

Roaring trade

Domestic, international tourism booms during May Day holiday

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G7 meeting clouded by debt crisis

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Diverse creations

Artist has produced more than 1,200 paintings since 2020

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# CHINA DAILY

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## China, US hold substantive, candid talks

Two sides agree to make good use of strategic communication channel at Vienna meeting

By WANG KEJU and LIU ZHIHUA

Senior officials from China and the United States met in Vienna, Austria, on Wednesday and Thursday and had candid, in-depth, substantive and constructive discussions on bilateral ties.

Wang Yi, director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, and US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan discussed removing obstacles in China-US ties and stabilizing the relationship.

Wang, who is also a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, fully expounded on China's solemn position on the Taiwan question.

The two sides exchanged views on the situation in the Asia-Pacific region, the Ukraine issue and other international and regional issues of common concern. Both sides agreed to continue to make good use of the strategic communication channel.

### Trade curbs opposed

In another development, Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao met on Thursday with Nicholas Burns, the US ambassador to China. The two sides exchanged views on China-US economic and trade relations, as well as their respective concerns over other economic and trade issues, the ministry said in a news release.

Also on Thursday, the Ministry of Commerce said that the Chinese government will resolutely oppose any move by the US to restrict US companies from investing in China or coercing its allies to follow suit, as such moves undermine the international economic and trade order and disrupt the stability of global industrial and supply chains.

Shu Jueting, a spokeswoman for the ministry, made the remarks at a news conference after Bloomberg reported that US President Joe Biden aims to sign an executive order to limit investment in China's high-tech industries and hopes to get an endorsement from its G7 partners on such curbs at next week's meeting.

"If the news report turns out to be true, China will resolutely object to such acts", as they run contrary to the market economy and the principle of fair competition, affect enterprises' normal

business decisions, undermine the international economic and trade order and disrupt the stability of global industrial and supply chains, said Shu.

China will remain steadfast in advancing high-level opening-up and welcomes enterprises from all countries to invest in China and share development opportunities, the spokeswoman added.

Tu Xinquan, dean of the China Institute for WTO Studies at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, said the US government habitually politicizes technology and trade issues and uses them as a tool and weapon in the name of national security, while its true intention is to suppress China's development.

It is rare for governments across the globe to launch outbound investment screening on the pretext of national security. The US will need a well-structured legal basis to enforce the restrictions, and it would be the same for its allies to do so, Tu said, adding that relevant countries must discard such a Cold War mentality and follow market rules.

Wu Chaoze, chief analyst of technology, media and telecom industry at China Securities, said the curbs, if enforced, will have limited impact on China's relevant high-tech sectors. The scale of US investment concerning areas such as AI, chips and quantum computing in China remains relatively small, as US companies have avoided investing in China due to US sanctions in recent years, Wu said.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said on Thursday that China and the US have maintained communication. "What matters is that the US cannot keep raising the issue of communication on the one hand, while on the other, keep suppressing and containing China," Wang said at a regular news briefing in Beijing.

The US side should view China in an objective and rational manner, respect China's red lines, stop undermining its sovereignty, security and development interests, and work with China in the same direction to bring bilateral ties back on the track of sound and stable growth, he said.

Mo Jingxi contributed to this story.

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## Border drama



A Texas National Guard member speaks to migrants who swam to the US side of the bank of the Rio Grande river, seen from Matamoros, Mexico, on Thursday. Thousands of migrants had begun gathering in northern Mexico at the US border in Texas the past few days. FERNANDO LLANO / AP See story, page 7

## Burst of fighting



Above: Israel's Iron Dome air defence system intercepts rockets launched from Gaza on Tuesday. Israel's army and Gaza militants have traded heavy fire since Tuesday, with at least 25 Palestinians killed over two days. It has been the worst bout of fighting between Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza in months. MAHMUD HAMS / AFP

Right: Relatives mourn outside a hospital morgue in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on Thursday after a Palestinian was killed in an Israeli strike. SAID KHATIB / AFP



## Nation optimizes exit, entry policies

By YANG ZEKUN in Zhuhai, Guangdong yangzekun@chinadaily.com.cn

China will fully restore fast-lane entry and exit services at all ports starting on Monday, facilitating the cross-border travel of Chinese citizens and foreign nationals.

The National Immigration Administration issued a circular on Thursday announcing the adjustments to immigration policies.

Chinese nationals will be allowed to use fast lanes for expedited border inspection on the following travel documents: Chinese ordinary passports, exit-entry permits for travel to and from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, mainland travel permits for Hong Kong and Macao residents, five-year mainland travel permits for Taiwan residents, and multiple entry permits valid for one year, the administration said in a notice.

Foreigners can use the service with their passports and China-issued ID cards for foreign permanent

residents, or with their electronic passports and residence permits with a validity period of more than six months, it added.

Chinese crewmembers working on scheduled international flights and foreign crewmembers who are visa-free or have obtained flight attendant/employment visas or residence permits for one year or longer can also use the channel, said the circular.

China will fully resume group travel permits for mainland residents to Hong Kong and Macao. Mainland residents may submit their applications to any national entry and exit administration center, it said.

In addition, mainland residents can apply for permits to visit relatives, and work and study in Hong Kong and Macao at any exit and entry administration center across the country.

Immigration authorities will also adjust the validity period of the visa for mainland students studying in Macao from a maximum of one

year to match the length of their study in Macao.

Lin Zhizhuo, a manager of Ctrip, a Chinese travel service provider, said that the adjusted policies will benefit people who are not employed where they have registered residence, and it will greatly ease the visa application process for tourists to Hong Kong and Macao.

As immigration policies have become more flexible, more tailored package products will emerge. The policy of applying for travel permits at any immigration center provides great convenience for tourists, who are not restricted to their place of departure, Lin said.

Ways of traveling to Hong Kong and Macao are also becoming more diversified. In April, high-speed rail services to and from Hong Kong resumed from cities such as Chongqing, Zhengzhou in Henan province, Changsha in Hunan province and Kunming in Yunnan province.

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## AUDIENCES DRAWN TO CHANGING TIMES

Suspense drama becomes one of nation's highest-rated TV series

By LI YINGXUE liyingxue@chinadaily.com.cn

A week after the final episode of the suspense drama *The Long Season* aired on Tencent Video, about 450,000 viewers gave it a score of 9.4 out of 10 on the popular review site Douban, making it one of the highest-rated Chinese TV series.

The show is true to life, as it portrays aging, has twists of fate and mirrors changes in society.

### In-depth

The 12-episode series, starring Fan Wei, Qin Hao and Chen Minghao, premiered on Tencent Video's X Theater on April 22, and has since then topped the platform's hot search list.

The show has been discussed more than half a million times on Sina Weibo, and when the last three episodes were released, the hashtag

"The Long Season Masterpiece" was among the platform's top searches for three consecutive days.

The plot for *The Long Season* centers on the fictional industrial city of Hualin in northeastern China, where the Hualin Steel Plant used to be the pride of the city and its main industry. Wang Xiang, the leading character, was a train driver at the company, before he retired and became a taxi driver.

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## WORLD WATCH

By Dennis Munene

## Country has key role in Africa's industrial growth

For decades, Africa's industrial development — either as a concept or in practice — has featured in all bilateral and multi-lateral engagements at regional, continental and global levels. A latecomer in transforming its resources-based economy to one that is driven by technology and innovation, Africa's industrialization process has begun to expand to meet the needs of its growing population.

The African Development Bank estimates that the continent — endowed with vast natural resources such as rare earth minerals, and marine and agricultural products — is sitting on more than \$82 trillion of discovered natural resources, with the potential to contribute \$30 billion a year in government revenues over the next 20 years.

However, with all the wealth from natural resources, Africa remains underdeveloped. The extractive industries that existed during and after the colonial period plundered Africa's resources at the expense of its fragile economy. Weak and unstable governance structures in the 1990s continued to exacerbate the underdevelopment of the continent. Exporting of raw materials without any form of value added became the norm in Africa.

Meanwhile, developing countries in Asia and other continents were shifting their industries from light to heavy. This policy shift lifted these regions' economies out of the doldrums and created an enabling environment for sustainable industrial growth that has become the driving force in their continuous industrialization process.

Industrial development in Africa is still attainable. This can be achieved by fully implementing two action strategies already in motion.

The first is the strategy for the continent. In 2008, during a summit themed "the industrialization of Africa", African leaders endorsed and adopted the plan of action for the accelerated industrial development for Africa. The strategy contained seven actionable programs, including the promotion of infrastructure and energy for industrial development; upgrading production and trade capacities; industrial innovation systems; R&D and technology development; and human resource development for industry.

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In 2016, Wang helped his brother-in-law Gong Biao resolve a case of car registration fraud, but unexpectedly discovered clues related to his own son Wang Yang's "accidental death" 18 years ago. Wang Xiang, Gong and retired police officer Ma De-sheng reunite to uncover the truth of the past.

The story follows the three seniors as they track down the culprit, during which they also reflect on their own lives and the changing times around them.

At the start of the series, the authentic northeastern accents of the main characters, along with various playful jokes, created a great deal of humor.

*The Long Season* is the second TV series directed by Xin Shuang. Three years ago, his debut series *The Bad Kids* received a score of 8.8 out of 10 on Douban, and has since become a classic work among domestic suspense dramas.

Xin said the use of warm colors to present *The Long Season* is designed to portray a positive feeling, adding, "The people in the northeast I know are usually cheerful and optimistic, and this type of character is unique in crime films."

The story of *The Long Season* is set in 1997, 1998 and 2016, and Xin uses visual language to convey time transitions, rather than relying on explicit timelines.

He feels that one of the project's charms is its timelines, and if the show had been presented in chronological order, it would not have resulted in the same viewing experience.

### Music praised

*The Long Season* has also been praised for its music, which is seamlessly woven into the narrative. Xin, who was guitarist for the band Joyside, teamed up with composer Ding Ke again after their work on *The Bad Kids* to fit more than 10 highly energetic pieces of music into the series.

The songs that feature in the closing credits are mostly from independent and rock music bands, but classical music was also chosen, including *The Blue Danube*, which is used at the end of the tenth episode to give viewers a sense of novelty and contrast.

The opening part of a poem penned by Wang Yang in the series, which was written in real life by Ban Yu, a writer from Shenyang, Liaoning province, contains these lines:

*Snap your fingers, he said,  
Let's create a resonant snap.  
Distant things will be shattered,  
People in front of us are still unaware.*

Xin feels that the poem explains the relationship between the story's timelines, with each affecting the others.

The murder case in the series serves as an "entry point" for audiences to examine the life values and beliefs of those living in the times the show is set in, Xin said, adding that this is the most important aspect of the series, as it gives people an insight into the society and culture of years gone by.

In the past two years, more young writers from the northeast have emerged, offering popular literary works mostly set at the end of the 20th century. Many of their contributions have been adapted into TV series and films.

Liang Hong, professor at Renmin University of China's School of Liberal Arts, has long paid attention to the new generation of writers from the northeast.

"The cultural and social landscape of the 1990s undoubtedly had a profound impact on literature. Social transformations always bring about new societal statuses and human developments," Liang said in an interview with *Lifeweek Magazine*.

She thinks the writers' works showcase a certain resilience and self-deprecating spirit of survival, and that they excel at portraying the interconnectedness of daily life and the inner workings of the human psyche.

The script for *The Long Season* was co-written by Yu Xiaoqian, Pan Yiran and Chen Ji. Pan and Chen also worked with Xin on *The Bad Kids*. In the past two years, they have both read popular stories about the northeast and watched TV works adapted from them.

Chen said the numerous comments shared by people from the northeast on short-video platforms such as Douyin and Kuaishou gave him inspiration about local residents' daily lives.

Fan Wei (left) and Qin Hao, who star in *The Long Season*, drive a shared taxi in the series.

PHOTO PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY. ART BY LU PING / CHINA DAILY



## Dramas: More young writers emerging



A poster advertises *The Long Season*. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Pan said Xin decided to depict a "golden view" of the northeast in *The Long Season*, so the original darker story written by Yu was changed into the final plotline presented to audiences.

Before the show premiered, Pan wondered if audiences would warm to the story, as it is told from the perspective of three elderly men, which is rare for a Chinese TV series. However, the enthusiastic response dispelled her concerns, and the exceptionally high rating on Douban surprised her.

She thinks one reason for the show's success is that many young audiences, such as those born in the 1990s and 2000s, were often raised by their grandparents, so they have an emotional connection with the elderly.

"In the storyline for the series, we included issues related to empty nesters (seniors whose family members have left home), care for the elderly, and the love lives of seniors. I believe that viewers naturally have emotions related to these topics,

making it easy to arouse empathy," Pan said.

"The fragility of elderly people is often concealed, as they can be very stubborn. However, when their vulnerability is exposed, it becomes especially touching and evokes a sense of sympathy."

One of the most popular scenes in the series features three seniors dancing and singing together in a karaoke room.

Pan thinks this is also an example of the spiritual power of people from the northeast, who use humor as a weapon to combat whatever kind of difficulty they face.

When Yu wrote the initial script in 2018, he based Wang Xiang's character on Fan Wei, the actor.

"This story originated from a father-son relationship set in northern China in the late 1990s. From this starting point, the plot developed and expanded into a full story," Yu said.

"Wang Xiang's character embodies the image of many fathers in northern China. He has his strengths and weaknesses. He has a humorous side, as well as being timid and ready to compromise. He is strict and not good at expressing his love, which are common traits."

In the series, Wang Xiang has two sons. In 1998, when his first son dies at the age of 18, he adopts a newborn. Yu uses the ways in which Wang Xiang treats his sons to represent the different father-son relationship.

"Since 2000, Chinese society has undergone significant development, particularly in terms of economic achievements. The handling of interpersonal relationships has also changed a lot," Yu said.

"The most crucial and straightforward point of the series is that Wang Xiang has learned to express himself. His love for both sons is the same, but the way he expresses it is different."

### Biggest advantage

Pan said the success achieved by *The Long Season* underscores the need to resonate with audiences.

"People's emotional patterns are worth writing about, which is our biggest advantage in connecting with audiences. We cannot ignore the very soil of our lives," she said.

From discussing the plot and the actors' performances, to exploring details of costumes, makeup, music and even posters, Chinese audiences have always shown great enthusiasm for and anticipation of high-quality domestic TV dramas, especially those they can connect with.

They are less concerned about big-name directors and actors, but more interested in whether the overall quality of a production is good enough.

Domestic suspense dramas have been particularly popular in recent years, and online video platforms such as Youku, Tencent and iQiyi continue to broadcast new works.

In March, two suspense dramas were released on Youku's Suspense Drama Theater and iQiyi's Mist Theater — *Who Is He*, starring Zhang Yi, lead actor in this year's hit drama *The Knockout*, and *Echo*, directed by Feng Xiaogang. However, both productions were criticized for their slow-paced plots, receiving scores of 5.8 and 6, respectively, on Douban.

Last month, the new 24-episode suspense drama *Thirteen Years of Dust*, which focuses on an unsolved murder case in 1997, found favor among audiences, who gave it a score of 8.1.



Scenes from *The Long Season*. The suspense drama depicts life in the fictional industrial city of Hualin in northeastern China in 1997, 1998 and 2016. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Warmhearted look at life in a cold climate evokes sweet memories of home

I don't remember the last time a television series left me so deeply immersed in the fates of its characters.

The suspense drama *The Long Season* depicts the vibrant lives of people in Northeast China from 1997 to 2016, particularly those of my parents' generation. It offered me a glimpse of what my parents were like when they were young.

I was born and raised in Shenyang, capital of Liaoning, a province once known as "the eldest son of the People's Republic of China".

Fan Wei and Qin Hao, who play the lead roles of Wang Xiang and Gong Biao in the drama, are also from Shenyang. Watching their aged appearance and daily conversations in the show, I felt a strong sense of familiarity.

Qin Hao's character is similar to my mother's younger brother, who is warm-

hearted and always cheerful, but sometimes a little unreliable. On the other hand, Fan Wei's character is like my father's elder brother, who never panics and can fix almost anything.

The appearance of Huang Liru, Gong Biao's wife, with her permed hair, eyeliners and tattooed eyebrows, resembles that of aged aunts in the northeast.

In the series, Huang is a stunning lady in 1997, wearing a floral dress and red high heels, with a bright smile on her face. I feel that my mother and aunts must have been just as charming when they were in their 20s.

Several stereotypes have emerged for people from the northeast, linking them to humor, gangs, poverty and the region's long winters.

Xin Shuang, director of *The Long Season*,



LI YINGXUE  
Reporter's log

breaks such stereotypes by using 11 episodes of the 12-episode series to depict autumn in the northeast, which is bright and invigorating — but too short for shooting a film or TV series.

As a result, the drama was filmed in Kunming, capital of Yunnan province in southwestern China, which enjoys considerably higher temperatures than the northeast.

I particularly enjoyed the poem in the series written by Ban Yu, who comes from Shenyang. Ban, Zheng Zhi and Shuang Xuetao, also writers from Shenyang, are

three representatives of the Northeastern Literary Renaissance in China.

In contrast to traditional writers, the three have found a good balance between literary and commercial interests, gaining recognition from prestigious literary journals such as *Harvest*, and seeing many adaptations of their works produced for films and TV. These adaptations give audiences a detailed picture of life in the northeast over the past 30 years.

Snow is frequently mentioned in books and films about the northeast, and is often linked to cold and sorrow. However, in *The Long Season*, Xin, who was born in Jilin province, uses snow to denote hope and an end to the autumn.

We northeasterners celebrate the snow, as we believe that the harder it falls, the better the harvest will be in the coming year.

Netizens have commented that the series is based on local people's lives in the northeast, and what touched me most was that it highlights their optimistic spirit.

The humor of northeasterners is not always reflected in the jokes or popular sketches used for the annual CCTV *Spring Festival Gala*. Instead, it stems from their positive attitude toward life, in which they use optimism in the face of adversity.

Northeasterners once took pride in being workers making contributions to the nation's construction. They may feel lost when their jobs disappear, but they always strive to find their own way forward.

Such an approach is evident at the end of the series, when an elderly Wang Xiang tells his younger self: "Look forward. Don't look back."

## TOP NEWS

# Dalian satellite piggybacks on cargo craft

Multispectral camera on board to capture images of Earth with enhanced accuracy

By ZHAO LEI in Wenchang, Hainan  
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The first satellite designed and built in China's northeastern province of Liaoning has been carried into space by the Tianzhou 6 cargo spacecraft, which was launched on Wednesday night, according to the Dalian University of Technology.

Developed by the university in the coastal city of Dalian, the Dalian 1-Lianli is a 17-kilogram mini Earth-observation satellite and is tasked with demonstrating technologies relating to high-definition remote imaging, the OpenHarmony operating system and advanced satellite components, the university said in a news release.

OpenHarmony is an open-source version of HarmonyOS, a distributed operating system developed by Huawei Technology Co.

The satellite will also demonstrate technologies related to an ultralight multiple satellites deployer made using 3D printing technology, the release added.

The major payload of the satellite is a high-definition, multi-spectral camera capable of generating images at sub-meter resolution at low cost, said Professor Xia Guangqing, president of the university's School of Aeronautics and Astronautics and the satellite's chief designer.

He said the satellite is attached to the exterior of Tianzhou 6, and will be deployed in orbit in due course. It will then transmit data back to a ground control station at the university.

According to Xia, the satellite has a modular propulsion system, which has no toxic propellants

**17 kilograms**

The weight of the Dalian 1-Lianli Earth-observation satellite

but has strong power. It gives the satellite a good maneuverability in orbit, he said.

The Tianzhou 6 robotic cargo ship docked with the Tiangong space station on Thursday morning. Crew members of the Shenzhou XV mission will enter Tianzhou 6 in due course to collect the cargo and transfer it to the space station, according to the China Manned Space Agency.

As the first spacecraft to visit the Tiangong space station this year, Tianzhou 6 was launched at 9:22 pm on Wednesday by a Long March 7 carrier rocket from the coastal Wenchang Space Launch Center in the country's southernmost island province of Hainan.

It is carrying about 260 packages with a combined weight of nearly 5.8 metric tons, including enough living necessities for a three-member crew for 280 days.

