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CHINA DAILY

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Sino-Australian trade talks to foster business confidence

By ZHONG NAN
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The resumption of economic and trade dialogues between China and Australia will offer institutional support and create more opportunities for business cooperation on both sides, experts and industry leaders said on Monday.

Their remarks came after Chinese Commerce Minister Wang Wentao and Australian Trade Minister Don Farrell held the 16th China-Australia Joint Ministerial Economic Commission in Beijing on Friday, according to a statement released by China's Ministry of Commerce over the weekend.

This was the first in-person meeting between trade and commerce ministers of the two countries since 2019.

During the meeting, Wang called on Australia to make joint efforts to expand common interests, and urged the two countries to address each other's concerns on the basis of equality and mutual benefits.

In a statement released on Saturday, Farrell said the two sides agreed to step up dialogues under their existing free trade agreement and other platforms to stabilize the trading relationship, and discussed opportunities for further cooperation, including on climate change, digital trade and e-commerce, and the reform of the World Trade Organization.

The renewed engagement between the two countries signifies an improvement in bilateral business ties, said Zhou Mi, a senior researcher at Beijing-based Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

The high-level dialogues will offer institutional guarantees, foster confidence among businesses and build stable expectations, Zhou said.

Affected by certain political factors, China-Australia trade dropped by 3.9 percent year-on-year to \$220.92 billion in 2022, data from China's General Administration of Customs shows. However, total trade value surged 10.9 percent on a yearly basis to \$58.79 billion in the first quarter of this year.

The growing foreign trade figures during this period indicate that China-Australia trade and economic

relations have entered a phase of substantial improvement, with Australian wheat, cotton and iron ore, in addition to Australian coal, all expanding exports to China, said Chen Hong, director of the Australian Studies Centre at East China Normal University in Shanghai.

"There are also positive signs of advancement in the China-Australia trade disputes over barley, wine and lobster," Chen said. "The previous Australian government tied its foreign policy excessively to the United States, causing a major shock to the China-Australia economic and trade relationship, which ultimately hurt the Australian economy."

Therefore, a long-term and effective friendly relationship with China is conducive to the development of bilateral business ties, he added.

Since global headwinds have affected the Australian economy and labor market due to its small population size and scattered manufacturing sector, China could be the best partner for Australia to help it deal with its current challenges, said Zhang Yongjun, deputy chief economist at the China Center for International Economic Exchanges in Beijing.

Jakob Stausholm, CEO of Rio Tinto, an Australian mining giant, said he is quite optimistic on the outlook for iron ore in the short term. There is a clear connection — when China's growth strengthens, the demand for iron ore goes up.

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

Eager to enlarge its sales in China, Bellamy's Organic, an Australian provider of organic baby milk powder and other baby food products, said it will follow the trend and draw young mothers through new media marketing, joint intellectual property activities and private domain traffic marketing this year.

"We will invest more resources into the marketing of middle and high-end formula milk powder, and snacks and supplementary food, to further diversify our offerings," said Daisy Liu, Bellamy's marketing general manager for China.



President Xi Jinping and visiting Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki inspect a guard of honor of the Chinese People's Liberation Army during a welcoming ceremony on Monday, before their talks at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

Xi hails strong ties with Eritrea

Isaias visits China ahead of 30th anniversary of nations establishing diplomatic relations

By XU WEI
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President Xi Jinping underlined on Monday China's readiness to explore cooperation with Eritrea in infrastructure development, telecommunications, agriculture, mining and fisheries as part of broader steps to promote win-win cooperation and common development.

In talks with visiting Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki in Beijing, Xi reaffirmed Beijing's commitment to supporting the African nation in safeguarding its sovereignty, security and development interests and opposing foreign interference in its internal affairs and imposition of unilateral sanctions.

China will encourage more businesses to invest in Eritrea and continue with aid programs, including sending medical teams and agricultural experts, he told Isaias, who started his state visit to China on Sunday.

Isaias' visit to China came ahead of the 30th anniversary of the two

nations' establishment of diplomatic ties on May 24.

Xi noted that both nations have always trusted and supported each other over the past three decades, and Beijing, as a trustworthy friend of Eritrea, has always viewed and developed bilateral ties from a strategic and long-term perspective.

In an international landscape full of instability and uncertainties, ensuring the sound growth of ties between China and Eritrea is not only in keeping with the common and long-term interests of both nations, but is also instrumental to safeguarding regional peace and international fairness and justice, he said.

Xi underscored China's readiness to deepen the bilateral friendship, both as friends and comrades, and take the bilateral strategic partnership to a new level.

China is willing to conduct exchanges with Eritrea on experiences in state governance, and support each other in jointly opposing unilateralism and hegemonic acts

in order to uphold the common interests of both nations and those of developing countries, he said.

He called on both nations to utilize frameworks and platforms such as the joint building of the Belt and Road, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation and the Outlook on Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa, in advancing win-win cooperation.

The president expressed appreciation for Eritrea's support of China's efforts to evacuate its citizens from Sudan, which he said spoke volumes for the strong bond of friendship between the two nations.

Xi expounded on the need for China and Africa to build up their solidarity and tackle challenges of the times under the new circumstances, saying that mutual respect, understanding, support and help will forever be the focus of China-Africa friendship.

He noted that Africa is "a land full of hope", adding that cooperation between China and Africa plays an important role in guiding South-South cooperation and international cooperation with the continent.

He reaffirmed China's resolve to

work with African nations to carry forward the traditional friendship, consolidate strategic mutual trust and provide new opportunities for the continent, as China moves forward with high-quality growth and follows its own path to modernization.

The Eritrean president emotionally recalled his special attachment to China over the past 50-plus years, saying that his people will never forget the precious support from China in their efforts to win independence and liberation.

China is a great country and any attempt to contain China's development is doomed to failure, he said.

He appealed for stronger cooperation between the two countries and expressed belief that the bilateral strategic partnership will help Eritrea achieve economic and social development.

Premier Li Qiang also held talks with Isaias on Monday.

Trade between China and Eritrea grew by 32.2 percent year-on-year to \$610 million in 2022, with China mainly exporting electronic and mechanical products and importing copper ore and leather products from the African nation.

Alive in memories



Naujaj Buchanan, 2, nestles against a portrait of her godmother, shooting victim Geraldine Talley, across the street from Tops Friendly Market in Buffalo, New York, the United States, on Sunday, which marked the first anniversary of a mass shooting. The racist attack at the grocery store killed 10 people and wounded three others.

LIBBY MARCH / THE BUFFALO NEWS VIA AP See story, page 7

REWARDS REAPED AS AI MAKES RAPID PROGRESS

Technological advances transform computer industry, daily life

By ZHANG ZHOUXIANG
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Just five seconds after Abu was asked to paint a picture of cattle returning to a farm, an image was provided with the reply, "Here it is!". The work of art was truly impressive, as Abu is not a human, but a robot based on artificial intelligence, or AI.

In addition to painting, the robot



can write reports, make video clips, and, at the command of those in its user group, perform all the tasks a human can do on a computer.

Thanks to the development of computer algorithms, the development of AI has accelerated so rapidly

in recent years that it has acquired skills previously thought to be the sole preserve of humans.

Zhou Xiao, an assistant professor at Renmin University of China's Gaoling School of Artificial Intelligence, listed some examples of AI that can be used in daily life, including those that compete with humans in playing games such as Go.

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INSIDE
Japan stymied by its perception of the world
Global Views, page 13

Expanded BRICS would bring widespread benefits

Interestingly, a new "continent" of multiculturalism is in the making in the shape of a strategic expansion of the BRICS grouping of emerging economies — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — with more countries keen to join. The role of China will be important in achieving this goal.

It seems that geopolitics and great statesmanship would be

changed by the expected expansion of BRICS in the future. Its multiculturalism and joint contribution would be a driving force in the converging of countries, communities and commodities to make a new continent through shared prosperity and the China-proposed Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative and Global Civilization Initiative.

WORLD WATCH
By Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan

BRICS, which currently accounts for nearly 42 percent of the world's population and nearly 32 percent of global GDP, has always been committed to multilateral

cooperation and a multipolar world order.

Recently, United Kingdom-based media pointed out that the BRICS collective surpassed the Group of Seven nations in GDP regarding purchasing power parity. Its share of the world's GDP was 31.5 percent, surpassing the G7 nations' 30.7 percent.

About a dozen countries have

sent applications to join BRICS. Obviously, its growing economic power and unity are creating new dynamics for global governance.

Specifically, the BRICS nations have united in developing the New Development Bank. It seems that various countries, exhausted by the political actions and unnecessary requirements of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, are ready for a constructive change.

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PAGE TWO

AI: New job opportunities emerge

From page 1

This game, developed by the AI company DeepMind in October 2015, features a search algorithm, deep neural networks and reinforcement learning — the science of decision-making.

AI can also recognize car registration plate numbers to help police hunt suspects. For example, in 2016, AI could correctly recognize 94 percent of car plate numbers, but a police officer was still required to man a computer screen. By 2020, AI could correctly recognize 99 percent of car plate numbers, doing away with the need for a human. Police forces are also benefiting from the use of robotic dogs.

The recently launched AI-related technology ChatGPT (Generative Pretrained Transformer) uses a natural language transformer algorithm to enable it to “understand” human language.

Wang Jianshuo, founder and CEO of Baixing AI, a company building the basic infrastructure for a world in which bots talk with bots, said, “The way in which this algorithm works is comparable to finding a point in a space.

“In human language, one might need thousands of parameters to describe an object. For example, to be defined, an apple needs parameters such as “edible”, “fruit”, “green” or “red”, and to be grown from a tree. It is generally less than 10 centimeters in diameter. The more parameters there are to define, the more accurately AI can find the right point.”

Wang cited apples and bananas as two examples. With parameters such “edible”, “sweet” and “fruit”, neither humans nor AI could distinguish them from each other.

But with the addition of parameters referring to shape, such as “long” or “round”, such distinction is achieved. Parameters referring to color, such as “red”, “green” or “yellow” enable a more certain judgment to be made.

“That’s also how GPT works — most of the time it takes thousands of parameters for AI to define an object like we humans do. We just do not realize that,” Wang said.

GPT-3 technology, on which ChatGPT and related technologies are based, features an excellent understanding of human language.

Unlike other forms of AI that can only take commands from certain types of sentences, GPT-3 analyzes a sentence like humans do to obtain its true meaning, which enables it to be commanded like talking to a friend.

However, this also means that AI might be misunderstood if given orders without ample clarity and information.

A reporter twice asked BaixingAI, a domestic app, to draw an image titled “crane”. However, the app initially drew a bird flying amid mountains and rivers, before drawing a machine working at a construction site.

In an academic essay on ChatGPT’s potential, prospects and limitations, Zhang Junping, a professor of computer technology at Fudan University in Shanghai, stressed that the amount of data the language model uses is of key importance to AI such as GPT.

“ChatGPT generates responses that match the user’s intent with multiple variations. It captures previous conversational context to answer certain hypothetical questions, greatly enhancing the user experience in conversational interaction mode,” Zhang wrote in the essay.

Swift progress

AI has revolutionized not only the computer industry but also daily life. With the technology making major progress in the games industry over the past five years, people can now play games such as chess or Go with smart forms of AI as opponents to sharpen their own skills.

With image-recognition AI becoming more advanced, it is now easy to use it to unlock a door or make a payment. GPT is also developing rapidly, with the result that the way in which people interact with computers might change.

Chen Jing, a researcher at the Fengyun Institute of Science, Technology and Strategy in Beijing, said the progress made by GPT, and the emergence of GPT4, have fundamentally changed the way in which humans interact with computers.

Computers typically receive instructions from humans mainly through a keyboard or mouse, with the user clicking on an icon, or typing in a command. However, with speech recognition and facial recognition AI technologies becoming more mature in the 2010s, computers can now receive new forms of input, such as sound, Chen said.

GPT4 technology, announced by the research company OpenAI on March 15, takes this process a step further. With its ability to recognize images more accurately and reliably, this technology understands humans more efficiently.

Chen said the technology could enable humans to command machines through gestures. For example, there are already smart appliances on the market that can be given oral instructions. In the future, humans will be able to convey such instructions simply by waving their arms, with this action being caught on camera. Such technology currently exists but is not yet fully developed.

“Imagine leaving home for the office. You have to turn off the lights and lock the door,” Chen said. “With GPT-4, all you need do is wave goodbye to the camera at your gate, and AI will understand you, turn off all unnecessary appliances, close the door, and lock it.

“When you come home, just smile at the camera, and it will ‘wake up’ everything. This is not only because AI recognizes your face based on technology that became fully developed around 2020, but also because it can understand your gestures based on GPT-4.”

Wang said one of the biggest changes AI could bring to humans is the way in which we live.

“There used to be a saying that AI could only do repetitive work, such as copying and pasting, but as it has advanced, such a saying is fast becoming outdated. Today, AI is creative, as shown in the images it draws, and it also saves time and energy for we humans and helps us be more creative.”

Occupational link

Not everybody is delighted with the advances made by AI, and such unhappiness appears to be linked to a person’s occupation.

Xi Li, a 41-year-old painter, who uses a pseudonym, said: “The images drawn by AI are soulless. This technology can help humans, but never replace human hands.

“We don’t call the work produced by AI a drawing — AI is only collecting material online and sticking it together.”

“

With the invention of automobiles, we got drivers, with the invention of airplanes, we got pilots. Living standards in general have been rising with such progress, as productivity has increased.”

Qu Xiaobo, deputy director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences’ Human Resource Center

A science fiction writer, who requested anonymity, said AI can never write as well as professional writers. “There is no yardstick to measure how good an essay is, but those written by AI just do not ring true,” he said.

Qu Xiaobo, a professor at the Institute of Population and Labor Economics and deputy director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences’ Human Resource Center, said some people are worried about losing their jobs to AI.

“This is understandable. Even we professors worry about being replaced by AI professors,” he said.

Qu remains positive about employment prospects in the age of AI. “While diminishing jobs, AI also creates new ones,” he said.

“Its general effect on the market will depend on how many jobs disappear and the number of new ones that emerge. Apparently, AI will increase Total Factor Productivity, or TFP, in society, which means it will theoretically create more jobs than it replaces.”

A search for “AI” on several domestic job websites locates new positions involving AI such as “consultant,” “engineer”

and “tutor”. In Beijing, these jobs cover numerous pages, with the salaries offered ranging from 15,000 to 30,000 yuan (\$2,182 to \$4,365). The average monthly salary for such jobs last year was about 15,000 yuan.

Qu said these newly emerging jobs mainly involve dealing with AI, or what he terms “jobs for human-AI interactions”.

Wang said the rapid development of AI will create new jobs, adding that with every major technological advance, new employment opportunities emerge.

“With the invention of automobiles, we got drivers, with the invention of airplanes, we got pilots. Living standards in general have been rising with such progress, as productivity has increased. The faster AI progresses, the easier life will become,” Wang said.

However, keeping hold of a job remains a challenge for many who lack the skills needed for a new occupation.

Qu said there is a “structural mismatch” in the jobs market, adding that this is not unique to AI, but has been observed throughout human history, as technology makes continual progress. The difficulties graduates currently face in finding

jobs are part of such a “structural mismatch,” Qu added.

To solve this problem, individuals need to keep learning new things to acquire experience and skills. Qu also stressed the role played by the State in providing employees with better training to enable them to constantly update their skills to meet changes in the employment market.

Zhang, from Fudan University, said AI is still far from being sufficiently developed to replace humans.

Addressing the future of AI, all the interviewees in this article see hope.

Zhou said GPT-4 has not performed well in all tests, but it has revolutionized the AI industry by enabling it to understand the human tongue.

“In essence, AI has been invented by humans to assist them,” Zhou added.

Yang Xiaoheng contributed to this story.



TOP NEWS

Guns collected in Serbia



Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic inspects weapons collected as part of an amnesty near the city of Smederevo, Serbia, on Sunday. Serbian authorities on Sunday displayed some of around 13,500 weapons they say have been collected since last week's mass shootings, including automatic weapons, hand bombs and anti-tank grenades. SERBIAN PRESIDENTIAL PRESS SERVICE VIA AP

FBI hit over 2016 Trump probe

Report by special counsel John Durham after 4-year inquiry says 'actual evidence' lacking

By HENG WEILI in New York
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After a four-year investigation, a special counsel report released Monday about the FBI's investigation of former president Donald Trump's 2016 campaign said that neither US law enforcement nor the intelligence community "appears to have possessed any actual evidence of (Russian) collusion in their holdings at the commencement of the Crossfire Hurricane investigation."

The 306-page report marked the end of a probe launched in May 2019 when then-attorney general William Barr appointed John Durham, to probe potential mistakes by the FBI when it started its inquiry into possible contacts between Trump's campaign and Russia.

