-industrial bloc of AUKUS is furthering cooperation, seeking to integrate defense supply chains and "Defense Industrial Bases" and launching research, development and production of military equipment and ammunition jointly.

The Biden administration has hyped up civilian security challenges through issues such as maritime security and further expanded the influence of the UK, the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the "Indo-Pacific region". The Biden administration has laid greater focus on addressing "civil security challenges" such as illegal fishing in the Asia-Pacific. The US seeks to pressure China through such "soft security" issues, increase costs for China to improve its global reputation and increase difficulties for China to handle relations with neighboring countries and promote regional cooperation.

The Biden administration has also expanded the link between

Europe and the "Indo-Pacific geopolitical bloc" to back up its strategy of tying China and Russia and imposing pressure on the two countries to increase the leverage over China. In January, the UK and Japan signed the Reciprocal Access Agreement, an alliance-oriented security agreement. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz visited Japan in March. Defense ministers of Germany and Japan said they will increase joint exercises and cooperate more on military technology.

With the promotion of the US "Indo-Pacific strategy", risks of confrontation are rising, and military races are casting a shadow over the "Indo-Pacific region".

Countries in the Asia-Pacific region need to rethink the long-term challenges brought by confrontation, strengthen their strategic communication, and reduce misunderstanding and misjudgment. The countries should cope with fragmented regional security issues and utilize resources to improve people's well-being and development rather than on arms races so as to safeguard peace in the Asia-Pacific region.

First, countries in the Asia-Pacific region need to draw lessons from the Ukraine conflict. Confrontation between blocs will intensify countries' sense of insecurity and even lead to military conflicts. A new NATO with China as its imaginary enemy is not what the Asia-Pacific region wants or needs. The region needs common, comprehensive and sustainable security. Second, China's defense spending and military capabilities should not be exaggerated. The security challenges China faces come from the US and its alliances, whose overall military expenditure is much higher than China's. The Global Security Initiative proposed by China is not empty talk and the test is whether it can be implemented in the Asia-Pacific region. Third, we need to build up an Association of Southeast Asian Nations-centered security governance framework in the Asia-Pacific, maintain existing mechanisms such as ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting and the East Asia Summit, and address non-traditional security issues such as food and energy security and counter-terrorism that can affect long-term development of most countries in the region.

Fourth, countries in the Asia-Pacific region need to engage in more dialogues on security challenges from emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, and address excessive securitization of the economic and technological relations which does harm to the region's stability and prosperity.

The author is a professor at the Institute of International Studies at Pudan University and a China Forum expert. 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.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

# LIFE



We hope that through this festival, we can attract more industry insiders and outsiders to participate in and pay attention to the exploration of this new form of art (dance video), thus propelling the performing arts industry in China toward a path of high-quality development.”

Liu Dan, deputy secretary-general of the China Association of Performing Arts



Dancers perform in real-time footage to introduce the Beijing International Dance Video Festival that is scheduled from April 28 to May 3. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## NEW HORIZON FOR ART

Beijing video festival focuses on emerging directions for creative performers to express themselves in era of increased possibilities, **Li Yingxue** reports.

Eight dancers delivered an enthralling show that involved the audience, while a camera tracked their moves and displayed real-time footage on a screen. The dancers' interaction with the camera created two distinct viewing experiences for the audience: witnessing the live performance and observing the visuals onscreen.

The recent show introduced the second edition of the Beijing International Dance Video Festival, from April 28 to May 3, and is set to feature seven sections, including offline screenings, workshops and forums.

Under this year's theme, Integrating, the festival will aim to bring together the energy of international art and various industries, and convey the culture of harmony through dance and images.

The festival seeks to find new directions for China's art and performance industries through dance and video. It aims to be a platform for artists, performers and enthusiasts to come together, exchange ideas and push the boundaries of creativity.