The cargo ship holds 98 packages of science payloads, with a combined weight of 714 kg, that will be used in 29 scientific experiments and technological tests.

Compared with its predecessors, Tianzhou 6 carries more cargo for use in science and technology work, said Liu Wei, designer of the cargo craft's application system at the Technology and Engineering Center for Space Utilization at the Chinese Academy of Sciences.



A screen grab from the Beijing Aerospace Control Center shows an astronaut working inside the Tianhe core module of the orbiting Tiangong space station after the Tianzhou 6 cargo craft docked with the station at 5:16 am on Thursday. The cargo craft was launched at 9:22 pm on Wednesday from the Wenchang Space Launch Center in Hainan province. GUO ZHONGZHENG / XINHUA

## Policy: More cross-border travelers expected

From page 1

According to Ctrip, orders for group tours to Hong Kong and Macao rose about 70 percent in May from April.

Fang Zhibo, head of the border inspection division of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Exit and Entry Frontier Inspection Station in Guangdong province, said that the station has been using fast-lane services since Jan 8, and the latest policy adjustment will further facilitate the entry and exit of residents from the mainland, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and foreign nationals, and the number of cross-border travelers is expected to increase after the implementation of the policy.

"We will complete the inspection system upgrade and optimize the allocation of police officers, strengthen assistance offered to special groups such as the elderly, and serve the vast number of tourists," Fang said.

According to the National Immigration Administration, immigration authorities nationwide conducted about 6.27 million inspections of people exiting or entering the mainland during the five-day May Day holiday this year, and about 3.15 million of them were for those leaving.

In addition, data released on May 3 by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism showed that during the holiday, outbound tourism rose nearly seven fold year-on-year.

Fanny Yeung, executive director of the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong, said that the new measures are good news for the tourism industry. However, it is not expected that there will be a large increase in mainland visitors very soon, and Hong Kong's reception capacity also needs to be improved.

## Melting under the heat



A street vendor in Dhaka sells ice on Wednesday as scorching temperatures hit Bangladesh. Temperatures between 36 C and 41 C were recorded across the South Asian country this week, exceeding typical highs for May, according to media reports. ANIK RAHMAN / GETTY IMAGES

## Chinese role in fueling renewable energy drive lauded

By ALEXIS HOOI  
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China is a powerhouse of renewable energy and the country is poised to leverage its experiences and expertise for international exchanges and cooperation in this increasingly important field, according to a global expert.

"The role of China is crucial and recognized in the world. China is an incredible powerhouse of renewable energy projects," said Francesco La Camera, director-general of the International Renewable Energy Agency, or IRENA, during a recent visit to China's National Energy Administration.

Both domestically and internationally, the production of renewable energy and renewable energy equipment has put China at the forefront of the global green energy drive, La Camera said.

IRENA is an intergovernmental organization that supports countries in their transition to a sustainable energy future. It comprises 167 member nations and the European Union. China officially joined the group in January 2014.

The National Energy Administration drafts China's energy strategy, implements the country's energy policy and regulates its energy sectors, including coal, electricity, oil and gas, and nuclear power. It also supports science and technology research on energy efficiency and renewable energy, formulating plans for national reserves of oil and gas.

On April 18, a China-IRENA cooperation seminar was held in Beijing with the support of the energy administration. About 100 representatives of central and

The role of China is crucial and recognized in the world. China is an incredible powerhouse of renewable energy projects."



Francesco La Camera, director-general of the International Renewable Energy Agency

local governments, energy enterprises, financial institutions, research institutions, industry associations and universities attended the conference.

The delegates held in-depth discussions on topics ranging from China's energy transition and renewable energy development to international cooperation on clean energy and cooperation between China and IRENA.

China's renewable energy industry continued its global lead last year, with its renewable energy generation equivalent to the reduction of 2.26 billion tons of domestic carbon dioxide emissions, according to data from the administration.

Chinese exports of wind power and photovoltaic products also helped other countries reduce emissions by about 573 million tons, data showed.

La Camera said that China's latest renewable energy projects show the world a way to move forward toward sustainable development.

"What is interesting to see is the speed and the impetus of the process. So we see that there is really the sense of urgency ... and China has many possibilities," he said. "Look at the solar panels in the desert, where you can experiment ... and they can also be (used) for environmental protection or to promote agricultural use of the land."

The country's focus on green hydrogen — a critical enabler of the global transition to sustainable energy — is very relevant, according to La Camera.

Hydrogen fuel is produced from various sources of primary energy, including coal and natural gas. The process of electrolysis is used to extract the fuel, which can then be stored and converted into electricity when needed.

Green hydrogen from renewable sources, such as wind and solar power, makes it one of the most eco-friendly fuel options, and China's green hydrogen production costs are going down due to its technological advances.

"We may have the use of green hydrogen in greening the steel and heavy manufacturing industries. ... Green hydrogen can be a solution for the energy sector," La Camera said.

IRENA is a platform for exchanging information, showcasing good experiences, and trying to identify problems and finding their solutions, he said. "In this respect, China's experiences are being brought to the attention of others, with many suggestions on how optimizing processes can fuel more renewables on the ground."

China has been an active IRENA member, with its involvement in the council, in initiatives and in expert review of major reports, La Camera said. The Chinese contribution also includes participation in crucial capacity-building activities, he said.

Relevant training and capacity building are in high demand worldwide, as professional skills and curriculums are oriented to the old energy systems and frameworks, such as fossil fuels, so re-skilling is important, La Camera said.

"Dealing with new systems, where we have to ensure that the system works in interconnectivity and flexibility, is important. So we provide the training for these institutions to manage this range of problems."

In the next few stages, the focus will need to include strengthening institutional capacity via professional skills and training that are oriented toward the future, complemented by the sustainability of physical energy grids and related infrastructure, he said.

China's efforts will be integral in the global move toward sustainability amid climate change. "China is crucial in energy transition, playing a very important role in reaching the consensus for the Paris Agreement," La Camera said.

"When we talk about energy transition, the African continent, the Global South, where we have to intercept the economic growth and feed it with green technologies, in this respect, China ... can play a very important role. This could be done through investments, through participation in drawing up the policies. ... All these elements can work together for society going toward a green energy system."

## Strategy: Partnership seen as game changer for Africa

From page 1

The second is the partnership strategy. In 2021, during the 8th Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in Dakar, Senegal, China promised to undertake 10 industrialization and employment promotion assistance projects for Africa through industrial partnership and production capacity cooperation.

China's success story has led many African states to pursue similar industrialization strategies. Its resource-intensive growth model — boosted by its strong dual economy — has made China a pillar revered as the "world's factory", which supports the global resources supply chain, while creating jobs and eliminating poverty and underdevelopment.

Tried and tested, the partnership strategy is a game changer for Africa's reemerging industrial process.

From 2000, the China-Africa relationship has boosted Africa's industrial development through the FOCAC and Belt and Road frameworks.

From 2000, the China-Africa relationship has boosted Africa's industrial development through the FOCAC and Belt and Road frameworks. China has helped the continent build nearly 100,000 kilometers of highways, about 10,000 km of railways, about 1,000 bridges and approximately 100 ports and large-scale power facilities. These infrastructural developments have begun to spur industrial growth in the continent. Indeed, with the continental

and partnership strategies in motion, Africa's industrial development is no longer a pipe dream. In the post-COVID-19 era, African regional economic communities and governments are breaking down trade barriers, improving financial structures, and investing public resources in much-needed infrastructure projects in the manufacturing, transport and energy sectors.

However, despite having vast natural resources, Africa's industrial development still suffers from uneven energy structures. Furthermore, in coping with global climate change, African countries face dual challenges: modernization in its infancy and the low-carbon transition.

To mitigate these, African countries need the continuous support of experienced countries such as China to provide alternative options to solve the problem of energy shortages and realize a sus-

tainable industrialization path that is environmentally friendly and suits their own characteristics and purposes.

The process of industrialization remains at the center of Africa's growth, driving its economic future and capacity to eradicate poverty, improve people's living standards and achieve inclusive and sustainable development.

China is committed to seeing inclusive growth in Africa and assisting the continent to become the world's third-largest economy by 2063. This is achievable through the implementation of the FOCAC industrial partnership and cooperation, as well as the accelerated industrial development for Africa.

The author is the Executive Director of the China-Africa Center at the Africa Policy Institute. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## CHINA

## Equipment for sale

Visitors examine police motorcycles on display at the 11th China International Exhibition of Police Equipment in Beijing on Thursday. The four-day event drew hundreds of companies from China and abroad to promote their equipment, including anti-terrorism gear, drones and anti-drone devices and criminal investigation tools.

WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY



## Shenzhen center helps domestic, overseas litigants solve disputes

Dedicated court better protects rights for different parties in family affair cases

By CAO YIN  
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Overseas residents engaged in family disputes have enjoyed easier access to legal services thanks to a trial center in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area to promote its integrated development of the rule of law.

Just a 14-minute high-speed train ride from Hong Kong West Kowloon Station, the center is located in an office building next to the Shenzhen North Railway Station in Guangdong province. Litigants from Hong Kong, a major source of domestic cases in the area, travel there to solve domestic problems more conveniently.

As a division of the Longhua District People's Court, the Shenzhen Family Trial Center Involving Hong Kong-Macao-Taiwan and Foreign Factors was established on July 6 last year. It handles first-instance cross-border family disputes, including those related to divorce, child custody, inheritance and property allocation.

By the end of March, the center had filed 445 cases, of which 72.8 percent involved Hong Kong litigants, according to court data.

"The center has played a big role in strongly protecting the rights of women and children in cross-border case handling, and also in providing efficient legal services for those from Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and foreign countries," Shi Wei, president of the court, told

China Daily in an exclusive interview last month.

"We have not only helped solve litigants' domestic problems, but we've also eased their concerns about studies, work, daily life and also starting businesses or investing in Shenzhen," he said.

Family disputes are generally more complicated, "as many domestic conflicts are about people's personal rights that are more difficult to be quantified compared with property allocation in commercial cases," Shi explained.

"Therefore, we have to care more about litigants to prevent those who are emotional from harming their family members or even disturbing public order while handling their disputes in a fair and efficient manner," he added.

For those who can't make the trip, litigants from home and abroad can go online to access legal services such as case filing, evidence exchange, trial and mediation and to facilitate the delivery of documents.

At the center, visitors can visit a rest area, where they can relax in a musical massage chair or release pent-up aggression on a punching bag. There is also a nursery to help care for infants, and children can play with toys and read books while accompanied by family members in a children's waiting room.

In addition, the center has a psychological assessment room and an observation room, where judges can observe parents playing games with their children and assess their

relationships and mental states in a bid to figure out the best way to solve their domestic disputes.

There is also a room run by the local women's federation to mediate divorces, a counseling room for legal advice and a room judges use specifically to settle disputes online.

A property dispute between a Shenzhen woman and a Hong Kong man who were living together was heard recently at a courtroom.

Though the case was not solved that day, the Hong Kong litigant said that the center left him with a good impression.

"Its environment is comfortable. I felt less stressed, and it was easy to communicate with the judge," he added.

Mao Zhaozhi, the Shenzhen woman's attorney, also approved of the center. The courtroom they were in had a round table at the center.

"Round" in Chinese signifies harmony, so the design shows the humanity in domestic case handling," he said, adding that it was his first sitting at such a table during a trial hearing.

Mao also lauded the technology-friendly facilities and the judges' clear explanation of the laws.

In another case in the center that day, a man working in Shenzhen won custody of his child from a Thai woman. After the trial, He Pengchao, the man's lawyer, said that he filed the case online, and the foreign defendant and her attorney participated in the trial via video link.

"All the legal procedures were efficient, which made me willing to represent more cross-border family cases in the future," he added.

Shi, the court's president, noted

that the center has played a big role in serving litigants from the Bay Area and abroad during the epidemic period.

"Domestic and overseas exchanges have gradually resumed since the beginning of this year, so more family cases will come to us," he said.

"How to better protect children's rights and interests in cross-border marriages, and how to further improve the system for cross-border trials to promote the integrated development of the rule of law in the Bay Area in case handling will be our next priorities," he added.

Shi revealed that an online platform for learning about extraterritorial laws regarding family affairs is being set up by the center, aiming to provide legal guidance and references for judges and litigants.

Meanwhile, the center is also selecting mediators from Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and foreign countries to jointly explore better ways to resolve family disputes, he said.

"In addition, the center will continue working with the local women's federation, labor unions and children's aid institutes to integrate traditional Chinese family culture and the socialist concept of law with the development in the Bay Area, to enhance people's sense of identity and their cohesion with a Chinese-style socialist legal system," he added.



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## Barrier-free policies extended to copyright

By CHENG SI  
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China is extending the concept of a barrier-free environment beyond simply provisions for physical needs.

China has just marked the first anniversary of the implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty on May 5 — the first and only human rights treaty in the field of copyright around the world — after it took effect in the nation last year.

Li Chen, a professor from the Law School of Renmin University of China, said at a forum on constructing a barrier-free environment on Thursday in Beijing that the implementation of the treaty has extended people's understanding of the barrier-free environment from only physical needs to allowing copyright exceptions for visually impaired people so they can access copyrighted books and other works.

Liu Dongxiao, an official from the China Braille Library, said at the forum that the implementation of the treaty has broken some limitations of copyrights to meet the reading needs of the visually impaired, but it will take time to improve public awareness and acceptance of cultural services for the disabled.

"It's necessary to improve cooperation and resource sharing among different service providers domestically and build up a mechanism for international cooperation. We still have technical barriers, so we hope for more help from both government bodies and society," she added.

Some legislative actions have also helped children, pregnant women, the elderly and people in need gain access to barrier-free facilities and services.

In late April, the draft law on the construction of a barrier-free environment was submitted to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top

Building up a barrier-free environment takes time and is quite a complicated process, and I hope that the nation can apply the idea of creating a barrier-free environment to the amendments of other related laws and regulations."

Sun Jiling, associate professor from the Nanjing Normal University of Special Education

legislature, for a second review. The draft law is open for public opinion.

"Compared with the barrier-free environment construction regulation implemented in 2012, the draft law extended its coverage from disabled people to all members of society. It's an all-round law containing design, construction and maintenance of barrier-free facilities, as well as media promotion, standards construction and supervision of the barrier-free environment," Sun Jiling, an associate professor from the Nanjing Normal University of Special Education, said at the forum in Beijing.

He hopes the law can be better promoted — for example, by sign language — to help more people learn about it.

"Building up a barrier-free environment takes time and is quite a complicated process, and I hope that the nation can apply the idea of creating a barrier-free environment to the amendments of other related laws and regulations. It's also important to enhance the supervision of law enforcement," he said.

## Car contest



A contestant works on a piece of steel during a skills test for car painting at the Tibet Institute of Technology in Lhasa, Tibet autonomous region, on Wednesday. It was Tibet's first regional skills competition. WANG LI / TIBET DAILY

## Foreign filmmaker finds culture in ancient town

CHONGQING — The story of Adam Mahmood's quest to learn about *ren*, a traditional Chinese philosophy of benevolence advocated by ancient Chinese educator and philosopher Confucius, begins in the hustle and bustle of Chongqing, a southwestern Chinese metropolis.

Mahmood was one of the dozens of foreign filmmakers who participated in a documentary-making activity held by Southwest University recently. The activity aimed to help young directors experience the charm of China's traditional culture. What Mahmood focused on during the trip to Chongqing is *ren*, a key idea in the thoughts of Confucius.

"Prior to this journey, I had learned a little about the Chinese traditional culture of *ren*," said Mahmood, a 23-year-old British national.

After riding for a few hours by bus, Mahmood and his filming partner arrived at their destination — Pianyan ancient town in Chongqing's Beibei district. Tucked away in deep mountains, the town is over 300 years old.

After a spring rain, birds were chirping on the local centuries-old trees while the tree leaves fell gently onto roofs of nearby old residential buildings and covered part of the stone walkways. Following the streams winding through the sleepy town, Mahmood and his partner



This photo taken on April 12 shows a roadside store in Pianyan ancient town of Chongqing's Beibei district, where Adam Mahmood and his partner filmed *The Dance of Ren*. CHEN QINGBING / XINHUA

curiously observed the surroundings with mud on their pants and shoes.

"I believe the residents here were more able to show me the culture of Pianyan than the architecture of the old town," said Mahmood as he began visiting locals.

Pianyan is known for its intangible cultural heritage, Tangmen Caizha, or "colored weaving from the Tang family," which dates back to the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). The old craft mainly integrates handicrafts, traditional calligraphy and paintings as well as engraving arts.

Tangmen Caizha's artworks are all structured with bamboo strips. Local craftsmen paste paper on the structures, draw vivid colors and then attach various kinds of adorn-

ments to them. The finished products were used for dragon or lion dances and parades on important festive occasions in ancient times.

Tang Qiantai, 80, is a fourth-generation inheritor of the old craft. The senior master now volunteers to teach children in order to better preserve and revive the craft.

Thanks to Tang's efforts, the Tangmen Caizha has drawn more attention in recent years, becoming a major magnet for visitors to the ancient town. During the first seven months of 2022, over 520,000 tourists were received by the Jindaixia scenic area, which includes the ancient town, up 85 percent year-on-year.

Deeply touched by Tang's spirit,

Mahmood speaks highly of him and deems the master's efforts as a vivid image of *ren* culture. The filmmaker even experienced the handcraft making and dragon dance himself, trying to comprehend the essence of *ren*.

Apparently, he underestimated the great difficulties of grasping the craft.

"My arms ached from long hours of holding the dragon's head in the blazing sun. And I realized that the dragon dance was not easy, even for a young man like myself," Mahmood said.

After days of practicing, Mahmood made his debut at a show on a sunny day, dancing with the local dragon dance team for the residents. Rounds of applause from the audience spoke volumes about the success of their performance.

Mahmood recorded the whole process through his lens. He named the finished film *The Dance of Ren*, as he began to realize the rich connotation of traditional Chinese culture and philosophy.

"The spirit of *ren* is not only a human trait, but also a culture that has been precipitated by thousands of years of history," he said. "It's not only the insistence on heritage in Master Tang, but also the spirit of selflessness and dedication of Tang and friendliness of all the people in the town."

XINHUA

## Former SPC vice-president guilty of accepting bribes

By CAO YIN  
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Shen Deyong, a former vice-president of China's top court, pleaded guilty to taking bribes of more than 64.5 million yuan (\$9.3 million) at the Ningbo Intermediate People's Court in Ningbo, Zhejiang province on Thursday.

Shen, former head of the Committee on Social and Legal Affairs of the 13th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, took advantage of his various positions, including as vice-president of the High People's Court of Jiangxi province and vice-president of China's top court, to provide assistance to departments and individuals in matters such as case handling, project contracting and job promotions, according to prosecutors from Ningbo.

In return, Shen accepted over 64.5 million yuan directly or through his wife and daughter, prosecutors said during his trial, adding that he should be criminally punished for bribery.

The Ningbo court said that the

ruling will be announced at a later date.

More than 30 people, including national legislators, political advisers and journalists, attended the trial as observers.

A native of Jiangxi, 69-year-old Shen joined the Communist Party of China in 1972 and started his career in 1977. As a law school graduate, he had been engaged in the country's judicial system for many years.

Before he became vice-president of the Supreme People's Court, the nation's top court, at the end of 1998, he served as vice-president of the Jiangxi High People's Court and also had worked for the provincial anti-corruption authority.

From November 2006 to April 2008, he was head of the discipline inspection commission of Shanghai. He then returned to the top court and became its executive vice-president.

In 2018, he became a member of the CPPCC's National Committee.

He was placed under investigation after being accused of seriously violating Party disciplines and the State law in March last year. Six months later, he was expelled from the Party and public office.

# CHINA



By CUI JIA in Wenchuan, Sichuan  
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Earlier this year, Zheng Haiyang returned to Beichuan Qiang autonomous county in Sichuan province, one of the areas worst hit during the Wenchuan earthquake 15 years ago, which claimed the lives of 69,227 people.