That investigation was later turned over to special counsel Robert Mueller, who in March 2019 concluded there was no evidence of a criminal conspiracy between Trump's 2016 campaign and Russia, although it was critical of Trump.

The report said that FBI agents were so determined to go after Trump in 2016 that they championed "seriously flawed information" and abandoned their "own principles regarding objectivity and integrity."

"Based on the review of Crossfire Hurricane and related intelligence activities, we conclude that the [Justice] Department and the FBI failed to uphold their mission of strict fidelity to the law in connection with certain events and activities described in this report," Durham wrote.

"Again, the FBI's failure to critically analyze the information that ran

counter to the narrative of a Trump/Russia collusive relationship exhibited throughout Crossfire Hurricane is extremely troublesome," the report said.

On Monday, Trump posted on his Truth Social media platform: "WOW! After extensive research, Special Counsel John Durham concludes the FBI never should have launched the Trump-Russia Probe! In other words, the American Public was scammed, just as it is being scammed right now by those who don't want to see GREATNESS for AMERICA!"

Durham argued that the FBI rushed to investigate Trump even as it proceeded with caution on allegations related to Hillary Clinton, who was the Democratic presidential candidate at the time.

The report said that while the FBI warned Clinton's team when agents learned of possible evidence by a foreign actor to gain influence with her, agents did not give a similar briefing to the Trump campaign before opening an investigation.

As an example of bias by the FBI, Durham said it was unable to corroborate "a single substantive allegation" in a dossier of allegations, some salacious, against Trump compiled by British former spy Christopher Steele.

Despite Durham's scathing report, prosecutions that he brought concluded with two people he charged with crimes being acquitted, while a former FBI lawyer pleaded guilty to changing an email used to help a colleague prepare a court application for surveillance of a Trump adviser.

The FBI issued a statement Monday in response to the report saying that the conduct in 2016 and 2017 that

Durham examined "was the reason that current FBI leadership already implemented dozens of corrective actions, which have now been in place for some time."

"Had those reforms been in place in 2016, the missteps identified in the report could have been prevented. This report reinforces the importance of ensuring the FBI continues to do its work with the rigor, objectivity, and professionalism the American people deserve and rightly expect," the bureau said.

Durham included a recommendation for the FBI: Create a position for an FBI agent or lawyer to oversee politically sensitive investigations. That person would be responsible for challenging every step of such inquiries, including whether officials followed the rules governing applications to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court.

Durham's report was released to Congress without redactions, after it was delivered to Attorney General Merrick Garland on Friday.

House Judiciary Committee Republican Chair Jim Jordan said on Twitter he has invited Durham to testify about his report next week.

Legal analyst Jonathan Turley tweeted: "The Report's elaborate details shred (former FBI director) James Comey's claims of professionalism. Yet, Comey continues to sell books on his vision of 'ethical leadership' after overseeing what Durham calls an abandonment of 'fidelity' to the law and standards of the FBI."

Emerald Robinson, a conservative journalist, was skeptical of the report's impact. "Lots of conservative media folks seem to be happy that Durham 'proved' the FBI/CIA fabricated the Russia Hoax. That's called: coping mechanism. Durham was not supposed to do a book report. He was

supposed to clean up the Deep State. Instead he's part of the cover-up," she wrote.

CNN anchor Jake Tapper said on the air Monday: "The report is now here. It has dropped and it might not have produced everything of what some Republicans had hoped for, but it is regardless devastating to the FBI, and to a degree it does exonerate Donald Trump."

Frank Figliuzzi, a former FBI assistant director and an MSNBC contributor, was critical of Durham. He said on the network Monday that "if the goal, at least the consolation prize, was to hand over a politically tainted document that can be used in sound bites over and over again on FOX News and other platforms — already congressman Jim Jordan has publicly stated he's going to call Durham to testify in Congress and I'll note as others have done — John Durham should be Exhibit A in the so-called 'Weaponization of Government Subcommittee' because he was weaponized by Bill Barr and turned against the very institutions that he comes out of."

The original Russia investigation was opened in July 2016 after the FBI learned from an Australian diplomat that a Trump campaign associate named George Papadopoulos had claimed to know of "dirt" that the Russians had on Clinton in the form of hacked emails.

But revelations over the following months exposed flaws in the investigation, including errors and omissions in Justice Department applications to eavesdrop on a former Trump campaign aide, Carter Page, as well as the reliance by the FBI on a dossier of uncorroborated or discredited information compiled by Steele.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Wuzhou's distinctive tea embraces global growth

By ALEXIS HOOI and ZHANG LI
in Wuzhou, Guangxi

Tea farmer Tan Aiyun still remembers taking the first few sips of her hometown's iconic drink, Liupao tea, as a child.

"When we didn't feel well, because of a cold or some other common ailment, the elders would always grab a handful of leaves from storage and brew a hot cup of comforting tea for us," recalled Tan, now 62.

"Liupao tea was more than a famous Chinese tea. It also was a cure-all, a ubiquitous beverage and an important part of our lives," Tan added.

The tea is said to help lower blood pressure, improve appetite and aid digestion. Its distinctive earthy, woody tones give Liupao tea an aged flavor, the combined result of its leaves and its storage, fermentation and processing methods.

Furthermore, its production process and long history have led to Liupao tea being recognized as a national intangible cultural heritage.

For Tan and many other residents of Liubao, a town in the city of Wuzhou in South China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, it seemed only natural that the dark, or fermented, tea and its traditions, heritage and time-tested health benefits would continue to spread far and wide.

Ideal conditions

The humid, subtropical climate of Liubao and its pristine environment of clear waters and misty mountains combine to form what agricultural specialists say are ideal conditions for cultivating Liupao tea leaves.

Liupao tea, which originated in Wuzhou, has long been popular in overseas Chinese communities. Its fame grew significantly overseas in the second half of the 19th century among Chinese migrants in Southeast Asia, who used it as an herbal remedy in the hot, humid climate.

Over a century ago, Liupao tea was one of the major commodities exported along the old maritime Silk Road to Southeast Asian countries, including Malaysia.

Recent growth in the tea sector is about to expand in traditional overseas markets, said Qin Jialiang, manager of the international sales department at China Tea (Wuzhou), which specializes in exporting Liupao tea to markets such as Malaysia, Singapore and Japan.

The annual output of the Wuzhou-based company reached 3,000 metric tons in 2022, a year-on-year increase of 20 percent, and its output value was about 16 billion yuan (\$2.3 billion) last year, a year-on-year rise of over 45 percent, according to Wuzhou authorities.

"We're pushing to expand in areas like the United States and Europe" from the traditionally strong markets of Southeast Asia and Japan, Qin said.

"More younger consumers are also taking to the tea, and we're leveraging that via innovative channels such as livestreaming, e-commerce and trendy packaging," he said. "Liupao tea products' geographical indication now makes it a regional specialty, which is good for the development of the sector as a whole."

A geographical indication, as defined by the World Intellectual Property Organization, is "a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin".

The number of specialized tea cooperatives in Wuzhou has increased to involve about 270 households, and the Liupao tea industry has provided employment opportunities for more than 50,000 people in the city.

Over the years, tea farmers' income has seen average annual growth of 3,000 yuan per capita, thanks to the establishment and development of tea gardens.

"The development of the Liupao tea industry has effectively promoted economic growth and improved people's livelihoods," Wuzhou Mayor Zhong Changzi said.

The city has cooperated with several countries, including France, Peru and Japan, to develop the Liupao tea industry. In addition, Wuzhou has used the China-ASEAN Expo as a marketing platform for the past seven years, signing agreements for 66 tea projects with a total investment of 13.1 billion yuan, according to local authorities.

Zhong said it is crucial for Wuzhou to strengthen cooperation and exchanges with member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in commerce, trade, culture and tourism, and to organize exchanges and interactions between tea enterprises of the two sides.

Building on the growing brand value of Wuzhou Liupao tea, whose public brand value reached 3.76 billion yuan in 2022, the city has set up nearly 1,000 Liupao tea stores in Beijing, Shanghai and other major cities in China.

Zhong said Wuzhou authorities also have established service facilities and research centers to help the tea industry reach its next stage of development. More efforts will be made to improve production lines, establish a safety supervision and tracking system, and ensure the quality of Liupao tea from cultivation to tea cup, she added.

Tapping opportunities

Wu Yan, head of Wuzhou's chamber of commerce for tea, said the sector is poised to tap the latest opportunities.

"Liupao tea exports were an important part of our maritime trade. Now we have the Belt and Road Initiative and other related developments to naturally extend and build on that," said Wu, who is also president of Tianyu Tea Industry Co.

The company, which has about 60 employees, focuses on Liupao tea production, reaping annual sales revenue of about 147 million yuan. It is investing in an all-inclusive center for tea storage, exhibition and trade, and the center's annual operating income is expected to reach about 126 million yuan.

Tan, the tea farmer, helps train local farmers and residents in Liupao tea cultivation and customs, passing knowledge of the tea to future generations.

"My connection with Liupao tea here goes back to at least four generations," Tan said. "The industry is growing well, with local business up by about 20 to 30 percent a year."

What's more, she said, "We have some of the happiest farmers."

Jiang Wenting contributed to this story

Contact the writers at alexishooi@chinadaily.com.cn



Villagers sift tea leaves in Liubao village in Cangwu, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, in September. LU BOAN / XINHUA

BRICS: Interests of developing nations prioritized

From page 1

Moreover, BRICS has helped to make the New Development Bank attractive to other countries. This unifying approach is immensely valuable because of its potential expansion.

An expanded BRICS would vividly reflect the true spirit of multilateralism, which could guarantee the survival of emerging markets and developing countries and promote regional and global cooperation, social justice, stability, peace and harmony among different communities.

By following the principles of the United Nations and opposing coercion against developing countries, an expanded BRICS could enhance global security governance and safeguard world peace and tranquility in a new era of cooperation, coordination and compassion among all member countries.

Furthermore, an expanded BRICS would promote the true

spirit of solidarity and mutual assistance for the benefit of human cooperation, security and development. South-South cooperation would also be easily implemented on a larger scale, which would subsequently enhance the power of international discourse, agenda setting and rule making, and promote the development of a global governance system in a more just and reasonable direction.

Chinese policymakers have already shown keen interest in BRICS' strategic expansion, which would further promote democracy in international relations, make the world economy more inclusive and rationalize global governance, in order to jointly create a bright and better future.

The role of China would be a balancing act. Chinese policymakers are pushing for BRICS to pursue sustainable development goals and implement the mission of global governance. In this regard, developing countries should work

together to improve global governance and strive for greater space for development under the flagship of BRICS.

President Xi Jinping has urged BRICS members to reject the Cold War mentality, shun confrontation and work together to build a global community of security for all.

It is hoped that BRICS would play a constructive role in dealing with emerging socioeconomic, geopolitical and geostrategic challenges and would be a positive force in the international community. Emerging economies under the flagship of BRICS should brave tough winds to promote peace and development, uphold fairness and justice, and advocate democracy and freedom in the world.

The next BRICS summit will be held on June 2 and 3 in Cape Town, South Africa. Several African countries have shown keen interest in joining the group. The potential addition of members could undeniably reshape the

global economic landscape and inherently update the group's dynamics, reinforcing its importance on the international scene.

This year's BRICS meeting is also expected to further consolidate the China-proposed global initiatives for development, security and civilization, encourage economic recovery, fight climate change, and oppose unilateralism and the widening digital gap between the advanced and developing economies through rational global governance.

Hopefully, BRICS' representation and promotion of the spirit of multiculturalism, economic equality, socioeconomic prosperity, economic sustainability and fair play will bring fair and just order to the realms of power politics.

The author is executive director of the Center for South Asia and International Studies in Pakistan. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CHINA

Nimble fingers



Overseas students studying at Shandong Vocational College of Science and Technology learn traditional Chinese crocheting in Weifang, Shandong province, on Sunday. The students learned how to crochet as national vocational education week kicked off in the city. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Ministry on alert for flood season

Survey combs reservoirs, sluices, dikes nationwide to identify risks in facilities

By HOU LIQIANG
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China has identified risks in its water resources management facilities as it prepares to cope with flooding in some major river basins this year, according to the Ministry of Water Resources.

In a national survey of flood and drought risks, the ministry combed 97,000 reservoirs, 78,000 flood control sluices, 315,000 kilometers of dikes and 98 flood detention areas.

Aside from learning about the general condition of these facilities, a series of risks have been identified, said Zheng Shichen, an official with the ministry's Dam Safety Management Center.

Some reservoirs, for example,

have seen flood control capabilities damaged due to previous deluges that overloaded their intended limits, he said. A number of earth and stone dams with cracks were found to be leaking.

"Some reservoir dams have inadequate safety monitoring and management facilities," Zheng said.

He said the ministry will use both engineering and other methods to eliminate safety hazards in 9,385 small reservoirs.

While measures will be taken to reinforce some facilities, others will be emptied if the risks can't be resolved before flood season, he said.

This year, the ministry plans to strengthen 3,500 small-sized reservoirs found to have problems. A

total of 3 billion yuan (\$431 million) from the central government has been transferred to local governments for reinforcement work on 1,890 facilities.

China's flood season began on March 24, eight days earlier than usual. So far, the flood control situation this year has been tougher than in previous years, said Shang Quanmin, an official with the ministry's department of flood and drought control.

"Torrential rains in some regions in the southern part of the country swelled water levels in 50 rivers in Jiangxi, Hunan, Fujian, Zhejiang and Guangdong provinces and the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region above their danger marks, 40 percent higher than the average for the same period over the past 10 years," he said.

Forecasts show that the country will experience more frequent

regional and periodic drought and flooding this year, with an increase in extreme weather events.

In the majority of regions, flood season had already begun by May. Heavier than usual rainfall is expected to fall in the basins of the Haihe, Pearl, Songhua and Liaohe rivers, as well as the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River, resulting in more severe flooding than normal.

The ministry has organized flood-control drills in some river basins.

Liu Weiping, vice-minister of water resources, attended the drill for the Songhua River on Wednesday.

It involved the testing of flood forecasting, the flood control operation of key reservoirs, flood detention areas, and other command procedures for emergency river basin responses, the ministry said in a news release on Friday.

First domestic mRNA COVID vaccine delivered

By ZHANG YU in Shijiazhuang
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An elderly man in Shijiazhuang, Hebei province, received a booster shot of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine on Saturday. It was the first dose of the domestically developed COVID-19 vaccine based on messenger RNA technology to be delivered, according to its maker, CSPC Pharmaceutical Group.

Developed independently by the drugmaker in Shijiazhuang, the vaccine will be available across the country.

It has been given a priority recommendation as a booster shot for adults in the latest national plan for COVID-19 vaccinations, issued in April by the State Council's joint COVID-19 prevention and control mechanism.

"The mRNA vaccine can produce strong humoral immunity, cellular immunity and long-term immune memory, providing longer sustainable protection for those vaccinated," said Yang Hanyu, vice-chairman of the group, who is in charge of the company's research and development work on vaccines.

He added that the mRNA vaccine displays significant advantages in preventing severe illness and death caused by COVID-19.

It covers the core mutations of

the Omicron variant and can protect against Omicron strains. In clinical trials, the booster dose proved effective at neutralizing Omicron subvariants BA.5, BF.7, BQ.1.1, XBB.1.5 and CH.1.1, according to the group.

In addition, researchers are able to quickly modify mRNA vaccines to target new strains.

"The production of mRNA vaccines does not require adjuvants, virus preparation or recombinant protein preparation, and can be done quickly as long as the virus' genetic sequence is known," Yang said.

According to the group, the vaccine was approved for emergency use by the National Medical Products Administration in March, and was granted clinical trial approval in April 2022.

The key raw materials and auxiliary materials used in the production of the mRNA vaccine are all produced by the company.

"The group is developing new generations of mRNA vaccines in order to counter mutated virus strains, and actively promote the development of other products based on mRNA technology," Yang said, adding that "mRNA technology has broad prospects, and great application in vaccine research and development."

Submersible engineer gets national award

By ZHANG ZHIHAO
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"I am homesick, basking in the bright moonlight, as two ships sail for the Mariana Trench. Innovating and exploring, we strive together, to roam the hadal trench 10,000 meters down."

This poem was written by Yang Shenshen, one of the chief engineers behind China's most advanced deep-sea manned submersible *Fendouzhe*, or *Striver*, during its sea trials in November 2020.

Born in August 1981, Yang has been involved in building all three of the country's record-setting manned submersibles, namely *Jiaolong*, *Shenhai Yongshi* and *Fendouzhe*. He was recently awarded the National May 1 Labor Medal, the top honor awarded to the most outstanding workers.

