



Net profit

Ocean ranch committed to improving marine environment **IMAGE, PAGE 7**



Soccer robot

State-of-art humanoid takes sports tech to the next level

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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 MONDAY, MAY 1, 2023

Navy completes its mission to evacuate Chinese people from Sudan

Two PLA vessels also bring group of foreign evacuees

By YANG ZEKUN
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The Chinese navy has completed evacuating Chinese people from conflict-torn Sudan, with 940 Chinese citizens departing from the area from Wednesday to Saturday in two groups, according to the Defense Ministry.

At the request of some countries, China also evacuated a total of 231 foreign residents together with Chinese nationals.

With the help of Chinese embassies and consulates in relevant countries, those people were transferred from Port Sudan to the port of Jeddah in Saudi Arabia by CNS *Nanning* and CNS *Weishan Lake*. Tan Kefei, a spokesman for the Ministry of National Defense, said late on Saturday.

"The Chinese military will always be the guardian of the people and a staunch force in safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests, and serving the building of a community with a shared future for mankind," he said.

On Saturday morning, CNS *Nanning* and CNS *Weishan Lake*, which carried 493 evacuees from Sudan — 272 Chinese citizens and 221 foreign nationals — arrived at the port of Jeddah, successfully completing the second group of personnel evacuation.

The first group of 678 evacuees, 668 Chinese and 10 foreigners, were evacuated by the same two ships on Thursday, according to the Chinese military.

Pakistani Ambassador to China Moin ul Haque on Sunday expressed appreciation to China for helping more than 200 Pakistani nationals evacuate from Sudan.

During a meeting with Liu Jinsong, director-general of the Department of Asian Affairs of the Foreign Ministry, Haque said that China's assistance demonstrated once again how strong Pakistan-China friendship is.

Liu said that as China tried its best to ensure that Chinese nationals were evacuated from Sudan in a safe manner, it also helped some people from other friendly countries including Pakistan to leave the African country, which demonstrated the iron-clad friendship between China and Pakistan as well as its responsibility as a major country.

At 10 am on Saturday Beijing time, the first temporary flight to



People of different nationalities evacuated from Sudan by the People's Liberation Army Navy arrive at Jeddah Islamic Port, Saudi Arabia, on Saturday. WANG HAZHOU / XINHUA

pick up evacuated Chinese citizens from Jeddah arrived at Beijing Capital International Airport, carrying about 340 evacuated Chinese, according to official data.

Ma Dongpeng, 35, was evacuated along with his wife and two daughters. "When I got off the ship, I was very excited to hear the familiar song *My People, My Country* and see Chinese compatriots greet us at the port," he was quoted by People's Daily as saying. "I could not hold back my tears while seeing the Chinese national flag fly high."

Ma said his family haven't been back to China for five years, and his 5-year-old daughter has been growing up in Sudan. Thanks to the efficient coordination and help of the Chinese government, they could finally go home at such a difficult time.

"We feel the warmth and strength of China's five-star red flag and feel the strength of the motherland. We are so proud!"

As the security situation in the African country continued to deteriorate in recent days, the Chinese Foreign Ministry and diplomatic missions in Sudan and neighboring countries have worked hard to create conditions for the safe evacuation of Chinese citizens in Sudan to border ports or neighboring countries in an orderly and safe manner, according to the ministry.

So far, most Chinese citizens have been safely evacuated. The Chinese embassy in Sudan will provide all necessary assistance to the small number of Chinese citizens still in the country, according to the



A boy waits to enter the customs at the Beijing Capital International Airport on Saturday with his family. They are among the Chinese nationals evacuated from Sudan. WANG CHUNHUI / XINHUA

ministry. With the assistance of the Chinese consulate-general in Jeddah, Wang Peng, a young man from Hunan province, successfully completed the procedures for entering Saudi Arabia on Saturday.

Wang had worked with his colleagues in Sudan for many years, but did not expect to encounter an armed conflict. "After the armed conflict broke out, everyone immediately hid in the basement, and we could still hear the sound of whistling missiles," he recalled.

Thanks to the great efforts of local embassy staff, the journey of around 800 kilometers was smooth from the Sudanese capital of Khartoum to the port where he boarded a Chinese ship.

"During the 14-hour journey, we

passed through multiple conflict zones and over a dozen checkpoints, but everything went smoothly. This could not have been achieved without the advance coordination and arrangements by the staff of the embassy," he was quoted as saying by People's Daily.

Netizens at home and abroad also took to social media platforms to praise China's timely and orderly evacuation measures.

Many praised China for giving priority to protecting the lives of its own citizens. "The motherland will never abandon any of its compatriots under any circumstances," said a post on Weibo which received tens of thousands of likes.

Cao Desheng contributed to this story.

Xi sends greetings to nation's working people

By CAO DESHENG
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President Xi Jinping on Sunday extended festive greetings and best wishes to the country's working people ahead of International Workers' Day, which falls on May 1, and called on them to make efforts to advance Chinese modernization.

While sending the greetings on behalf of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, Xi, who is also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, called on working people to foster an ethos of work, foster respect for model workers, and promote quality workmanship.

He said that this year marks the beginning of full implementation of the guiding principles of the 20th

CPC National Congress, and it is also a key year for carrying out the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25).

Xi encouraged all working people nationwide to work diligently and boldly engage in innovation to make solid progress in advancing Chinese modernization, and play a leading role in the new journey of building China into a strong socialist country and realizing national rejuvenation.

Party committees and governments at all levels should take measures to stimulate the enthusiasm, innovation and creativity of working people, as well as protect their legitimate rights and interests, and earnestly help them solve their problems and difficulties, Xi said.

A social atmosphere in which work and working people are treated with reverence and great respect should be promoted, he added.

Factory activity contracts in April on weak demand

By OUYANG SHIJIA
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China's factory activity unexpectedly contracted for the first time in four months in April, indicating that the foundation of the country's post-pandemic recovery is not yet solid and underscoring the need for greater policy support to boost domestic demand, analysts said on Sunday.

Despite headwinds and challenges, they said China's economy is stabilizing and picking up steadily amid the strong rebound of in-person services, and the country will continue to witness a consumer-driven recovery in the second quarter of this year with accelerated GDP growth.

A meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee stressed on Friday that currently the key for the economy to steadily recover and pick up relies on the recovery and expansion of demand, saying the current economic improvement is mainly restorative with endogenous driving force still weak and demand insufficient.

The official purchasing managers index for China's manufacturing sector stood at 49.2 in April, down from 51.9 in March, data from the

Going forward, we expect growth in the in-person services sector to remain robust on pent-up demand and a low comparison base."

Lu Ting, chief China economist at Nomura

National Bureau of Statistics showed on Sunday, below the 50-point mark that separates growth from contraction.

This month's drop in the manufacturing PMI comes amid insufficient market demand and the high comparison base in the first quarter due to a rapid recovery in the manufacturing sector, said Zhao Qinghe, a senior NBS statistician, adding that the sub-indices for production and new orders came in at 50.2 and 48.8 in April, both down from the previous month.

NBS data showed the reading for manufacturers' expectations for future output and business operations came in at 54.7 in April, expressing confidence in a post-

NEW OCCUPATIONS FOR THE NEW ERA

Changing interests and needs have given rise to alternative professions

By CUI JIA
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Cao Jiangnan, a graphic designer in Shanghai, started doing a part-time job — cooking for people at their homes — last November. "Many young people are tired of ordering takeouts, and just want to have a hearty home-made meal once in a while. This demand is surging, so the new occupation has become increasingly popular," the 26-year-old Cao said.

People's new interests and needs, in the new era, have led to the emergence of new occupations in niche areas of consumption in China. For example, room escape games popular with youngsters have incubated new professions, such as room escape game scriptwriting. The profession of hospital helpers, whose

services include helping people to get an appointment with a doctor or fetching lab test results, has also emerged in recent times.

Most of the new occupations are favored by young people because they are more flexible, suit their interests, and provide a platform for them to pursue their dreams and adhere to their personal values.

Cao first came to know, through social media, about cooks/chefs making food for people at their homes last year. As someone who enjoys cooking, he believes it's a good opportunity to earn some extra money and meet new people during his free time, so he posted the first advertisement on providing in-home chef service on social media on Nov 1.

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Tourism sector sees boom during May Day holiday

By CHENG SI
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The nation's tourism market is expected to see its best post-COVID

performance during the ongoing May Day holiday, said industry insiders, who added that it may also be a turning point in the recovery of the sector.

Early on Friday — the day before the holiday started — train tickets for departures from Shanghai Hongqiao Railway Station to destinations nationwide were sold out.

Latest figures from China State Railway Group Company show that the railway system nationwide ran 12,064 passenger trains and handled 19.66 million trips in total on Saturday, both a record high. And travelers taking flights also registered a record high on Saturday of around 2.04 million, up 44.8 percent year-on-year, according to civil aviation authorities.

Tourism destinations were also overwhelmed by travelers. Shanghai's tourism authorities said that the city received over 3.06 million visits from tourists on Saturday.

"I've never imagined such a huge population of travelers. It really blew my mind," said Wang Yalu, a 32-year-old from Hangzhou, Zhejiang prov-

ince, who is enjoying her holiday in Sanya, a coastal city in Hainan province, for a four-day trip with her family. She said that she booked the trip a month ago. "It's a very good time to take a family trip, but the price is quite high. The trip cost us almost 20,000 yuan (\$2,900)."

The Humble Administrator's Garden — a traditional Chinese garden and World Culture Heritage Site in Suzhou, Jiangsu province — received about 22,800 visits on Saturday. All tickets from Sunday to Tuesday had already been sold out as of Saturday, according to the garden's official website.

"It's expected that Chinese travelers will make over 240 million trips during the five-day holiday, a growth of around 104 percent compared with 2019 — before the epidemic hit," Dai Bin, president of the

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Tourists view a lion dance performance in Poshan, Guangdong province, on Saturday. MENG ZHONGDE / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

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CHINA

Diplomats from 14 countries visit Xinjiang

Envoys from 14 countries, including Brazil, Iran, Indonesia, Pakistan, Ecuador and Senegal, visited the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region from April 24 to 28 at the invitation of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Consuls-general of 14 countries, stationed in cities across China, visited the regional capital of Urumqi, as well as Kashgar, Turpan and other locations in Xinjiang to experience firsthand the social and economic development of the region.

They said that Xinjiang's achievements are remarkable, and that people of all ethnic groups live in harmony and happiness. They noted that the various lies fabricated by certain Western media are completely inconsistent with the reality of Xinjiang.

"To root out terrorism, it is crucial to have a comprehensive plan for a region's development and help people improve their lives," said Agha Hunain Abbas Khan, Pakistani acting consul-general in Chengdu, Sichuan province, after visiting an exhibition on Xinjiang's counterterrorism and deradicalization work.

"And China has made tremendous strides," he added.

The envoys also visited the old town in the city of Kashgar and experienced the tourism boom in the run-up to the May Day holiday. Zaw Linn Oo, consul-general of Myanmar in Chongqing, hailed Kashgar as a "land of hope" that is attractive to visitors from both near and far.

"A country needs social stability and economic development, and both are well reflected in Kashgar," he said.

Mehmet Mert Tokman, Turkish consul-general in Chengdu, paid a visit to the region years ago. During



Foreign diplomats learn about the baking of nang, a local flatbread, with diplomats from other countries at the International Grand Bazaar in Urumqi, Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, on Thursday. HU HUH / XINHUA

this visit, he said that the land has a rich heritage and has undergone tremendous development and change, which can be seen particularly in the region's incredible infrastructure construction achievements.

Giving high praise to the authorities' efforts to guarantee people's freedom of religious belief, Ben Perkasa Drajat, Indonesian consul-general in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, said that Muslims in Xinjiang are free to go to the mosque to pray, after visiting the Id Kah Mosque in Kashgar and the Xinjiang Islamic Institute. "The news

from the Western media that the Chinese government doesn't allow Muslims to do religious activities is not true."

As the country with the world's largest Muslim population, Indonesia resolutely opposes external forces that manipulate the Xinjiang issue, interfere in China's internal affairs and attempt to split China, the Indonesian envoy said.

The reality of Xinjiang is completely different from the biased reports of the Western media, he said. He noted that he hopes the two countries can continue to promote

cooperation and encourage relevant individuals from Indonesia to visit Xinjiang.

Speaking to Xinhua News Agency, Judith Muthoni Nsababera, Ugandan consul-general in Guangzhou, said that she would not blindly believe the lies about Xinjiang that have been fabricated by Western media.

It is important to come and see the region and feel it in person, and China has the right to choose its own path, she said.

XINHUA

Afghanistan can become a platform for cooperation

By ZHOU JIN

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China has called for abandoning the Cold War mentality and bloc rivalry to make Afghanistan a new platform for cooperation among various parties rather than an arena of geopolitics, a veteran diplomat said.

Yue Xiaoyong, Chinese special envoy for Afghan affairs, made the remarks after a series of meetings regarding Afghan affairs in Uzbekistan earlier in April.

The withdrawal of the United States and the seizure of power by the Taliban in August 2021 were the most complex and profound changes in Afghanistan, with stability and reconstruction in the war-torn country becoming a major concern for regional countries as well as the international community.

In an interview with China Daily, Yue said that promoting a political solution for the Afghan issue requires upholding the principle of indivisible security, and taking a holistic approach to addressing both symptoms and root causes.

He urged the Afghan side to fulfill



Yue Xiaoyong

its commitment to combat terrorism, saying that China pushes for and supports it in fighting terrorism, separatism and extremism.