In addition to running an orchard, the 31-year-old, who lost both legs during the earthquake, has also planted a tree in the ruins of the county seat. "For me, it's a demonstration of the power of life and it helps me focus on the future, not past," he said.

When the magnitude-8 earthquake struck at 2:48 pm on May 12, 2008, Zheng, then a senior high school student at Beichuan Middle School, was in class. The school buildings quickly collapsed, and he was trapped between broken floor slabs as he tried to escape.

After nearly 22 hours under the rubble, Zheng was rescued but had to have both legs amputated. "Many of my classmates didn't make it, so I am the lucky one," he said. The earthquake killed 15,645 and left 4,311 missing in Beichuan alone.

Zheng said that he has been through a lot during the past 15 years. "I have been looked down upon, discriminated against and even deceived, but those things are all trivial because I've already experienced the darkest hours of my life."

As more than 93 percent of the buildings in the former Beichuan county seat, which is nestled in a mountain valley, collapsed or were damaged, the central government decided to start from scratch in a new location. Construction of the new town of Beichuan began in June 2009 about 23 kilometers from its original location, and was completed three years later. The ruins of old Beichuan have since been preserved as a memorial to the earthquake.

The new county seat is modern and apartment and commercial buildings are being built as it continues to develop and expand. Visitors may only realize the town was completely rebuilt when they see Rebirth Square, which has a monument with the same name in its center to commemorate the efforts the entire country poured into search and rescue missions.

"As time goes by, I think that most Beichuan residents have

stepped out of the shadow of the earthquake, and begun to focus on the future ahead. But many people still don't want to talk about it. For me, it's impossible to forget the earthquake because it has changed my life forever," Zheng said.

Like most Beichuan residents, he usually avoids going to the former location of the county seat. But once a year, just before the anniversary of the earthquake, he pays the ruins a visit to mourn classmates, friends and loved ones.

The moment his car reaches the road leading into the former town, Zheng turns the music off. "It's so sad to see the Beichuan where my friends and I had so much fun, in ruins," he said, adding that his home is now submerged beneath a lake created by the quake. "For visitors, it's a tourist site but for us, it's packed with grief."

He normally lays flowers on a green behind the remains of a building marked with the date of the earthquake. Many people are buried under the green because it was impossible to transport bodies out at the time, as roads were severely damaged.

Behind it, there is a flag post and a basketball stand. They are all that remains of Maoba Middle School, which was crushed beneath huge boulders that tumbled down from the mountains during the 80-second quake, burying students and teachers inside.

For the past fifteen years, Cheng Xingfeng, mother of a missing 16-year-old student at the school, has been putting up banners in front of its remains that express how much she misses her son. She includes her cellphone number on the banners, just in case her son didn't die, and comes back to the town one day. They have brought tears to the eyes of many visitors.

"Look how many layers of banners there are now. It will only get thicker," Zheng said.

Meanwhile, the former site of Beichuan Middle School, where Zheng was rescued, has been used to build a memorial museum. "I often have dreams in which my classmates say they are tired of traveling, so they have come back to see me. I really like those dreams because they give me the chance to see my friends again."

Zheng now runs an orchard and plans to sell his fruits online. He said he is living a happy life because he is regularly able to see his parents and girlfriend, who he plans to marry at the end of the year. Business is looking good, too. "I don't want to dwell on the past. Instead, I want to become stronger because of the quake. I believe my friends who lost their lives would want to see me living life to the full," he said.

## 15 years on, WENCHUAN SURVIVORS HELPING OTHERS IN NEED

Traumatic earthquake spurred many to volunteer or become soldiers and firefighters themselves



From top: Zheng Haiyang returns to the former Beichuan county seat, Sichuan province, on April 14. Zheng lays flowers at a monument in memory of people who lost their lives in the Wenchuan earthquake. PHOTOS BY WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

Unlike Beichuan, Yingxiu township in Wenchuan county and the epicenter of the quake, was rebuilt at its original location, but residents say that only a few hundred meters of the road are as they were before the devastating event, which destroyed over 80 percent of the buildings and killed 5,462 people.

"I would never have imagined that the township could recover in such a short time and become this beautiful after seeing the way the earthquake ruined it," Ma Qiongxia said over a cup of tea at a local tea house.

The 58-year-old was trapped under the remains of her house after it collapsed, with only her head and one hand free from the rubble. "I have only been able to think about what happened calmly in recent years. It's true that time is the best

cure, people have finally started to move on."

Seven villages and a community were rebuilt from scratch within three years. All the houses are now quake-proof, and capable of withstanding a magnitude-8 earthquake.

When Ma moved to her new house in 2010, 53-year-old He Kairong became her new neighbor.

During the earthquake, He's house near the banks of the Minjiang, collapsed into the river and she had to scramble back to the riverbank as large stones fell from the mountains. "Many children died in their schools, including my niece and nephew. This is the most painful thing to have happened to Yingxiu, until today," He said.

After being made homeless by the quake, the two women both found

temporary accommodation in a shelter put up by disaster relief forces, among them the People's Liberation Army and firefighters. In the face of such tragedy, they were traumatized and depressed.

"The volunteers at the shelter noticed that we were not in a healthy mental state, so they comforted us, telling us that things would only get better because the whole country was helping. Their actions helped us get through tough times," Ma said. "That was also when I first learned about the idea of volunteering."

After Ma and He settled in their new homes, they decided to start their own team of volunteers in Yingxiu to help others in need. It now has over 60 members, mostly women, and is headed by Ma. The group has taken part in a series of disaster relief projects since it was founded in 2013.

"We know exactly how people affected by disasters feel, and what they need, so it's natural that we offer our help whenever we can, and we try our best," Ma said.

In addition to the volunteers, the PLA soldiers and firefighters who worked tirelessly amid the danger to rescue people, have also left lasting memories, He said.

"Many children who experienced the earthquake grew up determined to join the PLA or become firefighters. My son is one of them," she said proudly.

Zhang Zili, from the neighboring county of Maoxian, is another.

He was attending a sports class at the primary school in his village when the quake struck. He was six at the time. "My village is only 30 kilometers from the epicenter of the Wenchuan earthquake, so it caused a lot of damage," the 21-year-old said.

Zhang's home was unsafe to live in, so his family stayed in a temporary shelter. "There was no electricity because of the quake, so we had to sit in the dark at night. I was scared. The PLA soldiers who came to help us comforted me by teaching me songs and playing with me," he said.

He also recalled how emergency supplies were airdropped from helicopters, and how soldiers and firefighters built tents and gave food to survivors.

"These memories made me want to become a PLA soldier or a firefighter, so that I could also save lives and help people," said Zhang who is now a firefighter with the Wenchuan Brigade of the Forest Fire Fighting Detachment of Sichuan's Aba Tibetan and Qiang autonomous prefecture.

After a magnitude-6.8 earthquake hit Luding county in Sichuan's Garze Tibetan autonomous prefecture on Sept 5 last year, the brigade was immediately summoned to take part

in the search and rescue mission. It was Zhang's first earthquake-related mission.

"As we approached the epicenter, I saw that houses had been destroyed and people were homeless. The sight triggered memories of the Wenchuan earthquake. I know how scary and tough it can be, so I was determined to do my best to help," he said.

During a search and rescue operation in Wandong village, which is halfway up a mountain, Zhang found a grandmother and a 2-month-old baby sitting by the ruins of their house. The baby's mother and grandfather had been severely injured, and were later airlifted by helicopter to hospital.

With the road to the outside world cut off, Zhang had to help the grandmother and the baby reach safety via a rescue route that the brigade had opened up.

"The baby's head had been bruised during the earthquake, but his injuries were not serious. His grandmother had not eaten for a day and was weak, so I held him carefully. He soon fell asleep and did not wake up until we crossed the river and reached safety," Zhang said.

A photo of him tenderly holding the baby went viral on social media. People noticed the word "Wenchuan" on his left armband, which indicated that he was from the Wenchuan Brigade, and he was lovingly dubbed "Wenchuan Brother."

"I think people were touched because they were glad that people affected by the Wenchuan earthquake were back on their feet, and can now take on the responsibility of helping others," he said. "Although 15 years have passed, we have never forgotten the help we got back then."

Gou Qi, Zhang's team leader, said that the ability of fire departments to search for survivors after earthquakes has significantly improved over the past 15 years.

"Unlike the search and rescue teams that depended on manual labor and simple tools to rescue people in 2008, we are now better equipped and trained than ever," Gou said.

Although Zhang's daily schedule is packed with training sessions, including ways to break into collapsed houses and fight wildfires, he hopes he never has to put his skills to use. "I was only a child during the Wenchuan earthquake, but now I have grown up, so when disasters happen, I won't let the people down."



From left: The public visit the ruins of old Yingxiu town, which was at the epicenter of the Wenchuan earthquake. Zhang Zili, now a firefighter with the Forest Fire Fighting Detachment of Sichuan's Aba Tibetan and Qiang autonomous prefecture, adjusts his helmet to get ready for a mission on April 14. Firefighters conduct daily training in the Aba Tibetan and Qiang autonomous prefecture on April 15.



## WORLDUS

## G7 meeting clouded by debt crisis

NIIGATA, Japan — A standoff in Washington over raising the US debt ceiling overshadowed a meeting of Group of Seven finance leaders starting on Thursday, heightening US recession fears as central banks seek a soft landing for the global economy.

President Joe Biden piled pressure on Republican lawmakers on Wednesday to move quickly to raise the limit on the government's permitted borrowing from the current \$31.4 trillion maximum or risk throwing the world's biggest economy into recession.

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen was expected to face questions from her G7 counterparts, meeting in the Japanese city of Niigata, on how Washington intends to prevent turbulence in financial markets, already jittery after the recent failure of three US regional banks.

"A default would threaten the gains that we've worked so hard to make over the past few years in our pandemic recovery," Yellen said in Niigata on Thursday. "And it would spark a global downturn that would set us back much further."

"In my assessment — and that of economists across the board — a default on US obligations would produce an economic and financial catastrophe," she said in a speech.

The impasse over spending risks leaving the US government unable to pay for teachers in classrooms, medical care for veterans and vital benefits to many Americans, she said. It is also undermining US economic leadership.

The US debt crisis is a headache for Japan, which is this year's G7 chair and the world's biggest holder of US debt.

"We won't go into such specific subjects," Japanese Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki told reporters on Thursday, when asked what kind of solution Japan wanted from the US.

The G7 finance leaders, instead, will debate ways to better address financial system risks by sharing their understanding on lessons learned from recent US bank failures, Suzuki added.

"The G7 won't be able to come up with a solution for what is a purely domestic and political US problem, though the group could reaffirm its resolve to cooperate in stabilizing markets in the worst-case scenario," said Takahide Kiuchi, an analyst at the Nomura Research Institute in New York.

"Washington is solely responsible to get this fixed. But when things go wrong, all the other countries bear the brunt."

Global economic risks, including stubbornly high inflation and the fallout from aggressive US and European interest rate hikes, will likely be among key topics of debate for the G7 finance leaders.

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Florence Fang (sixth from left), founder of the Chinese Railroad Workers History Center, along with elected officials and community leaders celebrate the 154th anniversary of the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad. LIA ZHU / CHINA DAILY

## San Francisco has new center to honor Chinese railroad workers

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco  
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Residents of San Francisco and visitors now have a place to learn and study the largely forgotten history of Chinese workers who helped build the US' first transcontinental railroad.

The Chinese Railroad Workers History Center, near the southern entrance of San Francisco's Chinatown, is expected to serve as a "multifunctional gathering place" for people to learn about Chinese Americans' heritage in the US, according to the founder, Florence Fang, a Chinese community leader in the Bay Area.

"The center's purpose is to remember the Chinese railroad workers' contribution to this country; the goal is to give voice to the voiceless, and the spirit is to remember the past and inspire the future," said Fang.

The construction of the Transcontinental Railroad, originally known as the Pacific Railroad, was completed on May 10, 1869. It was considered one of the most remarkable engineering feats of the 19th century. The railroad profoundly changed the nation as it not only expanded the American economy but also instilled national confidence.

Nearly 12,000 Chinese joined the railroad workforce; however, they dealt with prejudice, isolation and dangerous working conditions. Nearly 1,200 of them died from work accidents, avalanches and explosions while toiling in the Sierra Nevada.

The Chinese workers, who made up more than 80 percent of the railroad

workforce, were soon despised in the country and then largely forgotten after the tracks' completion.

"What is important to remember is the sweat and the tears and sometimes the lives of the Chinese immigrants who built the most treacherous, difficult part of the Transcontinental Railroad," said California Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis. "Now it will be enshrined in history along with so many other incredibly important contributions of Chinese Americans."

Kounalakis and other elected officials in the state and the city joined community leaders on Wednesday at the center to commemorate the 154th anniversary of the completion of the railroad and pay tribute to the Chinese workers.

Aaron Peskin, president of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, praised the railroad as an inextricable link to the "ethos of San Francisco."

This center joins several other institutions in San Francisco, like the Chinese Historical Society and the Chinese Culture Center, to attract visitors and to teach Chinese American history and culture, said Peskin.

"It comes at a critical time for us. It comes as Chinatown and the home of San Francisco have experienced three very difficult years, Chinatown in particular, not only with the economic harms, but with the rise of Asian hate," he said.

"The center will help teach future generations and make San Francisco proud," said Peskin. "It will help boost the economy of Chinatown."

California Governor Gavin

Newsom said in a written message that the completion of the railroad — a historical feat — was made possible by "the thousands of immigrant Chinese laborers who risked and sacrificed their lives to transform American history into what we know today."

"Our nation is defined by the back-breaking work Chinese immigrants contributed to our country, with the Transcontinental Railroad completely transforming the economic export of Western resources to Eastern markets. The driving down of the ceremonial Golden Spike not only marked the beginning of a new technological era, but it symbolized the impact Chinese immigrants made on the development of this country," said the governor.

The center is under construction, with rooms in the basement for hosting classes or seminars. After completion, it will be open to the public, said a staff member of the center who did not provide a timeline for opening.

"You have no idea how few people, even those living in the city, fully know what the Chinese went through," said former San Francisco mayor Willie Brown.

"I'm certain that this center will be incredibly educational, as well as entertainment. I suspect that every school in San Francisco, no matter at which grade, at some point during the course of the school year will make this one of the stops when the school leaves to teach on the outside. You are providing all of us and all the children of the city with this opportunity," he said.

## Fed's inflation efforts may be working

By HENG WEILI in New York  
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The recent US economic data suggest that the Federal Reserve's efforts to fight inflation may be having an impact.

Jobless claims increased in a report released Thursday, while on Wednesday, the increase in the consumer price index (CPI) fell below 5 percent in April for the first time in two years.

The number of Americans filing new claims for unemployment benefits jumped to an 18-month high last week. Initial claims for state unemployment benefits increased 22,000 to a seasonally adjusted 264,000 for the week ended May 6, the highest reading since October 2021.

"The Fed looks closer to winning the war on inflation today, but it risks losing the war on keeping the economy afloat and away from the shoals of recession," said Christopher Rupkey, chief economist at FWD BOND S in New York.

Economists say jobless claims in a 270,000-300,000 range would signal a deterioration in the labor market.

Layoffs, which were initially concentrated in the technology and housing sectors, appear to be spreading to other industries as companies prepare for weak demand.

Still, despite the increase in unemployment filings reported Thursday, the jobs report released on April 28 showed a rise in job and wage growth in April as the unemployment rate stood at a 53-year low of 3.4 percent.

"Business labor demand has been gradually cooling, and today's initial claims reading hints at potentially a

more abrupt slowing," said Michael Feroli, chief US economist at JPMorgan in New York.

As for the CPI, in the 12 months through April it increased 4.9 percent. That was the smallest year-on-year rise since April 2021 and followed a 5 percent jump in March.

Nevertheless, inflation remains too strong, with the report from the Labor Department on Wednesday showing monthly consumer prices rising solidly because of high rents as well as rebounds in the costs of gasoline and used cars.

"Inflation is still sticky; I don't think that the Fed is going to look at this and cut rates, or leave an especially big sigh of relief," said Priya Misra, head of global rates research at TD Securities, reported The New York Times. "Not so fast. We can't draw the conclusion that the inflation problem is over."

Scott Anderson, chief economist at Bank of the West in San Francisco, said the inflation report "supports the case for the Fed to seriously contemplate a pause in rate hikes in June, but does not support any near-term rate cuts."

The annual CPI peaked at 9.1 percent in June 2022, when it posted its largest increase since November 1981.

"On balance, inflation is still too high, and it is not going to fall back to 2 percent if it increases 0.4 percent a month," said Chris Low, chief economist at FHN Financial in New York.

The Fed raised its benchmark overnight interest rate by another 25 basis points to the 5 percent-5.25 percent range last week and signaled it may pause its fastest monetary policy-tightening campaign since the 1980s.

The Fed has raised its policy rate by 500 basis points since March 2022.

The monthly core CPI was lifted by prices of used cars and trucks, which increased 4.4 percent, the first gain since June 2022.

US producer prices rebounded modestly in April, leading to the smallest annual increase in producer inflation in more than two years, the Labor Department said on Thursday.

In the 12 months through April, the PPI increased 2.3 percent. That was the smallest year-on-year rise since January 2021.

Meanwhile, around 113 of the largest US lenders will bear the cost of replenishing a deposit insurance fund that was drained of \$16 billion by recent bank failures, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) said Thursday.

The FDIC will apply a "special assessment" fee of 0.125 percent to uninsured deposits of lenders in excess of \$5 billion, based on the amount of uninsured deposits a bank held at the end of 2022, the FDIC has proposed.

While the fee applies to all banks, lenders with more than \$50 billion in assets would cover over 95 percent of the cost, the agency said. Banks with less than \$5 billion in assets would not pay any fee.

The top 14 US lenders will need to pay an estimated \$5.8 billion a year, which could erode their earnings per share by a median 3 percent, Credit Suisse analyst Susan Roth Katzke wrote.

Reuters contributed to this story.

## US hegemony over postwar order slammed

International fairness, justice must be upheld, Chinese foreign minister says

By ZHOU JIN  
zhoujin@chinadaily.com.cn

The international order that must be defended is the order based on the United Nations Charter and rules, rather than an order designed to serve the United States hegemony and the interests of small blocs, officials and experts said.

When visiting the site of the Potsdam Conference in Berlin on Wednesday, China's State Councilor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang said in a speech that while claiming to uphold the rules-based international order, the US discards the Potsdam Proclamation it had drafted and supports "Taiwan independence" separatist activities, which disrupted the postwar international order.

From July 17 to Aug 2, 1945, leaders from the former Soviet Union, the US and the United Kingdom met in Potsdam and discussed the future of Germany that had already surrendered, Japan that was still at war, and the postwar order.

The conference played an important role in laying the foundation for the post-World War II international order, and is of special historical significance for the Chinese people, Qin said.

The Potsdam Proclamation issued after the conference reaffirmed the provisions of the Cairo Declaration, including that all the territories Japan had stolen from China, including Taiwan, should be restored to China.

Qin stressed that the postwar international order must be preserved, and that international fairness and justice must be upheld.

"Taiwan independence" separatist activities, which challenge international norms and order and go against the tide of history, are doomed to lead to nowhere, he said.

Yuan Sha, a research fellow at the Department for American Studies at the China Institute of International Studies, said that Washington always cherry-picks international rules as it sees fit in order to maintain hegemony.

Li Haidong, a professor at the Institute of International Relations at China Foreign Affairs University in Beijing, said that Qin has pointed out the biggest source of risk to today's international order, which is disrespect for the basic consensus that underpinned the postwar order at great cost of countries involved in WWII.

European countries should stay awake and avoid blindly following the US to promote the rules that

serve Washington's selfish interests and engage in geopolitical competition, he said.

It was reported that the Group of Seven summit to be held in Japan will ask China to abide by international rules. At a news briefing on Thursday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said that the G7 itself has constantly violated and disrupted rules.

The "international rules" that G7 talks about are "Western rules" that draw ideological lines and "rules of a small clique" that put the US first and are dominated by the G7, Wang said.

Such rules serve the vested interests of several countries such as G7 members, instead of the common interests of the international community, Wang said.