Liu Dan, deputy secretary-general of the China Association of Performing Arts, says the performing arts market in the country is experiencing a new phase of development, presenting many possibilities for the future. "As practitioners in the performing arts industry, we look forward to seeing more rich and diverse works at this year's Beijing International Dance Video Festival," she says.

"Additionally, we hope that through this festival, we can attract more industry insiders and outsiders to participate in and pay attention to the exploration of this new form of art, thus propelling the performing arts



The schedule is dramatically revealed at a news conference in Beijing on April 9.

industry in China toward a path of high-quality development," Liu says.

The "dance video" segment of the industry started to develop more with the help of new media during the COVID-19 pandemic when many dancers could not perform live.

"The festival will become a platform for young performers to explore more possibilities," Zhang Ligang, vice-president of the organizing committee of the festival, says.

Liu Chun, associate researcher at the dance research institute of the Chinese National Academy of Arts, says dance videos in China have a history of over 20 years.

"It's a young art form, which



A poster for the festival.

has been exploring its own path," he says. "The birth of a platform like the Beijing International Dance Video Festival is an excellent opportunity for young creators to present themselves in the still-niche field."

Actress Sarna, from the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, vice-president of the organizing committee, says the festival is like "a pair of hands and eyes to explore the field."

"We are looking for good works around the world — they may be masterpieces, pioneering works by young dancers or interdisciplinary works," she says.

During the festival, professionals from the fields of dance, video-making, drama, script writing and marketing will

gather in the workshop section to share information and discuss ways to develop dance videos. A youth scholars and artists forum will also be held to discuss the diversity of dance videos and multimedia artistic expressions.

A highlight of the festival is the "limited creation" section, where six groups of dancers and choreographers will create dance videos according to six film themes at Langyuan Station in Beijing in 48 hours, and the entire process will be livestreamed.

The creation process will be quite challenging for the dancers, and at the same time, the audience will get a chance to know the stories behind each dance, Gao Shan, art director of the festival, says.

Cao Chengyuan, chairman of the jury of the festival, says: "I am eager to see more pioneers in the field creating dance imagery that connects with life, advances the future and steps toward the global stage."

After its successful debut last year, the Beijing International Dance Video Festival has once again been included in the Beijing International Film Festival this year.

Cui Yan, executive deputy director of the Beijing International Film Festival organizing committee, says last year's film festival brought many pleasant surprises, and he is excited to see what new surprises and content this year's festival will bring.

The Beijing International Film Festival is a young, growing festival, so I hope in the future, both festivals can grow together to help China's film and dance industries develop toward a better future, he adds.

Contact the writer at [liyixue@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:liyixue@chinadaily.com.cn)

### What's on

#### Diverse cultures

The Inner Mongolia autonomous region in North China is a destination of serenity and poetic beauty for many visitors. The extensive plateau horizons, with some distinctive mountains,



grasslands and wetlands and other geographic features, have been attracting tourists. A painting exhibition now on at the Shenzhen Art Museum, Guangdong province, unfolds a panoramic view of Inner Mongolia by showing its natural magnificence, rich culture and improvement in ecological conditions. The exhibition, running through to April 23, is a tour show mounted by Inner Mongolia Art Museum. It is also a celebration of the region's history of being crisscrossed by agricultural and nomadic civilizations, and the Yellow and the Yangtze rivers, all of which contributed to the development of diverse ethnic cultures there.

9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 32 Donghu Yijie, inside Donghu Park, Aiguo Road, Luohu district, Shenzhen, Guangdong province. 0755-2542-6069.

#### Sino-German links



In his most revered writing, *Lantingji Xu* (Preface to the Poems Composed at the Orchid Pavilion), the 4th-century calligrapher Wang Xizhi created a phrase, *youmu chenghua*, meaning "let the eye travel extensively so that the heart and mind are set free". The traditional cultural philosophy is that people should travel as often and far as possible so that their vision widens and their minds open more. *View, the Landscape on the Bridge*, an exhibition at TAG Art Museum in Qingdao, Shandong province, traces the journeys of modern Chinese artists to carry on this tradition in a new context: They traveled much further around the world, compared to their predecessors in ancient times, to a different continent and embraced different styles of art. Fan Di'an, dean of the Central Academy of Fine Arts and chairman of the China Artists Association, the show's curator, has got together 37 Chinese artists who worked and lived in Germany in the past four decades. It shows their exploration of art and cultural observations. The exhibition, running through to May 14, celebrates the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Germany.