On Nov 10, 2020, *Fendouzhe* set a national record by diving to a depth of 10,909 meters in Challenger Deep, an 11,000-meter chasm located at the bottom of the Mariana Trench in the western Pacific Ocean.

President Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory letter to the team after they successfully completed sea trials for *Fendouzhe*.

Xi said *Fendouzhe's* success demonstrated that China is capable of conducting scientific exploration and research in the deepest parts of the ocean, and is a reflection of the country's prowess in cutting-edge maritime technology.

He called for scientists and engineers working on deep-sea equipment to continue to contribute to China's rise as a strong maritime



Yang Shenshen

nation, as well as to humanity's understanding of the oceans.

Yang was one of the commanders overseeing the trials. "The success was the result of a fighting spirit

and of perseverance in overcoming difficulties," he said. "We are very proud to be at the global forefront in terms of manned submersible technology capable of diving to the 10,000-meter mark," he said.

The spirit of innovation and exploration helped propel Yang from an assistant engineer to one of China's leading mechatronics experts on manned submersibles in less than two decades.

He joined the *Jiaolong* research team in 2005. Growing up inland, Yang said he felt nervous when he first saw the ocean, and also about making it his career, but he did not let this faze him. Over the years, Yang and his team overcame many technical challenges, ranging from deep-sea lithium batteries to propulsion technology. Their efforts enabled China to master most of the core technologies used in its manned deep-sea submersibles.

Now, Yang said the team is aiming to create a new manned submersible using resin glass that will offer a 360-degree field of view under the sea, unlike traditional submersibles that only have a small viewing window.

"The ocean's depths may be limited, but our desire to explore them is limitless," he said.

Water diversion plays key role in development

By HOU LIQIANG
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China's mega water diversion project, which channels water from the Yangtze River Basin to the drought-prone north, has diverted over 62 billion cubic meters of water, according to the China South-to-North Water Diversion Corporation.

The South-to-North Water Diversion Project has benefited more than 150 million people, the corporation said in a media release on Sunday, and now supplies 75 percent of the water used in Beijing, and 99 percent of the water used in Tianjin.

The project follows three routes: eastern, middle and western. The middle route, which starts at the Danjiangkou Reservoir in Hubei province and runs across Henan and Hebei provinces before reaching Beijing and Tianjin, started operation on Dec 12, 2014.

The eastern route transfers water from Jiangsu province to areas including Tianjin and Shandong province. Its first phase, which



A pumping station on the eastern route of the South-to-North Water Diversion Project in Sihong, Jiangsu province on Friday. FANG DONGXU / FOR CHINA DAILY

serves Jiangsu and Shandong provinces, went into operation in November 2013.

The western route is still in the planning stage.

The corporation stressed the role of the project in supporting economic development and promoting

environmental improvement.

Since the middle and eastern routes were commissioned, they have helped support GDP growth of almost 10 trillion yuan (\$1.4 trillion), it said. The project's enhancement of water capacity has enabled many areas along its routes to

develop new towns and industrial parks.

For example, local authorities in Zhengzhou, capital of Henan, were able to persuade digital products manufacturer Foxconn to build a plant in the city in 2010, as a result of the promised sufficiency of water supplied by the middle route.

The release stated that to date, the middle route has supplied over 100 million cubic meters of water for domestic and industrial use in the Xiong'an New Area.

In total, the project has added almost 10 billion cubic meters to water bodies in North China, helping reverse the decline in groundwater levels, which started in the 1970s.

Baiyangdian Lake, the largest wetland ecosystem in northern China, dried up for five straight years between 1984 and 1989. Thanks to supplementary water provided by the middle route since 2018, however, the lake has expanded from 171 square kilometers to 275 sq km.

"The wetland that is regarded as the 'pearl of North China' has gradually resumed its former vitality," the release stated.

Hong Kong resident given life sentence for espionage

By YANG ZEKUN
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Hong Kong resident John Leung Shing-wan was sentenced to life imprisonment and had his political rights stripped for life for espionage, according to a statement issued by the Suzhou Intermediate People's Court in Jiangsu province on Monday.

The court rendered its verdict on Monday. It also confiscated per-

sonal property worth 500,000 yuan (\$71,800).

Born in May 1945, Leung holds permanent residency in the Hong Kong Special Administration Region and also possesses a United States passport, the court said.

According to provisions of the Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure Law, Suzhou's national security bureau detained him on April 15, 2021, on suspicion of spy-

No further details of the case were released.

Given the grave state of the current struggle against espionage, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, adopted a revision to the Counter-Espionage Law, which was first released in 2014, to safeguard national security in April.

According to the NPC Standing Committee's Legislative Affairs Commission, traditional and nontradi-

tional security threats are intertwined, and intelligence activities are more complicated. Espionage now extends to more extensive fields, more diverse targets and uses more covert methods, requiring the amendment of the Counter-Espionage Law to meet current needs.

The revised law will come into effect on July 1, and will provide a strong legal guarantee in the battle against infiltration, subversion and the theft of secrets.

Wheels Up



People practice on BMX bikes at a newly opened pump track park in Shenyang, Liaoning province, on Sunday. Recognized as the world's largest pump track park by the Guinness World Record upon opening, the park has nine courses and will host a number of competitions for BMX biking, skateboarding and rollerblading. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

CHINA

'Ferryman of life' ease organ donation process for patients' family members

Greater awareness is needed, expert says

By YANG ZEKUN

Are you willing to donate your loved one's organs?" Wang Chulong, who used to work as a nurse in an intensive care unit, is familiar with life and death. However, after becoming a full-time coordinator for organ donations, he has discovered that this is the most difficult question he can ask. It's also the most difficult one for relatives to answer.

He said he drops whatever he is doing and rushes to the hospital whenever he hears about a potential donor because his job revolves around life and death, and he is often in a race against time.

Voluntary posthumous donation and living donations between relatives are China's only sources of organs for transplantation, and the country has vigorously publicized the related policies. Coordinators are involved in almost every successful donation and the publicity and implementation of the policy. As such, they are often popularly known as "ferryman of life."

Currently, 29 provincial-level authorities have set up organizations for human organ donations, with more than 2,500 coordinators and over 400 volunteer service teams with a total of 10,000 members.

By the mid of this month, about 6.23 million people had registered with the China Organ Donation Administrative Center to donate posthumously, while about 138,200 organs had been donated since 2010.

However, registration is only an expression of the intention to donate, and the process can only be undertaken after strict medical assessment and with the consent of immediate family members. Therefore, voluntary registration does not necessarily ensure that a donation will take place. As a result, coordinators are sometimes faced with refusals, so they often have to try to persuade family members to honor the dead person's wishes.

Early experience

In 2011, Wang, a 35-year-old native of Hebei province, became a nurse and started work in the ICU at the China-Japan Friendship Hospital in Beijing. In 2017, he passed the tests to become an organ donation coordinator and began doing the job in his free time.

He first experienced death in 2011, when he helped treat a 60-something heart attack patient. Efforts to save the man were unsuccessful, and Wang said he lacked the necessary experience that helps seasoned medical professionals become used to the negative feelings that can follow a patient's death.

When the doctor announced the news, the man's family members were heartbroken. Meanwhile, Wang felt numb with a mixture of disappointment, sadness and reluctance to accept the fact.

Professionals help honor the deceased person's wishes and soothe their relatives' pain of loss. **Yang Zekun** reports.



Above: Organ donation coordinator Wang Chulong talks with a doctor in the ICU at the China-Japan Friendship Hospital in Beijing on April 25. **Left:** Anesthetists are seen working in an operating room at the hospital on Nov 14, 2021. PHOTOS BY ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

incomplete in death? Nine out of 10 refuse for different reasons," he said.

He added that he often spends about a week dealing with his own negative emotions after each donation, and the best thing to do is to get back to work and allow fatigue to help him forget the pain.

Wang registered as a donor after working as a coordinator, and he has told his wife to donate his organs when he dies. "I think it's a continuation of life and the best choice," he said.

Greater respect

After nearly 13 years as a coordinator, Cao Yanfang, from Zhejiang province, feels that her role is not just to persuade family members, but to help people honor the wishes of a relative who has decided to donate.

"I used to think that this work was difficult, but I later discovered that all jobs that involve changing people's minds are hard. Many people find it difficult to change their mind quickly, so I decided to identify and help those who were willing to make donations," she said.

Cao said rejection is a regular part of the coordinator's job. Her experience as an ICU nurse enables her to face life and death bravely, but she still finds that the hardest part of the job is learning how to forge ahead after repeated rejection.

The job also involves dealing with the pain and despair of family members who have lost a loved one, as well as their mental struggle when deciding whether to agree to a donation, she said.

In 2010, her understanding of the coordinator's job was that she had to persuade the families of potential donors to agree after the loved one's death. Therefore, she took great care to obtain all the relevant information about the potential donors and learned how to discuss donation with their family members.

Her first experience was in 2010, when she met the family of a man who had been pronounced brain-dead after a fall.

Cao had to rush to the hospital in Pujiang, Zhejiang province, from Hangzhou, the provincial capital, and during the two-hour drive she mulled over how to raise the topic of organ donation.

The family was in a quiet room at the hospital, so Cao spoke with the patient's wife, telling her that she was a Red Cross volunteer. The woman immediately understood Cao's mission and told her that she and her mother-in-law would not agree to the donation.

"If we donate his corneas, he might not be able to see his way home," she said, leaving Cao at a loss about how to continue the discussion.

Comfort, company

The coordinator's job is more about heart-to-heart communication as they are always dealing with bereaved families. In addition to persuading relatives to agree to the donation and witnessing the removal of the organs, coordinators have to provide comfort and company. Moreover, they often help the family members arrange the funeral.

"There was a time when I began to wonder if I was right for this job. Yet the hope that donation brings to patients over and over again keeps me going and makes me understand the meaning of my work," Cao said.

She also helps train new coordinators, explains their working philosophy and promotes organ donation. She and her colleagues also explore ways to help soothe the pain of loss.

Cao recalled a letter she received from a child. The girl said that initially she felt that her father had abandoned her, her mother and her brother. Later, Red Cross volunteers visited the family and told the girl that her father's donated organs had helped save three people. As a result, she was extremely proud of her father.

"I think another important thing is to let the donor's family truly feel the significance of organ donation, as well as the warmth and respect of society during the donation process," Cao said.

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When his colleagues broke his chain of thought, he realized that he had been helping to arrange clothes for the deceased man to wear.

"I chose to be a coordinator because it linked with my work in the ICU, where I saw so many lives and deaths, which gave me a new perspective on life. Death has never been a taboo subject for me since I took the job," he said.

The process from first contact with a potential donor's family to a successful donation is often a long one.

Days or sometimes months can pass after a severely ill patient is admitted to the ICU to the time they are declared brain-dead. Coordinators have to race against time to ensure that the wishes of potential donors are respected and also help their family members.

Sometimes, although family members know that the chances of survival are slim, they are desperate to try every measure to save the patient.

However, organs have to be used very quickly after death, so coordinators often have to work hard to per-

sue the family members to agree to a donation within the limited time frame.

Wang said coordinators are sometimes shunned, called names or misunderstood when they approach a potential donor's family members, who often think the patient can still be saved. Some are unhappy at being approached shortly after a loved one's death as they see it as a sort of curse.

When the medical team alerts Wang that a patient may be a potential donor, he ensures that he is fully prepared before he speaks with their immediate family members.

The meeting often starts with a discussion about the patient's condition, followed by details of the organ donation process to show the family how their relative can help others after death.

Wang said the family members may change their minds from time to time, as they usually experience inner struggles.

"Sometimes, they face criticism, such as 'He or she loved you so much in life, how can you leave him/her



From left: Wang Chulong displays certificates that show he is a trained coordinator for organ donations. Surgeons transplant a donated organ at the China-Japan Friendship Hospital on Nov 14, 2021. Relatives of organ donors lay flowers at a monument in the Changqing Life Memorial Park in Beijing on March 24.



REPORTER'S LOG

I can discuss the issue, but my heart is still hesitant



Yang Zekun

I first heard about organ donation coordinators when I read a news story in 2020. I was impressed by their courage in doing the job.

I met Wang Chulong in his office, a quiet corner room on the first floor of

an inpatient building. It contains just a sofa, a chair, a filing cabinet and a desk with a computer.

As he said, donors' families and the coordinators themselves need such a simple, quiet environment so they can think carefully about the meaning of life. It's somewhere no one can disturb them.

When I asked him if his work as a coordinator had changed his perception of life and death, he simply said

that he cherishes his healthy life. I was struck by the calm way the 35-year-old spoke about death, and it made me wonder what he had experienced.

While each successful coordination process means that a family is about to lose a loved one forever, it also means that another life is about to be renewed.

This feeling of joy mixed with sadness makes Wang better appreciate the here and now.

Since that interview, I have been thinking about whether I should donate my organs or those of my relatives. I can talk about donating, but honestly, my heart is still hesitant.

Many people may not have thought about the issue, or have even tried to avoid it because of a belief that it may bring bad luck.

Imagine how hard it must be for a coordinator to confront devastated family members almost every day and

ask, "Would you like to donate your relative's organs?"

In China, there is still a huge shortfall in the number of organs needed each year, and awareness of donation is low.

Most of the time, people learn about the service through active coordinators. However, there are only about 2,500 coordinators, which is far from enough. I think it is worth thinking about how to protect and expand this team. After all, in many cases, the difference between death and a new lease on life is simply the absence of a coordinator.

The center always treats donors with respect, and many cities have allocated special sites for memorial parks to express appreciation, which rarely happens in other countries, Hou said.

He added that although China's organ donation service has developed rapidly, improvements are still needed in some aspects — such as laws and regulations, and personnel training — so more people will understand and recognize the selfless nature of donation.

WORLD

Thailand casts vote for change

Opposition parties claim majority; prime minister to be decided in July

BANGKOK — Thailand's opposition parties raked in most of the 500 seats available in the race for the House of Representatives, with the results on Monday suggesting that voters are ready for change.

Early indications were that opposition parties had won the majority of seats in the lower house of Parliament, the Election Commission said.

It came as officials said on Monday that the Thai economy had grown 2.7 percent in the first quarter thanks to a steady recovery in tourism and strong consumer confidence, offsetting sluggish exports.

The National Economic and Social Development Council has forecast the economy to grow between 2.7 and 3.7 percent this year. The January-March expansion marked a pickup from 1.4 percent in the previous quarter, the council said.

"Our domestic economy does not have any major problems. Consumption and the tourism sector continue to strengthen," Danucha Pichayanan, the council secretary, told reporters.

The council has said that an incoming government must prioritize boosting exports and finding new potential markets by speeding up free-trade negotiations.

Monday's vote was "people saying that we want change," according to Saowanee T. Alexander, a professor at Ubon Ratchathani University in northeastern Thailand.

With more than 99 percent of ballots counted on Monday, Move Forward appeared to have a small edge over Pheu Thai, whose leaders conceded on Sunday that they might not finish on top after a voter turnout of about 39 million, at about 75 percent.

The official result of the election is pending verification by the Election Commission, which is due in 60 days.

The Move Forward party, with a strong base among young voters, is seeking to form a coalition government with other opposition parties.

Pita Limjaroenrat, the 42-year-old leader of the Move Forward party, said on Monday that he has invited Pheu Thai and several other parties previously in the opposition to form the government.

"I have congratulated Pheu Thai leader, Paetongtarn (Shinawatra), for her hard-fought campaign and have invited her to join the coalition. And that includes other five parties in the previous opposition," he told a news conference.

Pita tweeted that he is ready to bring about change as the country's 30th prime minister. "Whether you agree or disagree with me, I will be your prime minister. Whether you have voted for me or not, I will serve you," he wrote.

The Pheu Thai party said in a statement that it has accepted the invitation but Paetongtarn said the two parties have yet to start negotiations.

The party of incumbent Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha held the fifth spot in the constituency vote and third in the party-preference tally. Prayut told reports late on Sunday that he respects the election results and will continue to serve the country no matter what his role will be.

Challenges ahead

Sunday's winner is not assured of the right to form the new government. A joint session of the 500-seat House of Representatives will be held with the 250-member Senate in July to select the prime minister. The winner must attain at least 376 of the combined 750 seats.

Analysts say a lot can still happen before the commission declares the results valid, a process that can take up to 75 days and will almost certainly include legal challenges.

Alexander cautioned that the situation remains "very unpredictable" and the results could be unilaterally affected by the commission, which previously disqualified opposition parties or otherwise undermined challenges to the conservative establishment.

She said the Bhumjaithai Party, which came in third, could be a "swing vote" as the combined Move Forward and Pheu Thai seats may not be enough for a majority coalition. Bhumjaithai controls a large bloc of votes in the northeast and helped put the military-backed coalition into power.