Wang cited the US withdrawal from international treaties, global surveillance, economic coercion and military intervention as saying that Washington is in no position to point a finger at others when it comes to international rules.

## False rhetoric

Yuan said the US is trying to use the rhetoric of "rules-based international order" to contain and suppress China and other non-Western countries as the country is anxious about the decline of its hegemony.

"The Joe Biden administration actively rallied its allies and partners to build small circles to establish an exclusive and camp-oriented pseudo-multilateral system, and replaced the international rules under the UN system with 'house rules,' aiming to hinder the building of an inclusive and open international order," she said.

The G7 cannot represent the international community as it is a group of developed capitalist countries, the influence of the bloc is not comparable to the UN, and it has no legitimacy to accuse China, Yuan said.

Li said the US has been dealing with international affairs and its relationship with others with a logic of supremacy in civilization, power and ideology.

The consensus of upholding international rules based on the basic norms governing international relations underpinned by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter must be consolidated, so as to avoid the interpretation and use of international rules being hijacked by a few countries, he said.

## Notice

House No 59, Caijiazhai, Gongxin village, Caolu township, Pudong New Area, Shanghai [with the Shanghai Rural Residential Land Use Certificate No. Hu Ji Zhai (Chuan Sha) Zi No. 067261 and Land No.: (34) Qiu 16, Gongxin village, Gongluxiang], with Cao Dingyue (deceased) as the holder of the certificate who gave birth, with Xu Xiaomei (deceased), to three children in their lifetime: Cao Xiaoyan, Cao Xiaoyan and Cao Fen.

In accordance with the "Notice on Compensation Schemes for Houses on Acquired Land", with Hu (Pu) Zheng Di Fang Bu Gao [2023] No. 27, the above-mentioned house has been included in the acquisition scope of the renovation project for Jinhai Road (Yanggao Zhonglu to the east of Huadong Road).

At present, the project has entered the stage of concrete implementation of compensation for houses on the acquired land. As the relevant rights holders of the above household could not be contacted, negotiations with the household have not been possible. The relevant rights holders of the above household are advised to contact the housing acquisition implementation service company within seven days of the publication of this notice and provide a valid proof of house ownership (property rights) certificate, proof of identity, contact address and contact information to ensure the service of the relevant documents for house acquisition, so as to negotiate the matters of compensation for house acquisition. After the deadline, we will announce matters related to the compensation for house acquisition of your household through the bulletin board of this base in accordance with the regulations.

Contact time: 9:00 - 17:00, Monday - Friday  
Contact address: Shenjiazhai 31, Wusi village, Caolu township, Pudong New Area, Shanghai, China (Acquisition Office)  
Contact name: Wang Jing, Contact number: 86-138 1867 9916  
Organization to implement house acquisition: Shanghai Pudong No. 5 Housing Acquisition Service Affairs Office Co Ltd

# WORLDUS



**Left:** Migrants gather near the US-Mexico border wall, as seen from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, on Tuesday. JOSE LUIS GONZALEZ / REUTERS **Right:** Migrants line up amid barriers at the US-Mexico border, as seen from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, on Tuesday. CHRISTIAN CHAVEZ / AP

## Migrants rush to cross border as Title 42 ends

By MAYZHOU in Houston  
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Thousands of migrants had begun gathering in northern Mexico at the US border the past few days, waiting for Title 42 to be lifted Thursday so that they could enter the US. But they were met by a more restrictive policy. Title 42, a World War II era health policy, was reintroduced by former president Donald Trump in March 2020. It has allowed US border patrol officers to turn away migrants immediately for the past couple of years due to the COVID-19 pandemic even if they had asked for asylum. It expired at 11:59 pm Thursday.

But the Biden administration issued an executive order on Wednesday that would deny asylum to migrants who arrived in the US without first applying online or seeking asylum in the country they passed through.

“Do not risk your life and your life savings only to be removed from the United States if and when you arrive here.”

**Alejandro Mayorkas**, US Department of Homeland Security secretary

Migrants caught crossing the border illegally wouldn't be able to enter the US for five years after Title 42 ends.

Migrants perceived the new policy as making it harder for them to stay in the US after Title 42 expired.

Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said at a news conference Thursday that the administration is prepared to deal with the migrant surge, but he said it will take time “for those results to be fully realized”.

Mayorkas also warned migrants contemplating coming to the US: “Smugglers have been long hard at work spreading false information that the border will be open. They are lying. To people who are thinking of making the journey to our southern border, know this — smugglers care only about profits, not people. Do not risk your life and your life savings only to be removed from the United States if and when you arrive here.”

At the Rio Grande in Matamoros, migrants arrived steadily on Wednesday, The Associated Press reported. Many stripped down before descending the steep riverbank, grasping plastic bags filled with clothes. One family put a tiny baby inside an open suitcase, and a man held it atop his head while wading through the river along with another man. Some children rode on the shoulders of adults. Once the migrants were on US soil, they put on dry clothing and picked their way through concertina wire. Many surrendered to authorities right away and hoped to be released while pursuing their cases in immigration courts, which have years of backlogs.

The situation quickly changed on Thursday. Texas law enforcement officers and soldiers in Brownsville completely closed off the banks of the Rio Grande with barbed wire and refused to let anyone pass and give



Migrants arrive at the Rio Grande river bank with plans to cross to the US side from Matamoros, Mexico, on Wednesday. FERNANDO LLANO / AP



**From left:** A border patrol agent checks migrants as they enter El Paso, Texas, from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, on Wednesday. ANDRES LEIGHTON / AP Migrants peer through the fence as they gather between primary and secondary border fences on Tuesday. MIKE BLAKE / REUTERS A migrant climbs over the border barrier into the United States, as seen from Tijuana, Mexico, on Wednesday. GUILLERMO ARIAS / AFP

their cases for asylum, The New York Times reported.

Dozens of migrants struggled to find their footing in the steep riverbanks on Thursday morning as they pleaded with Texas officials. Meanwhile, Mexican migration officials yelled at migrants on the Matamoros side to return to their camp.

Shortly before noon Thursday, American authorities deployed a helicopter to monitor the Rio Grande as migrants tried to cross its waters into Texas.

A group of at least 500 migrants from around the world from America to Asia began crossing the border near Yuma, Arizona, in darkness early Thursday morning, the Times reported. Authorities in Yuma said more than 4,200 migrants were arrested last week, and as many as 1,000 were arriving every day ahead

of Title 42's lifting.

The Border Patrol's holding capacity already has been exceeded, with more than 28,000 migrants in custody. Usually, migrants are held in custody for an average of 65 hours.

With hundreds of additional staff members, the agency is getting more efficient and the average time in custody has been shortened to only about three hours, according to the Times.

Republicans are seizing the opportunity to decry President Joe Biden for failing to control the border. House Republicans also proposed a bill that would crack down on unlawful migration at the US-Mexico border despite it having little chance to become law because the Democrats are the majority party in the Senate.

Agencies contributed to this story.



Right: Immigrants seeking asylum in the United States arrive at the US-Mexico border in El Paso, Texas, on Monday. JOHN MOORE / AFP

## BUSINESS

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## HIGHER GROUND

## IMF prescribes fiscal support for households

Experts call for more monetary easing, deepening of consumption rebound

By ZHOU LANXU  
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China may need to boost fiscal support for households and launch additional monetary easing as the latest economic figures indicate that demand is yet to recover fully, experts at the International Monetary Fund and investment banks said on Thursday.

Krishna Srinivasan, director of the Asia and Pacific Department of the IMF, said China's reopening has led to a strong rebound in consumption in the first quarter and the recovery is expected to continue and be led by services.

Yet the property sector has recovered relatively slowly and may remain subdued, Srinivasan said. Given the prevalence of near-term downside risks, it will be important for macroeconomic policies to support the recovery.

The IMF recommends that China's fiscal policy remain neutral and avoid premature tightening with support geared toward households, Srinivasan said, adding that monetary policy should remain accommodative in 2023.

"Reducing precautionary savings and boosting consumption will require strengthening the social protection system," he said.

He made the remarks at a news conference on Thursday in Beijing, which was co-organized by the IMF and the China Finance 40 Forum, a think tank. The conference was aimed at introducing the IMF's Regional Economic Outlook: Asia and Pacific, updated this month.

According to the outlook, China's economic growth is projected to rebound to 5.2 percent this year from 3 percent last year, serving as a primary driver of growth in the Asia-Pacific region, which is expected to reach 4.6 percent this year, up from 3.8 percent in 2022.

Yet, experts cautioned that China's economic rebound is partly attributable to last year's low comparison base, and the economy's underlying growth momentum still needs to be consolidated.

"Both price indicators and employment figures show that demand is now relatively subdued," said Peng Wensheng, a CF40 member and chief economist at investment bank China International Capital Corp.

China's consumer price index, a main gauge of inflation, climbed 0.1 percent from a year earlier in April, down from the 0.7 percent rise in March, cooling to the lowest rate since February 2021, the

National Bureau of Statistics said on Thursday. Experts said easing inflation is seen as indicative of mild demand in the economy.

Moreover, data from the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, showed on Thursday that the country's new yuan-denominated loans totaled 718.8 billion yuan (\$103.6 billion) in April. The number was up by 64.9 billion yuan year-on-year but was down from 3.89 trillion yuan in March, indicating that the recovery in lending demand may not yet be solid, experts said.

Citing that fiscal transfers to low-income households will be effective in boosting demand, Peng said such measures will help households better deal with their debt burden that has intensified due to COVID-19 and thus boost consumption.

On the monetary front, market sources and news reports said on Thursday that commercial banks are set to reduce interest rates for certain types of corporate deposits this month, following some small and medium-sized banks' cuts to their deposit rates earlier this year.

Sonal Jain-Chandra, IMF mission chief for China, said the recent cuts in deposit rates are in line with her suggestion that China should launch additional monetary easing as inflation remains low while growth momentum needs to be consolidated.



A COSCO containership docks at the Tollerort container terminal in Hamburg port. GETTY IMAGES

## COSCO unit's stake in Hamburg port terminal to boost trade with Europe

By ZHONG NAN  
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Germany's approval of a Chinese company's purchase of a minority stake in a container terminal at the Port of Hamburg will boost the port's role as a key logistics hub for China-Europe trade, market watchers said on Thursday.

The German government announced on Wednesday it approved the 24.9 percent shareholding of Hong Kong-listed COSCO Shipping Ports Ltd in Container Terminal Tollerort, so far owned by Hamburger Hafen und Logistik AG, a German container terminal operator.

HHLA had been urging the German government to make a decision since HHLA and CSPL announced the investment agreement in September 2021.

CSPL is a business unit of China COSCO Shipping Corp, the country's largest shipping company by market share and fleet size.

HHLA welcomed the approval and said the investment would make the terminal a preferred handling location for the strong trade

with China, where freight flows between Asia and Europe will be concentrated, according to its statement issued after the German government's announcement.

China is Germany's and the Port of Hamburg's largest trading partner, with around 30 percent of the goods handled at the port coming from or going to China. As 1.35 million jobs depend on the ports in Germany, HHLA is aware of the key Hamburg port's importance in serving companies and consumers in Germany and Europe, the company said in its statement.

Li Muyuan, executive vice-president of the China Container Industry Association in Beijing, said the Port of Hamburg has a significant geographical advantage and excellent distribution facilities. It is a crucial node for the China-Europe Railway Express freight train service.

Li said the port's well-developed railroad networks and the presence of over 7,000 supporting businesses such as logistics firms, shipping services, warehouses and freight forwarders would enhance long-term planning, cargo management, job

creation and integrated logistics services of the CTT.

CIT is one of three container terminals of HHLA at the Port of Hamburg. It has four berths and more than 10 container gantry cranes. CSPL's parent company China COSCO Shipping Corp's mega container vessels with a capacity of 20,000 twenty-foot equivalent units have been handled there, according to CSPL.

The terminal's own railway station, which has five tracks, is connected to the hinterland, meaning goods can be moved quickly between CTT and other European destinations.

With both CSPL and HHLA saying they will finalize the transaction soon, the tie-up will support the growth of China-Germany trade in the years ahead, said Lin Meng, director of the Modern Supply Chain Research Institute at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation in Beijing.

As of 31 March, CSPL operated and managed 367 berths at 37 ports globally, of which 220 were for containers, with an annual handling capacity of about 122 million TEUs.

## US berry giant eyes sweet mkt pickings

By ZHENG YIRAN  
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Upbeat about the Chinese market, Driscoll's, a California-based fresh berries provider, will triple its investment in the country over the next five years, said its top executive.

Miles Reiter, chairman and CEO of Driscoll's, said that he has noticed the great potential of the Chinese market, which has been growing rapidly.

Reiter said: "The Chinese market continues to show untapped potential ... In addition, guided by the Healthy China 2030 initiative, high-quality berries have been increasingly included in health-conscious consumers' daily diets."

"We plan to sell 35,000 metric tons of berries this year, up 25 percent year-on-year. We expect strong market demand in China. I believe that we can sustain a similar growth for the next five years, followed by a very significant future."

Apart from the size of the market, Reiter said Chinese consumers are accustomed to more flavorful, sweeter and more aromatic berries.

To cater to local tastes, in 2013, Driscoll's established its first domestic plantation base in Honghe in Yunnan province, becoming the first multinational corporation to carry out local cultivation work in China.

By 2022, the company and associated growers had invested over 2 billion yuan (\$288.8 million) in Yunnan. Apart from the berry plantation base, it has built a berry cultivation center in Yunnan. With advanced agricultural industry con-



A grower picks berries at a plantation in Yuxi, Yunnan province. LIANG ZHIQIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

cepts, unique business models, advanced sowing and seedling cultivation technology with independent intellectual property rights, Driscoll's said it is offering high-quality berries to the Chinese market.

Huang Yue, associate professor of the College of Food Science & Nutritional Engineering of China Agricultural University, said: "Localized plantation work helps enterprises lower logistics costs. Therefore, they can make more profits. Meanwhile, localized plantations can help enterprises benefit from favorable local government policies. Also, localized plantation activity supports local farmers and serves as public welfare, which shows enterprises' corporate social responsibility and enhances their brand image."

With people's rising healthcare awareness, berry consumption in China has been growing fast in recent years. According to a report from market research firm Beijing Jianle Shangbo Science and Technology Co Ltd, China's berry consumption market is expected to reach 8.8 billion yuan in 2025, with a compound annual growth rate of 9.8 percent.

"China is one of the world's largest berry consumption and production countries. In the past few years, as people's preference for healthy food changed, and disposable incomes grew, berries became an increasingly popular ingredient in cooking. Chi-

na's berry consumption has been growing rapidly," said the report.

"In addition, rising demand from food and beverage industries, especially baked goods, also promoted the growth of berry consumption in China," the report added.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of Driscoll's entry into the Chinese market. Speaking of new business plans in the Chinese market, Reiter said that previously, all berries planted in Yunnan had been for the local market. Starting this year, it plans to export the Yunnan-grown berries.

"By exporting the high-quality, amazing, flavorful berries from Yunnan, we are building greater awareness that Yunnan is capable of producing high-quality products," he said.

In addition, the company will make horticultural advances with its strawberries, and make efforts to build consumer awareness about lesser-known berries like raspberries and blackberries.

"We think that we took some really positive steps in that direction and we expect that over the coming years we would do more investment, in particular in marketing, to build that consumer awareness of these two lesser-known berries, so that Driscoll's over the coming years would not be known just as a blueberry company, but actually a berry company," he said.

## Visit to bolster China-Australia biz ties

By ZHONG NAN

The visit of Don Farrell, Australia's minister for trade and tourism, to China from Thursday to Saturday, is expected to boost bilateral trade and tackle common concerns through economic exchange mechanisms, said government officials and experts on Thursday.

Farrell will co-chair the 16th China-Australia Joint Ministerial Economic Commission with Chinese Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao in Beijing, said Shu Jueting, a spokeswoman of the Ministry of Commerce.

This will be the first visit by an Australian trade minister to China in nearly four years. The last China-Australia Joint Ministerial Economic Commission was held in Beijing in 2017.

China hopes that through this visit, the two sides will further implement the important consensus reached by the leaders of China and Australia at their meeting in Bali in November 2022, said Shu.

She also said China hopes to exchange views with Australia on developing bilateral economic and trade relations, addressing each other's concerns and promoting business cooperation.

In a statement on Thursday, Farrell said he will strongly advocate the full resumption of unimpeded

Australian exports to China — for all sectors — to the benefit of both countries and in the interests of Australian exporters and producers.

The statement said that the Australian government was pleased with several positive trade developments since the trade ministers of China and Australia agreed to enhance dialogue at all levels to fully resume trade in February. These developments include the resumption of coal, cotton and copper trade and China's agreement to undertake an expedited review of duties on Australian barley.

During his visit, Farrell will meet with some other Chinese officials and business representatives as well as Australian businesses and workers operating in China.

Trade experts said Farrell's visit to China is a key step to stabilize bilateral business ties in the next stage.

Amid the fast-changing global political and economic landscape, dialogue is certainly practical and beneficial. China, as a global manufacturing base that requires imports of ores and coal, and Australia, as a major exporter of materials for industrial use, can establish a complementary economic structure, said Wang Xueling, a researcher specializing in regional economic development at the University of International Business and Eco-

nomics in Beijing.

Phillipa Harrison, managing director of Tourism Australia, a government agency responsible for attracting foreign visitors, said with the easing of COVID-19 control measures for international travel to and from China, the agency remains optimistic about the outlook for the industry this year and beyond.

China was Australia's largest source market for both international visits and spending in 2019. About 1.44 million Chinese residents traveled to Australia, making up 15 percent of all international arrivals in the country. In all, they spent around A\$12.4 billion (\$8.35 billion).

China-Australia trade declined by 3.9 percent year-on-year to \$220.92 billion in 2022, data from China's General Administration of Customs showed.

Thanks to improved political and business ties, their total bilateral trade value surged 10.9 percent on a yearly basis to \$58.79 billion in the first quarter of this year.

Australia mainly exports iron ore, coal, alumina, copper ore, wool, wine, timber, grains, fruits and aquatic and dairy products to China. Computers, transport equipment, mechanical and electrical products, electric vehicles and chemical products are China's main shipments to Australia.

## Briefly

## China, Ecuador sign free trade agreement

China inked a free trade agreement with Ecuador on Thursday to further tap the potential of trade and investment cooperation between the two countries, according to the Ministry of Commerce. Chinese Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao and Julio Jose Prado, Ecuador's minister

of production, foreign trade, investment and fisheries, signed the agreement on behalf of their respective governments via video link, the MOC said in a news release published on its website. China and Ecuador will keep the markets open to each other with higher standards through the trade pact and foster a more favorable, convenient, transparent and stable business environ-

ment for enterprises, the MOC said.

## Intercity railway sees marked progress

An intercity railway linking East China's Anhui and Jiangsu provinces has made marked progress with the completion of main structures on the line. The Chuzhou-Nanjing Intercity Railway connects Anhui's

Chuzhou and Jiangsu's Nanjing with a line of 54.6 kilometers. Since starting building the No 2 bid of the line's Phase-II, more than 1,000 workers from China Railway No 4 Engineering Group Co Ltd have spent some 1,500 days at work sites to build the main structures. The two provinces are also building another intercity railway to link Anhui's Maanshan with Nanjing,

provincial capital of Jiangsu.

## CNOOC 2022 output reaches record high

Oil and gas production of China National Offshore Oil Corp reached a historical high last year and has further ensured domestic energy security, the company said on Thursday during a news conference in Beijing.

Oil and gas production reached 120 million metric tons of oil equivalent last year, with domestic crude oil and natural gas production up by 3.39 million tons and 2.7 billion cubic meters year-on-year, respectively. The increase in crude oil production accounted for over 60 percent of the country's total increase, it said.

CHINA DAILY

## BUSINESS

# Covestro eyes bigger green role in nation

Materials giant bullish on local market, to focus on customer ties, biz expansion

By ALYWIN CHEW in Shanghai  
alywin@chinadaily.com.cn

Covestro CEO Markus Steilemann reiterated the company's commitment to the Chinese market, and said it will continue to pour investment into areas supporting China's sustainable goals.