9 am-6 pm, closed on Mondays. 1111 Yinshatan (Silver Beach) Road, West Coast New Area, Qingdao, Shandong province. 0532-8667-1111.

#### Lacquer tradition

Hubei province is one of the earliest regions in the country to apply coatings of lacquer to materials such as wood, bamboo and cloth for the production of decorative works. Such items were found during archaeological work in the province. The objects embody an Eastern cultural spirit and aesthetic value. It is viewed as a duty by artists today in the province to preserve the fine tradition of lacquer art and to translate the form into a modern social context. One example is the presentation of Hubei Lacquer Art Triennial, first held in 2010, which has won recognition from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The new edition has made a comeback at Hubei Museum of Art in Wuhan, the provincial capital, and runs through to May 18. This year's exhibition, *World of Lacquer: Change and Connection*, shows more than 200 works by Chinese and foreign artists, presenting the richness of lacquer as a material and a working method to inspire the constant creativity of artists.



9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 1 Sanguandian, Donghu Road, Wuchang district, Wuhan, Hubei province. 027-8679-6062.

## LIFE

## Film sector reveals optimistic storyline

In traditional Chinese culture, spring is seen as a season of hope and possibility. With the country emerging from the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic, celebrities are optimistic about the future of China's film industry, believing that it has weathered the winter, in more senses than one, and is poised for a new beginning in spring.

China Movie Channel, the country's most influential movie broadcaster, held an award ceremony recently for winners of 14 categories of its latest M-Chart awards, an annual honor that recognized the most outstanding movies and their makers between 2022 and 2023.

The ceremony, which was held in Jingzhou, Hubei province, on April 9, was concurrently held with a show to highlight the significance of big data for the movie industry. Initiated in 2019, the annual M-Chart awards are selected through a combination of big data analysis and the opinions of experts and audiences, according to the organizers.

With the war epic *The Battle at Lake Changjin* franchise, which grossed an overall 9.84 billion yuan (\$1.4 billion) from two installments, Huang Jianxin — a veteran filmmaker credited with participating in 83 movies and producing 46 features within 45 years — took home the annual outstanding producer award.

Some other notable annual "outstanding" awards went to a group of A-listers, including Wu Jing and Zhang Yi, who jointly won the best actor category; Xi Meijuan and Yuan Quan, who jointly took the best actress entry; and Yi Yangqianxi, who scooped the most influential actor award.

"This year's Spring Festival holiday ushered in a good start and also brought about the revival of China's film industry," Huang says during an interview with Chinese reporters.

Speaking of the highest-grossing blockbusters during the holiday, ranging from historical suspense *Full River Red* to sci-fi sequel *The Wandering Earth II* and animated feature *Boonie Bears: Guardian Code*, Huang says the genres of Chinese films are becoming increasingly diversified.

"Even some movies with strong indie traits and artistic temperament — types that were previously believed to be impossible to achieve commercial success — have also performed well in the recovering market. With more movie events to be held this year, it's encouraging to see signs of growth in the industry," says Huang.

He further explains that director Cheng Er's espionage tale, *Hidden Blade*, which interweaves multiple timelines to revisit the turbulence of wartime Shanghai between the late 1930s and mid-1940s, is a prime example. Despite the story being somewhat difficult to understand due to Cheng's directorial intention of creating implicit and vague elements, *Hidden Blade* has managed to earn an impressive 931 million yuan, a remarkable achievement for this type of film.