AGENCIES—XINHUA



A voter looks at a poster of candidates for the general election at a polling station in Bangkok on Sunday. THOMAS MARESCA / NEWSCOM



Residents shop at a market in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Sunday after a cease-fire ended five days of deadly fighting. SAID KHATIB / AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Life returning to normal after Gaza truce

GAZA/JERUSALEM — Life on both sides of the Gaza Strip border seemed to be returning to normal on Sunday after an Egyptian-mediated cease-fire halted five days of fighting between Israel and Islamic Jihad.

The Israeli Defense Ministry announced in a statement the reopening of the crossing of Kerem Shalom for cargo trucks and the Erez crossing, the only pedestrian passage between Gaza and Israel, after a six-day closure.

Shops and public offices reopened and crowds returned to streets that had been deserted for days.

Both sides confirmed the halt to hostilities but gave different interpretations of the conditions.

The truce, however, was put to the test when sirens went off in southern Israel shortly after taking effect.

Israeli soldiers killed a Palestinian man on Monday in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry said, with the army saying it returned fire after being shot at. "Saleh Mohamed Sabra, 22, was killed by live bullets during an Isra-

eli attack in Nablus," the ministry said, adding that another Palestinian was wounded by gunfire.

The Israeli military said suspects hurled rocks and explosives and fired at its forces in Nablus, a flash-point city where there have been regular raids and clashes. The soldiers shot at the suspects and "a hit was identified", the military said.

It added that the forces were in Nablus to prepare for the possible demolition of the home of a Palestinian suspected of killing two brothers from a Jewish settlement on Feb 26.

Meanwhile, for the first time, the United Nations will officially commemorate the flight of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from what is now Israel on the 75th anniversary of their exodus — an action stemming from the UN's partition of British-ruled Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states, The Associated Press reported.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is headlining Monday's UN commemoration of what Palestinians call the Nakba or "catastrophe".

Riyad Mansour, the Palestinian UN ambassador, called the UN

observance "historic" and significant because the General Assembly played a key role in the partition of Palestine.

"It's acknowledging the responsibility of the UN of not being able to resolve this catastrophe for the Palestinian people for 75 years," Mansour told a group of UN reporters recently.

He said the catastrophe for "the Palestinian people is still ongoing". The Palestinians still don't have an independent state, and they don't have the right to return to their homes as called for in a General Assembly resolution adopted in 1948.

On Sunday, the Iranian Foreign Ministry stressed a diplomatic solution to Palestine's "old crisis". The ministry underlined the issues in a statement to mark the occasion of Nakba Day.

The statement highlighted the necessity to adopt a "diplomatic solution" to enable the displaced Palestinian people to return to their homeland and hold a referendum to decide about its political system.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Tourism boosts South Africa's recovery

By NDUMISO MLILO
in Johannesburg, South Africa
For China Daily

Tourism in South Africa has rebounded quickly this year, though still below pre-COVID-19 levels, according to a senior tourism official, who expects a growing number of visitors, including from China, to boost the country's recovery.

Some 2.1 million travelers visited South Africa in the first quarter of 2023, up by 103 percent compared with the same period last year and almost 80 percent of the 2019 figure, according to the Department of Tourism. Foreign direct spending increased by almost 150 percent to \$1.4 billion.

Fish Mahlalela, deputy minister of tourism, predicts the rebound will continue and said that Western Cape, Mpumalanga and Gauteng provinces have already reached pre-COVID-19 levels in tourism.

The country is focusing its efforts on key source markets including the United Kingdom, the United States, India and China, he said, adding that group tours from China this year will assist in the recovery in South Africa and Africa.

"China is the biggest market. We have good relations with the Chinese people and government," Mahlalela said. "As BRICS members, we have an agreement to encourage our citizens to visit each other's countries. BRICS countries constitute the biggest population in the world."

He said that South Africa's recovery plan for the tourism sector has shown signs of success.

E-visa service

To attract international visitors, the country is offering an e-visa service to citizens from 14 nations, including Algeria, Cameroon, Croatia, Cuba, China, Kenya and Nigeria, and authorities are planning to add 20 more countries.

After introducing the e-visa, visitors from Kenya significantly increased in the first three months compared with last year and other countries, said Mahlalela. Other factors such as improving security at tourist destinations also have helped increase visitor numbers.

Abel Yifru, area manager in South Africa for Ethiopian Airways, said the airline is also recovering after the pandemic. The airline,

which has reopened existing routes and is opening new international routes, has flights from Ethiopia to five Chinese cities, including Guangzhou, Beijing and Shanghai.

"China has always been the biggest market for us," he said. "We're creating business opportunities for Chinese and Africans and bringing many Chinese tourists to different African countries."

Elise Hashikutuwa, deputy director of tourism and development in Namibia, said her country is receiving tourists from China but fewer than the expected numbers. It is working on a memorandum of understanding with China that will involve cooperation in airlines, national tourism boards and other areas.

"We're pushing so that we can reach pre-COVID-19 levels, and we're doing well on that," she said. "We have strong ties with China, and once the MoU is concluded we expect more cooperation. We want to strengthen relations and make sure the Chinese come and enjoy the Namibian hospitality."

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Discovery of remains stirs Native community

BOSTON — As a citizen of the Quapaw Nation, Ahnili Johnson-Jennings has always seen Dartmouth College as the university for Native American students.

Her father graduated from the school, founded in 1769 to educate Native Americans, and she had come to rely on its network of students, professors and administrators. But news in March that the Ivy League school in New Hampshire found partial skeletal remains of 15 Native Americans in one of its collections has Johnson-Jennings and others reassessing that relationship.

"It's hard to reconcile. It's hard to see the college in this old way where they were taking Native remains and using them for their own benefit," said Johnson-Jennings, a senior and co-president of Native Americans at Dartmouth. The remains were used to teach a class as recently as last year, just before an audit concluded they had been wrongly cataloged as not Native.

"It was very upsetting to hear, especially when you've just felt so supported by a school and they've had that secret that maybe no one knew about, but still, to some sense, was a secret," Johnson-Jennings said, describing a March meeting where Native American students were briefed on the discovery.

Dartmouth is among a growing list of universities, museums and other institutions wrestling with how best to handle Native American remains and artifacts in their collections and grappling with what these discoveries say about their past policies regarding Native communities.

For Native tribes, the loss of the remains and cultural items caused significant pain. The remains, most believe, are imbued with the spirit of the ancestor to whom they belong and are connected to living citizens of those tribes.

They could go to court or negotiate with an institution for them to be repatriated. But it wasn't until the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, or NAGPRA, in 1990 that a process was created for their return.

'Moving too slowly'

Critics complain that many institutions move too slowly in repatriating remains and funerary items once they're discovered in their collections, often hiding behind a loophole in NAGPRA that allows them to label remains as culturally unidentifiable. That puts the burden on tribes to prove the remains are their ancestors, an expense many can't afford.

Some 884,000 Native American artifacts — including nearly 102,000 human remains — that should be returned to tribes under federal law are still in the possession of colleges, museums and other institutions across the country, according to data maintained by the National Park Service.

The University of California, Berkeley tops the list, according to the Park Service.

Shannon O'Loughlin, chief executive of the Association on American Indian Affairs, called the practice racist. "It just says that they value the idea of Native Americans as specimens more than they do as human beings," said O'Loughlin, a citizen of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

Humanitarian crisis worsens as Sudan conflict prolongs

KHARTOUM — A United Nations report has warned that the humanitarian crisis in Sudan will continue to worsen as hopes are dim for an end to the brutal conflict, now in its second month.

At least 676 people have been killed in clashes between the Sudanese Army and the Rapid Support Forces, or RSF, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, or OCHA.

The agency reported that more than 936,000 people have been displaced by the conflict since April 15, including about 736,200 internally displaced. About 200,000 have taken refuge in neighboring Egypt, Ethiopia, Chad and South Sudan.

Sudan's health ministry said the

bulk of the deaths had occurred in Darfur. It reported 199 fatalities in the nation's capital, Khartoum, while at least 450 people were killed as of May 10 in El Geneina, the capital of West Darfur state, and surrounding areas.

Across Khartoum, those still alive remain barricaded, hoping to dodge stray bullets and enduring desperate shortages of food and basic supplies. There are power blackouts, a lack of cash, communications outages, and runaway inflation.

The UN said it is estimated that about 15.8 million Sudanese, about one-third of the population, will need humanitarian aid this year, and the figure is likely to increase because of the conflict.

Since clashes broke out, aid agencies have been looted and at least 18 humanitarian workers were killed.

Sudan has been witnessing deadly armed clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces in Khartoum and other areas since April 15, with the two sides accusing each other of initiating the conflict.

Despite all the bullets, aerial bombardments and anti-aircraft fire since then, neither side has been able to seize the battlefield advantage.

On May 11, the two parties met in the Saudi port city of Jeddah and signed the Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan, to facilitate the delivery of emergency humanitarian aid and

guarantee the safe evacuation of civilians. However, the two sides have accused each other of breaching the deal and continuing the clashes.

On Sunday, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, head of the Sudanese army, issued a decision to freeze the bank accounts of RSF and its affiliated companies, his office said in a statement.

In the absence of "a significant change of mindset from the warring parties, it is hard to see that commitments on paper will be fulfilled", said Aly Verjee, a researcher on Sudan studies at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

Verjee said the fighting across the country has destroyed workshops and factories and caused "the partial deindustrialization of Sudan".



People wait by the buses upon arrival at the Wadi Karkar village, Egypt, on Sunday after fleeing Sudan. KHALED DESOUKI / AFP

Aid group Doctors Without Borders said food shortages in Darfur displacement camps mean that people have gone from three meals a day to just one.

"This means that any future Sudan will be much poorer for much longer," said Verjee.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

WORLD US

Border story



Migrants are dropped off at a hotel after being processed by US Border Patrol following the lifting of Title 42 in San Diego, California, on Monday. US border patrol agents have seen a 50 percent drop in the number of migrants crossing the border since the pandemic-era immigration policy known as Title 42 expired at midnight on Thursday. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said on Sunday. MIKE BLAKE / REUTERS

Bells toll on Buffalo massacre anniversary

BUFFALO, New York — A bell chimed 13 times as people paused for a moment of silence on Sunday to remember the 10 people killed and three wounded in a racist attack at a Buffalo supermarket one year ago. Mayor Byron Brown read the names of the victims outside Tops Friendly Market, where a self-declared white supremacist gunman opened fire on May 14 last year. Politicians including State Governor Kathy Hochul and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer also attended the remembrance, which fell on Mother's Day. "It's a beautiful day. It's Mother's Day," Hochul said. "And the cruel irony behind the fact is a day we celebrate a life that comes into this world, making someone a mother, is also a day we're here to think about those who are no longer with us. It's hard. It's been a really hard year." In the year since the shooting, relatives of the victims have spoken before Congress about white supremacy and

gun reform and organized events to address food insecurity that worsened when the market, the neighborhood's only grocery store, was closed for two months. United States President Joe Biden honored the lives of those killed in Buffalo in an op-ed published on Sunday in USA Today. He called on Congress and state legislative leaders to act by banning assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, requiring background checks for all gun sales and repealing gun manufacturers' immunity from liability. Gun control organizations and advocates held nearly 200 events nationwide over the weekend, calling on Congress to reinstate a bipartisan assault weapons ban. In Buffalo, Wayne Jones, whose mother Celestine Chaney, 65, died in the attack, urged the city and its institutions to keep on investing in the area and its residents even after the anniversary events are over. That is

why he is willing "to keep opening up this wound that I have" and talk about it, he said. Inside the store fountains flank a poem dedicated to the victims. The store was closed on Sunday in remembrance of the shooting. More than 215 mass shootings have occurred in the US this year, according to the Gun Violence Archive, an NGO. Two people were killed and five others injured on Saturday in a shooting in Yuma, Arizona, on Sunday. Police responded to a report of shots fired in a neighborhood at about 11 pm and found several people with gunshot wounds, the Yuma Police Department said in a news release. Two men aged 19 and 20 were pronounced dead at a local hospital shortly after being sent there, it said. A third victim, a 16-year-old male, was sent to the hospital with life-threatening injuries. AGENCIES—XINHUA

China's system finds support in debate

By **MAY ZHOU** in Houston
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A spirited online debate titled "Is the Chinese System Better than the American System" featured a French entrepreneur who lived in China and defended its political system as having evolved naturally. In the YouTube debate organized by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, Arnaud Bertrand argued for the Chinese system against Adrian Zenz, a China expert based in Washington DC. The debate drew more than 1,000 comments on YouTube, most of them praising Bertrand. "The Chinese model plays uniquely only to China (and) is a product of China's very long and unique history. It also fits the very particular context that China is in today," said Bertrand. "But it doesn't fit or pretend to fit other countries." Comparing how China and the US view their own systems, Bertrand quoted Stephen Ward, professor of ethics at the University of British Columbia: "China explicitly embraces the idea that each country should determine for itself how it's governed. The US by contrast loves to lecture others how they should govern themselves and keep trying to get other countries to embrace our liberal values." Bertrand argued that while the West and its values have done a lot to provide freedom, prosperity and stability for people over many decades, "there are little doubts that it's increasingly losing its way." Meanwhile, "the Chinese system has become better in many ways at providing stability, prosperity and even freedom for its people," said Bertrand. Bertrand said that "China might not be the unfree state most people in the West picture it as; vice versa, the West might not be quite so free." He pointed to China's war on poverty that resulted in the largest and fastest reduction of poverty in the

world and provided personal freedom as a result. Poverty is the antithesis of freedom, said Bertrand. While homelessness is becoming a major social problem in the US and France, "in China you won't see homeless people," he said. He also pointed out that 6 percent of Americans live in deep poverty based on US Census Bureau data, and a survey found that 25 percent of the US population worried about money for food. "Those people are not really free," he said. In term of freedom from fear, Americans can't walk anywhere at any time in the US, but such freedom by and large exists in China, he explained. "You are 70 times more likely to be victim of a violent crime in the US than you are in China," said Bertrand. He also cited his own victim-free experience and that of his acquaintances all the years that he lived in China. "China is literally the oldest continuous civilization in the history of mankind," he said. Bertrand cited a 13-year study by Harvard University that concluded that there is little evidence that the Chinese Communist Party is losing legitimacy in the eyes of its people, with 93 percent satisfied with the central government. In contrast, trust in government is 20 percent in the US, and 28 percent in France; 43 percent of Americans believe civil war is possible in the next 10 years. China invested 14 trillion yuan (\$2.1 trillion) between 2014 and 2021 dedicated to lifting people out of poverty, while the US was spending that much on wars in the Middle East and Afghanistan, Bertrand said. "The Chinese system with its emphasis on critical freedom, long-term stability and unwavering investment in itself has demonstrated its ability to provide a more holistic approach to societal well-being. The

Chinese system provides greater overall stability, prosperity and even freedom," concluded Bertrand. Zenz argued that it is the smart and hard-working Chinese people, not the system, which created the economic miracle and success of China. He also accused China of violating human rights in Xinjiang. Bertrand countered Zenz's argument by pointing toward India, where "people are smart and hard working just like the Chinese" with a Western-style democracy, but poverty remains prevalent following its independence from the UK in 1947. Bertrand said that the foreigners' claim about Xinjiang is not true, and the United States banning exports from Xinjiang only hurts Uyghur people more. Not a single Muslim-majority country has backed the West's claim against China over Xinjiang, he said. In fact, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) made a statement after visiting Xinjiang: "We commend the efforts of the People's Republic of China" for the care of its Muslim citizens. "When we talk about democracy here in the West, we live in a facade of a democracy. Yes, we get to vote every few years, but in most cases the choices boil down to two parties which aren't that different," said "Big Blue Monkey". "For all of the achievements [of China], the West has nothing good to say about it. China suffers from intense anti-China propaganda from the West. Western media used the keyword 'Communist' to instill fear and hatred towards China. Everything China does is negatively reported," commented someone in Malaysia. "As a Singaporean, I welcome China's growth any day over Americans' gunboat diplomacy," read another comment.