"We hope that this country, which has experienced much suffering, will embark on a path of development as soon as possible, realize long-lasting peace and stability, and return to the Asian family as an equal and important member," Yue said.

The international community should guide the Afghan interim government in adopting moderate and prudent policies through dialogue and consultation, instead of isolation, sanctions and criticism, he said.

According to Yue, the Taliban interim government has gone through the most difficult times, and has "found its feet" in governing the country.

While Afghanistan enjoys a generally stable situation and has started

its economic reconstruction process, the country still faces many challenges in areas such as political governance, the humanitarian situation and anti-terrorism, Yue said.

Yue emphasized the ending of chaos in Afghanistan, saying that the destiny of Afghanistan has to be decided by its own people.

This is not only conducive to peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region, but will also make it more possible to implement regional cooperation projects with Afghan involvement, he said.

"Only when Afghanistan truly becomes an oasis of peace and a land of development and prosperity on the Silk Road can the region achieve universal security and common development," he said.

China has been carrying out multilateral coordination on Afghan affairs on various platforms, and rallying international and regional efforts to help Afghanistan, Yue said.

The foreign ministers' meetings among Afghanistan's neighbors, which were held four times, offer neighboring countries' solutions in supporting Afghanistan's peaceful reconstruction, inclusive governance

and fight against terrorism, Yue said.

The meeting mechanism plays a leading role in encouraging the international community to stabilize and assist Afghanistan, and these countries have urged the US and its allies to shoulder their responsibilities on the Afghan issue, he said.

In the next step, Yue said that Beijing is willing to enhance pragmatic cooperation with Kabul and continue to implement its pledge to assist the country.

China would like to work with Afghanistan to jointly build the Belt and Road, enhance communication on governance, help the country to cultivate talent and carry out anti-drug cooperation, he said.

China will also work with the international community to provide constant humanitarian and development assistance to Afghanistan in advancing the economy and improving people's livelihoods, he said.

China has so far provided the country with over 350 million yuan (\$50.5 million) in urgent humanitarian assistance such as food, medicine, vaccines and winter supplies.

Traveling: Remarkable increase in overseas trips

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China Tourism Academy, said in a recent interview with China Central Television. Visits and trips will generate tourism-related revenue of over 120 billion yuan, around 83 percent of the tourism revenue earned during the same period in 2019, he added.

Overseas trips are also booming. According to figures from the National Immigration Administration, the average daily number of entries and exits from China's border ports is expected to exceed 1.2 million during the holiday, double the same period in the previous year and roughly 57 percent that in 2019.

Online travel portal Trip.com said in a recent report that its users have shown a strong desire for overseas travel during the holiday.

It said that as of April 20, searches for overseas flight tickets increased by 120 percent compared with the same period in 2019.

Outlook: Economy on recovery track

From page 1

pandemic recovery.

Zhou Maohua, an analyst at China Everbright Bank, said the manufacturing sector remains under pressure due to slack demand at both home and abroad, and the sector may continue to face challenges from a cloudy global outlook.

He cautioned that some manufacturing enterprises still face pressures and challenges from insufficient demand, high input costs and financing difficulties, saying that more efforts should be made to further boost consumption, expand domestic demand and well as take targeted measures to ease pressures and increase support for enterprises.

Despite facing pressures, analysts said China's economy is on track for a steady recovery amid the rebound of in-person services and consumption. NBS data showed that non-manufacturing activity expanded for the fourth straight month in April. China's non-manufacturing PMI came in at 56.4 in April, with services PMI and construction PMI standing at 55.1 and 63.9 respectively.

The country's official composite PMI, which includes both manufacturing and non-manufacturing activities, came in at 54.4 com-

pared with 57 in March, according to the NBS.

Looking to the second quarter of this year, Zhou said China's non-manufacturing sector will continue to rebound and perform better than the manufacturing sector, mainly fueled by the strong recovery of pent-up demand in fields like mobility, catering and tourism, the implementation of key infrastructure projects and the steady recovery of the property sector.

Meanwhile, Zhou said the manufacturing sector will gradually stabilize and rebound in the second quarter, given the steady recovery of consumption and real estate, strong policy support and strong optimism among manufacturers.

Due largely to China's higher-than-expected GDP growth in the first quarter, ongoing strength in domestic services consumption and its upside surprises in exports, Nomura recently raised its 2023 annual GDP growth forecast for China to 5.9 percent year-on-year from 5.3 percent year-on-year, well above the country's preset annual GDP growth target of around 5 percent.

Lu Ting, chief China economist at Nomura, said his team forecast China's year-on-year GDP growth to rise further to 8.4 percent in the

second quarter on a low base last year after 4.5 percent growth in the first quarter.

"Going forward, we expect growth in the in-person services sector to remain robust on pent-up demand and a low comparison base," Lu said, adding that the May Day holiday is the first multi-day holiday since January, which is likely to provide a boost to the in-person services sector.

As of noon on Saturday, the start of the five-day May Day holiday, bookings for scenic spot tickets have doubled compared to the same period in 2019, data from on-demand services platform Meituan showed. The number of passenger trips handled by the country's railways reached 19.66 million on Saturday, marking a record-high in terms of single-day passenger traffic, according to China State Railway Group.

Given China's robust recovery in consumption, the steady recovery of investment and the property sector gradually stabilizing, Ye Yindan, a researcher at the Bank of China Research Institute, estimated that China's economy will likely expand around 7.6 percent in the second quarter, with full-year GDP growth of around 6 percent in 2023.

Tokyo's export controls 'violate WTO rules'

Japanese chip-making equipment manufacturers victims of restrictions

By MA SI

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Japan's new semiconductor export control plans violate the rules of the World Trade Organization, and will undoubtedly hurt the global semiconductor industry and backfire on Japan's chip sector, experts said.

The comments came after the Japanese government asked for public opinion until Saturday on its latest plan to restrict exports of 23 types of semiconductor manufacturing equipment, and it will devise the final rules accordingly.

Zhang Wei, vice-president of the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said Japan's planned export control measures are contrary to market rules, will cause shocks to industrial development and undermine the normal economic and trade order.

"Cooperation on semiconductors is one of the most representative examples of mutual benefits from China-Japan economic and trade ties," Zhang said.

The Chinese mainland is the largest export destination for Japanese semiconductor equipment manufacturers. In 2022, such exports from Japan to the mainland hit 820 billion yen (\$60 billion), exceeding 30 percent of Japan's total chip-making equipment exports and almost double the amount of US exports in the same sector to the mainland, according to data provided by the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

For Japanese chip equipment makers, the mainland market contributes to about 20 to 30 percent of their sales revenue, Zhang said.

"Such close economic and trade ties indicate that there is no state of emergency between China and Japan in terms of international relations, and there is no reason for Japan to invoke national security exceptions to defend its export control measures," said Tu Xinquan, dean of the China Institute for WTO Studies at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing.

While often implemented in the name of safeguarding national security, export restrictions are essentially a trade measure subject to the constraints of and governed by WTO rules, and these should never be an instrument of competition, Tu said.

"The chip manufacturing equipment Japan exports to China now is not in any way related to national security," Tu said. "This is a pure commercial activity as a part of global production and trade."

According to him, although the Japanese government denied that the latest move is at the United States' behest, it is obvious that it is aligning its trade controls on technology with the US push to curb China's ability to make advanced chips.

The China Semiconductor Industry Association said in a statement on Friday that it



The chip manufacturing equipment Japan exports to China now is not in any way related to national security."

Tu Xinquan, dean of the China Institute for WTO Studies at the University of International Business and Economics

opposed the Japanese government's interference with global trade liberalization and distorting the balance of supply and demand.

The association has submitted comments to the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry regarding its latest export control plans. "The scope of controlled items is overly broad and far exceeds the internationally accepted list of controlled items, causing great hardship to the enterprises concerned," it said.

"In the event that the Japanese government is determined to jeopardize the well-established cooperative relationship between the Chinese and Japanese semiconductor industries, the CSIA is committed to safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of its 900 members and shall call on the Chinese government to take resolute countermeasures," the association added.

The China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Machinery and Electronic Products also said it opposed Japan's latest planned export control measures.

Wei Shaojun, a professor of integrated circuits at Tsinghua University, said Japan is a semiconductor powerhouse that plays an important role in the global market. But since the 1980s, Japan's semiconductor industry has been suppressed by the US and has gradually shrunk since then.

Meanwhile, China's semiconductor industry is on the rise, with an annual investment of nearly \$30 billion, with over \$10 billion spent on purchasing Japanese equipment and materials, Wei said.

"This is not an easy number to ignore for anyone. In the past year, sales of US semiconductor equipment companies in the Chinese market have been constrained by the US government and suffered heavy losses," Wei said.

If Japan restricts its exports of advanced semiconductor equipment to the Chinese mainland, the Japanese companies are bound to repeat the mistake, said Wei.

"The Japanese government must learn from the past seriously, and carefully and thoroughly consider the implications of any new export restrictions," Wei added.

Liu Zhifeng contributed to this story.

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Subscription: 212-537-8899

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CHINA DAILY (ISSN 0748-6154)

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

Vol. 38 - No. 1078

COVER

Jobs: Win-win for professionals and clients

From page 1

He provides the service only on weekends and public holidays. Also, his clients need to provide the ingredients needed for preparing the dishes of their choice. He charges 88 yuan (\$12.76) for cooking up to four dishes and 168 yuan for preparing about 10 dishes. For dish-washing, people need to pay 20 yuan extra.

"I was surprised by the number of people who contacted me after the advertisement was posted. And they didn't mind that I am not a professional chef. In fact, they prefer an amateur because they just want to have earthy home-made food," Cao said.

Cao visited his first client's home on Nov 5 last year and made five dishes including braised pork in brown sauce, shrimp in garlic sauce and steamed fish for lunch.

"The family was really kind to me and I enjoyed cooking. They even invited me to join them for lunch. Actually, all my clients are polite and nice to me; they are glad that they can find someone to cook for them so conveniently," he said.

Part-time option

Cao then shared his experiences on social media. Besides making appointments, many have commented that they, too, are interested in taking up such a job, which is new to many.

Unlike traditional domestic service providers who are mainly middle-aged women, many who find such occupations appealing today are young people, Cao said. What's more, his clients are mainly young people, including young women living alone and young couples.

"Many of my clients live in Shanghai because they work there and are far away from home. They just want to have someone to cook for them; it gives them comfort and makes them feel as if they were at home with their loved ones," said Cao, who is from Jiangxi province.

"I've met many interesting people during the process, which means more to me than the extra income I make."

Security concerns are not an issue for him, he said, because he chooses to trust the strangers that he cooks for just like his clients find him trustworthy enough to invite him to their home.

Cooking is a physically demanding and time-consuming job. Also, it takes time to commute to a client's home, so it's not an ideal full-time job. But for those who love to cook and are good at it, cooking for people at their home is a good part-time job option, Cao said.

"It's a good thing that more young people have started to provide in-home chef service, which is in high demand. As Chinese people's living standards continue to improve, more occupations may emerge in the future," Cao added.

In September 2022, China added 158 new professions to its list of recognized occupations since 2015, taking the total number of professions on the country's newly revised list to 1,639, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security said.

People's evident need for consumption upgrading, thanks to the continuous improvement in their living standards, has stimulated a batch of new occupations recognized by the ministry in recent years, including wardrobe organizers, healthcare providers, respiratory



Clockwise from top: Chen Cong, a part-time "pet sitter", walks a golden retriever for a customer in Chengdu, Sichuan province, in March last year. WANG LEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE Employees of an agricultural cooperative in Jiaozuo city, Henan province, learn how to operate a drone to spray pesticide on a farm with a professional drone operator on Feb 24. XU HONGXING / FOR CHINA DAILY Cao Jiangnan cooks at a client's home. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

therapists and capacity assessors for the elderly.

Besides, the advances in digital technologies have fueled the platform economy, which in turn has given rise to delivery personnel for online orders, taxi-hailing service providers, and other new occupations.

"Maybe in-home chef service provider will be officially recognized (as an occupation) in the country one day," said Cao, who has taken two orders during the Labor Day holiday from a social media platform.

Working in pet industry

Furthermore, with the increase in pet ownership in China, the country's pet industry has seen rapid growth. From 2015 to 2023, pet consumption is expected to grow from 72.5 billion yuan (\$10.51 billion) to an estimated 445.6 billion yuan, according to the 2021 White Paper on China's Pet Consumption Trends by iResearch Consulting Group, a Chinese market research firm offering consultancy services.

Accordingly, new occupations related to the pet industry have also

emerged, veterinary weight loss trainer being just one of them.

Ye Pijing works as a veterinary physical therapist at a veterinary center in Shanghai.

She is also a veterinary weight loss trainer because she's also good at helping dogs lose weight, which an increasing number of dog owners today find necessary.

"Pet owners in China see their pets as family members and want them to live a healthy and long life. Like human beings, weight gain for pets can lead to many health prob-

lems including putting too much pressure on their joints. So weight loss programs for pets have become popular in China in recent years," Ye said.

At the Shanghai veterinary center, each dog has a customized weight-loss program. Ye uses different kinds of tools such as balance boards to force the dogs to use more of their muscles. "Most of the dogs quickly fall asleep after the first session of the program because it's very physically demanding," Ye said.

A client even traveled all the way from Beijing so Ye could help his six-year-old border collie lose weight and build up muscles after a joint replacement surgery, she said. After a month of training, the dog lost 1.2 kilograms and the muscles in its hind legs became stronger.

Moreover, the owner of an eight-year-old Alaskan malamute has been taking his dog to see Ye for weight loss for the past two years.