An iconic figure among China's "fifth-generation directors", Zhang Yimou took the annual outstanding director award due to his recent two blockbusters, the military-themed *Snipers* and *Full River Red*, the latter set in the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279). The two movies have attracted a total of 100 million theatergoers, boosting the films' ratings on the M-Chart to both surpass 9.1 points out of 10.

Widely considered a huge commercial breakthrough in his directorial career spanning over 35 years, *Full River Red* unexpectedly beat its major rivals like the sequel of *The Wandering Earth*, China's highest-grossing sci-fi movie of all time, to top the Spring Festival box-office charts in the Year of the Rabbit.

The director recalls that he felt quite surprised at the success of *Full River Red*, which has grossed more than 4.5 billion yuan since it opened on Jan 22.

"I had several private conversations with my

After weathering the storm, prospects appear far more promising as new talent emerges, **Xu Fan** reports.



**Clockwise from top:** Director Zhang Yimou (left) alongside actors Wu Jing (middle) and Zhang Yi (right) at the award ceremony of the 2022-23 M-Chart of China Movie Channel in Jingzhou, Hubei province, on April 9; director Feng Xiaogang shares his passion for cinema, with his wife, actress Xu Fan; actresses Yuan Quan (left) and Xi Meijuan jointly win the annual outstanding actress award; and filmmaker Huang Jianxin receives the annual outstanding producer award. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Even some movies with strong indie traits and artistic temperament ... have also performed well in the recovering market. With more movie events to be held this year, it's encouraging to see signs of growth in the industry."

Huang Jianxin, veteran filmmaker

actors, telling them that I felt like I was a director who could make a single film that could earn over 1 billion yuan. But if one of my works could exceed 2 billion yuan at the box office, I would consider it as a great victory. So, it's really beyond our expectations this time," says Zhang Yimou.

The prolific director also reveals that he will begin shooting a movie regarding people's livelihoods and the rule of law in June, and his intense schedule also includes directing *League of Legends*, an online drama that is inspired by the eponymous video game, in September.

Zhang Yimou reveals that directing *League of Legends* marks his first time helming an internet series, adding that he doesn't feel that shooting for streaming platforms or TV channels is inferior to directing a movie for theaters.

"I take delight in exploring various types of stories, even though I have never played the game myself. I consider esports tales to be a new genre for me. My aim is to create something that is both cool and stylish, while also maintaining a fast-paced rhythm," he says.

With the unprecedented expansion of the internet industry, most filmmakers, including the celebrated winners, say they feel the traditional movie industry, which has a history of more than 100 years, is being increasingly impacted by various aspects of the internet, ranging from big data to emerging artificial intelligence technologies.

Hu Mei, one of the most well-known female directors in China, says domestic film companies have come to rely on big data throughout the entire production process, from script writing to market promotion.

"Big data can be particularly helpful during the later stages of a movie's distribution, as it allows distributors to estimate the film's market share in comparison with others set to be released in the same month or week," she explains.

However, producer-director Huang says he believes that big data is like "a double-edged sword", which may benefit investors but could possibly hinder the creativity of storytellers.

Mentioning that he was astonished to hear the AI applications such as ChatGPT could create a video in merely a few minutes, Huang says that, as a result, filmmakers and industry insiders will face an even greater challenge in this era.

"Technology always drives us forward, and we must use our imagination to surpass the challenges that technology sets for us," says Huang.

Despite facing the challenges, most Chinese filmmakers say that they have maintained their passion and love for cinema.

"Directing and producing movies have been a part of my life because of my love for cinema. However, making a movie is unique in that you need someone else to invest a large amount of money to bring your vision to life. As a result, I am always grateful for the opportunity to make films," says director Zhang.

Feng Xiaogang, one of the most renowned directors in China, reveals that he will return to the directorial chair by starting to shoot the third installment of *If You Are the One* later this year. The sequel is scheduled to reprise the roles of actor Ge You and actress Shu Qi, who are in the previous two movies, and maintains its trademark comedic tone.