Envoy calls for peace effort on Ukraine

By **MINLU ZHANG** at the United Nations
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The top Chinese ambassador to the United Nations on Monday urged the international community to promote a political solution to the Ukraine crisis, noting that everything China has been doing is to facilitate peace talks. A political solution to the Ukraine crisis must be promoted with the utmost urgency, Zhang Jun, China's permanent representative to the UN, told a Security Council meeting Monday on the maintenance of peace and security in Ukraine. "There are no easy answers to complex issues, and the first step must always be taken to comprehensively solve them," said Zhang. "The restart of dialogue and negotiation cannot wait any longer. All parties should create conditions for promoting dialogue and negotiation, instead of adding fuel to the flames, intensifying conflicts and trying to profit from it," he said. "China has always stood on the side of peace on the Ukraine issue, and everything we do is to promote peace and talks," said Zhang. Zhang said all efforts must be made to alleviate the harm and suffering by civilians. He said international humanitarian law sets out the rules of conduct that must be observed in conflict situations. "Parties to the conflict should do their utmost to protect the safety of civilians and civilian facilities," said Zhang. "Women and children are the most vulnerable groups in

armed conflict and should be given special care. "We welcome the international community, including humanitarian agencies, to expand assistance to all affected people and advance the restoration of civilian infrastructure on the basis of the principles of neutrality and impartiality," he said. China supports the balanced, comprehensive and effective implementation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative and the memorandum of understanding on promoting Russian food products and fertilizers to the world. China supports the UN in playing an important role in eliminating the practical obstacles to Russia's grain and fertilizer exports, said Zhang. "We must keep the red line of nuclear safety," said Zhang. Zhang reiterated that a nuclear war must never be fought and cannot be won, adding that the safety and security of nuclear power plant facilities in Ukraine is related to the safety and well-being of hundreds of millions of people, and any accident may have immeasurable humanitarian and ecological consequences. "We call for maximum rational restraint and refrain from words and deeds that may intensify confrontation and lead to misjudgment," he said. Zhang emphasized that the world must pay attention to and manage the spillover effects of conflict response. "The world economy is facing new risks of recession, and countries need to coordinate their actions to jointly maintain the stability of the

global food, energy, and financial markets," said Zhang. However, Zhang said, round after round of unilateral sanctions and the extension of the "long-arm jurisdiction" have not only "caused serious humanitarian consequences, but also disrupted the global industrial and supply chains," he said. "The US and other relevant countries should seriously reflect on it, make immediate reforms, and create conditions for developing countries to develop their economies and improve their people's livelihood," said Zhang. "They should not engage in economic coercion while fabricating narratives that accuse other countries of engaging in economic coercion. "Unilateral sanctions have no basis in international law and are causing resentment and opposition from more and more countries," he said, adding that the so-called "rules-based international order" also has "serious problems in law and practice." "It cannot be used as an excuse for the US and other relevant countries to impose unilateral sanctions indiscriminately, nor has it received wide support and recognition from the international community," said Zhang. Li Hui, special representative of the Chinese government on Eurasian affairs, is visiting Ukraine, Poland, France, Germany and Russia for communication, aiming at promoting a political settlement to the Ukraine crisis, said Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin.




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BUSINESS



Visitors check out the recording scene of a UHD video during the World UHD Video Industrial Conference 2023 in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, last week. SHI LEI / NANFANG DAILY

UHD to boost development of videos, see wider applications

MIIT official vows intensified efforts in sector, urges bigger role for leading firms

By FAN FEIFEI
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China will ratchet up efforts to develop ultra-high-definition videos and mull a series of new policies to promote the high-quality development of the video industry, with a focus on enriching application scenarios of UHD videos and bolstering the integration with a wide range of industries, officials and experts said.

The total scale of China's UHD video industry exceeded 3 trillion yuan (\$431.6 billion) by the end of last year, according to a white paper released by the Beijing-based China Center for Information Industry Development during the World UHD Video Industrial Conference 2023, which was held last week in Guangzhou, Guangdong province.

Currently, eight 4K UHD TV channels and two 8K TV channels have been launched across the nation. UHD is a term that includes two video resolutions — 4K and 8K — with 8K resolution an image or display with a width of about 8,000 pixels, currently the highest UHD resolution in digital television and digital cinematography.

China has made significant progress in developing UHD video technology in recent years, with breakthroughs and industrial

applications achieved in 8K UHD cameras, 8K monitors, 8K imaging sensors and optical lenses, the white paper said.

It added that the in-depth integration of UHD video with 5G, artificial intelligence, virtual reality and other new-generation information technologies has spawned a large number of new scenarios, new applications and new models, becoming an important driving force for bolstering the digital transformation of various industries.

China will step up policy support and roll out new measures to boost the development of the video industry, said Zhao Zhiguo, chief engineer of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

Heightened efforts should be made to give full play to the role of leading enterprises to establish a UHD industrial ecosystem and build up differentiated video industry clusters with distinctive features across the nation, Zhao noted.

He also called for more push to accelerate the upgrade of industrial chains, promote the digitalization of broadcasting, television and video production, deepen the integration and application of video technology in key fields, as well as expand international exchanges and cooperation.

The ministry has issued a slew of policies to support the UHD indus-

try, and sped up the construction of gigabit networks, digital centers and other new infrastructure.

Zhao added that China has taken a global lead in producing 5G-powered 8K video content and UHD videos have accelerated integration with 5G and AI technologies, with broad applications in sectors like manufacturing, culture, education, entertainment, healthcare and intelligent transportation.

China is at the global forefront of the semiconductor display sector, which is a key link of the global UHD industry, accounting for more than 70 percent of global large-sized liquid crystal display output, ranking first around the world, said Wang Cheng, chief operating officer of Chinese home appliance giant TCL Technology Group, adding that the country has become the world's largest panel manufacturing base.

"At present, China's economy is gradually recovering and consumption is picking up rapidly. The UHD industry will usher in a new stage of development, buoyed by the speedy growth of vehicle-mounted displays, foldable smartphones, the metaverse, smart healthcare and smart retail," Wang said.

Wang called for establishing UHD industry alliances to safeguard the stability of the semiconductor display industrial chain and making breakthroughs in key technologies, materials and equipment.

Takeshi Yoshida, president of Sony (China) Ltd, said: "As we enter

a new era of digital networks, AI and UHD, Sony hopes to continue assisting China's UHD video industry to flourish through its own technology, products and industry experience."

Yoshida said the company has formed complete solutions in the fields of professional, high-quality shooting and editing, low-latency transmission, high-end large-screen displays, and mobile and home audio-visual entertainment.

"In the strategically significant Chinese market, Sony is committed to working closely with all partners to continually introduce innovative and high value-added technologies, products and solutions that meet the expectations of the Chinese market and industry," he added.

Dong Min, deputy secretary-general of the China Video Industry Association, said the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics and the deployment of superfast 5G technology has made the transmission of 8K content possible and bolstered the sales of 8K TVs and 8K-related content production.

5G wireless telecommunication technology can solve content transmission, compression and decoding problems for 8K UHD displays and provide solutions for various fields covering entertainment, medical imaging, broadcasting, security monitoring and remote education, said Ai Weiqi, research manager of consumer electronics at Beijing-based market consultancy All View Cloud.

Southeastern Shanghai 'mud town' evolves into home of Tesla Gigafactory

SHANGHAI — Four years is usually just a brief moment in time, but Nicheng, once a little-known township in southeastern Shanghai, was propelled as if under the control of a fast-forward button, undergoing a tremendous and speedy transformation unseen in its history.

Nicheng — meaning "mud town" in English — takes its name from its geographic location. Adjacent to Hangzhou Bay, the town was formed by the accumulation of sediment carried by the Yangtze and Qiantang rivers.

About 200 years ago, local residents reclaimed the tidal flat, from which it got its name.

For decades, Nicheng was a neglected area with a poor transportation network and sluggish economic growth, until Jan 7, 2019, when deafeningly noisy machines used to construct Tesla's Shanghai Gigafactory carved out a new chapter in its development.

"We knew from the beginning that the establishment of this project would bring great opportunities for the development of Nicheng," said Zhang Yinbiao, Party secretary of Nicheng.

In fact, before the Tesla project, a series of preparations had been made in Nicheng, which longed for a chance to take off.

In 2013, Nicheng was listed as one of the four major commercial centers in the southeastern part of Pudong.

Its location along the Shanghai-Luchaogang Expressway has also given it the privilege to develop a manufacturing chain.

The construction of Tesla's Shanghai plant — the first wholly foreign-owned car manufacturing enterprise in China — was completed in less than a year. It is Tesla's first Gigafactory outside the United States. The plant delivered 710,000 vehicles in 2022, a 48 percent increase from 2021, accounting for over half of Tesla's global delivery.

The Shanghai plant has become Tesla's primary vehicle export hub, with electric cars selling well in the Asia-Pacific, Europe and other regions.

"The high efficiency of Tesla's Shanghai Gigafactory was supported by a sound business environment and industrial ecology in Shanghai. It is a demonstration of Shanghai's global competitiveness and ability to better allocate global resources," said Tian Xinmin, vice-dean at Antai College of Economics and Management, Shanghai Jiao Tong University.

Tesla's Shanghai Gigafactory has brought about considerable spill-over effects.

According to the company, the localization rate of the industrial chain of the Gigafactory has exceeded 95 percent. Nicheng is among those that have benefited the most.

About 10 kilometers away from Tesla's Shanghai plant, numerous automated guided vehicles are running around at the futuristic workshop of Yanfeng International Seating Systems Co Ltd.

"Here, about 3,500 sets of car seats are rolled off the assembly line every day and delivered to Tesla and SAIC Motor factories not far away," Jia Tingwen, the head of the assembly workshop, told Xinhua as he kept a close eye on the fast-running production line.

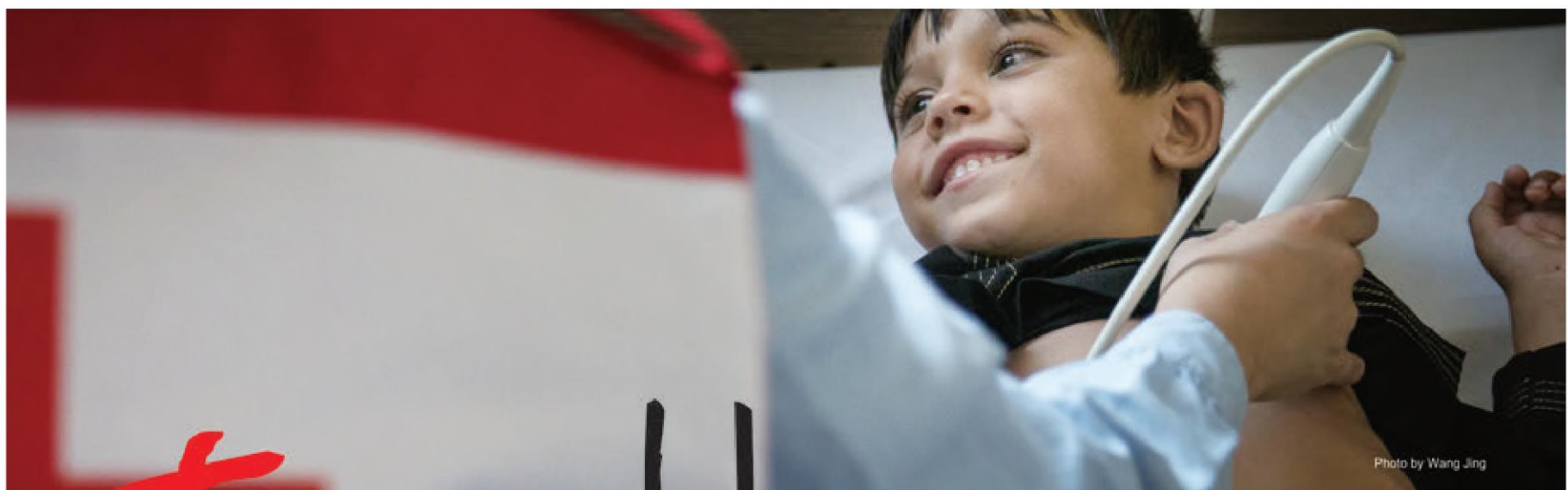
The thriving automobile industry cluster in Nicheng has not only accelerated local industrial upgrading, but also become a big driver in improving the public transportation network and other supporting facilities in surrounding areas, providing better living and working conditions for local residents.

"We've set two goals for Nicheng this year, to drive industrial investment and tax revenues to over 10 billion yuan (\$1.4 billion) and 3 billion yuan, respectively," Nicheng's Party secretary Zhang said.

XINHUA



An aerial view of Tesla's Gigafactory in Shanghai. The factory produced 710,000 electric vehicles last year. JIN LIWANG / XINHUA



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AD

BUSINESSFOCUS

By ZHANG YUE
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With businesses in China widely and actively rebounding since January, China's growth is speeding up from the pandemic impact felt since early 2020. Economic activity is once again up and running and the country's fiscal revenue increased in March on the back of recovering economic vigor.

Figures from the Ministry of Finance in late April show that fiscal revenue grew 5.5 percent in March after declining 1.2 percent in January-February, a strong sign of recovery after three challenging years.

Critical factors

A number of critical factors have served in this process. Among them, central fiscal funds have not only helped several localities survive the hard times, but also set up new projects that benefit local livelihoods. Figures from the Ministry of Finance showed that special bond issuance for the first three months of this year has come in at 1.36 trillion yuan (\$195.6 billion), up 4.53 percent from the same period last year.

Experts said that during the past three years, China's economy maintained a stable and sound performance thanks to the consistent fiscal fund offerings, especially special-purpose bonds. This can be partly seen from the rapid growth of infrastructure investment.

Each year between 2018 and 2022, part of the quota of special local government bonds was issued and allocated several months in advance to energize investment and facilitate local infrastructure construction. The projects they've supported and sustained have helped localities perform notably despite hits from the pandemic. For instance, some 1.46 trillion yuan in the 2022 quota for local government special bonds were issued in December 2021 as an effort to help spur investment and support the economy.

Overall growth stable

Special local government bonds are a form of off-budget debt that local governments use to raise cash for a particular policy and projects approved by central finance, primarily involving infrastructure investments. Such bonds were introduced by the central government in 2015.

Li Xuhong, a professor at the Beijing National Accounting Institute, said that during the past three years, fiscal funds such as special local government bonds served as a key fulcrum of macro-economic maneuvers in countering pandemic hits and keeping overall growth stable.

"First, they've worked effectively to ensure and improve people's livelihoods. Most projects invested in using special local government bonds are government-approved projects with strong public attributes and visibly serve in improving people's lives. For instance, a large number of projects to help with rural vitalization were supported by special local government bonds. In addition, these funds, particularly in recent years, have played an irreplaceable role in catalyzing investments when private investments somehow lost steam, keeping overall investment stable," Li said.

For Liu Xiaojun, deputy head of the Heqing township government in Mianyang, Sichuan province, his greatest relief last year was the completion of more than 30,000 *mu* (2,000 hectares) of high-standard farmland construction accumulated by the end of last year. The improvements made in the process have largely facilitated local farmers' cultivation process.



Fiscal funds generate new economic momentum for rural vitalization

Acceleration of special local government bonds keeps economy stable and sound in past three years

"Every year when it comes to the rice harvest season, the harvesting is quite a challenging process for local farmers. In the mountainous area, irrigation and mechanized cultivation have been difficult and time-consuming," he said. "With local farms upgraded with high-standard farmland, agricultural mechanization has been greatly improved. The efficiency of farm work, particularly during harvest season, has improved and lifted local people's incomes."

Southwest China's Sichuan province is home to 96.95 million *mu* of arable land as of 2022 and ranks ninth nationwide in terms of grain production. Many of the key projects supported by special local government bonds were agriculture- and rural-related. Since 2018, some 79.2 billion yuan released from special local government bonds have supported 519 key rural development projects in 21 cities in Sichuan.

Further innovations

He Qiang, an official responsible for local bond issuances and debt at the Sichuan Provincial Finance Department, said that there have been innovations in the application of special local government bonds. Such new developments have worked effectively in catalyzing larger amounts of social investment.

"For example, for some water conservation projects, financing inno-



vation modules used funds released from the special local government bonds as capital to catalyze social and private investments for the projects," he said. "Since 2018, a total of 6.8 billion yuan released from special local government bonds have been used as primary capital for projects on rural vitalization and have catalyzed a total of 40 billion yuan in social investments."

Li at the Beijing National Accounting Institute underlined the role that special local government bonds have played in energizing social capital and completing projects that benefit livelihoods, especially when social investment momentum was relatively in the doldrums during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Since 2020, due to the severe dis-

ruptions caused by COVID-19, many key projects at local levels that were previously planned outpaced the risk of shutting down because of lack of funding. Accelerating the issuance and allocation of special local government bonds has played a role in the counter-cyclical fiscal policy adjustment and ensured the stable operations of key infrastructure projects, generating real economic activity," she said.

Li explained that in recent years, fiscal revenue and expenditures at local government levels have remained in a tight balance. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a heavier blow to them and hampered their capacity to support key projects that bear on both local livelihoods and the region's stable economic performance.

"In recent years, the constant ear-

ly issuance and allocation of special

Top: Villagers sow rice seedlings in Mianyang, Sichuan province, in May 2022.
WANG KAI / FOR CHINA DAILY
Left: A technician operates a machine at a vertical farm in Xinjin district of Chengdu, Sichuan province, in September.
TANG WENHAO / XINHUA

... special local government bonds have been an integral vehicle in China's fiscal financing and the role they have played during the past three years is worth recognizing."