At the start of the weight loss program, the dog weighed 62.5 kg and had started to develop health problems. Now, it weighs about 47.6 kg and has become more active, Ye said. "People want the best for their pets and keeping them healthy is their priority."

For better environment

Many other new occupations have emerged which can support China's high-quality sustainable development of production and better protect the environment.

For example, new professions that will help the county achieve the carbon peaking and carbon neutrality goals such as carbon emission administrators, carbon sequestration assessors, and energy efficiency and carbon-neutral building consultants are among the latest officially recognized occupations.

Ren Feng, director of the carbon asset management department at Ruichentai New Energy Company's branch in Chengdu, Sichuan province, said that since China published a plan in 2021 to ensure its carbon emissions peak before 2030 and it realizes carbon neutrality before 2060, the demand for carbon emission administrators has increased rapidly because many enterprises have to reduce their carbon emissions, such as power plants and steel manufacturers.

"By recognizing the new occupations, the authorities can formulate new vocational standards and guide training institutions to carry out training in accordance with the standards, so the assessment of carbon emissions and carbon sequestration can be more accurate, which is key to carbon trading," Ren said.

"Many enterprises have already created new departments to monitor carbon emissions and such specialists are in shortage."

Also, the inclusion of green occupations, mainly in such fields as ecological environment monitoring, environmental protection and governance, new energy production, and waste recovery and utilization, in the official list, will help more people, especially youths, to learn about the new occupations and possibly become interested in them, Ren added.

Hu Yujie, 32, is an associate professor at Guizhou University in Guiyang, Guizhou province.

She also works as a carbon sequestration assessor and uses carbon measurement methodologies to measure, audit and evaluate carbon sinks in forests, grasslands and other ecosystems.

"I once worked on a project that aimed to replace electricity with shallow geothermal energy for some daily household needs, in a bid to reduce carbon emissions due to the use of fossil fuel-generated electricity," Hu told Xinhua News Agency, and added that an "emissions reduction project like this can be put on the carbon trading market to share the cost of emissions reduction".

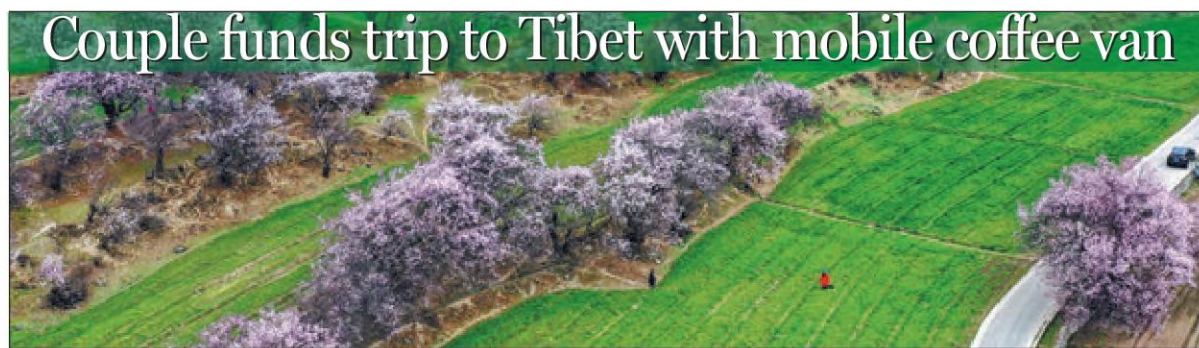
LHASA — Many people might search online for answers to questions like whether new energy vehicles are suitable for use on high plateaus as they prepare for a road trip to the Tibet autonomous region, but Mu Yiping and his wife, Tan Yan, focused on something else.

They were more preoccupied with finding out where to buy coffee beans.

Tibet's spring spectacle of peach blossoms in late March is a sight to behold for the crowds of tourists who come to view them.

Like so many others, the young couple from Chongqing traveled to the region to enjoy the enchanting sight, but what set them apart was that they had come with a mobile coffee van. "I have been looking forward to visiting Tibet for a long time," said Mu, 32.

"And then I had the idea of starting a mobile coffee van business to allow me to fund my travels as I enjoyed the trip."



An aerial photo shows that peach trees in the countryside of Nyingchi in the Tibet autonomous region are in full bloom on March 25. JIANG FAN / XINHUA

It took them about six months to modify the green van they chose.

To ensure they reached Nyingchi city before peach blossom season, they left Chongqing in late February.

But the journey to the plateau was no easy task. While crossing a mountain pass at about 4,400 meters, they were stranded for two

days due to heavy snowfall and had to eat and sleep in the van.

"Once we hit the road, we discovered that the trip might not be quite as wonderful as we had imagined. We often had unexpected problems with water and power, and it was also difficult to buy supplies on the road," Tan said.

But as their mountain journey continued, so did their progress with their coffee business, which they would set up beside the road during traffic jams. They also began to serve new drinks with a Tibetan twist.

In mid-March, as the peach trees were still budding, the couple arrived in Bomi county in Nyingchi

and decided to stay there for a while.

Despite the exhausting drive, the stunning views made it all worthwhile. They stayed for 20 days in Bomi, eagerly waiting for pink peach flowers to cover the mountainside.

"The sight was amazing and really made our day," Mu said.

He said that what impressed them both was not only the scenic beauty but also the incredible changes Tibet has undergone over the past few years.

"Compared with my last visit, I have noticed significant improvements in the quality of public infrastructure such as roads and scenic spots, which now offer quality services," Mu said.

In recent years, Tibet's focus on infrastructure and efforts to promote its tourism industry has made it an increasingly popular holiday destination.

Data show that from January to February, Nyingchi received over 1 million tourists from home and abroad, generating revenues of 906 million yuan (\$131.7 million).

"Whether it's camping or self-driving tours, everything is so convenient in Tibet," Mu said.

XINHUA

WORLD



Gray smoke rises over an oil depot in Sevastopol's Kazachya Bukhta neighborhood hit by fire on Saturday. TASS

Russia says Ukraine drone caused Crimea fuel depot fire

MOSCOW/KYIV — A Ukrainian drone strike set ablaze a Russian fuel storage facility in the Crimean port of Sevastopol early on Saturday, the city's governor said on Saturday.

Experts examined the site and "it became clear that only one drone was able to reach the oil reservoir", Mikhail Razvozhayev, Sevastopol's governor, said on Telegram, adding that no one had been injured in the fire.

The governor blamed Ukraine and later said the fire had been put out before a disaster occurred.

A Ukrainian military intelligence official said more than 10 tanks of oil products with a capacity of about 40,000 metric tons intended for use by Russia's Black Sea Fleet were destroyed, RBC Ukraine reported.

Moscow has accused Kyiv of sending waves of aerial and seaborne drones to attack Crimea.

"The enemy ... wanted to take Sevastopol by surprise, as usual, by staging a sneak attack in the morning," Razvozhayev wrote on Telegram. Russian firefighters had shown how to defeat a major blaze "and prevent a catastrophe", he added.

Andriy Yusov, a Ukrainian military official, told RBC the blast was in response to a Russian strike on the Ukrainian city of Uman on Friday.

As for the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, the International Atomic Energy Agency on Friday sounded the alarm over "increased military presence and activity" near the plant.

IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi said in a statement that the situation at the Zaporizhzhia plant "underlines the importance and urgency of agreeing on the protection of the plant".

In recent months, Grossi has been

consulting with Ukraine and Russia on creating a safety zone at the Zaporizhzhia plant.

Grossi said IAEA experts had completed a rotation at the plant on Thursday to continue the agency's assessment of the facility's security situation.

While the special military operation continues, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan discussed the Black Sea grain export deal over the phone on Friday.

"They exchanged views on how to guarantee the improvement, expansion and extension of the Black Sea Initiative," said a readout issued by the UN chief's press office.

The two also talked about the improvement of the implementation of the memorandum of understanding between Russia and the

UN Secretariat on promoting Russian food products and fertilizers to the world market, the readout said.

In July, Russia and Ukraine separately signed a document in Istanbul with Turkey and the UN on grain and fertilizer exports from Ukraine and Russia to ensure supplies to the global market amid the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

The initial 120-day agreement was extended by another 120 days in November and again on March 18.

Circumstances are not yet in favor of extending the Black Sea grain export deal, the Kremlin said on Tuesday after Guterres sent a letter to Russian President Vladimir Putin, outlining a proposed way forward aimed at the improvement, extension and expansion of the deal.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

5 shot dead in Texas after noise complaint

CLEVELAND, Texas — A man shot dead five neighbors including an 8-year-old boy after some of them had asked him to stop shooting a semi-automatic rifle in his front yard in Cleveland, Texas, because it was keeping their baby awake, police said on Saturday.

The suspect, identified as 38-year-old Francisco Oropeza, remained at large and authorities warned that he might still be armed. The attack happened just before midnight on Friday near the town of Cleveland, north of Houston, on a street where some residents said it is not uncommon to hear neighbors unwind by firing off guns.

San Jacinto County Sheriff Greg Capers said Oropeza used an AR-style rifle, and as the search for him dragged into Saturday evening, authorities had widened their efforts to as far as 16 to 32 kilometers from the murder scene. He said Oropeza may still have a weapon,



Officers work on Saturday at the scene where five people were shot the night before in Cleveland in the US state of Texas. YI-CHIN LEE / AP

but believed that authorities have the rifle used in the shooting.

Capers said they found clothes and a phone while combing a rural area that includes dense layers of

the forest, but tracking dogs had lost the scent.

Capers said there were 10 people in the house — some of whom had just moved there earlier in the week

— but no one else was injured. He said two of the victims were found in a bedroom laying over two children in an apparent attempt to shield them.

A total of three children found covered in blood were taken to a hospital, but found to be uninjured, Capers said.

The Texas killings appeared to be the latest in a series of banal interactions: a teenager mistakenly knocking on the wrong door, a cheerleader accidentally stepping into the wrong car, someone mistakenly driving into the wrong driveway, and a ball rolling into a neighbor's yard.

There have been more than 170 mass shootings — defined as four or more people wounded or killed — so far this year in the United States, according to the Gun Violence Archive.

With more firearms than inhabitants, the US has the highest rate of gun deaths in any developed country — 49,000 in 2021, up from 45,000 the year before.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

AAPI support lifted me up, Olympic skier Gu says

By MINLU ZHANG in New York
minluzhang@chinadailyusa.com

Eileen Gu, the US-born Olympic skier who competed for China and won gold medals at the Beijing 2022 Winter Games, said there were plenty of people telling her that they did not support what she was doing.

But what uplifted her were hundreds of positive messages from her AAPI family.

"It was the feeling of family, of community, culture, tradition, belief that came from my Asian, Asian American and Pacific Islander friends and family," she said at an event celebrating AAPI Heritage Month organized by the Bank of China and the China General Chamber of Commerce in New York City on Friday.

The messages from her AAPI family were "something that made me feel uplifted, made me feel like I belonged, made me feel like I had family back home no matter where my home was", Gu said.

Growing up between Beijing and San Francisco, Gu calls herself a "global person".

"I was able to appreciate different cultures. Not compare and contrast them over the same qualities, but really appreciate what each one brought to the table individually, uniquely, showed me that we are not weak because of our divides. Rather, we are strong because we are unique," Gu said.

"We have to find a way to unite ourselves as humans. And so what's important now, more than ever, is dialogue. It's communication. It's a sense of cultural tolerance and an ability to learn and understand one another."

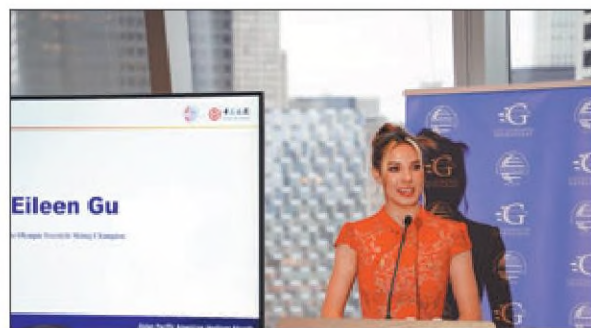
Huang Ping, the Chinese consul general in New York, said Chinese Americans or Chinese residing here have been devoted to promoting exchange and cooperation between China and the United States.

"Your efforts are greatly appreciated currently in the face of the difficulties in the bilateral relationship

and the rising anti-Asian and anti-China sentiments in American society," Huang told the audience.

"It is our sincere wish that all of us continue to leverage our strengths to help Americans gain a correct understanding of Chinese Americans, as well as the China-US relationship," he said.

"It is our objective to bring the hearts of the two peoples closer, deepen friendship and make new contributions to eliminating anti-Asian and anti-China sentiments in the US, improving the living conditions of Chinese Americans, and promoting the sound development of China-US relations."



Olympic skier Eileen Gu speaks at an event celebrating AAPI Heritage Month in New York City on Friday. MINLU ZHANG / CHINA DAILY

Yoon-Biden summit sparks wide concern

ROK foreign policy criticized as nuclear declaration undermines regional peace

SEOUL — The Republic of Korea's President Yoon Suk-yeol wrapped up his weeklong visit to the United States on Sunday, with outcomes including for the US to dock nuclear submarines in the Korean Peninsula for the first time in 40 years, a move seen by observers as stirring uncertainty to regional peace.

Apart from nuclear deployment, Yoon and US President Joe Biden talked about issues such as cybersecurity, climate mitigation, and economic investment.

Lee Jae-myung, chairman of the main opposition Democratic Party, criticized Yoon's foreign policy toward the United States as humiliating, speaking of Wednesday's meeting between Yoon and Biden.