"A few days ago, I wished Jackie Chan a happy birthday. Chan said he had been traveling across the country to promote his new movie (*Ride On*). Despite being quite tired, he enjoys doing it. I can relate to that. I told him that we made movies for fame, fortune, and career ambition in the past, but now we make movies because it makes us happy," says Feng.

Contact the writer at  
xufan@chinadaily.com.cn

## Australian photographer, 98, recalls images of China visit in '60s

SYDNEY — Like a timeless moment frozen on film, a 1960s trip to China is etched in the memory of 98-year-old Hans Schneider, an Australian photographer who can recollect almost every street he wandered, every dish he savored and every picture he snapped, despite more than 60 years passing by.

While bathing in the warm sunshine in the Southern Hemisphere, Schneider has no difficulty in remembering the bright yet icy March morning when he and his wife, Christina Cordero, stepped off the plane to embrace their new life in Beijing.

"We took a plane from Moscow to Beijing. It was bitterly cold on the plane ... It was a long flight and we traveled all through the night," says Schneider. "Everything was very new. I was just curious to know more."

He says that as a first-time traveler to China, he "knew nothing" about the Asian country at that point. Emigrating from his birthplace Germany to Chile at the age of 14, Schneider had his first contact with Chinese

culture by visiting a house in Santiago where a Chinese family lived.

"We had a Chinese meal. They grew many Chinese vegetables in the backyard, such as bok choy and many others that you wouldn't find in any market in Chile. I had some of the dishes, like sweet and sour pork and roast duck," Schneider recalls.

Before coming to China, it was merely by hearing from friends that Schneider caught a glimpse of what life could be like in that seemingly remote country.

When the chance to visit eventually knocked on the door, Schneider decided not only to learn about China hands-on but also to chronicle his expedition with photography, a hobby that dates back to his childhood in Berlin in the 1930s.

With both a monochrome and color camera in their luggage, Schneider and Cordero started their one-year stay in China. For work, Schneider devoted himself to translation and editing magazines at the Foreign Languages Press, while

Cordero taught Spanish at China Foreign Affairs University.

When the couple found free time, they would explore the city with their cameras. "Anything, any activity that could be of interest ... just people on the street, some children, some temple interiors," Schneider says, when asked about his selection of subjects.

Schneider's photo collections covered a wide range of themes, including renowned landmarks, children biting candied hawthorn, a street stall for steamed food, musical instruments sold at a department store, bicycles lined up by the road and an outdoor poster that read "hotpot for the masses".

Schneider was quick to click the shutter, as long as the viewfinder captured engrossing scenes, he never lingered on whether a photo held any particular meaning. "I haven't really thought about that. I put outside the photos as a selection. If the photo is there, it's because I liked it and I thought it was a picture of how life was in China at that time,"

says Schneider.

"You see children playing on the street, or you see the absence of cars ... obviously from our side, they are different," he adds.

Among all the photos taken in China, a bird's-eye shot named *Shanghai Bund* is one of Schneider's favorites. "It probably makes people think about how much has changed. When you look at my photos, the one I like best is a photo of Shanghai, the Bund," says Schneider.

"Now the island on your left is full of skyscrapers. So people will realize the enormous change in China over a relatively short period of time, the big contrast."

Following that one-year stay, Schneider only revisited China once, accompanying his friends for a book handover ceremony in Beijing in 2010.

But temporal and spatial distance haven't eroded his memory.

Schneider remembers the old days of cycling in Beijing with his wife, hiking the Fragrant Hills, browsing

antique shops on Liulichang Street, and being absorbed by *The Peony Pavilion*, a Kunqu Opera piece written by Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) playwright Tang Xianzu, in a local theater.

Back in the 1960s, Schneider would ask for coupons from his colleagues to buy a plate of street food, drink Tsingtao Beer in a restaurant near Purple Bamboo Park, and take a bite of a time-honored hotpot beside the Drum Tower.