Robin Xing, chief China economist with Morgan Stanley

local bonds have alleviated spending pressures for local governments in a timely manner and successfully ensured the early opening of infrastructure projects every year, generating real economic activity," she said. "In addition, by precisely formulating the areas allowed using the funds of these special local bonds, it has ensured that the funds are put in place where the country's high-quality development drive needs them the most, such as rural vitalization."

Promoting restructuring

The Government Work Report released during this year's two sessions — the top legislative and political advisory meetings — in March has made it clear that the government will work to promote restructuring while reining in an incremental buildup of hidden debt. When attending a news conference in early March, Liu Kun, China's finance minister, said that while the imbalance between fiscal revenue and spending remains acute, there won't be any phase-out in fiscal spending on people's livelihoods.

"As a transparent, compliant fiscal financing tool of good quality, special local government bonds have been an integral vehicle in China's fiscal financing and the role they have played during the past three years is worth recognizing," said Robin Xing, chief China economist with Morgan Stanley.

Better lives are the essence of China's development

As a journalist who has grown up and settled in urban areas my entire adult life, interview-based trips have long been the only chance for me to make grounded

observations of China's rural life and agricultural development. My earlier life as a journalist has constantly brought me into areas of the least-developed rural areas. Partially because of how strongly rural areas stand distinctly apart from metropolises, I always find my visits to the countryside impressive and intriguing.

The past three years of COVID-19 frequently prevented me from traveling outside of Beijing. Last month, I took my first week-long business

trip in three years across three provinces to once again visit the countryside. The pandemic has impacted economic development almost everywhere, and I was concerned that rural areas would be hampered more severely due to relatively more stressed revenues.

In mid-April, I arrived in the countryside of Chengdu, Sichuan province. The province is an important agricultural production base in China and ranks ninth nationwide in grain production. I was introduced to an agriculture exhibition area surrounded by vast cultivated land located more than 50 miles from central Chengdu.

As I was visiting, I was among a group of tourists instead of farmers, who were posing and taking many photos with their smartphones. Kids were having a carnival with plants and food products displayed

in a round-shaped indoor exhibition hall. It felt like I was at a scenic spot rather than farmland.

I later learned that springtime is the best season for urban residents in Chengdu to spend their weekends in the area. The Xinjin agriculture garden and exhibition house that I was visiting also has homes and hotel rooms for short- and long-term homestays and rural experiences.

Xie Liusheng, a staff member at the agriculture exhibition resort, said that the entire resort project's completion was supported by funds released from last year's special local government bonds. Construction of the project started in 2019 and its building was later supported by funds released from the special local government bonds in 2020 and 2021.

"Especially during the pandemic, when urban residents in Chengdu

looked for an outdoor place of leisure for a weekend or holidays, choices were limited. Now, the resort is less than an hour's drive from downtown Chengdu and children can learn about agriculture from a fun tour," Xie said.

After three years of weekends and holidays spent in China's capital city of Beijing, I could empathize with what he shared with me. Projects that were built in the past three years under public fiscal funds not only serve to meet the essential needs of the people, but more importantly, some have made their lives better and more fun now that COVID-19 is no longer a significant threat. In my opinion, making lives better is the essence of China's high-quality development drive.

Contact the writer at zhangyue@chinadaily.com.cn



People visit the Xinjin agriculture garden and exhibition house in Chengdu, Sichuan province, in September.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

SPORTS

OLYMPICS

Raising the stakes in winter sports medal quest

Team China urged to build on Beijing 2022 breakthroughs as 1,000-day countdown to Milan Games kicks off

By SUN XIAOCHEN
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Fresh from delivering the nation's best-ever Winter Olympic campaign at home, China's winter sports teams are refusing to rest on their laurels as they target more glory at the 2026 Games.

A mobilization meeting in Beijing on Saturday kicked off the 1,000-day countdown to the Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo Games, with motivational speeches from Olympic champions, coaches and sports officials underlining China's ambitions for more breakthroughs across a wider range of events in Italy.

Despite achieving a best-ever medal haul at the home Games last year, China still has a long way to go to become an all-around powerhouse in winter sports, stressed sports minister Gao Zhidan.

"Our overall competitiveness in winter sports is not strong enough, and the same can be said for the depth of our reserve talent in many sports. It's a big challenge for us to improve our performances in 2026," said Gao, who was appointed minister of the General Administration of Sport of China in

August last year.

"We have to prove to the world that the success of Beijing 2022 wasn't a one-off, that we remain committed to the sustainable development of winter sports and have changed the landscape of international ice and snow sports."

Maintaining China's traditional strength in skating events and making solid progress in snow sports such as snowboarding and freestyle skiing, the host delegation bagged 15 medals, including nine gold, at Beijing 2022. That was China's best result since making its Winter Olympic debut at the 1980 edition in Lake Placid, New York.

Beijing 2022's success triggered massive public interest in winter sports nationwide. Over 346 million Chinese people participating in ice and snow activities in the build-up to the Games, earning high praise from the International Olympic Committee.

Now it's time to build on that legacy even further, urged Ni Huizhong, director of the National Winter Sports Administrative Center.

"We cannot dwell on the success of Beijing 2022 and past glories," said Ni.



From left: Olympic champions Qi Guangpu, Liu Shaoang, Sandor Liu Shaolin and Sui Wenjing attend an event in Beijing on Saturday to mark the 1,000-day countdown to the 2026 Winter Games. XINHUA

"There is still so much untapped potential, more events to improve and invest in, and more problems to solve concerning the further development of our winter sports."

"The progress of youth development in some of our strength events remains slow. We still rely heavily on foreign coaching in most of the snow sports and we are far from being competitive on the world

stage in more mainstream events such as cross-country, biathlon and Alpine skiing.

"There are gaps between us and the world's winter sports powers which we need to keep working on with consistent effort and unwavering commitment."

With a number of veteran athletes taking a break from competition this past season, the lackluster performances of China's figure skating

and freestyle skiing aerials teams — two of the host's much successful programs at Beijing 2022 — highlighted the lack of youth development in these sports, Ni stressed.

Talent boost

During the 2022-23 season, China's winter sports teams won 14 gold medals in total at world championships and World Cup series — almost equaling the outcome of the 2018-19 season, the first year of the Beijing 2022 Olympic cycle, according to the administrative center.

As the country's most decorated winter sports program, the short-track speed skating team, led by new coach Zhang Jing, remains the biggest contributor after winning 19 medals, including six gold, this past season.

China's short-track medal hopes have been further enhanced by the additions of Hungarian-born Olympic champion brothers Sandor Liu Shaolin and Liu Shaoang, who completed a naturalization process in March.

The Liu brothers are the latest talents to be recruited as part of a program initiated prior to Beijing 2022 to bolster the country's competitiveness in winter sports, especially in less-developed events.

Former South Korean national team short-track speed skater Lin Xiaojun, aka Lim Hyo-jun, completed his first international season representing

China after changing nationality in 2021 to resume his career following a long-term dispute with the Korean governing body. In a strong return to competition, Lin won back-to-back 500m gold medals at the short-track World Cup series in February.

With China opening its borders in the post-pandemic era, a packed schedule of international events on the 2023-24 calendar will provide Chinese athletes with more elite-level tests at home.

The International Skating Union's long-track and short-track speed skating World Cup legs, scheduled respectively for Nov 17-19 and Dec 8-10, and the figure skating grand prix final, planned for Dec 7-10, are among the international events already confirmed.

Ji Dong, coach of the national freestyle skiing aerials team, welcomed the return of international tests and pledged to take full advantage of Beijing 2022's legacy to maintain the momentum in Italy.

"It sounds quite far away, but there are actually only two more winters until the Olympic season opens in 2025," said Ji, who helped Xu Mengtao and Qi Guangpu finish on top of the women's and men's podiums at Beijing 2022 in aerials.

"The clock is ticking and it's really a very tight window considering we are playing catchup to our rivals."

BASKETBALL

BOSTON — Jayson Tatum gave Boston a long-overdue fast start and followed it up with a finish the NBA had never seen before.

After struggling in back-to-back games, Tatum erupted for 51 points — the most in a Game 7 in NBA history — and the Celtics beat the Philadelphia 76ers 112-88 on Sunday to advance to the Eastern Conference finals for the second straight year.

One game after missing 14 of his first 15 shots only to awaken in the fourth quarter in time to save their season, Tatum scored 25 in the back-and-forth first half and 17 more in Boston's 33-10 third quarter that turned a three-point lead into a runaway.

The Celtics, who lost to the Golden State Warriors in the NBA Finals last year, will face the Miami Heat in the East finals for the second straight season. Game 1 is on Wednesday in Boston.

"I was relieved just to get another chance. Our season could have been over after Game 6," said Tatum, who broke the Game 7 record of 50 points Stephen Curry set two weeks ago.

"It definitely was on my mind that I had played as bad as it could get, for 43 minutes. We had a saying: 'It's only up from here.'"

Tatum added 13 rebounds and Jaylen Brown scored 25 points for Boston, which rallied from a 3-2 deficit in the series to keep alive their hopes for an unprecedented 18th NBA championship.

"You always come into a series with the expectation of how it's supposed to go," said Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla, who is in his first year as an NBA head coach after being promoted on the eve of training camp after Ime Udoka was suspended. "That's not how the playoffs are."

Tatum was subbed out of the game with three minutes left to a standing ovation from the crowd, which soon broke out in a "Beat the Heat!" chant. Miami beat Boston in six games in the 2020 East finals and the Celtics took a seven-game matchup last season.

"It's the best time of the year," Tatum said. "As a competitor, I love the opportunity."

Newly crowned NBA MVP Joel Embiid scored 15 points on 5-for-18 shooting, and Tobias Harris scored 19 for Philadelphia. The Sixers lost in the conference semifinals for the third straight year, and the fifth time in six seasons; they have not gotten any farther since reaching the NBA Finals in 2001 despite "The Process" — tanking their way to four top-three draft picks in a row, including Embiid.

"I thought we had the right group. I really did," said Sixers coach Doc Rivers, who was on the Boston bench when the Celtics won it all in 2008. "We played great all year and this loss absolutely diminishes what we did this year in some way. I think this team is headed right. I thought we

Tatum explodes to shatter Sixers



Jayson Tatum celebrates surpassing the 50-point mark against the Philadelphia 76ers during Game 7 of their Eastern Conference semifinal series at TD Garden on Sunday in Boston, Massachusetts. GETTY IMAGES VIA AFP



Jaylen Brown reacts in disbelief after being called for a technical foul on Sunday. USA TODAY SPORTS VIA REUTERS CON



Philadelphia head coach Doc Rivers congratulates Boston's Jayson Tatum after the Celtics' playoff series victory. GETTY IMAGES VIA AFP

took another step this season. And then tonight I think we took a step backward. But that's OK. That happens, too."

Tatum started 0 for 6 in a Game 5 loss and missed 14 of his first 15 shots overall from the floor in Game 6 before making four 3-pointers in the final 4:14 to force the decisive seventh game.

He picked up where he left off, scoring Boston's first basket and 11 points in the first quarter, 14 more in the second and out-scoring the Sixers on his own, 17-10, in the third. The

33-10 edge in the third was the most lopsided quarter in a Game 7 since at least 1997.

"JT just got it going and get out of that man's way," Brown said. "He got it rolling, and there's nothing they could do to stop him."

Banged-up Brown

Brown began the game with the black mask he has worn since breaking a bone in his face before the All-Star break. He took it off and soon absorbed an elbow to the face from James Harden, who was assessed a

flagrant foul.

Brown continued without the mask but finished the half with cotton in his left nostril. He also played with an edge, making both foul shots and following it with a steal and layup as Boston went on a 9-0 run to erase a 35-26 deficit.

Brown also dove into the Sixers bench to save a ball, then had words with the bench after Georges Niang grabbed his leg and kept him from getting back on the court. Both players were given technical fouls.

Robert Williams followed the com-

motion with a layup that tied the score at 35-35. "Nothing like a shot to the face to wake you right up," Brown said.

What's up, Doc?

Rivers is 6-10 in seventh games. The 10 defeats are five more than any other NBA coach and three more than the NHL's Mike Babcock and Bruce Boudreau.

Rivers' teams are 6-16 in their last 22 chances to close out an opponent in a playoff series.

Asked if he expected to be back next year, Rivers said: "Yeah. I think I

Jayson expects sparks to fly in finals rematch against Miami

Four-time All-Star Jayson Tatum is savoring his Boston Celtics' upcoming Eastern Conference finals rematch against the Miami Heat, after stomping out the Philadelphia 76ers 112-88 with a record-breaking 51 points in Game 7.

The Celtics beat the Heat a year ago en route to the NBA Finals, where they lost to the Golden State Warriors. Tatum promised there would be fireworks when their rivalry with Miami continues this week.

"They make plays and they figure out a way to win games. It's going to be fun, it's going to be highly competitive," said Tatum. "As a competitor you just love the opportunity."

It will mark the third time the two teams have met in the conference finals in four seasons, after the Heat came out on top in 2020 before losing the championship series against the Los Angeles Lakers.

The Heat have enjoyed a charmed run as the first eighth seeds in nearly a quarter-century to reach the conference finals.

But Tatum's Sunday showstopper — with 13 rebounds, five assists and the most points ever in a Game 7 — surely sent a chill even through the balmy shores of South Beach.

"Being in another Game 7, being able to come back home in front of our fans, I was really excited for the moment," he told reporters.

Celtics head coach Joe Mazzulla said the performance was as much a credit to Tatum's physical skill as his mental toughness, after overcoming a sluggish start to Game 6 when the Sixers had them on the ropes.

"(Tatum is) just a guy who doesn't get too high or too low," said Mazzulla. "When you play like that and live like that, I think it works out for him... he'll have the humility to just keep going."

REUTERS

got two years left. No one is safe in our business and I get that."

Harden also could be gone if the Sixers opt for an overhaul. He has the opportunity to become a free agent this offseason.

"We've got an unfinished job. We haven't won anything and I think we've got the chance to win," Embiid said. "We've got what it takes to win. ... I still believe me and him have the chance to win. But it's going to take more than us."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

COMMENT

Editorials

Europe should be wary of the Biden administration leading it further astray

Anyone taking an objective look at international relations cannot but raise their eyebrows at the latest plan proposed by the European Union to reduce what the bloc sees as its economic dependence on China while increasing its political dependency on the United States.

The policy adjustment, or "re-calibrating" of China policy as EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell calls it, places greater emphasis on China as an economic competitor. The recalibration received broad backing from the bloc's 27 foreign ministers when they met in Stockholm on Friday. They will now work out what they think it actually entails before presenting it to EU leaders who are expected to discuss China at a summit next month.

Borrell said that the EU had to learn from the "strategic mistake" it made in becoming too dependent on Russian gas. No matter what term the EU picks to describe how it will steer its relationship with China — European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has previously called for "de-risking" — there is no denying the fact that the EU will be ditching the decades-old mutually beneficial partnership that has served both sides' best interests, in favor of an ideologically driven confrontational approach driven by Washington.

Some have portrayed China as an economic threat to Europe's security and called for the bloc to distance itself from the country. But others, such as Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó,

remain clear-minded, cautioning against turning the EU into an "anti-China" bloc. They call for strategic cooperation instead of systemic competition between the two sides. "We don't agree at all with the way certain European countries want to define China as a kind of systemic rival," Szijjártó said in Stockholm on Friday.

It would be pointless for Western European countries to want to sever the economic links between China and Europe, given the "clear division of labor between East and West." "Neither works without the other," he said. As if to prove his point, French President Emmanuel Macron announced on Friday that Chinese group XTC New Energy Materials will set up a joint venture with France's Orano in the battery sector in the northern French port city of Dunkirk for an expected investment of 1.5 billion euros (\$1.63 billion). The venture is expected to create around 1,700 jobs.

China has, and will always see Europe as a comprehensive strategic partner and support it to play a more active role in the international arena.

Europe has undoubtedly been rattled by the conflict in Ukraine. But it should recognize its own role in what has transpired. By allowing the US to use it as the rack on which to stretch Russia to breaking point, Europe has inflicted harm and troubles on itself.

It would be detrimental to the interests of both the EU and China, if the EU were to let its cooperative relations with China also be hijacked by Washington.

US the real perpetrator of economic coercion

Non-market practices and economic coercion are the terms Washington often employs when it is pointing an accusing finger at other countries including China. It is absurd that it should do so, given that such expressions best describe what it has been doing.

Despite this, it still plans to use such phrases in meeting with the European Union later this month, in which the two sides will talk about ways to contain the rise of China.

Given the frequent visits to China by leaders of major EU countries in the past months and the close economic cooperation between China and EU countries, it is clear that Washington is trying to estrange the EU from China.