"With regard to the Inflation Reduction Act and the CHIPS and Science Act that were the core agenda, (Yoon) has not protected our industry and companies at all," Lee said at a party meeting on Friday.

Lee said Yoon's performance at the meeting ended up in a humiliating situation of generously spreading "global hogang" diplomacy. Hogang, a buzzword in Korean, refers to a customer who is easy to deceive.

Following the two leaders' meeting, the US and the ROK jointly issued the Washington Declaration on April 26 as one of the outcomes of Yoon's visit to the US.

According to reports, the declaration said the US will upgrade the extended deterrence it provides to the ROK, including enhanced consultation over a nuclear crisis, increased military exercises and training activities, tabletop simulation, the establishment of a new Nuclear Consultative Group, and further expansion of the US' regular visibility of strategic assets to the Korean Peninsula.

Kim Yo-jong, vice-department director of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, denounced the declaration as "a typical product of their extreme anti-DPRK hostile policy reflecting the most hostile and aggressive will of action" and said "it will only result in making peace and security of Northeast Asia and the world be exposed to more serious danger", state news agency KCNA reported on Saturday.

"The more the enemies are dead set on staging nuclear war exercises, and the more nuclear assets

they deploy in the vicinity of the Korean Peninsula, the stronger the exercise of our right to self-defense will become in direct proportion to them," KCNA said.

The Russian Foreign Ministry on Friday said the nuclear agreement reached by the US and the ROK will have a negative effect on regional security and undermine global stability.

"We took note of reports on an agreement that was reached between the United States and the ROK on joint planning with regard to the use of nuclear weapons," the ministry's spokesperson, Maria Zakharova, said in a statement. "This development is clearly destabilizing ... and will have serious negative consequences for regional security and will impact global stability."

By committing to policies of "extended nuclear deterrence", the US and its allies are duplicating schemes that Washington has been practicing for decades following the Cold War, and still practices with its NATO allies, the statement said.

'New Cold War'

It added that such practices will ultimately undermine international security, lead to further escalation of tensions, spur security crises and provoke an arms race.

The joint statement released after the Yoon-Biden talks has caused concern and criticism in the ROK, with public opinion saying that the Yoon government is leading the country to "the center of a new Cold War".

On Thursday, the ROK's national youth committee and the national university student committee of the party held a rally in front of the National Assembly Proceeding Hall to condemn the government's diplomatic policy for escalating tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

"The worry is that (ROK) is rushing into a situation where (the country) has to depend on the United States for everything," the Kyunghyang Shinmun newspaper said in an editorial on Thursday.

The editorial warned that the ROK was losing its diplomatic and security autonomy as it would be more difficult for Seoul to reject any demand from Washington.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

Briefly

THE PHILIPPINES
3 seamen killed and 2 missing in ship capsizing

Two Chinese and a Filipino seamen were killed in a ship capsized off the waters of Bataan Province on Friday night, the Chinese embassy in the Philippines said on Sunday. The Sierra Leone-flagged MV *Hong Hai 189*, a dredger with 20 crew members, capsized around 9:30 pm on Friday, the Philippine Coast Guard said. So far, 12 Chinese crew members have been rescued, and two others still missing. Three of the four Filipino crew members were rescued. The rescued crew members are in good health, and the search for the missing is still underway, according to the embassy.

JAPAN
'Black rain' victims recognition demanded

Twenty-three residents of Hiroshima have filed a lawsuit with the Hiroshima District Court, demanding recognition of their status as victims of radioactive "black rain" following the 1945 US atomic bombing. In their lawsuit on Friday, the plaintiffs, aged 70 to 90, argued that the scope of "black rain" was much wider than the government's claim, and that if they were found to have been

exposed to radioactive rain, they should be identified as victims regardless of whether they were sick or not. The "black rain" refers to nuclear fallout or radioactive blackened rain that fell after US atomic bombs exploded over Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Only residents with radiation-related illnesses in heavy rain zones could be identified as victims of nuclear explosions and have access to relevant state treatment.

UNITED STATES
Man gets 4.5 years for role in Capitol riot

A Southern California man who assaulted police with pepper spray during the storming of the Capitol on Jan 6, 2021, was sentenced to 4.5 years in prison, federal authorities announced. Jeffrey Scott Brown, 56, of Santa Ana received a sentence of 54 months in federal prison for felony and misdemeanor charges related to the mob attack by supporters of former president Donald Trump, the US Department of Justice said in a Friday news statement. More than 1,000 individuals have been arrested, including more than 320 people who have been charged with assaulting or impeding law enforcement.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

PEOPLE



Yang Zhengui rides his motorcycle along winding roads to deliver packages in Hengyang, Hunan province, in February. XIAO QILONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Yang Zhengui's daily job involves riding a motorcycle along winding roads on Hengshan Mountain, one of China's five famous mountains.

Unlike most motorcyclists, who wear a leather jacket and helmet, Yang sets out on the road every day clad just in his green uniform and carrying a bag of mail, newspapers and packages.

The 59-year-old is a mailman on Hengshan Mountain, in Hengyang of Hunan province, whose main peak, Zhurong Peak, rises over 1,300 meters above sea level.

Because of the unique climate and terrain, the mountain is shrouded year-round in clouds and mist. Riding a motorcycle along the winding mountain roads is like driving between the clouds, so the local people call Yang the "messenger through the clouds".

His face is tanned, because the job requires him to ride the motorcycle at least 5 hours a day, and he speaks in a loud voice, so the area residents will know when he has arrived.

Yang really enjoys his work. "Some customers treat me like one of their family members. They wait for me outside their houses and always ask me to come in to take a break. They chat with me and offer me some refreshments," he said.

Yang started the job in 2007, and over 16 years, he has traveled more than 400,000 km, wearing out four motorcycles along the way. He is now on his fifth motorcycle.

Yang is responsible for bringing mail, parcels and newspapers to nearly 10,000 residents in six villages scattered across the mountain.

Mailman braves mountain roads year-round to serve residents

In return, some treat him like one of the family, he says.

Luo Wangshu reports from Beijing with Feng Zhiwei in Changsha.

His route is about 100 km a day, and his mailbag weighs 30 to 60 kilos.

In recent years, since the development of the Internet and technology, the number of letters has drastically declined.

"People are more likely to phone or text," he said.

"Some older people still subscribe to print editions of newspapers, but the number is down," he said, adding that when he started, he delivered newspapers to about 60 families, but the number has now fallen to about 30.

"When the older generation passes away, the younger people usually stop subscribing to the print editions. They are more inclined to browse the news online," he said.

He also delivers newspapers to government departments and schools in the region.

Yang has three main routes to cover, all in the mountainous region.

In the morning, he collects mail, newspapers and parcels at the post office in town and sets out on his motorcycle for the deliveries.



Yang Zhengui (left) unloads parcels with colleagues at a post office in Hengyang, Hunan province, in February. MO XIONGFEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

"I usually leave the post office at about 8:40 in the morning and return to the station at 11:40, if the weather is good," he said, adding that he resumes making deliveries from about 2:30 to 5 pm.

But a lot of the time, especially in the first half of the year, the weather is not good. Snow and rain slow him down. And when the weather is bad,

the morning trip sometimes takes him up to five hours.

"When it rains too hard, I have to stop. When the road is wet, it's slippery, and I have to be very careful," he said.

Despite his caution, Yang has had some accidents. In one of them, he broke an arm.

Sometimes, when the weather is

too bad, he makes his deliveries on foot, like when he started.

When Yang began as a mailman in 2007, there was no hard road on the mountain. So he had to walk to make the deliveries.

His brother and father were mailmen in the region, and Yang used to be a carpenter. When his father passed away, he took over the route so the service continued.

"Now there are hard roads everywhere," he said.

China's road network has extended to 5.35 million km as of last year, according to the Ministry of Transport, and Yang witnessed some of the development.

"I like being a mailman. It's a stable job," he said, adding that as a carpenter, he had to look for business, but as a mailman, he has several kilos of mail, newspapers and parcels waiting for him each morning.

Yang also enjoys talking with the people on his route, and he always chats with them when he makes a delivery.

As online shopping has caught on,

some residents have bought products online. But parcel stations have not yet been set up in the villages Yang serves, so he sometimes helps pick up parcels in the town for villagers and brings them to their doorstep.

Eighty-year-old Cao Yunxiang, a now-retired Chinese literature teacher at a local vocational school, subscribes to several newspapers and is one of Yang's regular customers.

He looks forward to the mailman's arrival every day.

"Yang is very responsible. If I have any after-sales problem, he takes care of it," Cao said.

Cao's wife also spoke highly of Yang.

"The slope in front of our house is steep and long. Whenever it rains or snows, motorcycles can't get down to us at all. Yang always walks to deliver the mail," she said.

Yang will turn 60 in August, when he is about to retire.

"I am too old for this. Sometimes it's pretty dangerous when the weather is bad," he said.

He plans to take care of his grandson after retirement.

China's postal service development has improved. As of last year, post offices have been established in all towns, and postal service is offered in every village, according to the State Post Bureau of China.

Yang is a witness to and participant in that accomplishment.

Zhu Youfang contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at luowangshu@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese medical team aids cyclone-struck Vanuatu

By WANG XIAOYU
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Days after two Category 4 cyclones struck Vanuatu in early March, power, water, communication and other vital infrastructure remain out of service in the small Pacific island nation.

With flashlights and by the glow of phone screens in otherwise pitch-black rooms, Chinese medical aid workers stationed in Vanuatu have managed to write several popular science articles on their laptops on how to prevent the spread of infectious diseases and manage pest and rodent risks.

"As we helped with post-cyclone health services at Vila Central Hospital, we saw that the number of patients suffering from common diseases after disasters increased, so we published these articles in the local newspaper to inform people and help with disease prevention," said Li Kai, a surgeon from Beijing Shijitan Hospital, which is affiliated with Capital Medical University.

Li led the nine-member team from the hospital that arrived in Vanuatu in September for a year-long medical aid mission. Their average age is 44.

The disaster-prone country, which has a population of about 300,000 people, lies east of Australia. China has been sending healthcare workers there since the 1980s, but the team led by Li is the first medical aid group sent with the involvement of the national government.

Although Vanuatu was removed from the United Nations' list of least-developed countries in 2020, Li said the local living and healthcare conditions disheartened the group at first.

"There are scarcely any high-rises in the country. Most buildings are made from sheet iron or straw and contain little sturdy furniture," he said.

"The more serious problem is that most local hospitals have very limited medical equipment, such as only an ultrasound device or an X-ray machine," Li said. "Without more advanced technologies, like a CT scan and MRI equipment, we would be unable to perform the surgeries we had in mind before arriving."

Despite the difficulties, Li said the team has pressed on to fulfill its responsibilities and help as many people as they can with joint efforts of the Chinese Embassy in Vanua-

tu, local Chinese businesses and local governments.

A major task for the Chinese doctors is to provide technical guidance and training for hospital workers.

Chen Da, deputy leader of the team and a urologist, found that because of the lack of qualified surgeons and equipment, it was nearly impossible to perform minimally invasive surgeries at local hospitals, including such a routine procedure as a transurethral resection of the prostate, which involves cutting away a section of the prostate gland.

On Nov 11, Chen first gave a lecture to local doctors and answered their questions. Five days later, after the Chinese medical team obtained local medical licenses and donated medical equipment had been delivered, Chen and a local urological surgeon successfully performed that surgery on a 70-year-old man.

Li said that early the next morning, the team could still hear cheers from doctors at the hospital, who said, "Thank you! You are our and all Vanuatu people's good friends!"

Ye Huiming, a cardiologist, has so far given six lectures for local

doctors on diagnosing and treating chest pain.

"I have planned more lectures, focusing on various topics including heart attacks, hypertension, heart failure and cardiomyopathy," Ye said. "It was not easy to integrate my clinical experience and design English courses for local doctors. Neither was it simple to change their outdated habits and approaches and to treat patients when we do not have modern equipment available."

"Thankfully, donations of cardiovascular drugs and clot-dissolving thrombolytic drugs could address some acute demands and bring hope for patients," he said. "We hope our efforts will reduce the dangers of chest pain here."

Li, the team leader, said they have also visited and offered medical consultation on three outlying islands so far — Vanuatu has about 80 islands.

"I remember the first island we visited was Nguna, where about 2,000 people live. Around 30 residents visited us in the afternoon. It was a tiring experience, but also gave us a sense of achievement," he said.



Cardiologist Ye Huiming makes the rounds of the wards at Vila Central Hospital in Vanuatu in November 2022. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

apart from medication for common illnesses such as high blood pressure, also need external remedies to treat mosquito bites, open wounds and rashes caused by the humid tropical weather.

"With that in mind, we brought these medications to other islands to meet the specific demands," he said.

As the first group of medical workers sent to the nation, Li and his team members aim to accumulate experience and lay the foundations for future missions.

Renovation work at the desolate Chinese medical aid team's base began in early December and is expected to be completed within the

next few months, providing a safer and more comfortable living environment for medical aid workers.

Li said that improving the overall health of local residents could require more than just healthcare efforts.

For instance, foot ulcers caused by diabetes are prevalent in Vanuatu. "Patients suffering from diabetic foot ulcers cannot fit into the flip-flops usually worn by Vanuatu people and often walk around barefoot, increasing the risk of getting cut and infected," Li said.

"A feasible and convenient means of reducing their pain would be donating slippers to protect their feet," he said.

READ

SEIZING THE NIGHT

Businesses in Shanghai have been extending operating hours as the city looks to boost its nighttime economy

By HE QI in Shanghai
heqi@chinadaily.com.cn

After being affected by pandemic control measures for the past three years, Shanghai's nighttime economy looks to be finally on the rebound as businesses have been busy unveiling new offerings catered to the evening crowd.