People he met in China are an important part of his memory as well. "People were very, very friendly everywhere we went," Schneider says.

To learn about the country by themselves without being taught by others, the couple would hop on a bus to anywhere. "We never got lost. We never had any problems and the people were very friendly," he says.

Sometimes, passengers on a bus offered their seats to Schneider, who was then in his 30s, and Schneider would politely turn it down with basic Chinese words: "I'm good, thank you."

Thinking of these slightly embarrassing but funny moments brings a smile to the 98-year-old's face.

Schneider has also never forgotten a female Chinese doctor taking good care of Cordero at the Beijing Friendship Hotel. He also mentions a hotel manager, who found a darkroom for Schneider and his friends to develop photos in.

Looking back on those days, Schneider says, "We had a very good time."

Now settled in Australia, the almost-centenarian's love of photography is still deeply connected with Chinese culture.

He is in the process of turning films into digitized photos and displaying them on his social media accounts to let more followers observe an ever-changing China through his lens.

With the assistance of flashcard software and dictionaries, Schneider is also teaching himself Chinese.

XINHUA

## SPORTS

## SOCCER

## Haaland homes in on more history

Norwegian ties Salah's record, all-time mark now in his sights

Erling Haaland equaled the Premier League record of 32 goals in a 38-game season as Manchester City beat Leicester 3-1 to close within three points of Arsenal at the top of the table on Saturday.

The damage was all done in the first 25 minutes as Haaland struck twice after John Stones' fine strike had opened the scoring.

Haaland was denied the chance to move ahead of Mo Salah's 32 goals for Liverpool in the 2017/18 season after he was withdrawn at halftime as Pep Guardiola looked ahead to Wednesday's Champions League quarterfinal, second leg against Bayern Munich.

Guardiola could also afford the luxury of handing a rest to Stones, Rodri, Kevin De Bruyne and Jack Grealish in the second half as City secured a 10th consecutive win in all competitions despite a late wobble.

"The game was tricky in the last 20 minutes, but the first 55, 60 minutes was good," said Guardiola.

"At the end (it was uncomfortable). That normally happens when you make a lot of substitutions. We should avoid it.

"But sometimes it happens and it is important we started really well after the Champions League. We made subs to make players rest but we lost some control, though in general it was a deserved victory."

Dean Smith was taking charge of Leicester for the first time, but the true test of his ability to keep the Foxes in the top flight is still to come as the visitor chased shadows for the first hour at the Etihad.

"There's lots we can take. I'm obviously disappointed but a two-goal deficit to the best team in the world isn't the end of the world," said Smith, who was appointed Leicester boss until the end of the season last week.

"Our season won't be defined here, we have a run of games where we have to win matches."

## Keeping pressure on

Smith's defensive setup was undone within five minutes as Leicester failed to clear a corner and the ball fell to Stones, who volleyed into the top corner from outside the area on his weaker left foot.

Haaland set a new record for goals scored by a Premier League player in all competitions when he netted his 45th of the season in a 3-0 trouncing of Bayern in midweek.

The Norwegian is set to smash even more landmarks in the final two months of the season as he moved to within two of the all-time



Erling Haaland celebrates scoring Manchester City's third goal in Saturday's 3-1 home victory over Leicester City. The Norwegian striker netted twice to take his Premier League tally to a record-tying 32 goals. ACTION IMAGES VIA REUTERS

## Pep heaps praise on goal-machine Erling

Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola praised his scoring machine Erling Haaland on Saturday, saying the Norwegian's record-breaking achievements were good for the team.

Haaland scored twice in City's 3-1 win over beleaguered Leicester City to equal Mo Salah's record tally of 32 goals in a 38-game Premier League season.

"I want, I desire, (for him to) break all the records possible," Guardiola told a news conference. "That means he's scored a lot of goals, that means that helps us. But I think he wants to win the titles, to be there, and still we are there."

"But it's impressive, (we) still have to play eight games and he's close to

breaking all of them."