When it comes to the topic of non-market practices, it is well-known all over the world that China's reform and opening-up in the late 1970s turned the country into a market economy with its own characteristics. That transformation has brought China to where it is now. It is that transformation which has also ensured the Chinese economy's integration with the global market.

China has never changed its reform and opening-up policies and it has been making efforts to open its door wider and create an even better business environment for foreign investors.

It is the US that has abused market rules in its dealings with other countries by taking for granted its position as the world's sole superpower. It is the

US that has bullied other countries by taking unilateral actions in raising tariffs or imposing economic sanctions. It is the US that is desperate to suppress China's development in order to maintain its position as the world's sole superpower.

When it comes to the alleged economic coercion of China, the example that is cited is Lithuania whose exports to China the Chinese authorities are said to have blocked. However, it is Lithuania that is responsible for its problems with China, as it has failed to abide by the one-China principle that is the prerequisite for bilateral relations.

Washington has frequently practiced economic coercion in its economic relations with other countries. By politicizing economic issues, the US has frequently imposed economic sanctions against other countries. Washington has also abused the concept of national security to prohibit the development of other countries.

Its attempt to coordinate with the EU on export controls for semiconductors and other goods at their meeting to be held later this month is an apt example. It is a kind of bullying that is meant to keep China and other emerging economies at the lower end of the global industry chain.

What Washington has been doing has disrupted and will further disrupt the global supply and industry chains. It is selfish and callous of Washington to do a disservice to the development of the world economy in a bid to contain the rise of China and the development of emerging economies.

Washington still meddling in Hong Kong affairs

A US congressional report issued late last week that called for sanctions against 29 Hong Kong judges involved in the city's national security cases represents the latest attempt by the United States to weaken the rule of law in the special administrative region.

The report by the US Congressional-Executive Commission on China claimed that the National Security Law enforced in Hong Kong in 2020 in response to "pro-democracy demonstrations" had "created a parallel legal system that weakens judicial independence and strips criminal defendants of basic due process protections."

The claim does not hold water. The so-called pro-democracy demonstrations were nothing but social chaos orchestrated by Washington for the purpose of turning Hong Kong into a bridgehead for its China containment strategy. There is only one legal system in the SAR. It respects the legal rights and interests of all criminal defendants, and safeguards peace, stability and the rule of law in the city. It is the US that wants to make its own will "a parallel" set of rules for the city to follow.

The reason why the US lawmakers see the National Security Law, which was made, revised and executed following the will of the Hong Kong people, as a thorn in the flesh is because the law has

effectively plugged the institutional loopholes the US had long taken advantage of to implant, direct and support its pawns in the SAR to do its bidding.

That order could be quickly restored in the city shortly after the law was enforced testifies to its effectiveness.

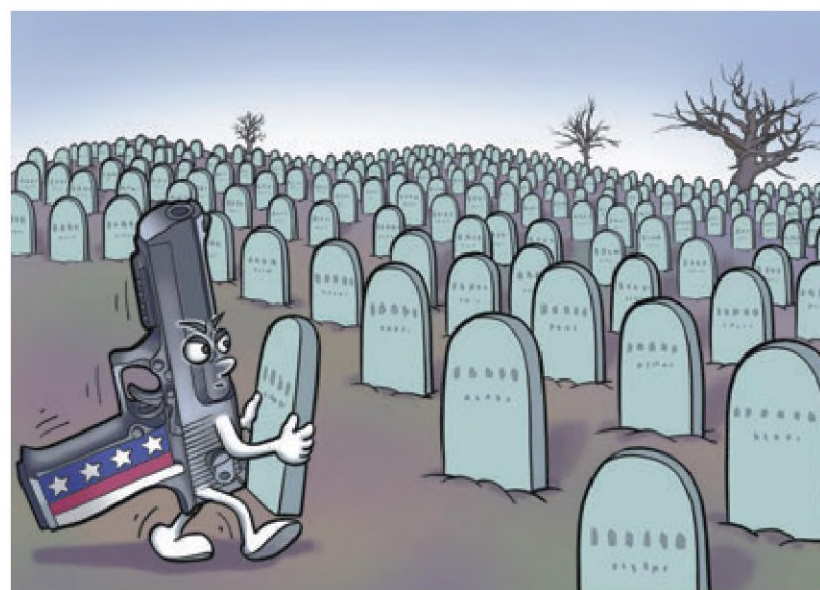
The US legislature body's issuing of such a baseless report constitutes a grave intervention in China's internal affairs, and also shows the US' reluctance to accept the fact that its good old days when it could waywardly manipulate the situation in Hong Kong through remote control of its puppets are gone.

The US lawmakers' appeal to the US government to sanction the Hong Kong judges who faithfully fulfill their duties in cases related to national security exposes their shamelessness in believing that the US government can interfere in the other countries' domestic judicial affairs.

Making other countries' business its own, and making its own business, if not failures, others' have always been a tactic employed by the US to maintain its global hegemony.

To truly show their concern for people in Hong Kong, the US lawmakers should suggest the US government immediately cease all interventions in the Hong Kong affairs, and abolish all the sanctions it has imposed on the city that directly harm the interests of the Hong Kong people.

Jin Ding



Opinion Line

Regional integrated development key to China's path to modernization

The Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region should make greater efforts to take the region's coordinated development to a new level and make it an example of Chinese modernization, the central authorities said in a recent meeting.

In early 2014, the central authorities issued a strategy to coordinate the development of Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei to create a model with a better economic structure, cleaner environment and improved public services. Two "new wings", the Tongzhou district of Beijing and Xiongan New Area in Hebei, were built to realize this goal.

Tongzhou and Xiongan should properly handle relations and work together to rid Beijing of its "big city malaise". According to the Hebei provincial government, China's centrally administered State-owned enterprises had set up more than 140 subsidiaries and branches in

Xiongan as of January, and more enterprises are expected to be relocated there. The relocation of the second batch of Beijing's administrative institutions and enterprises to Tongzhou will also be speeded up.

To promote its coordinated development, the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region should be given full play as one of the three major drivers of China's high-quality development. Being home to a large number of first-class universities and research talents, the region enjoys a solid foundation for innovation. This role will enable the region to set an example for achieving self-reliance and self-improvement in high-level science and technology and promote innovation.

The coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region needs to not only take into consideration regional differences while paying attention to complementary

advantages. Beijing's edge in sci-tech innovation should be combined with Tianjin's strength in advanced manufacturing research and development to make breakthroughs in core technologies in key fields, and the two cities should help Hebei to better accommodate industries transferred from the two cities.

The ultimate purpose of promoting the coordinated development of the region is to improve people's well-being and facilitate common prosperity. While making greater efforts to promote coordinated development, the region should learn more about the needs of the people, accelerate the joint contribution and sharing of public services, and promote the sharing of better education and medical resources, to solve the interests and concerns of the people and improve their sense of gain, happiness, and security.

— XINHUA NEWS AGENCY

Speculators, not scientists, driving AI rollout

Google recently announced the debut of its artificial intelligence-backed large language model, PaLM2, which, it claims, surpasses the existing GPT-4 in certain aspects and will serve people better.

The move challenges the open letter issued in March by the non-profit Future of Life Institute, which called for pausing all giant AI experiments for six months and to use the time to implement a set of shared safety protocols for advanced AI design and development. However, the sooner a company accomplishes its research, the bigger its market share is going to be. According to US-based Next Move Strategy Consulting, the \$100 billion

AI market in the US alone is likely to grow 20 times by 2030, while that of the whole world might even reach \$1.85 trillion during the same period.

Any company executive knows that no financier would, therefore, risk halting work for that long. That's the biggest dilemma in the whole affair: technologists might have realized the risks involved in AI's fast evolution, but those putting their money into the research are only driven by profits. It is, therefore, easy to persuade those behind academic research, but hard to persuade entrepreneurs whose job is to make profits. Even if some entrepreneurs are willing to suspend AI

research for six months, their rivals may not do so and so they risk losing their market share to rivals.

The way to solving this problem lies not in persuading entrepreneurs to halt research but in drafting regulations to minimize their worries about the risks. Calling lawmakers to make such a regulation might be a good idea, to ensure a level playing field for all players.

The Future of Life Institute, which called for "an AI pause", would do well to direct their call to those investing in the research than to the scientists, so that such rules are drafted sooner.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Rationalize local govts' investment competition

Investment from outside of a locality promotes the development of its economy and industry. But some local governments are overstretching their pro-investment policies to provide "extraordinary preferential treatments" that they cannot afford in the long run to investors, in a bid to win out in the competition for investment.

The practice not only increases the burden on local governments, but also encourages the speculation of some investors, prompting them to focus on quick returns.

With the competition for investment becoming increasingly fierce, the aforementioned practice must be rectified, otherwise it will turn regional development into a zero-sum game between neighboring towns, damaging the overall economic development environment.

For example, in order to compete for a big project, some places tend to offer "extraordinary concessions" in land use and tax reductions, and provide generous subsidies of vari-

ous kinds. That makes the process a de facto auction of the projects.

Before the project proves its profitability, the bidders are doing nothing but upping the ante on transforming investment promotion into a gamble with taxpayers' money at the costs of fairness in market competition. That increases the risks for the winners in the "auction", as many local governments are running on debt already, and shakes the foundation for the rule-of-law business environment the government vows to form.

Therefore, the central authorities should take concrete actions to address the issue which cannot be tackled by the local governments themselves. In a guideline policy the central authorities issued in June last year, it was stipulated that grassroots governments should gradually clear up the subsidies and abolish policies that interfere with the market and are linked to tax revenue. It also calls for the elimination of policies that impede the unification of the mar-

ket and fair competition, addressing local protectionism, market segmentation and insider trading, in order to prevent vicious competition for investment.

It should be borne in mind that some projects of the so-called emerging industries and high technology have proved to be a disguise for speculators to swindle local governments' subsidies, a source of kickback for some insiders in the government as some cases indicate.

There should be assessments and supervision of investment projects by means of an effective project and investment evaluation system. That will help local governments to see how the local economy will benefit from any investment project, whether the local economy can afford the loss to be caused by the possible failure of the project in the future, as well as an accountability system for the officials responsible for granting subsidies to projects that turn out to be not worth it.

— BEIJING NEWS

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COMMENT

Mallika Sachdeva

China's recovery drives Asian economy

The stress in the global banking system is leading some to draw parallels with the last banking crisis. There are, of course, clear differences around the nature of the banking stress itself. While the 2006-08 crisis was more explicitly a credit crisis, this time it has been more an interest rate risk crisis.

Smaller banks are struggling to compete on deposits, with front-end rates having been hiked sharply, and are also facing sharp losses on their fixed-income assets, which the withdrawal of deposits is exposing.

The 2008 Global Financial Crisis built slowly, with housing prices beginning to fall in 2006, hedge funds saddled with subprime investments beginning to fail in 2007, and full-blown banking failures in 2008. Despite clear signs of stress by mid-2007, Asian currencies actually continued to rally for a few quarters, with over 5 percent gains on an average Asian foreign exchange index from July 2007-Mar 2008, before a sharp turn and over 15 percent losses in the year thereafter.

There was of course variation in how Asian currencies performed even in the midst of the crisis. We note that from Summer 2007-End 2008, the Japanese yen, Chinese yuan and Singapore dollar actually managed to deliver net positive gains, while the Republic of Korea won, Indian rupee and the Indonesian rupiah lost the most ground.

Crucial differences in the Asian FX backdrop

There are a lot of areas to mine when it comes to parallels with history. We identify a number of crucial differences between 2007-08 and today that suggest that Asian currencies are likely to fare much better this time:

1. Foreign positioning in Asian assets is much lighter, with considerable outflows from Asian equities in recent years in contrast to the years of inflows from 2002-07.

In the five years before Summer 2007, Asian equities had attracted \$136 billion of inflows, or over 1 percent of the GDP of the countries covered, while over the past 5 years, Asian equities have lost \$120 billion, or 0.3 percent of GDP. Foreign investors are simply far less invested and exposed, having refrained from building positions in the last few years.

2. Corporate positioning is also long US dollar now, unlike short US dollar in 2007.

Asian corporates have hoarded US dollar deposits in recent years, in contrast to the heavy short US dollar forward positions in 2007. The year preceding 2007 had seen a consistent downtrend in US dollar/Asia, with domestic corporates actively positioned short US dollar.

3. Less risks of US dollar funding stress.

The emergence of banking system risks have been accompanied by far less US dollar stress this time. While US dol-

lar funding premiums have risen, it is well below levels seen in 2020, and just a fraction of what occurred in 2008. This is partly because foreign investors and corporates are much less short US dollar to begin with and thus the scramble for US dollar has also been more limited. But it is also partly due to higher levels of foreign exchange reserves, and access to emergency US dollar liquidity from the Fed via the foreign and international monetary authorities' repo facility, which appears to have been tapped recently for up to \$60 billion, albeit it is unclear how much Asian central banks have played a role.

4. China's expected strong recovery this year and next will provide an offset, particularly for ASEAN where some countries are more leveraged to China over US growth now, especially service exporters.

The Chinese economy is expected to accelerate from this year itself, given the reopening and property market reversal, with Deutsche Bank House View expecting 6.0 percent and 6.3 percent growth in 2023 and 2024. This should provide a helpful offset, particularly to Asian economies that are more leveraged to China than US growth.

We look at a simple correlation between domestic manufacturing PMIs and China versus US PMIs. We find that a number of ASEAN economies —

Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam — are all more correlated to China than US growth now, while North Asian economies could face a bigger drag from the US than lift from China. While there are clear relative implications for manufacturing strength, we think the bright spot of the Chinese recovery will be in services consumption, with Thailand set to benefit the most from this trend as Chinese tourism spending resumes.

5. Asian currencies are much more attractively valued.

In Summer 2007, Asian currencies were decidedly overvalued by an average of 13 percent on our Trade Weighted Index trade-based models. In comparison, Asian currencies on average are now slightly undervalued.

6. Most striking similarity between then and now will be around Japan and yen's strength.

Even in 2006, the Bank of Japan tightened after the Fed had delivered its last hike and cracks were beginning to appear. But while the last BoJ tightening cycle was very short-lived, and quickly reversed, we think this one will have more virtuous and sustainable domestic drivers. In 2006, when the BoJ lifted rates, core inflation was still negative and

headline inflation less than 1 percent. In contrast, Japan appears to have made a more meaningful exit from its low inflation regime this time, with Shunto wage increases the largest since the early 1990s in March 2023.

Taking the above factors together, we would note a weaker case to play this banking crisis via long US dollar/Asia positions compared with 2007-08. In contrast to then, real positioning appears very light with domestic corporates sitting on long US dollar and foreign investors having avoided building Asian exposure in recent years. Asian currencies are also mostly cheap, the risk of US dollar funding stress is much lower, and China is recovering strongly.

Our relative currency preferences mostly reflect the drivers discussed above. We note that exports from markets such as the Republic of Korea have been very poor, and a slowing US economy could add to the drag; Malaysia is meanwhile more leveraged to China's growth recovery. We see Thailand getting a boost later in the year from a greater return of Chinese tourism. We also see growth and monetary policy divergence leading to strength in the Chinese yuan against the US dollar this year.

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



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It's time to fight the burdensome betrothal money

Editor's note: The decline in the marriage rate is related to the rising cost of getting married, especially the high housing prices in some big cities and the increasing betrothal money a bridegroom has to give to the bride's parents, writes a veteran journalist with China Daily.

Betrothal money (or *pin jin*) required by a bride's parents has long been a financial burden for many bridegrooms and their families. Traditionally, *pin jin*, or the bride's price, is a practice in which the groom's family offers the bride's family an amount of money as a symbol of respect.

But nowadays, as reports show, the betrothal money could be as high as 300,000 yuan (\$43,115) in the more developed eastern region of China, and about 200,000 yuan in the less-developed western region. The sum is equivalent to an individual's five-seven years' income in a city and perhaps 10 years' earnings in rural areas.

After the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, the first law that China passed was the marriage law, which stressed gender equality and stipulated that a person has the right to choose his or her life partner instead of marrying the one chosen by his/her parents.

Although *pin jin* was not mentioned in the law, it was presumed that with youths choosing their life partners, the betrothal money custom would die a natural death. The fact, however, is that the *pin jin* custom survived, especially in rural areas. But the deals were reached secretly and the sum became smaller.

And according to data from other sources, more and more people are choosing not to marry at all for multiple reasons, though I believe the betrothal money and housing precondition are two of the most important ones.

The *pin jin* custom was more or less abandoned in urban areas till the turn of the century. I am among the lucky ones who did not have to pay the betrothal money to my wife's family when I tied the knot in the mid-1980s. During those days, the bride's parents, in many cases, required the groom's family to provide the newly-wed couple with necessary furniture, electronic appliances and a separate room to ensure they led a happy life.