"Roughly 20 percent of our group sales come from China. We have 10 production sites in China. We also have our regional headquarters and Asia-Pacific innovation hub here in Shanghai. China is one of the most important markets for us," Steilemann said during a media meeting at the company's Asia Pacific Innovation Center in Shanghai on Tuesday.

One project that exemplifies China's importance to Covestro, the German executive pointed out, is the building of the company's largest Thermoplastic Polyurethanes (TPU) site in Zhuhai, Guangdong province.

Located in the Zhuhai Gaolan Port Economic Development Zone, the first phase of the new site is expected to be completed by the end of 2025. Following the completion of the third and final phase in 2033, the facility will be capable of producing about 120,000 metric tons of TPU per year.

According to the company, the entire project represents a major investment that is in the "low three-digit million euro range".

Steilemann said one of the key reasons behind the decision to increase Covestro's production capacity in China is the need to be close to its customers.

"The largest market in the Asia-Pacific is China. It benefits us to be close to our customers here. This means we don't have to pay too much for logistics. Besides, we are a B2B business. The closer we are to our customers, the better we can understand them and respond to their concerns," he said.

Another reason behind expanding its footprint in China is the nation's sustainability drive, which has provided the company with new business opportunities.

Steilemann noted that Covestro has recently been busy supplying its Chinese clients with materials used to build new clean energy generators like solar panels and wind turbines, which he says will be pivotal to China's quest to peak carbon dioxide emissions by 2030

**50 percent**

target Covestro Integrated Site Shanghai plans to achieve in use of renewable energy by this year

and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060.

Other examples of how the growing focus on sustainability in China has been a boon to Covestro's business include the company's deal to supply Shanghai-based electric vehicle startup HiPhi with low-carbon material solutions.

In a show of its commitment to helping China lower its emissions, the company — aiming to become operationally carbon neutral by 2035 — will increase its use of renewable energy such as solar and wind power at the Covestro Integrated Site Shanghai from the current 30 percent to 50 percent this year, added Steilemann.

The company has also signed a letter of intent with Chinese sports equipment manufacturer Xtep and its partner Silan Group during the fifth China International Import Expo to explore ways to produce low-carbon running shoes and promote the circular economy.

Steilemann pointed out that the unveiling of the EcoFoam mattress at Covestro's booth during the fifth CIIE was a success as all units were quickly sold out during a livestream session. Produced by Hong Kong-based Sinomax, the mattress is made using Covestro's bio-attributed TDI (toluene diisocyanate), which has a smaller carbon footprint compared to conventional fossil-based materials.

Steilemann noted that Covestro will once again participate in the expo this year.

"There is an intrinsic value in the CIIE because it provides companies with a much broader view of the Chinese market compared to the usual industry events. The CIIE also allows us to better understand consumer needs and meet more partners, which we need to get close to local consumers," he said.

"For Covestro, the CIIE is also a helpful platform through which the rest of the world can learn about our potential in serving China's development."



Visitors check out models at the AVIC booth during the China Brand Day event in Shanghai on Wednesday. YIN LIQIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

## Astounding brand credentials call for relentless effort

### TALKING BUSINESS

By He Wei

I have long been an aficionado of simple Western-style dining, but upon moving into a new condo in Toronto, I realized that my culinary preferences were undeniably Chinese.

I soon found myself in need of various cooking appliances. The shopping list quickly filled up with essentials. I needed a water boiler, a rice cooker, and an all-in-one mixer and soup maker suitable for both cold and warm beverages.

Unsurprisingly, my quest for these kitchen gadgets led me to opt for Chinese brands. Even while selecting an air fryer — a recent addition to the kitchenware pantheon — the sleek, compact designs of Chinese brands were more appealing than their bulkier Western counterparts.

I was happy to discover that most of these products were readily available outside of China. This led me to ponder whether these brands held equal allure for local consumers, or if they were even aware of the products' origins.

After briefly talking to my neighbors, I was surprised that they were unaware of the fact.

For some Chinese brands, the country of origin seems to have lit-

tle bearing on their business success. Customers in the West are drawn to products from companies like Ninebot — known for its self-balancing scooters — and Anker — which produces a wide range of chargers — not due to their affordability, but rather their unparalleled quality.

Indeed, many items in these companies' inventory are priced higher than those sold in China. There are, however, numerous market share-oriented players including digital marketplaces AliExpress and Temu — a newcomer to the Canadian market — that focus on top-line growth.

For these businesses, brand recognition is a luxury; the primary driver behind sales is swift market expansion and cost-effectiveness. Critics though argue that this approach results in significant variations to product quality.

This is a substantial challenge for Chinese brands seeking to establish a presence overseas. Overseas consumers have long equated "Made in China" labels with affordability, and once a brand breaks free from this stereotype and gains in popularity, other factors, such as politics, kick in.

I believe the key to overcoming such challenges is to take the hard approach, such as adapting to local cultural nuances as the stepping stone for brand-building in foreign markets. These include everything from product design and marketing messages to the typography used in instruction manuals.

Marketing material from Chinese brands is quite often a direct translation of their Chinese originals, leaving Western audiences perplexed by phrases like "open the TV".

Similarly, websites that haven't been updated for long do not inspire confidence in the credibility of Chinese brands.

Each year since 2017, May 10 is China Brand Day, a laudable initiative to recognize and celebrate Chinese brands striving to make their mark globally. And, as a person living abroad, I am proud to be able to purchase "Made in China" products of supreme quality.

Some may dismiss such attention to detail as a mere pandering to Western tastes and argue that it is unnecessary. However, we must refrain from falling into a nationalist trap.

Adapting to local preferences is a way of demonstrating respect for customers. International brands often create China-specific designs, and while the result may not always be satisfactory, the effort itself is rich

in symbolism.

Each year since 2017, May 10 is China Brand Day, a laudable initiative to recognize and celebrate Chinese brands striving to make their mark globally. And, as a person living abroad, I am proud to be able to purchase "Made in China" products of supreme quality.

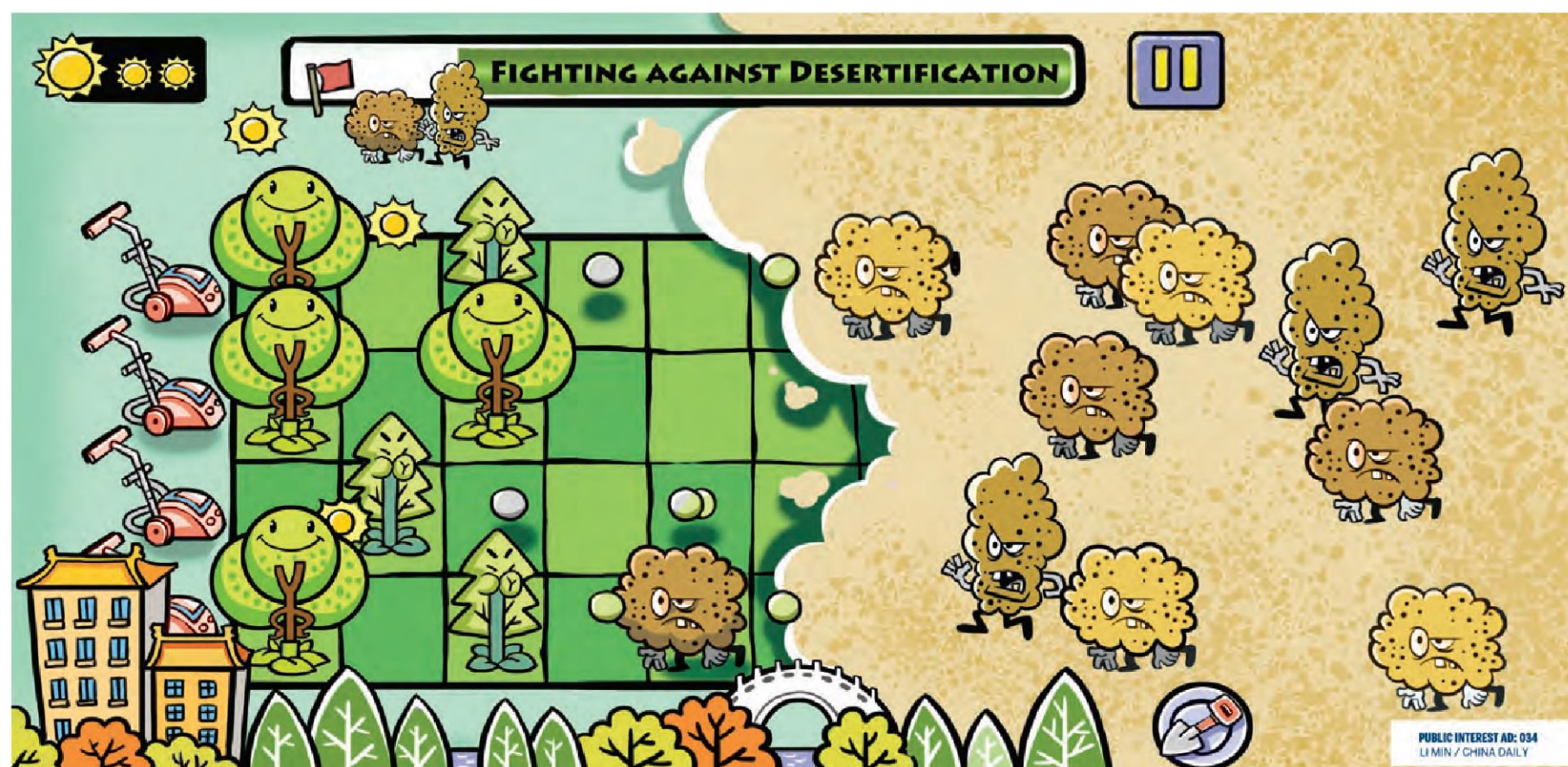
This is, therefore, an opportune moment to ask whether our brand-building has evolved into a successful business story, and take the necessary steps to move the needle in the right direction.

We must, however, not lose sight of the fact that many Chinese brands with an overseas presence mostly serve the vast Chinese diaspora, with limited reach.

These brands have yet to make a concerted effort to stay relevant to local consumers in their target markets. Numerous factors beyond our control can influence a brand's success overseas, but I believe we can still take meaningful measures to establish a solid foothold.

Creating top-notch products, respecting the market by understanding local consumer preferences, refining our messaging, and thoughtfully introducing the Chinese identity at the right time, will, I believe, represent a meaningful first step toward global success.

The writer is a freelance columnist and communications consultant based in Toronto, Canada. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



## BUSINESSFOCUS

# Travel booms during May Day holiday

Domestic, international trips rise as many vacationers opt for higher-end flights, hotels and cultural experiences

By ZHU WENQIAN  
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China's five-day May Day holiday saw the country's biggest travel bonanza since the COVID-19 pandemic began over three years ago, and more people traveled greater distances and chose higher-end options, industry experts said.

The figures exceeded those of 2019 in some categories as pent-up demand is unleashed.

The tourism sector still has huge potential for the latter half of the year, experts said.

During the Dragon Boat Festival in June, summer vacation and the National Day holiday in October, the market is expected to see successive peaks, said Guo Lechun, vice-president of Qunar, a Beijing-based online travel agency.

The May Day holiday, from April 29 to May 3, served as the first long national holiday since China optimized its pandemic prevention and control measures and restarted quarantine-free cross-border travel in January.

During the break, the average distance that Chinese tourists traveled by plane was 1,638 kilometers. The distance almost matched the level of 2019, prior to the pandemic, according to Trip.com Group, China's largest online travel agency.

An increasing number of Chinese tourists pursued higher-quality experiences and booked first-class and business-class flights. During the holiday, the booking volumes of flights in those two classes surged nearly 80 percent compared with the same period in 2019, and the growth rate was higher than that of economy class.

Some other travelers chose to take chartered flights, and their main destinations included Koh Samui, Thailand; Okinawa, Japan and the Maldives, Trip.com said.

"For this year's May Day holiday, the most distinguishing feature was the strong release of pent-up demand for long-haul travel. It has driven the recovery of many related sectors such as catering, accommodations, transportation and shopping," said Peng Han, director of strategic research at the research institute of Trip.com.

The holiday saw more than 80,000 domestic flights in total, and the daily average level rose by 15 percent compared with the same holi-

day in 2019. The average price of a one-way domestic flight during the break was 1,211 yuan (\$175), including tax, which jumped by 39 percent over 2019, according to FlightAI, a market insight platform affiliated with Trip.com.

The number of international flights during the holiday was about 40 percent that of 2019. Flights from the Chinese mainland to Macao, the United Arab Emirates and the Maldives saw higher booking volumes compared with the same period in 2019, FlightAI found.

"... the most distinguishing feature was the strong release of pent-up demand for long-haul travel."

Peng Han, director of strategic research at the research institute of Trip.com

During the break, the total volume of orders for flight tickets and hotels for outbound travel from the Chinese mainland soared nearly 900 percent and 450 percent year-on-year, respectively, Trip.com said. That was a peak in the past three years for national holidays, the company said, and in-depth tours organized by smaller groups were more popular among Chinese travelers, Trip.com said.

Li Fangping, a 58-year-old retiree who lives in Beijing, joined a 10-person group and traveled to Russia with her husband for a week during the holiday. While a frequent traveler previously, she hadn't traveled abroad for more than three years. It was her first trip overseas since the start of the pandemic. The group was paired with a tour guide and a driver.

"My birthday fell during the trip. The tour guide prepared a celebration for me, which was such a surprise. I definitely enjoyed the tour, which included convenient services and a lot of free time," Li said.

This year, Chinese travelers have increasingly preferred private and tailored group tours. During the holiday, the booking volume of private tours surged nearly 900 percent compared with 2019, according to Trip.com.

Top overseas destinations included those in Asia such as Bangkok,



**Above:** Tourists enjoy canyon rafting in Wuzhishan, Hainan province, during this year's May Day holiday.

GUO ZHIHUA / XINHUA



**Left:** Visitors flock to Xi'an's city walls, the largest and best preserved ancient city wall in China, in Shaanxi province, during the May Day holiday.

LIU XIAO / XINHUA

travelers. Among them were Zibo, Shandong province; Dehong, Yunnan province; and the Ili Kazak autonomous prefecture in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, which saw hotel bookings surge more than 10-fold compared with the same period in 2019, Qunar said.

The travel frenzy also drove up consumer buying levels in those cities, the agency said.

Zibo's barbecue, which has become a viral topic on social media platforms, attracted many travelers to the city during the holiday. A traveler visiting Zibo might spend about 50 yuan per person to have a barbecue, but that would drive total spending of some 750 yuan for transportation and accommodations, according to a projection by Qunar's research institute.

After three years of the pandemic, boosting consumer spending has become a priority for domestic cities. Many other cities also hoped to leverage their economic growth with featured local products just like Zibo.

"Zibo barbecue has created a national sensation. It was not only due to the delicacy itself, but also thanks to joint efforts of the local government, retailers and merchants who operated with integrity, and hospitable local residents," Guo said.

Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Seoul and Tokyo, and the booking volume of flights to and hotels in those places largely exceeded the 2019-level, the agency said.

Hong Kong and Macao also were among the most popular destinations for Chinese mainland tourists. Tuniu Corp, a Nanjing-based online travel agency, designed a five-day tailored trip to the two cities, and the package became the best-selling option among outbound destinations on the platform.

On the first day of the holiday, more than 165,000 Chinese mainland travelers visited Hong Kong, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, Greece and Egypt, the company said. In domestic travel, the hotel booking volumes for some most popular destinations nearly doubled pre-pandemic levels, and many travelers

booked higher-end hotels. Cities that saw the highest volumes of hotel bookings included Beijing; Shanghai; Chongqing; Chengdu, Sichuan province; Guangzhou, Guangdong province; and Changsha, Hunan province, according to Qunar.

"During the May Day holiday, a large number of Chinese travelers took trips for the first time in three years, and many were looking for better vacation experiences, including stays at luxury hotels," said Guo of Qunar.

"Some smaller hotels closed due to the challenges brought by the pandemic. Chain hotels have occupied a larger market share, and some of them have lowered room prices," Guo said.

A number of smaller Chinese cities were also popular with domestic

visitors, injecting vigor into local economy, officials said.

The Macao Grand Prix Museum, a popular attraction for children, received nearly 3,000 visitors during the holiday, an increase of 86 percent from a year ago.

An employee at a store selling local specialties told Xinhua News Agency that they had been working overtime every day during the holiday. "However, the wages tripled and we have something to look forward to in the future," he said.

Chan Ka Leong, director general of the General Union of Neighborhood Associations of Macao, said the number of visitors during the holiday exceeded general expectations, voicing confidence that Macao's tourism sector can help boost other sectors to generate more income.

Macao was fully prepared for the holiday tourist surge, officials said. Starting on May 1, two of the major land ports linking the SAR with neighboring Zhuhai in the mainland lifted the ban on multiple entries and exits for travelers in a single day.

The office also rolled out a series of events for this month, including the month-long 33rd Macao Arts Festival and a sports carnival on the beach. Authorities from several government departments carried out joint patrols during the holiday to curb illegal business operations.

Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, director of the SAR government tourism office, said officials will learn from the experience of this holiday to be better prepared for the summer holiday, a usual travel peak period for students, and the National Day holiday in October.

Ng Long Wai, president of the Macao Tour Guide Promotion Association, said Macao should continue tapping its cultural potential to help tourists experience its charm.

Tourism recovery is bound to boost related industries and aid Macao's appropriate economic diversification, according to Li Xi, executive associate dean of the Faculty of International Tourism and Management of the City University of Macao.

XINHUA



Around 493,000 visitors entered the Macao Special Administrative Region during the five-day May Day holiday. ZHANG JINJIA / XINHUA

## Macao sees robust tourism recovery during five-day break

MACAO — A robust tourism recovery was experienced by Macao during the just-concluded May Day holiday in the mainland as it received around 300 travel groups and nearly 500,000 visitors.

The Macao Government Tourism Office said a total of around 493,000 visitors entered the special administrative region during the five-day holiday, including 376,000 from the mainland and 89,000 from Hong Kong.

The number of visitors rose more than 262 percent from last year's May Day holiday and recovered to about 62 percent of the level in 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, the office said.

The average hotel occupancy rate during the holiday reached 85 percent, up 26.5 percentage points from the same period last year. The hotel occupancy rate on Sunday, the day before May 1, shot up to 93.2 percent, a new record high this year.

Not only were famous tourist spots such as the landmark Ruins of St. Paul's and A-Ma Temple packed with tourists, but niche tourism destinations and streets also welcomed

## COMMENT

## Editorials

## Washington knows no shame in trampling over fundamental principle of world order

Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin on Wednesday expressed China's "resolute opposition" to a statement issued by US State Secretary Antony Blinken the day before. In his statement, Blinken said that Washington would "strongly encourage" the World Health Organization to invite Taiwan to participate in this year's World Health Assembly as an "observer".

Citing Taiwan's previous presence at the WHA during the Kuomintang administration, Blinken said that the US would continue promoting Taiwan again becoming a WHO observer. This, he claimed, is in line with the United States' one-China policy.

The Chinese spokesman reiterated that there is only one China and Taiwan is part of China. As such, the political foundation for Taiwan participating in the WHA is non-existent given the insistence of the present authorities in Taipei on the island's "independent" status, their refusal to uphold the 1992 Consensus, and their sabotaging of the political foundation of cross-strait consultations.

Blinken knows that Taiwan is at the heart of China's core interests, as well as the first redline in China-US relations that must not be crossed.

But he recklessly played the "Taiwan card" again. Washington dismisses the growing tensions over the Taiwan question and the fact that the Taiwan Strait is becoming an increasingly volatile geopolitical flashpoint.

Yet any party that truly hopes to see peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, any party that is truly dedicated to preserving the international order should abide by the one-China principle, and oppose all acts of "Taiwan independence".

One day earlier, during a joint news conference with German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock in Berlin, visiting Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang reminded the world that Taiwan's return to China is "an inherent component of the post-WWII world order".