Haaland, in his maiden Premier League season, could obliterate the record in the remaining games.

The 22-year-old striker also took the English single-season scoring record in all competitions when he got his 45th goal on Tuesday in City's 3-0 Champions League quarterfinal win over Bayern Munich.

Haaland increased that to 47 on Saturday before Guardiola took him off at halftime, with the second leg versus Bayern looming on Wednesday. The popular player lingered long on the Etihad Stadium pitch after the final whistle, waving and smiling at fans.

The Spanish manager said Haaland's response to sitting out the sec-

ond half was "excellent as always," pointing out that his star striker was coming off a groin injury.

"You see his body language, his face during the game. He's like John (Stones), John and him come from injuries... and after 45 minutes, (it) was good for them to rest."

Stones scored Manchester City's other goal on Saturday, a left-footed rocket from long range.

Kevin De Bruyne now has 101 Premier League assists after a beautiful pass for Haaland's second goal, making him only the fifth player in history to exceed the 100 mark.

With the win, Manchester City climbed to within three points of leader Arsenal, who was due to play West

Ham on Sunday, in their chase for the Premier League title. But City has a far busier schedule, with the Champions League and FA Cup still to play for.

City and Arsenal square off in what should be a thriller at the Etihad Stadium on April 26, with Guardiola aware of how hard his team must fight in the remaining games.

"It's win, win and win," he said. "(Arsenal) have done an incredible run of the season so far and I don't think they're going to drop many points."

Asked if he was pleased with where his team is as it heads into the last stretch of the season, Guardiola said: "We're really good."

REUTERS

Premier League record of 34 goals in a campaign jointly held by Andrew Cole and Alan Shearer.

Haaland doubled City's lead from the penalty spot after Wilfred Ndidi handled a Grealish cross.

The 22-year-old then exhibited his mixture of blistering pace and brute strength to burst past Harry Souttar and hold off the Australian international as he latched onto De Bruyne's pass and lifted the ball

over Daniel Iversen.

But there was a price to pay for Guardiola's changes as Leicester grew into the game as the second half wore on.

Former Man City forward Kelechi Iheanacho was left with the simplest of tap-ins after Ederson parried Souttar's header 15 minutes from time.

James Maddison then wasted a glorious chance to set up a grand-

stand finish when Ederson saved a one-on-one with the England international before Iheanacho hit the post in stoppage time.

But a ninth defeat in 10 games left Leicester still second from bottom and two points adrift of safety.

City's sixth consecutive league win puts the pressure back on Arsenal ahead of the Gunners' trip to West Ham on Sunday.

The sides have now played the

same number of games, but Mikel Arteta's Gunners are in action twice before they travel to the Etihad Stadium in City's next Premier League game on April 26.

Arsenal will host bottom-of-the-table Southampton on Friday, while City faces second-tier Sheffield United in the FA Cup semifinals this weekend.

AFP

## Lampard laments slumping Chelsea's lack of fight

Chelsea interim manager Frank Lampard said he has to turn around the club's slump urgently before Tuesday's visit of Real Madrid in their Champions League quarterfinal following the Blues' latest limp defeat.

Lampard, speaking after a 2-1 home Premier League loss to Brighton & Hove Albion, said Chelsea — the 2021 European champion who is now stuck in 11th place in the Premier League — was displaying a worrying lack of desire and competitiveness.

"At the minute, we are falling short on that and we need to turn it around quickly," said the former Chelsea midfielder, who was rushed in for a second spell in charge of the Blues after Graham Potter's dismissal earlier this month.

"We haven't got training time... So the response has to be what you see on the pitch, especially with Tuesday coming."

Lampard said the defeat to Brighton was the most disappointing performance of the three games since his return to Stamford Bridge to see out what looks like being a barren first full season under Chelsea's new American owners, despite their huge outlay on new players.