The nighttime economy refers to business activities that take place between 6 pm and 6 am in the service sector. The municipal government is aiming to make the nighttime economy a key driver for consumption growth and economic development.

Last September, the Shanghai municipal government released guidelines to boost the nighttime economy as part of efforts to speed up economic recovery. The guidelines, which are effective from 2022 to 2025, aim to create a "24-hour city of vibrancy" that has signature nightlife neighborhoods and clusters, night markets and night leisure spaces on waterfronts.

To achieve its goals, the government has encouraged cultural and entertainment businesses to extend their operating hours and, more importantly, explore new business models to attract more customers.

One of the first establishments to adjust its operating hours to cater to the nighttime crowds is Shanghai Museum. On February 11, the museum extended its opening hours from 5 pm to 9 pm every Wednesday and Saturday. Starting from April 18th, the museum has been holding night exhibitions every day that it is open.

In addition, the museum will close at 11 pm during the May Day holidays.

"When I learned that the Shanghai Museum was going to be open at night, I wanted to make an appointment immediately," said visitor Chen Xi.

"As it turned out, I wasn't the only person trying to do so. I could only make a booking after trying for two days."

One of the main reasons the Shanghai Museum wanted to introduce night sessions is the strong demand for certain exhibitions like the *Botticelli to Van Gogh Masterpieces from the National Gallery* showcase, which kicked off on Jan 17. This exhibition features 52 paintings from 50 renowned European artists, including Raphael, Titian, Rembrandt, Paul Cezanne and Monet Claude.

The exhibition welcomed more than 300,000 visitors as of April 18, according to Li Feng, the deputy curator of the Shanghai Museum.

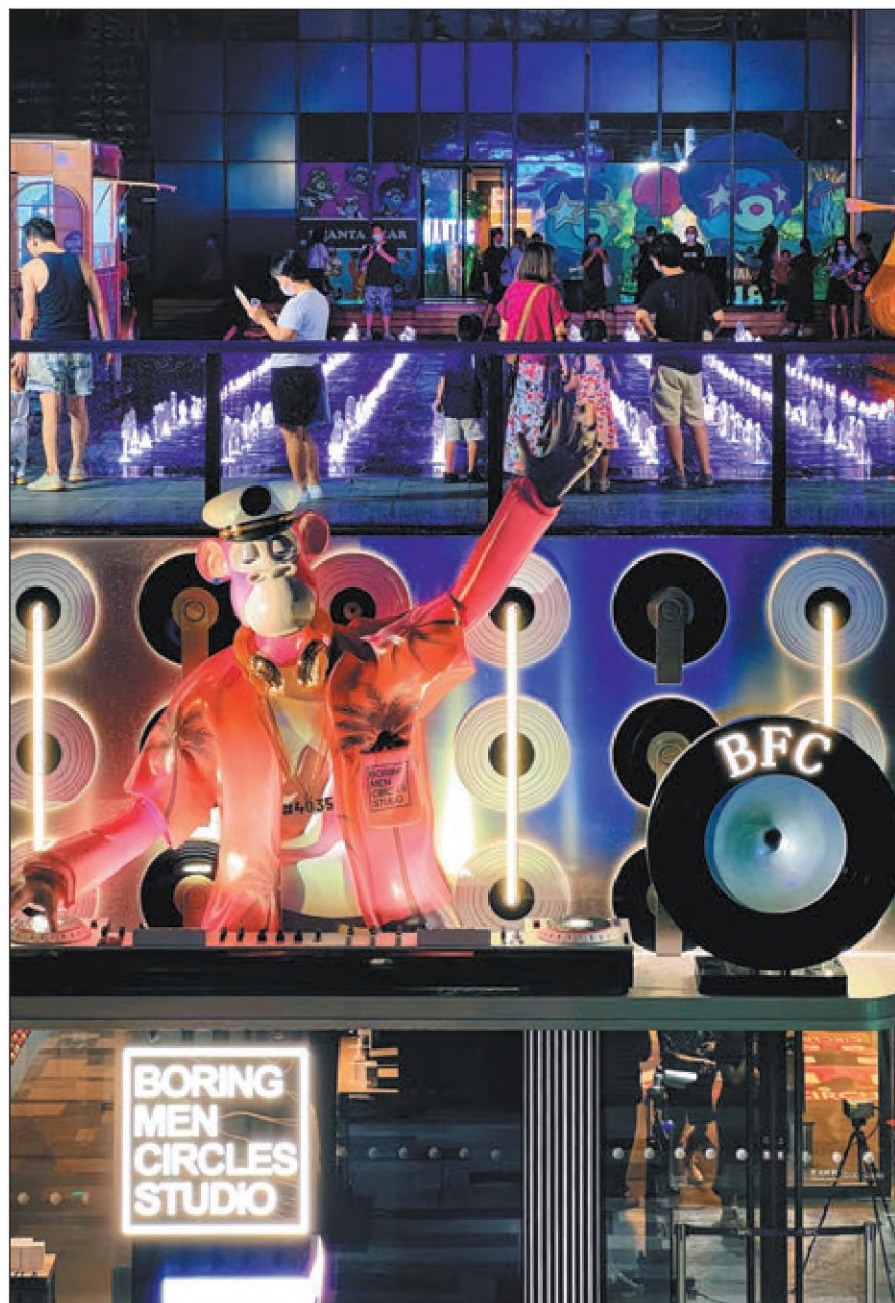
Another reason why the museum decided to extend its opening hours was to support the local government's campaign to bolster the nighttime economy, Li added.

Big crowds

Li believes the opening of night exhibitions has made a positive impact to the nighttime economy as statistics show that almost half of the visitors come from outside the city. This influx of visitors from other cities has also boosted the business of hotels and restaurants located near the museum.

Li pointed out that museum's other venue in Pudong, which is scheduled to open by the end of this year, would also consider having a night session.

"If we can operate the museum from 10 am to 10 pm, which is consistent with the shopping malls in the city, more office workers will be able to visit art venues after they are



Shanghai residents are now being pampered with a wide range of options on how they can spend their evenings as the city's move to bolster the nighttime economy has resulted in longer operating hours and more offerings from cultural and entertainment venues. PHOTOS BY HE QI, GAO ERQIANG AND PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

done with work," Li said. "Such a move is a good thing for the city."

Other museums have also followed suit. The Shanghai Pudong Art Museum, for example, extended its business hours to 9 pm since last year.

Yang Bokai, the founder of the BFC Weekend Market, said he has witnessed growing nighttime crowds in recent months. Launched in June 2020, the market is part of the city's nightlife festival. This year's nightlife festival will be held from June 3 to 30.

"Although the market is open from 10 am to 10 pm, the nighttime turnover accounts for much more than 50 percent," said Yang.

"During weekends, holidays and large events, the market won't close until 11 pm. The visitor numbers during these periods range between 80,000 and 100,000, and may even exceed 120,000 on special occasions."

Starting in June, popular music labels will be invited to perform until 10 pm every evening.

In the early stages, night markets were solely focused on selling street food and small wares, but they have since evolved into much more comprehensive affairs that require more creative and profes-

sional services.

"The commercial real estate sector in Shanghai is embracing the night economy now. Efforts are constantly being made to provide more leisure and entertainment options so that people are inclined to hang around till late," Yang said.

A love for night jaunts

Outdoor night markets have always been popular among Shanghai residents.

Shanghai has more than 3.38 million people who have a habit of going out at night, according to the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Commerce. An index released by the commission last September also ranked Shanghai as the top city in terms of the nighttime economy in China. It was followed by Shenzhen, Beijing and Chengdu.

On March 30, the Sijing night market in Shanghai's Songjiang district was reopened to the public following its closure in January due to poor management and sanitary conditions. According to local officials, people have been flocking to the market, with as many as 90,000 visiting the venue in a single night.

Officials also shared with the

media that the number of vendors at the market is set to grow.

"We are determined to make the nighttime economy a new highlight of the city. We will continue exploring options to bolster this sector," said an unnamed official in a news report by local media The Paper.

LARP (live action role playing) venues have also been eager to tap the growing nighttime crowds to boost revenue. Huang Zhengzhong, who runs the DC Taotaowu escape rooms in Shanghai, said he is hoping to expand to 24-hour commercial spaces to prolong his operation hours and capitalize on the growing crowds.

"There are no restrictions on business hours and customers are allowed to enter and exit at will in the shopping malls. Some customers will stay till 4 am," Huang explained.

As of July 2022, Shanghai had more than 1,000 LARP venues, surpassing Beijing, Shenzhen, and Guangzhou, according to market consultancy iiMedia.

"Our stores have the most customers from 3 pm to midnight. The turnover during this period accounts for 60 to 70 percent of the total turnover," Huang added.

"If we are located in commercial

spaces that can operate around the clock, we could generate more income at night."

Gao Yi, the owner of Meow Game, said many LARP venues have been extending their operating hours to accommodate more late-night customers.

"Some dungeon masters are more willing to work at night because they can earn more," he noted.

Organizers of talk shows have done the same. Previously, most talk shows had just one session per night that started at 7:30 pm. Now, many places have a second session at 9:30 pm.

Participating in sporting activities at night has also become a trend among young people. Activities like frisbee, football, cycling, and running are particularly popular from 8 pm to 10 pm.

The Shanghai Youth Nightlife Trend Report released by social platform Xiaohongshu showed that the search volume for night-time frisbee by Shanghai users increased by about 16 times last July compared to October 2021. The number of searches related to night cycling also increased by 388 percent.

Zhang Guangzheng contributed to the story.

Coffee first, alcohol later

By HE QI in Shanghai

In light of the city's goal of boosting the nighttime economy, more and more coffee shop owners in the eastern metropolis of Shanghai have been transforming their cafes into bars when nightfall comes.

Among them is Han Wei, the founder of ROOTS Bar&Cafe, which opened in September last year.

Located on Jinxian Road, the store operates from noon until about 2 am. It sells mainly coffee, cakes and deserts during the day and alcoholic beverages in the evenings.

"The biggest advantage of such a model is that it can attract customers no matter the time of the day," said Han.

"This way, many of our customers who drink coffee during the day are willing to come back to drink again at night. At the same time, night drinkers will also be able to come back for coffee in the day. It's an efficient way to retain customers."

Han said that although coffee sales have been stable, they account for only 40 percent of the total revenue as his shop makes more money selling alcoholic beverages in the evenings.

Even the big coffee brands have been jumping on the bandwagon.

Seesaw Coffee launched its inaugural "early coffee, late alcohol" shop in Shanghai last August, while Canadian coffee label Tims followed suit with two such outlets in the city in October.

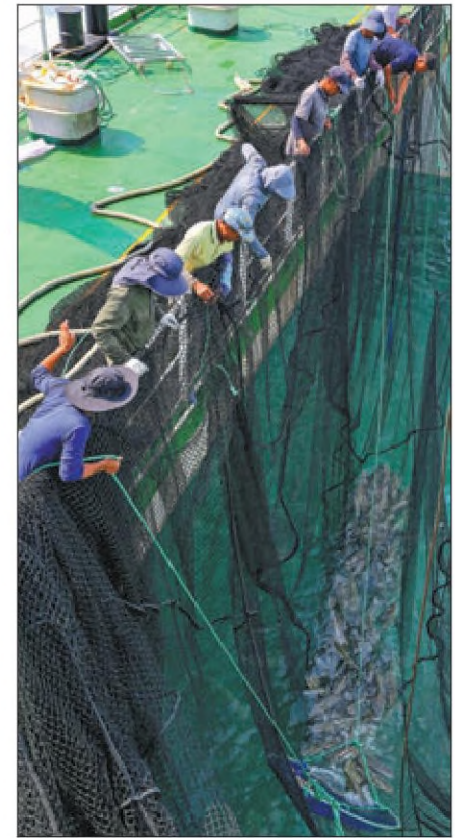
Local coffee brand M Stand opened five such shops in Shanghai, Shenzhen and Ningbo that same month.



IMAGE



Left: Fishermen put the fish into ice water, ahead of the weighing and packaging stage. **Right:** A bird's eye view of the first remote sea intelligent breeding and tourism platform, "Pusheng Ocean Ranch 1", which is located at the Longqi Bay Ocean Ranch in Ledong, Hainan province.



Left: Fishermen work together to lay nets and catch fish. **Above:** A group of fishermen use a small net to retrieve fish from the large net and will then prepare them for packaging. PHOTOS BY WANG CHENGLONG/FOR CHINA DAILY

NET PROFIT

Pusheng Ocean Ranch No 1 is the first intelligent aquaculture and tourism platform in Hainan province, and also a national-level modern intelligent ocean ranch. Compared with traditional ocean ranches, it is committed to the

integration and innovation of modern ocean industries; improving the marine environment; increasing fishing catches and creating new marine tourism industries, such as leisure fishing. They often pull feed from the sea 20 nautical miles away, feed fish on the

ranch and observe the growth of each animal. Workers are busy from morning to night watching over schools of fish. Hundreds of metric tons of fish and other types of seafood are unloaded in the fishing port each year. Aquatic product processing

industry is rising rapidly. The ranch supports the livelihood of hundreds of thousands of people in the island and has helped create a modern fishing industry.

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Clockwise from left above: Dozens of fishermen work together on the net cage to catch fish. Fisherman Ji Xinhe holds an 18 pound cob fish. A fisherman carries a box of live fish. The number on the foam box is the weight of the fish inside.

TREND

By CHEN BOWEN in Haikou and ZHANG XIAOMIN in Dalian, Liaoning

In the Palace Museum, aka the Forbidden City, in Beijing, tourists wearing elaborate makeup and traditional Chinese costumes look like they have traveled back in time when seen through the photographer's lens.