However, the latest spat between Beijing and Washington over Taiwan is only the tip of an iceberg of greater divergences in the changing global geopolitical landscape. It involves multiple complex factors, including but not limited to the two sides' longstanding differences on the matter, which are most prominent in those between Beijing's one-China principle and Washington's one-China policy.

Now that the US' approach is increasingly driven by the anti-Chinese bipartisan coalition in Congress, and Beijing is increasingly convinced of a Western plot to thwart its pursuit of peaceful reunification and confident of its ability to realize that by force, the risk of a confrontation is plain for all to see.

No matter how the independence-seekers in Taiwan try to make use of the Western antipathy to the mainland to further their cause, other stakeholders must maintain a clear head and avoid being involuntarily dragged into a worst-case scenario, which is avoidable, at least for now.

Taiwan's participation in the activities of international organizations, including the WHO, must be handled in accordance with the one-China principle as affirmed in the United Nations' resolutions. With the ruling Democratic Progressive Party authorities refusing to recognize the 1992 Consensus that embodies the one-China principle, the political foundation for the Taiwan region to participate in the WHA no longer exists.

## China and Europe can be ballast for peace

There are many common interests between China and the European countries despite their ideological differences. Among these is a shared desire for peace in Ukraine.

An end to the conflict would benefit not just Ukraine and Russia, but also China, the whole of Europe and the rest of the world. The conflict has been one of the factors driving up global inflation. It has caused grain, gas and other material shortages, as supply chains have been broken. Quarrels and antagonism among various parties have also been exacerbated by the hostilities.

Since it has taken a principled position on the crisis rather than simply choosing sides, this dissonance has been focused on China. As a result, the conflict has prompted intensifying calls within the US-led camp for decoupling from China.

But with the spillover effects from the crisis worsening, an increasing number of countries are now acknowledging that "an overly simplified or emotionally driven approach" is not the right way forward. Which was something that Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang stressed during his visit to Germany on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Reiterating that China is neither the one that created the conflict nor a party to it, Qin reminded

his hosts that China has been a consistent advocate for peace and the building of a balanced, effective and durable European security architecture.

Qin was visiting Germany within a month of his German counterpart Annalena Baerbock visiting China. It is to be hoped that Germany is gaining more awareness of China's sincerity in working for peace and urging the two countries to join hands to share the dividends of development.

Although German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told European Union lawmakers on Tuesday that he agrees with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen that "we should not aim for a de-coupling" from China, he also added his voice to hers in calling for "smart de-risking".

In fact, what many in Germany and European countries seem to hope will happen is that they can continue to follow the United States' lead while China will leverage its friendly relations with Russia to accept a peace deal dictated by Washington.

But, as Qin told his hosts on Wednesday, what China brings to the world are opportunities, cooperation, stability and reassurance, not crises, confrontation, turmoil or risks. Its 12-point peace proposal is a workable basis on which concerted efforts can be made to secure a cease-fire in Ukraine and get the conflicting parties to negotiate a deal in good faith that will produce durable peace.

## NATO should rein in US' coercive behavior

In an interview with the Editorial Board of The Washington Post last week, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg insisted that "NATO will remain an alliance of North America and Europe. It will not become a global alliance with members from Asia".

But the United States is hell-bent on playing the "Taiwan card" for its own narrow ends. Thus, NATO's presence in the region has already become something of a fait accompli.

Since it is controlled by Washington, NATO is undoubtedly intending to expand to the Asia-Pacific using cross-strait tensions as the pretext. "Any conflict in and around Taiwan will have profound consequences for all of us," Stoltenberg said in a bid to justify this.

Although he had softened his tone compared with his interview with Japanese media three months ago, when he directly lambasted Beijing's "coercive behavior" in the Taiwan Strait, his message was essentially the same. Namely: "What happens here in Asia matters to NATO. Our security is connected."

The logic Stoltenberg used this time to explain why the Taiwan question concerns NATO, a transatlantic security alliance born of the Cold War, is as absurd as his coercion claim.

"Trade, 50 percent of container freight, ships go through the Taiwan Strait. A significant amount of

all of the world's semiconductors are produced in Taiwan," he rightly pointed out.

No matter how many container ships transit the Taiwan Strait every year, it is irrelevant to changing the nature of the Taiwan question from China's internal affair to a global issue. In fact it only highlights the fact that it is Washington's insistence on playing the "Taiwan card" that is the real coercive behavior and a risk to trade and semiconductor supplies.

What the NATO chief is peddling is nothing but interventionism, militarism and hegemony customized in accordance with Washington's agenda. If that is bought by regional countries and they let NATO into the region, it will shatter the region's hard-won peace and stability.

That NATO's eastward expansion is being driven by Washington is beyond doubt. Prior to the Joe Biden administration pressing forward its aggressive national security strategy that has seen it instigate a war in Europe and heighten tensions in Asia, NATO did not see China as an adversary. Indeed, three years ago, Stoltenberg was expressing the organization's willingness to strengthen its relations with China. He and NATO perhaps now need to be reminded that the international consensus on one-China is a fundamental part of the rule-based order under the framework of the United Nations which they claim to uphold.

Fang Wenlin



## Opinion Line

## Lingering debt ceiling crisis reflects systematic defects

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has warned of a "constitutional crisis" if Congress fails to raise the \$31.4 trillion debt ceiling as soon as possible. She was talking to an ABC News program on May 7.

Considering that she was supposed to be on her way to Japan for the G7 meeting on Thursday, the temporary postponement seems to underline the seriousness of the "debt ceiling crisis".

In fact, the US' current debt ceiling was reached in early January, but the convention allows Congress to debate it for a while. In January, Yellen wrote to Congress saying the Treasury Department had begun taking "extraordinary measures" to avoid a default on the government's debt.

On May 1, Yellen sent another letter to Congress urging action "as soon as possible" to raise the debt

ceiling "without conditions". A day later, she wrote to Congress again, saying that "waiting until the last minute to suspend or raise the debt ceiling can cause serious damage to business and consumer confidence and raise short-term borrowing costs for taxpayers".

The United States imposes a mandatory legal cap on the amount of debt the government can borrow, equivalent to about 120 percent of the GDP, and the federal fiscal borrowing account is frozen if the limit is not raised in time.

That means the US will no longer be able to borrow to pay government employees and military personnel, meet social security checks or other payments to defense contractors. A default on the US government's debt can also upend the global financial market and undermine global trust in the US. Many

experts warn that a default on debts could plunge the US into a recession, rendering millions of people jobless and driving up payments on household mortgages, car loans and credit cards.

Since 1960 the US has hit its debt ceiling a staggering 78 times without it leading to a situation where it cannot borrow again.

The Republicans have proposed spending cuts in exchange for raising the borrowing limit, but US President Joe Biden and the Democrats have urged Congress to pass a "clean" debt ceiling increase without conditions. The bickering between the Democrats and Republicans has made little progress toward reaching an agreement.

The lingering debt ceiling showdown fully shows the inherent systematic defects in US politics.

— BEIJING NEWS

## Antiques should return to where they belong

The return of two cultural relics from the Manhattan District Attorney's Office to China's Consulate General in New York sets a good precedent for other Western nations to follow.

In April, some Manhattan procurators found the two cultural relics of great historical and artistic value during a criminal probe. Agencies in both countries cooperated to make the return possible. Since 2015, the US has returned 404 cultural relics plus an ancient archaeological fossil to China, and this is the sixth time it has done so.

The cultural relics belong to Chi-

na and it is good news they are now returning home. By helping the lost cultural relics to return home, the US side not only shows its goodwill toward China, but also restates a basic principle of international relations, namely that cultural relics belong to their country of origin and should go home one day.

In a statement, Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg said: "It is a shame that these two incredible antiquities were stolen and at least one remained largely hidden from public view for nearly three decades." It's a shame for those who

stole and moved the antiques out of their country of origin.

Fortunately, the mistake has been corrected, reinforcing the international consensus that antiques should remain in their country of origin or be returned if they were stolen or robbed.

The US is not the only or the biggest repository of Chinese cultural relics. According to official data, some 17 million Chinese antiques are lost overseas, scattered across Western countries. A day will come when they will all return home.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

## What They Say

## Belt and Road welcomed as global public good

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations concluded its three-day summit in Indonesia on Thursday. In light of this, CNBC reviewed the fast expansion of the railway network in Southeast Asia in a report published on Tuesday.

It said the network built with China's support is putting China at the center of the regional trade system. It should be pointed out that although the railway network in Southeast Asia is built under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative and connected with the railway network in China, it has not put China at the center of the regional trade system. In fact the regional trade system is largely dependent on sea transportation.

Like many other US media outlets, CNBC hints in its report that China is exploiting ASEAN by taking advantage of these railways in

bilateral trade, and that China's trade with ASEAN hurts the United States' interests in the region.

Neither claim is true.

That China is the largest trade partner with ASEAN is primarily decided by the complementarity between their economies and development phases, as well as their shared commitment to promoting common development by tapping into that through free trade.

China's exports to ASEAN — mainly electrical machinery, plastics, steel, fossil fuels, furniture, vehicles, organic chemicals and knitting products — are what the ASEAN members need. China's exports are cost-effective supply to demand.

ASEAN's exports to China — mainly agricultural products and raw industrial materials — are what China needs. They are not what the

US needs, as the country is one of the largest exporters of agricultural produce itself, and has already moved beyond the industrial development stage that needs the raw materials the ASEAN countries export.

In other words, China's trade with ASEAN is one between two players on the lower rungs of the global value chain. It does not touch the US' trade cheese.

The US media outlets should learn to see the Belt and Road Initiative, which involves more than 120 countries, regions and international organizations, for what it is — a global public good. No matter how many geopolitical tools Washington has devised to counter it, that does not change the nature of the initiative as an open platform promoting common development of the world.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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## COMMENT

# WB official's insight into China's growth, resilience, greenness

**Editor's Note:** Mara Warwick, now the World Bank country director for China, was associated with the World Bank's Wenchuan Earthquake Recovery Project (2009-14) after the devastating Wenchuan earthquake in Sichuan province in 2008 that claimed more than 69,000 lives and affected many parts of China. She also served as a volunteer for the Beijing 2008 Summer Olympic Games later the same year. In an exclusive interview with China Daily's Zhu Ping, Zhao Manfeng and Pan Yixuan, Warwick shared her story and her insight into China's development transformation since her first visit to the country 30 years ago. Excerpts follow:

**Q**uestion: May 12 marks the 15th anniversary of the devastating Wenchuan earthquake. You have said that you were moved by China's recovery capacity and resilience. Is there anyone or any story that particularly moves you even you today?

**A**nswer: I was able to travel with our management team and members of the national and provincial government to the earthquake-affected area about one month after the earthquake. We traveled to Leigu township, a town that was hosting a lot of displaced people from Beichuan (a severely ravaged county near the epicenter), and the surrounding areas. There was a very big tent camp there. It's a visit that I will always remember ... to see the people who had been so affected by the earthquake. We talked to local people about their urgent needs for recovery and also their longer-term needs for reconstruction.

What really stayed with me from that day was a lady who spent quite a bit of time with us. She was a finance officer in the local government. After we had spent time walking around Leigu, talking about reconstruction and other needs, she shared with us (the tragic fact) that she had lost her seven-year-old daughter in the earthquake. At the time I had a seven-year-old daughter myself. I will never forget that even amid such a personal tragedy, she was working so hard for her community. She was one of those who helped the local government move forward with the recovery.

**Q**: As an international organization official, how did you coordinate with the local governments or the local people to better implement the World Bank's program? What is the World Bank's global experience in helping post-quake reconstruction?

**A**: I spent a lot of time with my team in the area because the World Bank-financed infrastructure project was part of the national and provincial government support for the reconstruction. We were helping the provincial government in their reconstruction planning and implementation.

The World Bank has provided support for many large earthquake recovery programs around the world: in 1999 in Turkey, in 2005 in Pakistan, in 2008 in Wenchuan of China and also this year in Turkey where there has been another large earthquake. The World Bank brings international principles and standards to make sure the reconstruction quality is high and that reconstructed infrastructure will be able to withstand future disasters that may occur.

We also focus on ensuring that reconstruction is conducted in a more inclusive way. We believe it is important to make sure that the needs of the whole population are considered in the recovery with particular attention to the lower-income people and the vulnerable, for example, the elderly and women.

This is important as the priorities for different groups may differ — for example elderly persons who may be displaced from their original home may wish to be close to health clinics and to other people that they know. Whereas young people will have different priorities; their priorities will be staying close to jobs, to be in places where their families can grow. So it is about making sure that all of those things are taken into account in an inclusive way.

**Q**: May 12 has been observed as the Disaster Prevention and Reduction Day in China since 2009. Why is it important to raise people's awareness about disaster prevention and reduction?

**A**: A lot of places in the world are seeing recurrent disasters, in particular, because of climate change. For example, cyclones and flooding are becoming more frequent. In recent years, I've been working in south-



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

ern and eastern Africa. For example, Malawi, one of the world's poorest countries, is experiencing flooding and powerful storms about every two years. And this affects not only their agriculture sector, but also energy production. Preparedness really helps to make sure that infrastructure and service provision are strong and sustainable, and that communities can recover quickly from the disaster.

**Q**: How can disaster-stricken areas better ensure that people do not slide back into poverty?

**A**: In 15 years, China has made great strides in its disaster prevention and preparedness. When we talk about disaster preparedness, we focus on risks. We analyze the risks of certain locations, of certain activities, and make sure that the activities match the level of risks, to make sure that the local communities are in a position that, if a disaster strikes, they will not be pushed back into poverty. Most important is that there need to be systems in place to ensure the government can get support to communities immediately after a disaster.

**Q**: You have mentioned that volunteers play an important role in the reconstruction efforts. Did that kind of spirit prompt you to become a volunteer for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games?

**A**: Volunteers (have) showed how their individual contributions could make a real difference to strangers. We saw this in the reconstruction efforts. As far as the Olympics is concerned, I think that volunteers are very important in that kind of international event. Our role was to provide a bridge between the international spectators and athletes, and the local authorities and the organizers of the Olympics.

I took two weeks of my annual leave to be a volunteer at the Olympics. As "guides" on the site, we helped spectators find the way into and out of stadiums, and helped them

solve problems. On duty outside the Bird's Nest stadium, I never tired of the enormous roaring cheers that erupted from the stadium even at times when I knew there were no Chinese competing.

**Q**: How do you evaluate China's green development in its development transformation from quantitative growth to qualitative development over the past decades? For instance, the Chinese path to modernization also promoted harmony between humankind and nature.

**A**: China has experienced environmental challenges during its development. However, as I returned to China this time, I can certainly see the air pollution issue in Beijing is much improved over even seven or eight years ago.

A green development approach can make sure that China can meet its ambitious climate goals, particularly carbon peaking by 2030, and achieving carbon neutrality by 2060, which will be critical for China in the future. The World Bank is working with all levels of governments in China, at the central level but also at the local levels, to help them to translate these goals into real action.

For example, we are supporting several programs to reduce methane and carbon emissions in the agriculture sector by changing farming practices and providing better knowledge and infrastructure for farmers. In addition, we support programs designed to decarbonize industrial sectors as well as infrastructure such as transport and energy. The World Bank is also working with the government on biodiversity to achieve the COP 15 goals agreed last year.

Our work in China helps to make sure China's environment is healthier and better for the Chinese people, but at the same time also helps China contribute to global public goods.

**Q**: What are China's biggest development achievements according to your observation over the past three decades?

**For instance, what impressed you most when you came to China 30 years ago?**

**A**: I came to China for the first time about 30 years ago. And, in fact, my first impression of China came from arriving at the Guangzhou railway station after having traveled from Hong Kong by train, which was a journey that took three or four hours at the time and now is about 45 minutes.

I remember there was a large plaza in front of the railway station. It was full of people — migrant workers who had come from rural areas to Guangzhou — thousands of people. Coming from Australia, a country with a small population, I had never seen so many people in the same place as I did that day in Guangzhou. Of course, this was also less than two years after Deng Xiaoping's "Southern Tour" when China's rural-to-urban migration and China's industrialization process was just commencing.

Since that time China has had significant success in its economic development and particularly, of course, in alleviating poverty. Those migrant workers and all of the others who became part of China's industrial development were a critical element of that development.

**Q**: In 1978, China's GDP was 367.9 billion yuan. In 1993, China's GDP was just over 3 trillion yuan. Its GDP surpassed 121 trillion yuan (more than \$17 trillion) last year. Why has China been able to achieve such a rapid development? Does China's development offer some reference for other developing countries, like China's goal of common prosperity?

**A**: My personal observation in the last 30 years is that, in general, the quality of life of the population has improved. And I think we see that in many different ways. Children today are clearly healthier and taller than they were 30 years ago because of better nutrition. In the 1990s, when I lived in Shandong province, at the beginning of winter even city residents stored cabbages on their balconies — their only

vegetable during the cold days.

But things have changed a lot and people have more varieties of food even in winter. People's housing is also much better and the provision of services to people both in rural areas as well in urban areas has improved. Cities in China are much greener now than they were 30 years ago, because there has been a focus on making sure that cities are more livable, and a recognition that this is important for people's quality of life. Overall, we see some significant changes and improvements during these 30 years.

However, China's rapid development has caused environmental impacts. We appreciate China's focus in the last several years on making sure that development going forward is sustainable. China has had many successful and significant environmental programs such as the Loess Plateau reforestation which was initially supported by the World Bank and then significantly scaled up by the government.

**Q**: This year marks the 45th anniversary of the launch of the reform and opening-up policy. How do you evaluate the achievements of that policy?

**A**: The numbers speak for themselves. China's GDP has increased about 40 times, the per capita income of China has increased almost 30 times during that period, and about 800 million people have been lifted out of poverty. This represents around three quarters of global poverty alleviation during that period. This is a very significant achievement.

I think this was achieved because of China's focus on both reform and opening-up. The reform promoted investments in physical and human capital at the same time, and also created incentives for good fiscal resource allocation in the economy. Stability of macroeconomic policy was also a very important element during the period.

But the opening-up was also an important factor. International trade was encouraged and grew in tandem with domestic reforms. China has been open to new skills and new ideas coming into the country. And this has also helped promote development in a sustainable way over these 45 years. This is also where organizations like ours have played a role because we have been working with the government of China now for more than 40 years to bring international ideas and experience to China's development.

I think these are aspects that have been very important for China's reform, and will be equally important in the future, in particular, for addressing climate change and other global environmental challenges. It's important to continue this international exchange as the whole world is grappling with these problems. The World Bank's program in China is designed to help demonstrate good practices for each of the topics that we work on, including, for example, marine plastics reduction.

The World Bank is engaging quite deeply in the whole East Asia region on the marine plastics agenda. We have a knowledge exchange platform and (provide) technical assistance for many countries in the region, including China. In working with China on this important topic, we are able to connect other countries to China and vice versa, so that they can share knowledge.

Exchange of information between countries is not only to share other countries' experience with China, but also, very importantly, to share China's experience with other countries. This exchange is very critical, I think, to make sure that the whole world is able to address these larger questions. Going forward, I would really hope that China maintains a very active and open dialogue with the rest of the world on its achievements and challenges on climate change, the environment, as well as other development challenges.

And I certainly hope that the World Bank will be able to continue to play this facilitation role and continue to not only learn from China, but also support China as it experiments with new policies and new reforms and tries to achieve the goals that have been set.

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

## GLOBAL VIEWS



**Editor's note:** The world has undergone many changes and shocks in recent years. Enhanced dialogue between scholars from China and overseas is needed to build mutual understanding on many problems the world faces. For this purpose, the China Watch Institute of China Daily and the National Institute for Global Strategy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, jointly present this special column: The Global Strategy Dialogue, in which experts from China and abroad will offer insightful views, analysis and fresh perspectives on long-term strategic issues of global importance.



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

ZHANG YUNLING

## Confluence of interests

Complex political motivations and strategic purposes drive the establishment of regional cooperation mechanisms

With the advancement of global multilateral cooperation facing obstacles, regional cooperation initiatives have seen accelerated development.