Frank Lampard

Asked if he wanted to urge Chelsea fans to energize the team on Tuesday against Madrid — with the Spanish giant 2-0 up from the first leg — Lampard said the focus had to be on the players, not the support from the crowd.

"I know they will do that but we have to play with that energy and fight, that's like the bare minimum," he said.

"That's up to us, in terms of the game on Tuesday."

Lampard has taken charge of three games since being hired as interim manager following the firing of Potter, and he's lost all of them. First there was a 1-0 loss at Wolverhampton Wanderers before a 2-0 defeat at Madrid on Wednesday.

This was Lampard's first game at Stamford Bridge and Chelsea took the lead against the run of play, with Conor Gallagher's shot from the edge of the area deflecting off Brighton defender Lewis Dunk and wrong-footing recalled goalkeeper Robert Sanchez in the 13th minute.

Brighton coach Roberto De Zerbi, who took over the Seagulls when Potter departed the south coast for his short and fruitless stint at Chelsea and is now on course to guide the team into Europe next season for the first time, praised the way his players dominated the Blues.

But he also said he was unhappy at the way Brighton allowed Chelsea a couple of late chances to equalize.

"When we scored the second goal we thought only to finish the game, to spend time," he said. "And I spoke after the game to my players about this. If we want to become bigger we have to improve in this aspect."

The Italian said he believed his side could book a place in the FA Cup final by beating Manchester United in this weekend's semifinal of the knockout competition.

"It will be another difficult game, it's another big team. Man United I think are one of the best teams in the Premier League but I think we are able to win and I think we are able to fight," he said.

REUTERS

## Messi stunner helps PSG edge closer to title glory

PARIS — A brilliant Lionel Messi goal helped Paris Saint-Germain to a 3-1 home win over Lens on Saturday to surely end any doubt about the outcome of this season's Ligue 1 title race, after an early sending-off left the visitor with a mountain to climb.

Lens, who began the day six points behind league leader PSG in second place, looked the better team until Ghana midfielder Salis Abdul Samed was dismissed for a dangerous challenge on Achraf Hakimi in the 19th minute.

That changed everything, and by halftime the host was out of sight thanks to three goals in the space of 10 minutes from Kylian Mbappe, Vitinha and then Messi, with Przemyslaw Frankowski pulling one back for Lens from a penalty.

Mbappe opened the scoring and Vitinha's long-ranger doubled PSG's lead in the 37th minute.

Both goals were good but Messi's strike to make it 3-0 was stunning. The Argentine found a pocket out of space outside the area, fed a pass to Mbappe and then received the France striker's backheel return before slotting beyond Lens goalkeeper Brice Samba and into the far corner.

The result left the reigning champion nine points ahead with seven games remaining, meaning it is

surely just a matter of time until PSG secures a French record 11th league title.

"We must not think that it's done and dusted," said coach Christophe Galtier.

"We will need to remain serious and determined to maintain our lead and not give any hope to the teams chasing us."

The win comes at the end of a week overshadowed by allegations of racism against Galtier, who had already been under pressure since PSG's elimination from the Champions League last month.

Galtier said on Friday that he was "deeply shocked" by accusations that he made racist and Islamophobic remarks about Nice players when he was in charge there last season.

The allegations surfaced in an email apparently sent by former Nice sporting director Julien Fourrier and which have been reported by various French media. AFP has not been able to verify the message.

The affair looks set to hang over the coach and the club in the coming weeks.

"I was very determined and focused on the match, like my players," Galtier said of trying to stay concentrated on the game.

"It was obviously an important match, if not decisive, and so it was



Lionel Messi celebrates after netting Paris Saint-Germain's third goal in a 3-1 win at home to Lens on Saturday. AFP

important to get the result and enjoy it."

## Mbappe on target

Lens was hoping to take advantage of the leader's problems and extend a four-match winning run

that had got the northern club's supporters dreaming of a first league title since 1998.

It triumphed 3-1 when the teams last met in Lens on Jan 1 and it started the better of the two sides at Parc des Princes.

AFP