"I like to take photos. It is convenient to hire a photographer now, but I always make sure that we do not affect the other tourists," said Yan Wenting, 27, who lives in the capital. "Some of my wedding photos were taken at the Temple of Heaven Park. It was beautiful and memorable."

Influenced by social media platforms, travel photography has become a new trend in tourist consumption in China, and such services have almost become must-try activities at a number of popular destinations.

A bustling street in Fenghuang Ancient Town, Xiangxi Tujia and Miao autonomous prefecture, Hunan province, that was once filled with bars is now home to many photo studios. The ancient town is known for its well-preserved architecture and river-town scenery with features of the Tujia and Miao ethnic groups.

In its 0.91-square kilometer core scenic area, there are more than 1,000 shops offering services for makeup, clothing rental and photography, according to Hunan Daily.

Many shops post photos with a strong ethnic feel on social media platforms. Customers can look at them online, make inquiries, place orders after discussions and make appointments for shoots.

Developing trend

"Now, online and offline orders are almost 50-50," said Ma Yizhen, 35, a freelance photographer in Dalian, Liaoning province. "For tourists from other cities in Northeast China, Dalian's ocean scenery is most attractive. Usually, I undertake no fewer than 20 assignments every month from April to October."

Ma started shooting engagement pictures in 2009. He once flew to Xiamen, Fujian province, to take photos for a couple at their invitation in 2011. Since then, he has shuttled between the two coastal cities for summer and winter every year.

"Reservations for the next three months are already all taken," he said, adding that the customers are mainly young people taking wedding photos or recording their travels.

Sanya, in the southern island province of Hainan, is listed as one of the top destinations for travel photography, according to many platforms.

Last month, searches for "wedding photos" and "travel photos" in Sanya rose by 35 percent year-on-year, according to on-demand service platform Meituan. It also said that many shooting bases in the city's scenic spots have set up comprehensive makeup service areas that can accommodate nearly 200 customers simultaneously.

Data from online travel platform Ctrip show that this May Day holiday, the total number of travel orders

Resorts in the frame as tourist photography services boom

Many facilities are looking to harness the potential of the fast-growing market



Travel photographers take shots of a visitor on a beach in Sanya, Hainan province, last year. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



A girl wears a mermaid costume to pose for a photo at the Atlantis Sanya Resort, an ocean-themed facility in Hainan, in July.



A young couple is captured dancing in the Lost Chambers Aquarium at the Atlantis Sanya Resort in February.

for Hainan has risen by 411 percent from the same period last year.

In Hainan, a photo trip can take different styles — oceanic, pastoral, athletic, retro or ethnic. Guided by the photographers, couples in wedding dress wear big smiles, leaving a happy moment in the vows of eternal love; young tourists pose in the pool surrounded by coconut trees, ready to fill their WeChat moments with holiday photos; meanwhile, families wear ethnic clothing and walk in a tropical rainforest, hoping to record the beautiful memory.

The biggest advantage of Hainan's travel photography market is

the island's tropical climate and natural scenery, according to Yuan Wei, senior director of operations management at Fosun Holiday, a tourism group that provides travel photography services.

"Tourists, especially those who come to Sanya for the first time, may have a strong desire for photographs when they see the beautiful sea and sand, and breathe the fresh air," he said.

In Sanya, travel photography customers mainly come from Beijing and Shanghai, as well as Guangdong, Zhejiang and Sichuan provinces. Meanwhile, families from Russia,

France and South Korea opt for the little mermaid and underwater mermaid shooting services, for example, at the Atlantis Sanya Resort, Yuan said.

Customization and quality are two keywords of travel photography in Hainan. "It takes hours or even more than a day to meet the shooting needs of our guests," Yuan said. "We often communicate with them until 1 or 2 am before the shoot, as they are very excited and want to get more information and the best service during their vacation."

Now, those who want to take travel photos will look at the trending

styles on the internet and put forward their customized requirements, including clothing, makeup, scenery and props. They hope to be fashionable and look unique in their travel photos and videos, he added.

He Si, founder of Natural Nobleman, a high-end travel photography brand, said: "I think it is really worth traveling to Hainan. The province is the first-choice seaside tourist destination for most people in China. Travel photography is part of your public image. Posting travel photos and videos can be a way to socialize. When you capture precious moments from your trip with

beautiful photos and share them on your WeChat moments, it can bring attention and interaction."

While Natural Nobleman relies on WeChat and previous customers to attract new guests, Fosun Holiday uses its own hotel channel and a WeChat public account. It has also widened exposure of its products via social media platforms such as Douyin and Xiaohongshu.

Dedicated spaces

To offer high-quality travel photography products with transparent prices, many popular tourist attractions have started building their own dedicated spaces.

"We're looking to cooperate with professional travel photographers, and we are planning internet-famous sites at our hotel for customers to snap such pictures," said Fu Guiyou, account director of the Hainan Universal Qizibay Beach Hotel in the island's Changjiang Li autonomous county.

Meanwhile, back in Dalian, a professional base for travel photography and wedding pictures is being built on the beach at the Jinshitan National Tourism Resort.

"Relying on the resort's unique natural resources, we will create professional backgrounds and operate according to the standards of 5A scenic spots for travel photography services," said Yang Xiaohai, general manager of Hi Coast, a marine cultural tourism project.

"We plan to realize the interaction between Hainan and Dalian to attract customers to Hainan in winter and Dalian in summer," said Yang, who is also CEO of Hainan Ningsheng Tourism Group.

Elsewhere, Huang Hui, 32, a regular visitor to the Universal Beijing Resort, praised the new rules introduced by the park earlier in April that prevent access of unauthorized commercial photographers who offer tourists photo shoot services at the facility.

"I've had very good visiting experiences there. But then, I found that the amusement park had almost become a photo shoot studio, with many visitors posing in front of photographers at some scenic spots, especially the Wizarding World of Harry Potter," Huang said. "In some areas, the pathways are narrow and their posing just blocked the other visitors."

On April 3, sources at the resort confirmed that visitors can take photos with their own cameras and phones, providing they are not for commercial purposes. "Photography, videotaping, audio recording or livestreaming of any kind are strictly prohibited, except for personal and noncommercial purposes," according to the park's rules.

In fact, other major theme parks have banned unauthorized freelance photo shoot services in order to protect copyright as more visitors, especially young people, are choosing to hire photographers to record the best moments of their trips.

Du Juan in Beijing contributed to this story.

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Tibetan costumes offer visitors a fresh experience

By DAQIONG and PALDEN NYIMA in Lhasa

With the peak tourist season getting underway in the Tibet autonomous region, a trend has arisen among visitors to be photographed at some of the major tourist spots while wearing traditional attire.

In the Potala Palace Square and along the ancient Barkhor Street in Lhasa, Tibet's capital, tourists can be seen everywhere, having photos taken while wearing gorgeous Tibetan clothes. They regard such activities as a way of experiencing the unique local culture.

While the tourists enjoy the beauty brought by dressing in local clothing in some of Lhasa's busiest streets, the trend has produced new types of beautiful scenes in the city.

Luo Bibo, who runs Drolma Image, a photo studio near Barkhor Street, said many hostels and photo studios in Lhasa now offer services related to such photos, but it has only become a hot activity in recent years.

"Traditional Tibetan attire is widely used by such photography services in Lhasa, but some operators have produced innovative designs in new styles, colors and aesthetic choices to meet the tourists' needs," Luo said.

Around 2019, some female tourists posted social media photos of themselves wearing Tibetan dress,



Tourists in Tibetan attire take photos during a visit to Dukezong Ancient Town in Shangri-La, Yunnan province, in March. LIU ZHE / CHINA DAILY

prompting many other visitors to follow suit while touring the plateau city, he said.

Luo said that his was one of only two studios offering such services for visitors at the time, but now there are between 80 and 100 such outfits around Barkhor Street.

His studio now employs about 10 staff members, and it offers services such as providing clothing and

makeup, along with taking photos, postproduction work and photo reviews. "To demonstrate our respect for Tibetan culture and customs, we avoid allowing tourists to wear gaudy clothing while being photographed," he said, adding that Barkhor Street, the Potala Palace, monasteries, the grassland and lakes are the most popular locations for visitors to have photos taken.

Chen Zhiwen, a cultural scholar and TV anchor, has posted a short video on Douyin, a popular related site, commenting on the trend.

"First of all, I don't think it's a bad thing — the tourists express their love and respect for the plateau region and the Tibetan people, which is understandable," he said.

"However, it's very important not to disturb others while taking photos in public places, and especially not to obstruct the path of those who are undertaking religious practices. Secondly, some of the items held by women when they are having their photo taken may not just be props, but may in fact be genuine symbols of belief, so it is not good to hold them upside down."

He added that some of the items may contain holy scriptures, so it is not respectful to hold them in inappropriate ways.

Tibet's tourism market continues to heat up as peak season approaches. The region received nearly 2.55 million tourist visits in the first three months of the year, a rise of 39.6 percent year-on-year, local media reported. During the same period, tourism revenue exceeded 2 billion yuan (\$290 million), a year-on-year rise of 42.8 percent.

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A visitor has her photo taken in traditional dress in Dukezong Ancient Town in Shangri-La in March. LIU ZHE / CHINA DAILY

BIZ LIFE



A man plays pickleball in Phoenix, Arizona, the United States, on July 15, 2019. MATT YORK / AP

Entrepreneur escapes pickle to make pretty penny

Manufacturer of carbon fiber products tapping massive popularity of pickleball around the globe

By LIU YUKUN and ZHUANG QIANG

How did a 38-year-old technician in China manage to strike gold in just five years? By surfing the wave of a sport's soaring popularity in the United States, that's how.

Gong Minchong, from Qingyuan, Guangdong province, is the founder of Niupipo, a manufacturer of carbon fiber products. And a trendy, fast-growing sport — pickleball — has helped the entrepreneur achieve stunning commercial success in just half a decade.

Pickleball originated in the United States in the late 1960s. It combines elements of table tennis, badminton and tennis, and is typically played on outdoor courts.

Using a ball similar in size to a tennis ball and a net set at a height lower than a tennis net, the game is usually played in doubles format (with teams of two players). The rules of pickleball are relatively simple, where players use paddles to hit the ball over the net, aiming their shots to prevent opponents from returning the favor.

By riding the tide of the sport's soaring popularity in the US, it took the once little-known brand from Dongguan, Guangdong province, five years to become one of the top pickleball paddle brands on the Amazon platform, with frequent appearances on the bestseller list.

Most recently, it surpassed many established sports giants, such as Fila, as well as US pickleball paddle brands like Franklin Sports, in

terms of sales volume on Amazon.

Last year, despite COVID-19 challenges, Niupipo reported revenue of 120 million yuan (\$17.4 million), of which 80 percent came from selling pickleball paddles to overseas retailers. Gong said the company now targets 180 million yuan in revenue this year with around a 20 to 30 percent profit margin.

"Niupipo's success in overseas markets completely surpassed my expectation. I was aware of the market potential after conducting research on the pickleball craze in the US, but I didn't expect to see the outcome to be this quick and big," Gong said.

With more businesses from Malaysia and India contacting him for cooperation this year, Gong said: "There is a huge need for cost-effective and high-quality Chinese products, and the domestic demand for pickleball paddles will also get bigger since the country optimized its COVID-19 measures."

In recent years, pickleball has experienced rapid growth worldwide, attracting players of all ages and fitness levels thanks to its easy-to-learn nature. The value of the global pickleball equipment market was estimated at \$65.64 billion last year and will grow at a compound annual growth rate of 9 percent to reach \$155.4 billion by 2033, according to market research provider Fact.MR.

"Easy to learn, quick to grasp and good for socializing, pickleball is increasingly enjoyed by a wide range of people. There are also a growing number of tournaments

that entice players to continue to practice and win, and more players are demanding higher requirements for good-quality paddles and accessories," Gong said.

The sport has been introduced to China through various channels, including international competitions, exhibitions and grassroots efforts by enthusiasts. In recent years, it has gained attention and interest from individuals, sports clubs and organizations in China who deem it an enjoyable way to stay active and socialize.

Prior to entering the pickleball market, Niupipo's main business was the production of carbon fiber components. Gong set up a factory in 2016 after resigning from his job as a technician. By then, he had only one assembly line machine.

"At that time, the carbon fiber components production industry had intense competition, and our factory faced pressure of lower prices from competitors. A friend then requested us to produce pickleball paddles, which are also made of carbon fibers. After conducting research, I found there was a huge untapped market with big business growth opportunities, so I made the decision to change the main business to producing carbon fiber paddles," Gong said.

The next question was whether to sell them as outsourced products for an established player or to make them under a new self-owned brand.

"We worked as an OEM (original equipment manufacturer) for about a year, selling white-label paddles

and semifinished products for other companies. As pickleball gained popularity, the demand for related sports apparel and equipment continued to surge. Our clients made a lot more than us by tapping the growing market. I decided to build my own brand for more profit," Gong said.

He decided to use "Niupipo" as the name of the brand, because he thought it sounds like the word "super cool" in Chinese. He chose Amazon for its global sales platform, but was soon confronted with a major challenge that almost broke his business out of the gate.

In 2018, Gong's online store was halted by Amazon for about three months due to business disputes with an overseas peer, which led to a lawsuit.

"All of our earnings were frozen in the Amazon account. Our products were also kept in an overseas Amazon warehouse, and we had no way to transport the goods back to China to sell to others. My business completely stopped," Gong said.