Regional cooperation initiatives are characterized by clear political motivations. The United States has always had strong strategic motivations for promoting regional cooperation. For example, to hedge against the influence from a unified European market, the US had two major regional strategies. The first was to propose "a growing sense of community" among economies in the Asia Pacific region at the 1993 APEC summit in Seattle. However, in the face of the sharp rise in China's overall competitiveness, the US reduced its investment in APEC, abandoned the principle of "open regionalism", and instead promoted the construction of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, an initiative that excluded China. Washington later launched the "Indo-Pacific Strategy" with the aim of containing China. The second was that in 1994, the US proposed the building of the Free Trade Area of the Americas, aiming to establish a large market that includes most American countries. But the strategic attempt to unify the Americas did not become a reality.

Although Europe's strategic competition with the US is carried out with non-confrontational thinking and design, mainly through strengthening the internal cohesion and capacity building of the European region, the US has been highly vigilant against the development of the unified European market, the use of the euro, and the unified European military force, and has taken measures to hedge against such moves. At present, due to the impact of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, the European Union's reliance on the US has increased in terms of strategy and security, but its strategic efforts to reduce its dependence on the US and Washington's influence in European affairs have not changed.

Southeast Asian countries also have distinct political and strategic considerations in promoting regional cooperation. On the one hand, they hope that through the establishment of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, they will be included in a regional cooperation mechanism, and the countries can achieve friendly coexistence and cooperative development, putting an end to the history of regional confrontation and conflict. On the other hand, ASEAN's strategic

considerations are mainly reflected in the use of regional integration as a platform to ensure its autonomy and central role in regional affairs, so as to gain the initiative in the geostrategic competition among major countries. The bloc's status and influence have gradually risen through its development, from building itself into a free trade area to the building of a regional community. It has created an inclusive, open and cooperative model that avoids getting involved in conflicts between major powers. The bloc has not only maintained the peaceful development of the region, but also served as a buffer in the strategic competition among the major powers in East Asia and the "Indo-Pacific region". It has become a successful example of regional cooperation in Asia.

The cooperation mechanisms promoted by China in its neighborhood regions are neither exclusive nor confrontational. Take the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as an example. The establishment of the SCO was intended to build a new type of cooperative relations with Russia and the Central Asian countries, and to create a peaceful, stable and developing region guided by a vision for common and cooperative security. Today, the SCO has become a new type of regional cooperation organization. Its member states have created a regional security and development environment through consultation and cooperation, and achieved win-win results.

China actively participates in and promotes regional cooperation in addition to active engagements in cooperation with regions that are geographically not close to it. For example, China has actively promoted cooperative relations with Africa, Latin America and other regions, and promoted the establishment of cooperation mechanisms such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, the Forum of China and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, and the China-Pacific Island Countries Economic Development and Cooperation Forum. China's regional cooperation strategy does not target third parties, nor does China force other countries to take sides. It focuses on the cooperation agenda jointly set by parties involved to achieve common development.

In response to the new trends and features of regional cooperation, China adheres to the principle of open and inclusive regional cooperation, and to the direction of cooperative and common development. On the one hand, Beijing takes the initiative to align with existing regional cooperation mechanisms. For instance, China has filed applications to join the Comprehensive and Progressive

Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement, in an effort to align with new rules. On the other hand, while making its own rules and laws on digital security, China has advocated joint protection of data security and ensuring the security of the digital economy.

In response to the strong concern of all countries for development security and social security in the process of cooperation, China should give greater priority to common development and the planning and implementation of cooperative development agendas. For example, it is important to build a more secure system for capital and supply chains, and develop an identity-based guarantee mechanism.

At present, the US' considerations are mainly focused on strategic competition with China, a zero-sum strategic game in the eyes of Washington. In the context of this strategic competition, the US has advocated decoupling from China in terms of key technologies and important supply chains by promoting a "values-based" cooperation that excludes China. Participants include both US allies and opportunist countries that have joined out of self-interest considerations. But most countries will not follow the lead of the US, considering the importance of their relationship with China. Instead, they will make multiple choices rather than taking sides. In response, China should adopt a more flexible approach in participating in and promoting regional cooperation, prioritizing cooperation over projects and formulating functional rules. For example, considering the importance of supply chains, China can actively promote efforts to build up the security of supply chains and formulate rules on how to maintaining the supply chain under normal and abnormal circumstances.

While fully supporting the effectiveness of the multilateral system, China should prioritize participation in and the promotion of regional economic cooperation in its foreign economic strategy, and come up with different plans and agendas in accordance with different situations, characteristics and interests in different regions, in order to actively respond to changes in the international political and economic situation.

The author is a member of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the dean of the Institute of International Studies at Shandong University. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

WOLFGANG RÖHR

## Recalibration required

Europe must find its own place among the powers of the world

An interview with French President Emmanuel Macron during his state visit to China in April has given rise to a renewed debate about European strategic autonomy. Macron stated that Europe should take the role of a third power alongside the United States and China instead of becoming a vassal to one of them. He was criticized in Europe and the US for allegedly endangering transatlantic solidarity at a time when the Ukraine conflict required full NATO cohesion. But he also found support.

The issue is not new. The current German chancellor Olaf Scholz stated already as vice-chancellor of the Merkel government in 2021 that "the largest foreign policy challenge of the next years is that Europe has to find its place between the powers of the world — the US, China, Russia, but also soon other powerful Asian, African or Latin American states".

Then German chancellor Angela Merkel had herself repeatedly emphasized European independence. In 2017 she ruffled feathers by stating that "the times during which we could completely rely upon others are over". She also pointed out that European and German interests would often, but not always, square with those of the US.

The Scholz government has continued to follow this line. Before his visit to China in November, Scholz wrote that Germany has no interest in the building of global political blocs and that demands for the isolation of China were misguided. Later he stressed that Europeans should remain independent actors in an increasingly multipolar world; and that Germany and Europe had to play active roles in a balanced partnership with the US. He denied that a new Cold War between the US and China was approaching, and said that Germany and Europe did not aim to pit democracies against non-democracies.

Macron may have a point in believing that European strategic autonomy has already been achieved. No one in Europe doubts that the EU has to find its own voice in world affairs and not let its views be shaped by others, whether they are in Washington,

Beijing, or elsewhere. Economic developments make this imperative. In 2022, four European countries figured among the 10 largest world economies. By 2050, this number will halve: Germany and the United Kingdom, taking places nine and ten. The most important global economies will be China, the US, India, Indonesia and Brazil. Even the largest European economy, Germany, will not be able to make an impact alone. That is why just a few days ago nine EU member states set up a group to promote qualified majority voting on foreign policy issues.

However, agreeing on speaking with one voice does not clarify which positions to take. Currently, European states often do not see eye to eye on the policies they should pursue. Some hold that Europe should base itself on a variation of a theme well-known from the Cold War: Keep the US in, Russia down, and China out. Others claim that this would lead to more or less blindly following the US and getting involved in crises in which Europe has little, or no, interest.

The "transatlanticists" point to the historical links between the US and Europe, the positive role the US played in the reordering of Europe in the 1990s, its overarching significance for European security and the close economic relationship underpinned by the "Washington Consensus": balanced budgets, little regulation, open borders for goods and capital, and fair competition. That was all true.

Others, however, stress that the Joe Biden administration, while still supporting European security, has effectively canceled this Consensus: Under the Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors Act (CHIPS Act) and the Inflation Reduction Act, more than \$1 trillion in mostly borrowed federal funds will be invested in computer chips and green technologies — as long as the precursors are sourced in the US and companies do not have too much business with China. That is a violation of WTO rules and could lead to European companies decamping to the US. And it is the Biden administration, widely seen as pro-European, that pursues these policies. What could happen under a future president who might be elected as early as next year? After all, with Trump the US already had a president who

described NATO as obsolete and the EU as a foe.

It is therefore imperative for Europeans to recalibrate their foreign policy orientation — not toward Beijing or toward Washington, nor aiming at equidistance between the two. A truly autonomous European foreign policy will have to find a third, independent path, to guide it in a multilateral world in which it should aim at being another power, alongside the US and China and new, upcoming partners such as Brazil, India, Indonesia, Africa and, yes, also one day again, Russia. This should be part of the new China strategy that the German government is currently developing. The upcoming seventh Chinese-German intergovernmental consultations scheduled for June would be a fitting occasion for a first step toward such a new European path.

All significant global issues should be viewed within the framework of this independent policy which should be based on reciprocity. Trade should be fostered, and companies should be left to trade and invest unencumbered by too many government directives. Contacts in science and technology just as in culture should thrive without undue fears of negative foreign influence. Political issues should be decided on the merits of European interests alone. That means — and here, again, Macron is right — that problems which are not important for Europe should not exert undue influence on relations to other states. This, in turn, would mean not to join disputes other countries might have with China — unless, of course, European interests are at stake. Looking at the most important current issue in European politics, the Ukraine crisis, it also means that the EU should continue to stand firm to deal with the challenges emanating from it.

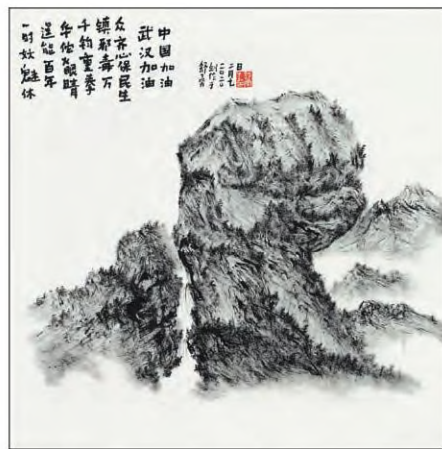
Such an independent and autonomous foreign policy would bring about prosperity for Europe in a 21st century that promises to hold many challenges, but also a multitude of opportunities.

The author is a former member of the German Foreign Service and a researcher at the German Studies Center at Tongji University. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



WU BOHAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

# LIFE



From left: Artist Shu Yong has painted a picture every day since January 2020, including *Fighting! Wuhan*, *Rabbit Running for a Good Fortune*, *Becoming a Butterfly* and *Together for a Shared Future*. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## Artist celebrates Belt and Road, one brick at a time

Installation serves as bridge spanning various cultures, symbolizing cooperation, **Deng Zhangyu** reports.

In 2013, artist Shu Yong produced for the China Pavilion of the Venice Biennale a “great wall” of translucent bricks on which more than 1,500 popular Chinese phrases translated by Google were written. The installation, titled *Guge Bricks*, was created to show cultural bias and misunderstandings caused by translation.

Later the same year, Shu made a gigantic golden bridge comprised of about 20,000 amber bricks to represent his desire to bridge the differences between the East and the West.

The sculpture, *Golden Bridge on Silk Road*, weighing more than 100 metric tons, has been exhibited in many cities both at home and abroad in the past decade, including Milan in Italy and Astana in Kazakhstan.

“It’s a bridge to express the Chinese desire to build a community with a shared future for mankind. It mixes together cultures from different countries and regions involved in the Belt and Road Initiative,” says Shu.

Inside the amber bricks are floral emblems from various locations participating in the initiative. The materials used for the bridge were collected from across the world.

The sculpture was inspired by the BRI, China’s flagship global development project. As its 10th anniversary approaches, Shu is preparing to place the amber bridge in Beijing, which he says will be a major undertaking.

When it was exhibited two years ago in Guangzhou, South China’s Guangdong province, it took about 500 workers a whole year to produce the large-scale sculpture. To set it up took about 20 days.

“It’s much more than a bridge. I hope in the future it can be seen as a cultural symbol of China in the new era,” says the 49-year-old artist, who is also a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference.

At the two sessions in March, Shu came up with a proposal that China should establish a series of national cultural symbols centering on the BRI to help spread the idea of building a community with a shared future. His proposal was selected as a key suggestion from among more than 4,000 by conference members from all walks of life earlier in May.

“As China enters the world stage, it should create Chinese cultural symbols easily recognized by people across the world. Artists should shoulder the mission to be engaged in the building of China’s cultural symbols,” Shu says.

He recalls when he and his child went



Above: Shu’s large-scale sculpture of *Golden Bridge on Silk Road*, made up of about 20,000 amber bricks, is exhibited in Guangzhou, Guangdong province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Below: Shu Yong at the museum named after him in Beijing. LU ZHONGQIU / CHINA DAILY

to a theater to watch a Chinese war movie, his child asked why Superman or Spiderman didn’t show up to save the soldiers who were killed and wounded by bombs in battles to protect their country. At that moment, Shu strongly felt that the country needed its own cultural symbols instead of relying on those introduced from the West.

He even conducted a survey in New York many years ago to learn if people recognized several images or symbols related to China. However, few could do so. Later, he went to Beijing and asked people to name symbols or images related to the United States. In contrast, most were able to.

“Cultural symbols can help a lot in spreading China’s culture across the world. China continues to deepen its connection with the world, especially this year, when we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the BRI. So, setting up a



series of national cultural symbols is an urgent and indispensable task,” Shu says.

Shu’s golden bridge has been exhibited in many events related to the initiative. He has invited celebrities and ambassadors across the world to sign the amber bricks and sent amber balls with silk flowers embedded inside to people who did so. These acts of interaction with the sculpture link people to the work.

“People who sign the bricks become part of the bridge and participants in its construction. It’s just like the initiative — many nations and regions engaged in building the Belt and Road together,” says Shu.

Shu talked with China Daily at an art museum named after him in Beijing. The five-story structure displays Shu’s artworks produced in the past decades, covering paintings, installations, sculptures and photos.

Shu was born in Hunan province, where he learned ink painting when he was a child. When he enrolled in the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, he chose oil painting as his major. However, the artist says he never sets limitations on his art. Inspired by versatile artists like Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, he hopes his art can be diversified.

Since January 2020, Shu has painted a picture every day. No matter how busy he is or where he is, he completes the task. He has produced more than 1,200 paintings.

The subjects vary, depending on his immediate experiences. He centered on the pandemic after the COVID-19 outbreak. From abstract style to landscape paintings, he created a variety of works paying tribute to the heroes fighting the pandemic. During the Beijing Winter Olympics last year, he blended imagery such as the Olympic and Paralympic mascots Bing Dwen Dwen and Shuey Rhon Rhon with various traditional Chinese cultural elements.

This year, he drew a series of rabbits to celebrate the Chinese Lunar New Year.

Shu takes brushes and ink with him everywhere and always draws late at night. He once painted at an ink store and spent the night there when he lost his supplies.

Many of his friends don’t understand why he has to spend so much time on these daily paintings since his early works have already ensured his fame.

“I believe that drops of water can outlast stone. The act of creating is self-sublimation for me, just like the building up of national cultural symbols. It needs the continuous efforts of generations,” says Shu.

The artist plans to build amber bridges in various locations along the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road based on the designs of local bridges.

“I know it will be a long-term project. I am prepared to work until the last minute of my life,” he says.

According to Jiang Yingchun, general manager of Poly Culture Group, a major State-run cultural institution, “Shu’s works usually combine elements of China’s political, economic, social and media landscape, and vividly reflect the development process of the country.”

Shu says: “Art should help improve society and echo the time the artist lives in.”

Contact the writer at [dengzhangyu@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:dengzhangyu@chinadaily.com.cn)

## Tea-tree movie gives villagers a chance to branch out

CHONGQING — Though trees cannot speak verbally, Evan Raymond Luchkow, a 32-year-old Canadian filmmaker who graduated from Vancouver Film School, made ancient tea trees the protagonists in his latest project, allowing them to “tell” their story about interacting with locals in Chashu village, Southwest China’s Chongqing.

As a participant in the Looking China annual youth film project, which invited eight young foreign directors to film Chongqing in April, Luchkow interpreted the topic through his lens — focusing on a sleepy village that planted tea trees thousands of years ago.

When the Canadian stepped into the village in Delong township, surprises kept coming. The luxuriant local tea trees are so tall that people need ladders to pick their leaves. The harmonious coexistence between people and nature in the village also struck him.

“In Canada, the preservation of nature sometimes keeps people separated from it. On our way into this village, I saw lots of houses cradled by these mountains, which was truly surprising,” says Luchkow, adding that the view was just like a postcard.

Soon he was able to set the tone for the filming, which depicts a silent dialogue between trees and people.

For thousands of years, from generation to generation, the tea trees have been receiving people’s care and protection. People sing folk songs, expand tree plantation areas and protect the trees from any risk of logging.

In turn, the trees benefit locals by yielding good-quality tea leaves and thus bringing them tangible income. Now, in Delong, the tea trees cover a total of over 8,200 mu (547 hectares) and are about to yield an annual revenue of 150 million yuan (\$21.66 million) this year.

Last year alone, there were around 200 households in the village that own tea trees covering more than 0.33 hectares, with an

average annual income of 50,000 yuan per household.

“I think if the trees could speak, they might want to deliver their gratitude to villagers. That’s what I tried to express via the film,” says the director.

During the period when the film was being shot, there was also a seminar held in Nanchuan district, Chongqing. Many experts were discussing the history of tea trees in Delong.

Meanwhile, at a black tea company, Chongqing Jinshanhu Agricultural Development, Wu Ke, a 33-year-old production manager, was busy processing tea leaves picked at

around the time of the Qingming Festival in April.

“With the help of the professors and local publicity, I just feel so lucky to do this job,” says Wu, adding that his father and grandfather didn’t know much about marketing channels and only bartered the tea for other goods, instead of raking in big profits.

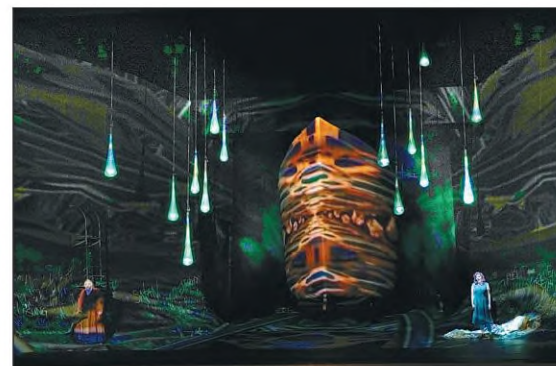
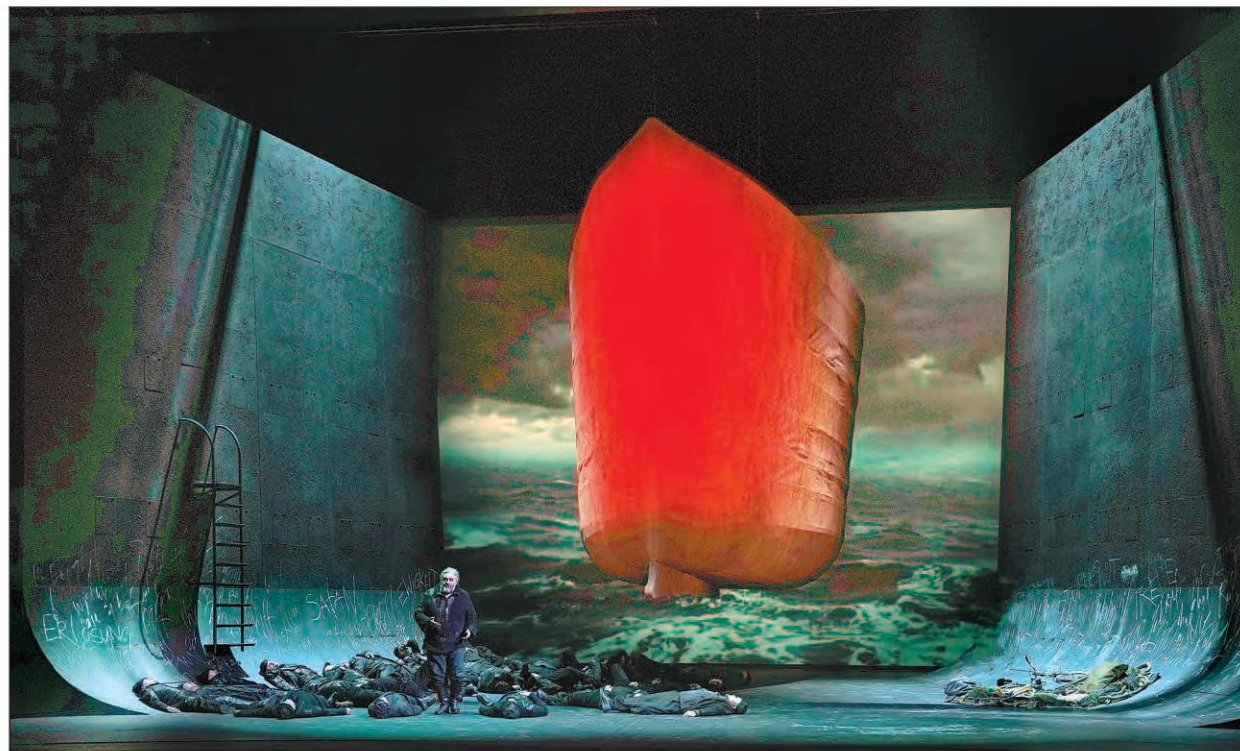
Wu is not the only one who chooses to stay in their hometown and do their best to protect and utilize the tea trees. Luchkow’s film, *The Tree Listens*, tells the millennia-long story of local villagers who actively guarded the clean water and green mountains.