"Apart from the support from my family and friends, I poured all my savings and loans from the bank into the business which totaled 5 million yuan. Because I knew if I shut the Amazon store I'd lose everything, I persisted with the overseas lawsuit despite great difficulties and big spendings it involved. Besides, I was confident that I could win the lawsuit," Gong said.

Then, the happy story went on as Gong ended up winning the lawsuit and reopened the store on Amazon.

In 2018 — the first year Gong started the business — he earned over 10 million yuan despite the three-month halt of business, with a profit margin of around 15 percent.

That gave him even more confidence to step up investment in the business with a focus on launching cost-effective and innovative products.

"Our business strategy focuses on targeting the mass market, providing professional products at relatively low prices. In contrast to domestic manufacturers that compete solely on price, we put more effort into ensuring product quality, and guaranteeing that our products have higher performance at similar prices. Compared with established brands, we offer products with similar performance but much lower prices," Gong said.

"Our team also spends a lot of time doing online marketing. This strategy has helped our products stand out from the pack among similar sellers on Amazon."

As the popularity of pickleball continues to grow, the domestic market in China has also started to gain momentum. Gong said that in the past two years, many associations and clubs reached out to him for cooperation.

"The sport is gradually gaining popularity among Chinese consumers. Many domestic sports organizations are starting to recognize pickleball as a recreational and professional game, and include it in some tournaments, programs and

events. In addition, pickleball equipment, such as paddles and balls, are becoming more widely available in China through online and offline retail channels," said An Fuxiu, founder of Sportbank, a Beijing-based sports industry think tank.

The sport's growing popularity can be seen by heated discussions on social media platforms. As of early April, there were over 2,000 posts relevant to pickleball on lifestyle sharing platform Xiaohongshu. On short-video platform Douyin, videos hashtagged "pickleball" had over 6.4 million appearances.

An said that in recent years, the government has also launched multiple documents to promote the development of outdoor sports, which helps create a good business environment and provides relevant companies with good opportunities to generate new growth points.

"The domestic market is growing and now contributes around 20 percent of Niupipo's total revenue. We are eyeing a revenue of 180 million yuan this year combining markets from home and abroad," Gong said.

Looking ahead, Gong's focus of work for the next three to five years will be on breakthroughs in product technology to cater to different demographics and scenarios.

He also plans to expand his business into pickleball accessory products like apparel.

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Trendy sports becoming big business as flying discs see soaring sales

By ZHUANG QIANG and LIU YUKUN

The Chinese sports market is seen by experts as a rapidly evolving space, especially after the country optimized its COVID-19 control measures, with a myriad of emerging games gaining traction and established ones finding new adherents. This ever-shifting landscape presents exciting opportunities for investors and enthusiasts alike.

One of the sports gaining momentum is ultimate flying disc — more commonly known by the product's brand name, Frisbee. The activity is a high-energy, cooperative team sport that combines elements of various competitive contests like football and basketball.

"The game is normally played by two teams. By cooperating with teammates, players who catch the flying disc in designated areas can score for their team," said a 22-year-old fan Yolanda Li.

Li has been into the sport for a year. It started when she met a group of flying disc fans in her Beijing residential community. "Before we went the ultimate way, it had

become a popular game in our community and enjoyed by many. And when enthusiasts mingled, the ultimate flying disc game was on," she said, adding that it's actually suitable for coed competition, as physical contact is not allowed.

Boasting advantages like few limitations for game venues and easy-to-understand rules, the sport has triggered a craze spreading fast across cities nationwide.

According to Yikun Sports Co Ltd, a leading flying disc manufacturer in Ningbo, Zhejiang province, sales of the sports "equipment" in 2022 soared 460.77 percent year-on-year, reflecting the soaring popularity of the activity in the country.

Eyeing opportunities brought by sizzling new sports, social platforms nationwide have taken active steps to tap the market. Xiaohongshu, a lifestyle opinion-sharing social platform in China, established ties with the country's sports administration, and launched the National Ultimate Frisbee League last year.

According to the event plan released by the administration on its website, the new league will host a national competition this month,



Flying disc fans play a mixed match at a campsite in Hefei, Anhui province, on July 30, 2022. RUAN XUEFENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

but the host city has yet to be named.

Apart from flying discs, skateboarding as a new pastime has emerged as a favorite hobby among Chinese sports enthusiasts, especially among Generation Z — those born in the mid- and late 1990s and into the 2000s.

In parks and squares across China, young daredevils can be spotted balancing atop long skateboards, moving their bodies as if surfing the waves. According to Jing Daily, an online business information aggregator, over the past two years, more than 6 million people nationwide have taken to skateboarding.

Xiaohongshu searches for "land surfing" revealed a significant rise in the first half of 2022, with the number rocketing 232 percent year-on-year. The number recorded an astonishing high in May — an increase of 460 percent year-on-year. "From flying discs and flag football to hiking, cycling and now pickleball, there are obvious commonalities among such sporting activities, which include low entry thresholds, ease of participation and strong social attributes," said Bai Yufei, a business professor at Beijing Sport University.

"Therefore, driven by intensive commercial marketing, celebrity promotion and online advertising for trendy content, it is easy for many people, especially the younger generation, to follow suit," Bai said.

The professor's words are well reflected by enthusiasts' current attraction to such kinds of nontraditional sporting activities.

"By taking photos and videos while engaging in trendy sports, I can create a cool and distinctive image on social media. Sometimes even before I start skateboarding, netizens will rush into my lives-

streaming room to watch me put on my gear and ask questions on equipment and other issues," said Ji Xiaoxue, a 26-year-old skateboarding enthusiast in Zibo, Shandong province.

Such trendy attributes, however, also mean that some participants may not maintain their zeal for certain sports over an appreciable period, as the social motivations can actually be easily replaced by other trendy sport undertakings, experts said.

To this end, Bai said, it is necessary to do a good job in terms of support and guidance, make full use of various tools, and provide professional support to relevant institutions to ensure healthy development of various sports, and ensure better services to retain long-lasting popularity and enthusiasm among practitioners.

In addition, the government should also strengthen supervision over training institutions and clubs in terms of operations and coaching qualifications to avoid damage to the sector's integrity, observers said.

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TRAVEL



The doorway of the west study is decorated with a relief of two angels encircling a globe. FANG AIQING / CHINA DAILY



A child teaches Chen Ye to perform Yingge dance on April 2.



Ancient ritual expert Peng Lin (left) discusses Chaoshan's sacrificial rites with other scholars in the study on Nov 7, 2020. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



The study's doors and windows are painted blue, a style once popular in Southeast Asia. FANG AIQING / CHINA DAILY



The Chen family write Spring Festival couplets on Chinese New Year's Eve in 2022.

A complex family legacy

Descendant restores his clan's former homestead while promoting regional traditions, **Fang Aiqing** reports in Shantou, Guangdong.

Around the ancient port of Zhanglin, in Chenghai district of Shantou, once known as Swatow, in Guangdong province, lush camphor, banyan, papaya and sweet-scented Osmanthus trees shield outdated dwellings and courtyards.

In the ponds, water lilies generously display their soft red appeal, which offers a vivid contrast to their emerald chaperones.

Many households keep well-groomed bonsai in their yards, while an Indian spurge tree almost reaches a bungalow roof and an areca palm unconsciously relaxes its leaves on the stone balustrade of another building's second floor.

Taking several turns in the alleys leading from the river that runs into the nearby sea, an open area with a row of centuried houses comes into view.

They are built and decorated with a blend of Chinese and Western styles, especially highlighting the use of light blue house beams, doors and window shades.

Such color was once widely applied in Southeast Asian countries like Thailand, Cambodia, Singapore and Vietnam. An impressive example may be found in the 1992 film adaptation of Marguerite Duras' well-known novel *The Lover*, a love story set in colonial Saigon, today's Ho Chi Minh City of Vietnam, directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud.

Located in Tangxi village, the houses belong to a clan of Chen, which built up a fortune with a fabric business in Thailand before sending funds back home and importing some of the materials to build the houses, which were completed in 1921.

Once left unattended, the houses are now under renovation by the descendants of the Chen family, led by Chen Ye, 39, a lecturer of Chinese philosophy at South China Normal University in Guangzhou, the provincial capital.

During the process, the Chens have had the chance to dig deeper into their family history, both at home and abroad, and reflect on their connections with local society.

More importantly, they are seeking to pass on the family tradition of giving back to the neighborhood — which has helped them build a reputation over the past century — by preserving and revitalizing traditional culture of the Chaoshan region, referring to the Guangdong cities of Chaozhou, Shantou, Shanwei and Jieyang.

East meets West

The houses, called *demaio nei* (Chen Demao's home) or *dehe li* (residence of virtue and harmony) in general, were originally built symmetrically, but have been partly destroyed, either by Japanese invaders during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45), or through natural weathering.

What remains is an ancestral hall in the middle of the complex, flanked by study buildings on both sides, and a residence to the west. Gardens on both sides and the residence on the eastern side have, sadly, not survived.

According to Chen Ye, when his great-granduncle Chen Xinmu (1873-1939) and great-grandfather Chen Yanchen (1892-1924) built the houses, they built the ancestral hall together, but hired two teams of craftsmen to design and build the structures on either side.

It was a local convention to form a competition and encourage creativity, resulting in totally different architectural styles on each side of the main hall.

Today, the gold-lacquered wood carvings



A Yingge dance troupe from Chaozhou perform in the ancestral hall of *demaio nei* near the ancient port of Zhanglin, in Chenghai district of Shantou, Guangdong province, on April 2. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

depicting classic historical stories on the beams of the ancestral hall, a renowned, time-honored genre of handicrafts that originated in Chaoshan, remain vivid and glittering.

Stone reliefs of figures and auspicious flora and fauna, inscribed boards and calligraphy works engraved on stone walls and pillars present the clan's parental instructions, which are deeply rooted in ancient Confucianism.

In the courtyard of the remaining, westerly residence, where Chen Ye's grandparents used to live, a bulky wooden table and chairs are placed under a wisteria, which scatters its pinkish purple petals over them. They are made of ship wood. Soaked in salt water for a long time, the wood is well protected against decay.

While the main body of the architecture is in traditional Chinese style, the arched windows facing the courtyard are painted blue, and the door frame of the inner room has on it a wooden relief image of European noblewomen on a boat excursion.

The doorway of the west study is decorated with a relief of two angels encircling a globe, whereas the east study has a stone pavilion with traditional overhanging eaves and Corinthian columns.

Both of the studies were where the owners hosted guests, with their decor and many calligraphy works by renowned artists of the time displaying the family's intellectual taste and values.

In the west study, the calligraphy works carry traditional aphorisms emphasizing modesty and inclusiveness. In the east building, however, the words meet the needs of a much more modern, competition-oriented society.

The houses are where angels and bats, traditionally bearing auspicious meanings, meet on the wall, while a Western pool and a Chinese well are also installed.

Ancestral history

In his heyday, Chen Xinmu used to be a board member of the Thai-Chinese Cham-

“We are exploring a new chapter to bring prosperity to the area through culture.”

Chen Ye, descendant of the Chen family in Tangxi village, Shantou, Guangdong province



Headwear in the shape of a dragon in the west study. FANG AIQING / CHINA DAILY

ber of Commerce. His nephew Chen Yanchen also sailed south at the age of 15, working hard during the day and learning local languages at night, and was acclaimed for his ingenuity.

They promoted the use of domestic products in business, while back home, Chen Xinmu founded a vocational school especially for women to improve their lives, a pioneering deed in the early 20th century.

Located on the outskirts of the village, the family donated money to projects that guarded against natural disasters and contributed to safeguarding the security of the neighborhood. Historical archives show that they helped deter a gang of robbers in 1922.

During wartime, they lent the houses to a local middle school to use as temporary class-

rooms and dormitories, and the Chinese army were quartered there during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and again in the 1950s.

Since the 1980s, the younger generations of the family have also sponsored road and campus construction, publication of local literature and development of local operas.

As one of Chen Ye's granduncles achieved the status of Datuk, the local equivalent of a knighthood, in Penang, Malaysia, generations of the Chen clan have also been promoting Chinese language and cultural education there.

In 2019, several years after Chen Ye's grandparents passed away, he spent part of the summer holiday cleaning up the vacant residence and sorting through the remaining belongings of the older generations.

As many previously unknown things came to light, he realized that it was his generation's duty to dust off the family history and accurately recount the life stories of their ancestors, fill in the family tree, and enhance the kinship with their relatives overseas.

It was not until he tore down a rusty warehouse in the forecourt that he discovered the symmetrical structure of the grouped houses, and that, in the past, the houses were all interlinked. Later he knocked down the barrier wall and restored the octagonal door that connects the west study with the ancestral hall.

For Chen Ye, the renovation is progressing slowly due to limited funds and the time he can spare from his busy working schedule in Guangzhou, but it's filled with surprises.

For instance, by chance, he found a stele embedded in the wall of the ancestral hall, hidden behind a layer of hardened dust. It is inscribed with the family's story, from how it came to settle in Zhanglin to how it started businesses in Thailand and Japan.

Apart from frequent contact with overseas relatives to piece together shards of family history, Chen Ye was particularly moved by the gesture of an elderly relative whom he has never met. Based in Malaysia,

she is a daughter of one of his great-grandfather's siblings, who, upon hearing about the restoration of the houses, transferred funds to Chen Ye, amid all the inconvenience incurred by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was also an act borne of a long-standing tradition.

For decades, the family members overseas have sent money home to support relatives who remain, usually in the form of *qiaopi*, a combination of letter and remittance certificate from overseas Chinese emigrants in the 19th and 20th centuries, especially those from Guangdong and Fujian provinces.

Chen Ye notes that one particular grand-aunt in Singapore, now in her 90s, has been sending the same sum every Spring Festival for nearly 70 years until recently, when it became too physically difficult for her.

Dance hall

Cai Haisong, an expert in traditional Chaoshan-style architecture, once told Chen Ye that very unusually, *demaio nei* has been kept in use for a century, sometimes privately owned and sometimes as public institutions, which has prevented major damage to the buildings.

Since he took up the deed, Chen Ye has been welcoming communal activities at the ancestral hall and the west study, such as women's gatherings and skills training, free clinics, as well as lectures and panels on culture and history, as a way to revitalize the old buildings.

But now, he and a group of companions, including his junior high school music teacher Chen Nan, are investing their efforts into a 300-year-old folk art, which is a combination of dance, opera and martial arts and is native to Chaoshan.

With painted faces and a pair of short sticks in hand, the performers of Yingge dance jump and swing, tapping the sticks while walking and dancing, accompanied by gongs and drums and shouts.

Since Chaozhou's Zhongjing Yingge dance troupe was invited to Zhanglin in early March, local youngsters have shown extraordinary interest in the art form.

Chen Ye says, the strong rhythms and the visual impact of the face paint, usually based on the heroes of classic novels like *The Water Margin*, seem to appeal to the younger generation, while Chen Nan points out that parents welcome it, as their children put aside their devices, build up their body and inherit traditional culture.

The troupe has visited the hall an additional three times since, teaching for free, with hundreds in attendance.

The duo made up their minds to establish their own local troupe. Chen Ye hopes that, by doing so, it will arouse people's interest and raise awareness of his ancestral home and family history.

The ancient port of Zhanglin, historically one of the starting points of the Maritime Silk Road, has been through prosperity and decline, but the clan culture and sense of home cultivated there remain an important trait of the locals and, as Chen Nan puts it, always drive them to serve the neighborhood with responsibility and without reserve.

“The revitalization of these old buildings and Zhanglin, the hometown of many overseas Chinese, is forged by young people's desire to return to their cultural origin, and the innovation of traditions. We are exploring a new chapter to bring prosperity to the area through culture,” Chen Ye says.

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SPORTS

TECHNOLOGY



Soccer-playing robot ARTEMIS is capable of withstanding rough stuff on the pitch, as demonstrated by Dennis Hong, a professor of mechanical & aerospace engineering at UCLA. REUTERS

Robo-naldo, soccer star of the future

State-of-the-art humanoid with an eye for goal taking sports technology to next level

Watch out, Lionel Messi. ARTEMIS is here.

Standing at 4 feet, 8 inches tall (142 centimeters) and weighing 85 pounds (38 kilograms), ARTEMIS is a first-of-its-kind robot that University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) mechanical engineers developed, and it is ready for the pitch.

Using cutting-edge technology, ARTEMIS, which stands for Advanced Robotic Technology for Enhanced Mobility and Improved Stability, can maintain its balance against heavy kicks and shoves, withstand objects being thrown at it and is capable of running. But what sets ARTEMIS apart on top of that is its ability to kick a ball.

"If your robot cannot even play a game of soccer, how would you be able to use these robots for more important things, such as saving people's lives?" said Dennis Hong, professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering and director of the Robotics and Mechanisms Laboratory (RoMeLa) at UCLA, which developed ARTEMIS.

The technologies used for soccer-playing robots are also being used for other applications like firefighting and disaster relief, said Hong.

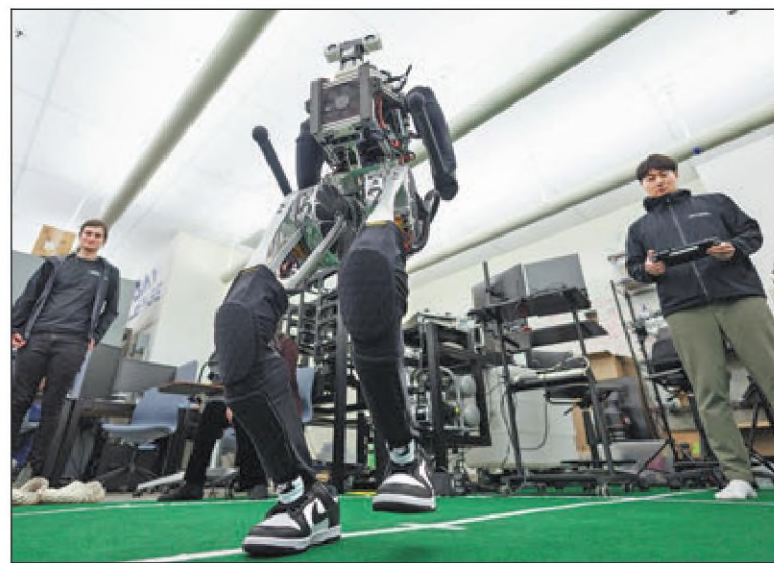
While ARTEMIS may not be at the next FIFA World Cup, Hong's team will be unveiling its full soccer capabilities at RoboCup in Bordeaux, France, in July.

The robot's major innovation is that the engineers custom-designed its actuators — devices that generate motion from energy — to behave like biological muscles. They are springy and force-controlled, rather than the rigid, position-controlled actuators that most robots have.

ARTEMIS' actuators are also unique in that they are electrically driven, rather than controlled by hydraulics. That means it is quieter and operates more efficiently, while also being cleaner, because hydraulic systems are notorious for leaking fluids.

RoMeLa student Justin Quan said his personal goal is engineering robots that improve people's lives.

"Seeing these robots helping push the robot technology to that next level is really rewarding because you're like, oh, the dream, it gets closer," he said.



ARTEMIS shows off its athletic abilities at UCLA's Henry Samueli School of Engineering in California on April 13. The robot's developers describe it as a first-of-its-kind humanoid that is capable of running and playing soccer. REUTERS



SOCCER

Team China hotshot Wu raring for World Cup challenge

Wu Chengshu hopes her recent playing stint overseas can help Team China emerge from a tough Women's World Cup group that includes European champion England.

The midfielder completed a season in Australia's top flight earlier last month, playing 10 matches for Canberra United after arriving last November.

During her five months Down Under, the 26-year-old missed eight club matches due to injury and international duty but still held down a regular starting spot across a variety of positions — midfielder, second striker, and winger — and scored two goals.

Canberra United narrowly missed out on a top-four spot and a place in the league's finals after ending the regular season with a 3-3 draw against Melbourne City.

"That match was very crucial and held in the same stadium as the men's A-League match in Mel-

bourne," Wu told Xinhua recently. "We were excited and everyone did their best. But the result was a pity. The coach praised the hard work we put in throughout the season and said we could make the top four next season."

Usually playing as a wide midfielder, Wu has emerged as a major attacking force for China's national team, opening the scoring in last year's Asian Cup semifinal victory over Japan.

She believes her season in the women's A-League has improved her game in a number of aspects.

"I took this step to experience an overseas league for the first time. I think it was a good decision. I didn't quite adapt to the rhythm in the first two rounds, and then match by match I got used to it," she said.

"My teammates and I have gradually become familiar with each other. I think I made some progress, as this is a physically tough league, and



Wu Chengshu unleashes a shot for Canberra United. XINHUA

it's very competitive."

Wu said the club praised her contribution and hopes to bring in another Chinese player next season. She added that her time abroad had forced her out of her comfort zone.

"Playing overseas means you have

to look after yourself, including daily cooking, which was difficult for me when I first came here. When I played for Jiangsu in the Chinese league, the club had a chef and a canteen, meaning you didn't need to think about what to eat each day," she said.

"But after a month, I became familiar with cooking and shopping in a market there. Life in Canberra felt convenient. Looking back on the season, it was a good experience."

Wu returned from a training camp with the Chinese national team in Europe in March, where the team drew 0-0 with Switzerland and was defeated 3-0 by Spain in two warm-up matches ahead of the World Cup, which is set to be held in Australia and New Zealand from July 20 to Aug 20.

"The European teams have really improved in recent years. We can feel the gap," said Wu.

"For instance, Spain — quite apart from their physicality — were so calm in possession and were really good at controlling the tempo of the game."

Drawn in Group D with England, Denmark and Haiti at the World Cup, China is not regarded as one of the favorites to reach the knockout

stage, despite winning the Asian Cup last year.

The top two teams from the eight groups will reach the last 16, with the tournament expanded to a 32-team format for the first time.

Despite the challenges that await, Wu hopes to continue improving over the coming months and do her country proud on the world stage.

"We still have a lot of room for improvement. Although the gap is huge, I think as long as we face up to it and narrow it step by step in daily training, we still have a great chance," she said.

"In the group stage, each team has different characteristics. We will analyze the opponent well before each game and stick to our strategy."

"I think the first goal must be to qualify for the knockout stage," Wu added. "After that, I hope we can go further. Confidence is essential."

XINHUA

SPORTS

TABLE TENNIS



Team China star
an inspiration
— on and off
the table

RAY OF SUNSHINE

Following her excellent start to the season, Sun Yingsha tops the world rankings in women's singles, women's doubles and mixed doubles. XINHUA



Sun Yingsha's success is credited with boosting the popularity of table tennis among the younger generations. XINHUA

By SHI FUTIAN
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"Pursue your passion and stay focused." That's the message that Chinese table tennis hotshot Sun Yingsha wants to convey to her young fans.

As a Gen Z-er herself, the 23-year-old already tops the world rankings in women's singles, women's doubles and mixed doubles, with her stunning skills at the table and endearing personality in front of the cameras propelling her to global stardom.

Sun is especially adored by the younger generation of table tennis lovers, and she is gratified to see her popularity is encouraging more kids to pick up paddles.

"I have seen an increasing number of people, including children, getting into table tennis. Table tennis, I think, has gained a growing influence," Sun told China Daily online show *On Your Marks*.

"If you truly love it, I hope you can persevere no matter what difficulties or setbacks you encounter. These experiences will be the most precious ones of your life, so I hope that in table tennis you give it your all and pursue your dreams."

"Generation Z players and kids must have their own unique styles, qualities that set them apart. Whether they are young athletes who started earlier, or who have just joined the team, we all have our own flair and talents."

Sun has been in sensational form this season, notably winning the women's singles, women's doubles and mixed doubles gold medals at the 2023 Singapore Smash, a WTT Grand Smash event, in March.

In doing so, she became the first player in the tournament's history to win three gold medals at a single edition of the event. It also secured her position as the world No 1 in each discipline.

"I feel more motivated. My two playing partners are both world-class. When (Wang) Manyu is standing in front of me we are rivals, and when she is next to me we are well-matched partners," said Sun.

"The same with Wang Chuqin, one of the top male players now. When we stand next to each other competing against foreign players our confidence surges."

Sun has plenty more targets in her sights, especially winning an Olympic women's singles gold. She made her Olympic debut at the Tokyo Games two years ago, when she pocketed a silver in the singles and a gold in the women's team competition.

Clearly, that singles runner-up finish still stings, and she is determined to go one step further on the podium at the 2024 Games in Paris.

"I took part in the Olympics when I was 21. At that time I was not a complete enough player, so I was unable to win the women's singles gold," recalled Sun.

"I was not mature enough. I'm now 23, and looking back at those losses, I feel that I have learned a lot from them. Since the Olympics, I've also experienced many other defeats in other competitions, but I never give up. Life is never smooth, and you always face ups and downs. Determination and courage are what make an excellent athlete."

lent athlete."

Kid at play

Sun had an instant connection with table tennis as a child — it was the sound of the bouncing ball that initially drew her to the game.

"My parents bought me my first paddle for just a few yuan in a nearby sports shop. I couldn't even hold the paddle very well as my hand was too tiny, and I could just use it to juggle the ball," said Sun.

"At first it was my parents who wanted me to play. But I was very sensitive to the sound of the ball hitting the ground. I really liked that kind of sound."

"They suggested I give it a try. After a few days, I found that I really enjoyed it. And when I started playing matches, I felt I had some talent."

As her training became more serious, Sun admits that she sometimes found the sessions boring, and the tears would even flow if she was criticized by a coach.

Looking back on those early days, Sun believes they have forged her mental fortitude.

In 2015, Sun stepped into the training base of the national team for the first time as a reserve team member. She still remembers the excitement of seeing her Team China idols for the first time.

"Everything was very new to me then, because I had just been called up to the national team," she said. "I saw Li Xiaoxia and Ding Ning training there. But if you're talking about idols, Zhang Yining is my role model," said Sun.



Sun Yingsha is determined to claim gold at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. XINHUA

Zhang is certainly a legend of the sport. Nicknamed "the Devil", fans see similarities between the four-time Olympic champion and Sun. Hence, they have dubbed Sun "the Little Devil".

"When I was 8, I watched Zhang Yining on TV playing a women's singles final against Wang Nan. I hope one day I can reach her level and become a world-class athlete like her," said Sun.

"Her perform-

ances in competitions and what she demands of herself in training are worth emulating, not just by me but by all young athletes.

"It will take a long time and a lot of effort to become a top player like Zhang Yining."

Sun is cherishing her time in the national team, and credits the support and help from the squad as key factors in her rise.

"Team China is so unified. It really is a great honor for me to be in the team. I've achieved some things, but these feats are inseparable from the efforts of every team member, including the support, medical and coaching staff, as well as my training teammates," she said.

"Few players get to stand on the winner's rostrum, but the gold medal belongs to the whole team. It is a team of unity, pride and responsibility."



Life is never smooth, and you always face ups and downs. Determination and courage are what make an excellent athlete."
Sun Yingsha, world No 1 table tennis player