In the process of documenting the tea village’s history, Luchkow also found that well-known Canadian coffee brand Tim Hortons had extended its footprint to Chongqing. While local Chinese take to coffee nowadays, his friends back in Canada enjoy Chinese tea a lot.

“The communication between tea and coffee is like the exchanges between people. That’s why I chose to participate in this program for the second time,” he says, adding that it has given him a chance to visit places he wouldn’t normally, and to see the diversified culture China has.

XINHUA

## LIFESHANGHAI



Produced by the Shanghai Opera House and the Theater Erfurt in Germany, Richard Wagner's opera *The Flying Dutchman* will be staged at the fifth China Opera Festival in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Monday. It features widely praised stage design with a dramatic giant red ghost ship (above). Xu Zhong (below), president of the Shanghai Opera House, will conduct the production. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## WAGNER'S SEA OF ETERNITY

Opera house revives a symbolic production that highlights struggle against a doomed fate, **Zhang Kun** reports.

**T**he *Flying Dutchman*, a Richard Wagner's opera coproduced by the Shanghai Opera House, will be staged on Monday, as one of 24 productions being showcased at the fifth China Opera Festival in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. The opera will also be performed at the Shangyin Opera House in Shanghai, on May 20-21.

Performed in German with Chinese and English subtitles, it premiered in China at the Guangzhou Opera House in Guangdong province on May 5. The opera was jointly produced by the Shanghai Opera House and the Theater Erfurt in Germany in 2018.

The revival this year features the widely praised stage design with a giant red ghost ship and a cold atmospherically chilly cabin, with the same leading male actor American baritone Todd Thomas.

The premiere at the Guangzhou Opera House marked the first performance of Chinese soprano He Hui as a Wagner heroine in a full-size opera production.

"In the past two decades of my opera career I have always tried to make new breakthroughs, but at the same time I have carefully protected my voice," He said before a rehearsal in Shanghai.

"I am very cautious in selecting my roles and productions. By now I believe I can make the bold step to embrace Wagner," He says.

She adds that in some Italian operas,

you feel as if the orchestra plays to accompany the singer, while in a Wagner's opera, the human voice is like an instrument, whose sound intertwines with that of the orchestra.

"This makes a huge demand on the strength, fortitude and technique of voice control. To use your voice as an instrument, you need to constantly know yourself and tap your potential to use it well.

"I am glad that with my age and experience, I now have the opportunity to present a most dramatic Wagner's opera. I think my voice is bigger, heavier and more penetrating than ever, and more appropriate for the performance of a Wagner piece," she says.

In the past three years, the soprano presented a series of opera productions with the Shanghai Opera House, such as *Aida*, *Turandot*, *Tosca*, *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci*.

"I am very honored to be able to present my first Wagner opera with the Shanghai Opera House in the 25th year of my career," she says.

The leading actor, Thomas, recalls his first visit to China in 2018, as it was the first time he played the Dutchman (the ship's captain) in the Wagner's opera. The audience's rapturous applause encouraged him.

"Every night, in the restroom I remembered there were people congregating for autographs and that doesn't happen a lot in the United States," he says.

“Wagner is a genius in music history who started an opera revolution. ... All of this means a Wagner production poses challenges for producers, performers and audiences.”

Xu Zhong, president of the Shanghai Opera House

### If you go

**The Flying Dutchman**  
7:30 pm, May 15  
Liping Grand Theater,  
the crossing of Wangmei Road and  
Xinghe Road South, Linping district,  
Hangzhou, Zhejiang province.  
0571-8850-6686.

7:30 pm, May 20-21  
Shangyin Opera House,  
10 Fenyang Road, Xuhui district,  
Shanghai.  
021-2415-8158.



This time he canceled the plan for a new Donizetti production in the US to make the China tour. Playing the revival is different from five years ago, he says. "Live theater is not like the movies. ... This is what's exciting about live theater. It is the same opera and same music, but the chemistry is different."

He goes on to praise the Shanghai Opera House for the "magnificent" sound of the chorus and says the soloists are "wonderful singers with strong work ethics".

Composed in 1841, *The Flying Dutchman* is based on German author Heinrich Heine's novel *The Memoir of Mister von Schnabelewopski*, which retells the European maritime legend about a doomed ship that sails forever.

Heine added to the tale a key plot that the Dutch captain can only be redeemed by the love of a faithful woman. Wagner took the theme that Heine used as irony and satire to create an opera about redemption and faithful love.

In the opera, the heroine Senta lunges off the cliff to fulfill her vow to be faithful to the Dutchman, and successfully redeems him from the curse.

The opera marked a turning point in Wagner's career, ushering in more maturity in his works. It is also one of the most popular Wagner operas.

This year being the 210th anniversary of the birth of Wagner, the Shanghai Opera House decided to revive the production and take it on a tour of three Chinese cities, with five shows in May.

"Wagner is a genius in music history who started an opera revolution," Xu Zhong, president of the Shanghai Opera House and conductor of the production, says.

"Meanwhile, his masterpieces demand expert technique, persistence and the physical prowess of singers and instrumentalists, as well as the control of the conductor.

"Producing a Wagner's opera brings challenges to the stage design and hardware equipment of an opera house, too. All of this means a Wagner production poses challenges for producers, performers and audiences. It takes a strong team to make a quality Wagner production," Xu says.

While having top-level international artists, such as Thomas and He, is important to a successful production, Xu says it is equally important to push emerging artists to develop rapidly.

"We have grown into a stronger company and accumulated more experience in big international productions. We are more confident than five years ago when we collaborated with the Theater Erfurt to make the first production of *The Flying Dutchman*.

"In September, we will collaborate with the Bayerische Staatsoper to create another Wagner's opera, *Lohengrin*, which is even more challenging," Xu says.

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## Conservatory shows its range with two works at festival

By ZHANG KUN in Shanghai

The Shanghai Conservatory of Music is presenting two opera productions at the ongoing China Opera Festival.

The festival is a triennial event founded by the then Ministry of Culture in 2011.

It started in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on May 9 and will run until May 26. It features 24 opera productions from all over China.

The conservatory is the only educational institution with two productions on the program list of the festival this year.

The first is the classical opera, Giuseppe Verdi's *La Traviata*, which was produced by the conservatory and Theater Kiel from Germany and had two performances.

It was staged on Wednesday and Thursday.

The conservatory decided to revive *La Traviata* as this year marks the 210th anniversary of the birth of Verdi. The opera was also performed at the Shangyin Opera House, a part of the conservatory, on Friday and Saturday.

The other is *A Love Ballad of Kangding*, an original opera about the construction of the highway from Sichuan province to the Tibet autonomous region and Qinghai province in the 1950s that will be presented on Thursday and Friday.

Since its opening in 2019, the Shangyin Opera House has been focusing on developing young talent and being a bridge between the conservatory and the public, as well as a hub for international exchanges, says Liao Changyong, president of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music.

"International collaborations



Produced by the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and Theater Kiel from Germany, Giuseppe Verdi's *La Traviata* entertains audiences at the China Opera Festival held in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. PROVIDED BY SHANGHAI CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

have not only helped students to achieve academic and technical progress, but also have nurtured their music aesthetics and broadened their international vision as well," says Wang Kaiwei, a professor of the conservatory, who is also a producer of the opera.

*A Love Ballad of Kangding* is based on a popular love ballad involving Tibet. In the 1950s, more than 110,000 highway engineers and workers participated in the construction of the Sichuan-Tibet-Qinghai highway.

Known as the steepest highway in China at that time, the road was built in the mountainous region under difficult conditions.

"Many people lost their lives in the process, and we want to commemorate this chapter in Chinese history, as well as the contribution and sacrifice of the workers," says Liao.

Liao points out that it was challenging for the conservatory to present two opera productions involving more than 400 people at around the same time, and that the curriculum and rehearsal plans had to be adjusted to make things work.

However, he believes that this challenge will go a long way to helping prepare their students for the real world before graduation.

"We hope our students can accumulate some formal performance experiences before they graduate and get a job in a theater company," he says.

"In the past, it took about three years for a newly graduated musician or singer in a company to become qualified for the position. If they have enough experience at school, they would be able to take important positions as principals and leading actors much sooner."

## LIFE

## A series of key works

Legendary pianist Rudolf Buchbinder embarks on a run of concerts, during which he will perform all 32 of Beethoven's piano sonatas, **Chen Nan** reports.

Few musicians have engaged with Ludwig van Beethoven's music as intensively, and over such a long period, as legendary pianist Rudolf Buchbinder.

With three recordings of the German composer's 32 piano sonatas and performing all 32, in cycles, all over the world more than 60 times, from May 9-17, Buchbinder is presenting Beethoven's complete piano sonatas at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing.

"In every sonata, Beethoven expressed his emotions, like anger and joy. I am never finished with this music. I learn something new every time I play the sonatas and it is a challenge every time," says the pianist.

"For a very long time, I have been performing Beethoven's music, which has been a personal journey for me. Like my wife, these works have accompanied me for years," adds Buchbinder.

Between 1783 and 1823, Beethoven wrote the piano sonatas, which were dramatic in character and demanding of technique.

It is not the first time that Buchbinder plays the complete collection of Beethoven's piano sonatas in China. In 2021, he played them all during the 15th Beijing Music Festival. Welcomed like an old friend by Chinese audiences, he has performed Beethoven's piano concertos, Nos. 1, 2 and 5 with the Vienna Philharmonic at the NCPA and, from 2016-19, he played in China for four consecutive years, including a concert with German orchestra the Staatskapelle Dresden at the NCPA in 2016. In 2019, again with the Staatskapelle Dresden, he played Beethoven's five piano concertos in two concerts, of which he was also the conductor.

"My first recital in Beijing was in 1981. I flew from Vienna to London and from London to Beijing. However, my suitcase stayed in London, so I had to buy lots of things after arriving in Beijing," recalls the pianist. "I can still remember that I bought pajamas and some clothes for the concert."

Born in 1946 in Leitmeritz, a market town in what was then Czechoslovakia, and later moving to Vienna, the pianist listened to Beethoven as a child, "who seemed to be there all the time," he says.

"There was a radio sitting on top of the piano in my family home. A



**Above:** Pianist Rudolf Buchbinder gives an interview at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing on May 9.

**Right:** Buchbinder is presenting Beethoven's 32 piano sonatas at the NCPA from May 9-17. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



My life is a life for music. Beethoven has been a big part of it."

**Rudolf Buchbinder,** renowned pianist



photo of Beethoven was hanging on the wall. When I was a little child, about 2 or 3 years old, I saw that photo and listened to the composer's music played on the radio. He (Beethoven) watched me all the time," recalls Buchbinder.

None of his family members had anything to do with music. It was his uncle who saw a piano student recruitment announcement in the newspaper and encouraged Buch-

binder to participate in the audition. At the age of 5, Buchbinder became the youngest student ever to be enrolled at the Vienna Academy of Music and, five years later, he made his stage debut. The interpretations of his classical and romantic repertoire rest on technical foundations established during his studies with Bruno Seidlhofer in Vienna.

As a teenager, Buchbinder gave a recital tour in North and South

America and, in 1966, he won a special prize at the second Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. In the 1970s, he received international acclaim for his recordings of Joseph Haydn's complete piano sonatas and other keyboard works. His reputation as an artist of the utmost integrity and discernment was soon enhanced with the release of the first of three complete recordings of Beethoven's piano sonatas.

"After the first recording of the piano sonatas, I didn't know if I should record them again. A friend of mine said to me: 'You should record them again, because you are a pianist with freedom of expression,'" Buchbinder says.

"My life is a life for music. Beethoven has been a big part of it," he says, adding that his repertoires also include works by many other composers, such as Wolfgang Mozart, Franz Schubert and Johannes Brahms.

Marking Buchbinder's 75th birthday in December 2021, Deutsche Grammophon presented the pianist's complete recording of Beethoven's 32 piano sonatas and five piano concertos.

In 2014, at the Salzburg Festival in Austria, Buchbinder became the first pianist to play all of Beethoven's piano sonatas at a single event, which was recorded live.

"I never listen to my past recordings because music always changes. Each time, I play it differently," says the pianist.

Buchbinder is not only a great pianist, but also attaches great importance to researching source material. His private collection of sheet music includes 39 different editions of Beethoven's complete piano sonatas and an extensive archive of first printings, original editions and copies of the signature piano parts of both piano concertos by Brahms.

"I always tell my students to read books about the composers. For Beethoven, I let them read the composer's earliest will," says the pianist, referring to the "Heiligenstadt Testament" written in 1802, where Beethoven, depressed and unable to hide his increasing infirmity, revealed his deafness and laid bare his soul.

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## Coronation exemplifies how small our world is

The commonly used English phrase "it's a small world" has become quite a cliché, but events in the past few days have truly made me appreciate its real meaning.

The event in question was the recent coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla in London on Saturday.

I was one of the many hundreds of millions of people who witnessed this amazing spectacle, and like the overwhelming majority of the spectators of this once-in-a-lifetime event, I was viewing it on television.

This meant that I literally had a front-row seat to a ceremony which



**Ian Morrison** Second Thoughts

has been virtually unchanged for centuries, the significant moment of the crowning of Britain's new king and his queen consort.

The coronation of a new monarch is a significant moment in the life of many British people,

marking the official confirmation of the nation's head of state.

But it is something that, until the 20th century, very few of us actually saw. Until that time, the opportunity to see this impressive event was confined to a select group of people, such as members of the royal family, aristocrats and the nation's leaders.

All that was changed by the profound developments in mass communication in the 20th century, particularly the advent and development of cinema and television.

In fact, the first time that an "ordinary" person in Britain could have seen, or heard, the moment of the crowning of their new king was in 1937, with the coronation of King George VI, the grandfather of the current British monarch.

In that year, film cameras were allowed inside London's Westminster Abbey to record the event for cinema newsreels for the first time. It was also the first time that the coronation ceremony was broadcast on the radio, by the BBC.

But, although most people regard the 1953 coronation of Queen Elizabeth II to be the first "televised coronation", part of the event in 1937 was actually broadcast by the BBC Television Service in its first major outside broadcast since it started regular transmissions in November 1936.

Although the television cameras were not permitted access to Westminster Abbey, the fledgling broadcaster covered the coronation procession and the impressive military parade, which took place at the newly crowned king returned from the Abbey to the royal residence at Buckingham Palace.

At the time, the television coverage was only seen by around 10,000 people, as the BBC only broadcast to London and its surrounding areas. So in many ways, 1953 was the true game-changer as TV cameras were allowed into the Abbey and virtually the entire ceremony was witnessed by millions of people from the comfort of their own homes throughout the length and breadth of Britain.

However, what was truly amazing about the coronation of King Charles III was that this was the first time that this centuries-old ceremony had a really global audience witnessing it as it happened.

Even in 1953, communications technology had not reached a sufficient stage of development for the live and simultaneous broadcasting of television to other parts of the world, as it was several years before the launch of the first satellites which offered the ability to do this.

The fact that I could sit on my sofa, many thousands of kilometers away from those events in London on Saturday and see the crowning of my new king as it actually happened really brought this fact home to me.

It made me truly appreciate that we are now really living in such a "small world".

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## Tributes pour in for renowned, prolific filmmaker

By XU FAN  
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Internationally recognized Chinese director Pema Tsenden died of sudden illness in the Tibet autonomous region on Monday at the age of 53, according to an obituary released by the China Academy of Art, where the filmmaker had worked as a professor since 2021.

A day before his passing, Pema Tsenden, of the Tibetan ethnic group, reportedly felt uncomfortable while shooting a new movie in Naktar county of Lhokha city in Tibet. Early Monday morning, he was sent for treatment at a local hospital in the county and later transferred to Lhasa, but passed away due to heart disease, according to The Beijing News.

His last message on social media was posted to his WeChat account at 5:23 pm on Sunday. The message reads, "Congratulations to the young filmmakers", and includes three pictures that show young Tibetan director Gegyal Pema's film *Gift* earning a nomination at the official selection of the Indian International Short Film Festival Awards.

Born into a herder's family in Guide county of the Hainan Tibetan autonomous prefecture in Qinghai province in 1969, Pema Tsenden initially worked as a primary school teacher and, later, as a government employee. After discovering his passion for art, in the early 1990s, Tsenden started publishing literary works, such as *Enticement: Stories of Tibet*. At the age of 33, he sought to further his interest in cinema by quitting his job to study at the Beijing

Film Academy.

Pema Tsenden demonstrated his unique examination of Tibetan life and culture in his directorial debut *The Silent Holy Stones*, a short, 30-minute film made during his study in Beijing. The work was later adapted into a feature film of the same name, earning him a best directorial debut gong at the 25th Golden Rooster Awards and obtaining a nomination at South Korea's Busan International Film Festival in 2005.

Since then, Pema Tsenden had written and directed a series of highly acclaimed and award-winning Tibet-themed films, varying from *The Search* (2009) and *Old Dog* (2011) to *Tharlo* (2015). With his movies regularly shown during international festivals, in 2018, Pema Tsenden won the best script award in the Horizons section at the 75th Venice Film Festival for his movie *Jinpa* and the best picture for his feature film *Balloon* at the second Hainan Island International Film Festival in 2019.

Renowned ethnic Tibetan writer Tashi Dawa once praised Pema Tsenden as the "double peaks" of Tibetan literature and cinema. Also receiving dozens of awards, Pema Tsenden's literary works have been translated into multiple languages, including English, French, Spanish and Japanese, thus providing foreign readers with a deeper understanding of Tibet.

The sudden passing of Pema Tsenden has caused widespread mourning among fans of art house cinema and members of the domestic film industry.

Chen Gang, director of the department of film and media at



**Top:** Director Pema Tsenden, who passed away on Monday at 53. **Above:** A poster of the director's 2019 directorial effort *Balloon*. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Beijing Normal University, says that he couldn't believe his eyes when he read the news on Monday morning, as he had seen Pema Tsenden's WeChat Moments post the day before.

Describing Pema Tsenden as "a great person", he tells China Daily that the university had once planned to invite the director — who had already given some

speeches at the institution — to conduct a workshop and guide college students in their filmmaking endeavors. "It's a pity that the director still had quite a few works that he planned to shoot," he says.

During his final days, Pema Tsenden was leading a crew on the shoot for his new movie, *Have a Nice Trip*, a romance about two travelers who fall in love during a trip to one of the base camps at Mount Qomolangma, known as Mount Everest in the West, according to the Shanghai-based magazine *Xinmin Weekly*.

The prolific director had two other movies that were yet to be completed. One of them is *Snow Leopard*, which finished shooting last year and was scheduled to complete postproduction in October. The other is *Stranger*, starring Huang Xuan, which tells the story of a man riding a Harley Davidson motorcycle on a quest to find a woman in Tibet.

"I have written and deleted so many words repeatedly, and I feel that none of them can express my current feelings. ... We discussed life and death, reincarnation and impermanence, but I still couldn't face your departure. In my lifetime, I will always cherish our memories together," actor Huang wrote on Sina Weibo.

In a statement released by the China Academy of Art on Tuesday, it was noted that Pema Tsenden, who had worked in the film industry for around 20 years, was entering his most fertile period of creativity, being capable of producing a movie almost every year and writing a novel every few months. It also revealed that Pema Tsend-