But the *pin jin* custom made a strong comeback about two decades ago under the cover of traditional practice. Neither the government nor society paid much attention to the revival of *pin jin*, probably because such deals were struck between two families and the betrothal money was usually small, and neither side broke any laws. This prompted the "betrothal money business" to grow. Traditional material gifts were first replaced with cash. Then the amount of money started increasing. The amounts mentioned above are those normally accepted practice, though in some extreme cases, the required sum could reach 1 million yuan.

In cities such as Beijing, *pin jin* may be a rarely heard phenomenon, but that does not mean it's easy for a young man to marry the woman of his choice. Reportedly, for a man to marry the woman of his choice, he or his family usually has to buy or have a separate apartment — which could cost 5 million yuan in Beijing where the average monthly salary is about 6,000 yuan.

High betrothal money and the unreasonable housing demand have prevented many couples from tying the knot. I know two men in their late 30s who couldn't marry the women they loved because they could not afford to buy or rent an apartment in Beijing.

Official data for 2022 show that China's population has begun decreasing and that people are getting married at an older age. And according to data from other sources, more and more people are choosing not to marry at all for multiple reasons, though I believe the betrothal money and housing precondition are two of the most important ones.

It may be difficult for lawmakers to pass a law banning *pin jin*. But something has to be done to curb this unhealthy trend which could have a negative effect on China's efforts to raise the total fertility rate and ensure social stability in the long run.

In fact, some lower-tier cities have introduced regulations limiting the sum of betrothal money — between 60,000 yuan and 100,000 yuan. But they are very cautious when it comes to strictly enforcing the regulations for fear of being accused of violating citizens' rights.

So it is up to us, society as a whole, to condemn this ugly trend. And the media, including social media, can contribute to the cause by helping develop an atmosphere in which asking for huge amounts of betrothal money would be considered a shame.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Gulchehra Rikhsieva

Sino-Uzbek education cooperation creates opportunities

Cooperation on education between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the People's Republic of China is based on the education cooperation agreement signed by the Uzbek Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education and the Chinese Ministry of Education on Nov 8, 1999. Along with this, Sino-Uzbek education cooperation is also based on a number of other key documents.

Every year, China grants scholarships to some students under the framework of interstate cooperation program of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which allows them to study in Chinese universities. Due to such grants and scholarships, students travel to China not only to learn the Chinese language and attend college, but also to gain experience as interns in institutions and organizations, and receive advanced training in the field of education and economics. Uzbek students can also seek scholarships to attend college in China through the Confucius Institute.

The Confucius Institutes in Uzbekistan have helped thousands of Uzbek citizens to learn the Chinese language, earn HSK level certificates (standardized test to test foreigners' Chinese language proficiency), and get better acquainted with Chinese culture. Many clubs and groups that regularly organize calligraphy, Chinese cuisine, tai chi or other competitions, or host cultural and educational events have also played an important

role in popularizing the Chinese language and culture in Uzbekistan.

In particular, volunteer teachers have had a big hand in popularizing the Chinese language and culture, as they, along with local experts, have not only shared their knowledge with others but also introduced new ideas and methods of Chinese studies to the Confucius Institutes. For instance, before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Confucius Institute at the Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies introduced new activities with the help of eight volunteer teachers from China.

While the number of higher educational institutions in Uzbekistan where the Chinese language is taught as a first or second foreign language is growing, the Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies remains the base of higher education in terms of Chinese studies. Also, the Confucius Institute at the university is the first of its kind in Central Asia. In fact, the university will celebrate 70 years of the founding of a school of Chinese studies later this year.

A landmark event in the history of the university was the opening of the Department of Chinese Studies in 2014. Its goal is to fully realize the educational and scientific potential of students and promote cooperation with Chinese universities and organizations.

For the past three academic years, volunteer teachers have been teaching students at the Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies, and interacting with

teachers in the Department of Chinese Philology of the university to improve the teaching methods and conversational practice. While 22 Chinese specialists have taught students in the university, experts from partner universities in China have conducted online classes for undergraduate and postgraduate students in the past three years.

In the 2021-22 academic year, there were 72 Chinese study groups in fields as varied as Chinese literature, philology, Chinese history, Chinese philosophy, journalism, economics and political science. At present, there are 770 undergraduate and 88 postgraduate students, while the number of doctoral candidates is 15.

From the 2022-23 academic year, postgraduate Chinese students are being taught under the "foreign economic activity (foreign trade)" program framework. And over the past three academic years, about 20 Chinese nationals have earned bachelor's, master's or doctoral degrees in the language courses of the university.

Besides, associations such as the Chinese Language and Culture Fan Club, Young Economists Club, Young Translators Club and the School for Young Political Scientists organize extracurricular activities for students so they can spend their free time in useful pursuits.

The university has also established ties with Chinese universities such as the Shanghai International Studies University, Hunan University, Tianjin Polytechnic University, Xi'an International

Studies University and the Northwestern Minzu University.

Last year saw another landmark event in Sino-Uzbek cooperation on education with the opening of the Uzbek-Chinese Research Center at the Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies. Among the center's priorities are creating monographs, promoting the study of China's domestic and foreign policies and economic practices, and the role of the Silk Road, as well as analyzing the prospects of Sino-Uzbek cooperation, which could give rise to new generation textbooks and electronic apps, and encourage more young researchers.

Undoubtedly, cooperation between Uzbek and Chinese universities and organizations will create more opportunities for people who are fluent in the Chinese language and well-versed in Chinese studies. This, in turn, will open up new horizons of cooperation between the two countries.

This is the result of the development of bilateral relations in recent years, and the upcoming visit of the President of Uzbekistan to China will in every way contribute to the development of relations in the field of education between our countries in the future.

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

GLOBAL VIEWS

ZHANG YUN

False perception

Japan's ambition to play a larger role in global affairs is stymied by its worldview

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's recent visits to four African states — Egypt, Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique — were aimed at rallying support from the Global South, including African countries, for the West ahead of the G7 summit to be held in Hiroshima. During his African trip, Kishida emphasized the so-called rules-based international order, which might also be Japan's keyword for the upcoming G7 summit.

Since the outbreak of the Ukraine conflict in early 2022, Japan has seen a dramatic change in its strategic thinking, with its self-positioning shifting from being a bridge between the West and Asia to a link connecting the West with the Global South. In its latest Diplomatic Bluebook, Japan included the term "Global South" for the first time, and recognized that the world is going through a historic transformation, which on the one hand indicates that Japan has woken up to the rise of developing countries, and on the other hand points to the fact that Japan's strategy toward the Global South is based on a worldview, which divides the world into three major blocs — the first is the United States, Europe and Japan, the second is China and Russia, and the third is the Global South countries. This is a misconception of the global political landscape, which does a disservice to Japan's ambition to play a larger role in global affairs, and also hinders the country's efforts to expand its strategic space.

First, the trichotomous view over-simplifies the real world and thus lacks appeal in the international society. Regarding the Ukraine conflict, Japan's position, which is in line with its Western allies, is isolating Russia diplomati-

cally and sanctioning it economically. The Ukraine conflict is no doubt a major global event, but it is by no means the only important issue in the world — climate change, energy security, and sustainable development are also pressing challenges facing humanity. For most countries, forcing them to toe the line of the West on the Ukraine issue is simply not in their interests.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict is in essence a security crisis for Europe, with much of the rest of the world not directly involved. It is first and foremost the European countries that should reflect on the crisis and try to find a solution to it. Earlier this year, many countries that attended the Davos World Economic Forum voiced their discontent about the event's excessive focus on the Ukraine issue and Europe's security.

Second, "Global South" and "rules-based international order" have been the two keywords in Japan's diplomacy narrative over the past year. On the one hand, it indicates that Japan has reassessed the "value diplomacy" Washington peddles around the world and adjusted its diplomatic strategy accordingly. And on the other hand, it reflects Japan's desire to woo the support of the Global South by forging a new narrative, which labels Russia as the biggest violator of international law and a disruptor of the global order, and portrays China as a saboteur of the order in East Asia.

However, countries have witnessed how the US-led West flagrantly violated international law in the Kosovo War, Iraq War and other wars they were engaged in, and the consequent grave human and economic costs suffered by the countries affected. They have also



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

witnessed the West's abuse of economic sanctions and trade protectionism which has violated international rules and exposed their double standards. All of these have weakened the credibility of Japan's proposal to build "rules-based international order".

Third, in Japan's worldview, the globe is divided into two confronting blocs, one led by the West and one led by China and Russia, while the Global South is merely regarded as a political arena the two blocs are racing to woo support from. This view ignores the endogenous dynamics inside the Global South. According to Japan's view, China's

efforts to forge ties with developing countries are regarded as filling the strategic vacancy left by the West and expanding its sphere of influence. Japan's role in global affairs is defined as swaying the Global South to the Western bloc and curbing China's influence. But this mindset of countering China will obstruct Japan from seeing the endogenous demands of developing countries to solve their security problems and promote their development.

In March, Iran and Saudi Arabia, the two archrivals in the Middle East, decided to resume their diplomatic relations under a China-bro-

kered deal, which was regarded by Japan as a result of China filling the vacancy left in the region after the West's withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan. In fact, Iran and Saudi Arabia's rapprochement is first and foremost an outcome of the war-torn region's desire and endeavors to seek peace and development after years of wars and conflicts due to interventions from non-regional major powers. China has successfully mediated the rapprochement by establishing political mutual trust and enduring economic partnerships with regional countries, which is in line with the trend of the times and caters to the aspiration for peace

of countries in the Middle East.

As a major importer of energy from the Middle East, Japan once maintained good relationships with countries in the region, including Iran and Saudi Arabia. It could have played a positive role in brokering peace in the Middle East and resolved conflicts in the region together with China. However, due to its mindset of bloc confrontation, Japan lacks the strategic vision of joining hands with China for political cooperation in a third country and other regions, which has corroded its potential diplomatic assets in the Global South, thus shrinking its strategic space.

As the world is undergoing a historic transformation, the major driving force of involvement in global politics is the rise of developing countries and their growing awareness of participating in global governance, rather than the bloc confrontations between major countries and their scramble for the Global South. Japan is misjudging the general trend by dividing the world into confronting blocs. The international society is not merely an enlarged version of the Western bloc. Facing the common challenges for humanity, the world is embarking on a historical process of jointly building a global political community, of which multipolarity will be an inevitable result. Japan should follow the trend of the times and promote the development of multipolarity.

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ONG TEE KEAT

A new security concern on the horizon

The roll-out of the Global Development Initiative and Global Security Initiative by China provides a timely framework for the ASEAN-China collaboration in agricultural development and food security

In the years preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, food security was on the back burner for most member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations amid robust GDP growth brought about by globalization.

While the region was still in the throes of COVID-19, the size of the hungry population teetering on the brink of malnutrition and famine worldwide witnessed a sharp rise to 258 million people in 2022 from 193 million the year before. The ASEAN region was not spared the exigency either. More than 60 million people remain undernourished in the region that was once dubbed the most dynamic regional bloc in the world.

The cost of food imports and agricultural production soared to a record high when wheat and fertilizer exports were disrupted after the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in February 2022. Alongside the economic fallout, the vulnerable food security stands out as a clear regional concern and a policy priority.

Parallel to this, the protectionist export bans on certain food items within the region ring the alarm of "food nationalism" which some countries justify by citing "prioritizing self-sufficiency". Nonetheless, the latter is no answer to the exigency. Instead, it would only put regional integration to the test.

While the agricultural output in ASEAN is becoming increasingly unsustainable to feed its ever-growing population, marine resources are getting depleted at an unprecedented rate because of escalating unregulated overfishing in the region.

Against such a backdrop, not only is the ASEAN-China Year of Agricultural Development and Food Security Cooperation a timely and relevant initiative in response to the exigency, more importantly, it calls for international solidarity and concerted action to arrest the woes amid the declining confidence.



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Indeed, this is a new dimension of collaboration in the domain of non-traditional security concerns where ASEAN has yet to have a coherent and coordinated security architecture. Neither is it an easy feat at a time when the trust deficit is riding high worldwide and global collaboration is getting more fragmented than ever before along geopolitical lines.

Unlike the traditional security

interests where antagonistic military might and competing security pacts dominate the scene, non-traditional security exigencies see the emergence of insecurity in such key areas as food, energy and climate change. And the only key to addressing such regional or global woes lies in coordinated efforts and collective wisdom through multilateral collaboration, instead of antagonistic face-off.

In the face of mounting pressure of food insecurity, ASEAN is in dire need of capacity building in stabilizing its collective food supply chain. In this respect, all efforts in addressing the formidable challenges posed by climate change as well as agricultural output in the region are inseparable from technological empowerment.

Facilities of logistical connectivity, storage and refrigeration are

absolutely necessary to make the remedial efforts viable. All these constitute the new drivers of economic growth in the region that may require the injection of Chinese capital and experience.

The roll-out of the Global Development Initiative and Global Security Initiative by China provides a timely framework for ASEAN-China collaboration in agricultural development and food security.

Both the China-proposed initiatives, consistent with the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, are anticipated to fulfill the regional bloc's dire need for "empowerment" through capacity building.

Prior to this, Beijing's partnership diplomacy was largely economy-driven. Security hardly ever took the driver's seat although China is the second largest funds-provider for the UN peacekeeping missions, in addition to deploying the most number of peacekeeping troops among permanent members of the UN Security Council.

In the current context, the international community has to live with the new paradigm of security concern where antagonism in the zero-sum perspective is no solution to the prevailing conundrums. Food insecurity in ASEAN is a case in point. It is now taken cognizance of as a critical pillar of regional security against a challenging backdrop where it's also a strategic guarantee of global peace and development.

From the perspective of regional geopolitical dynamics, the success of ASEAN-China collaboration in addressing such a grave challenge will no doubt add another feather to Beijing's cap of comprehensive strategic partnership with its Southeast Asian neighbor.

This enabler's role, consistent with the ideal of forging a community with a shared future for humanity, is all set to enrich the prevailing bleak scenario of global governance with a refreshing element of symbiotic collaboration in the real sense.

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LIFE



Clockwise from top left: Stills from four movies that have been produced to promote Peking Opera — *The Gathering of Heroes: Borrowing the East Wind*, *The You Sisters of the Red Chamber*, *Silang Visits His Mother* and *Cai Wenji Returns to Her Hometown*. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

For more than two centuries, Peking Opera has mesmerized audiences with its captivating performances and stunning vocal artistry, earning it a place as one of China's most significant cultural treasures. To preserve and promote the iconic legacy, the Peking Opera Film Project, entering its 13th year, has released four cinematic remakes of classics.

The new movies — *Silang Visits His Mother*, *The Gathering of Heroes: Borrowing the East Wind*, *The You Sisters of the Red Chamber*, and *Cai Wenji Returns to Her Hometown* — were shown on April 25, a day after the China National Film Museum added them to its collection.

Ma Chongjie, a Beijing native and the nephew of the late Peking Opera master Ma Lianliang, was the director of the first two movies, which wrapped up shooting in 2018 and 2019 respectively.

Ma Chongjie, who learned opera as a child, shifted his interest to the film industry after graduating from the directing department of the Beijing Film Academy. He has worked as a director at the China Film Group Corp for more than 30 years, serving as helmsman for around 20 movies, most of which have been inspired by traditional operas or remakes of them.

"I was born into a family of Peking Opera performers, so I have had a special affection for this art form since childhood," says the veteran filmmaker, who has directed four of the 21 features so far produced by

the Peking Opera Film Project.

With support from State authorities, the project has brought together masters and emerging talent from the country's top Peking Opera troupes, creatively blending modern cinematography with the centuries-old art form to appeal to younger audiences.

His third movie for the project — after *The Orphan of Zhao* and *Xie Yaohuan — Silang Visits His Mother* — casts a group of established Peking Opera artists, such as actor Zhang Jianfeng and actress Dou Xiaoxuan, to retell a legend set during the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127).

The tale, which originated in the 16th century, tells the story of Yang Yanhui, nicknamed Silang, the fourth son of a renowned general. He is captured and forced to marry the daughter of Empress Dowager

Xiao, his enemy and a powerful ruler from the Liao Dynasty (916-1125). Fifteen years later, the protagonist discovers that his long-separated mother has succeeded his late father as the new leader of a Northern Song army, so he decides to risk his life and escape the Liao palace to reunite with his family.

"The play is one of the earliest Peking Opera classics and has been staged many times over the past century, with most Peking Opera masters putting their own unique spin on it. When I was first tasked with directing this movie, I felt quite stressed," recalls Ma Chongjie.

On the project, which took an excess of eight months to complete, the director used advanced filming techniques, such as virtual cinematography, to combine traditional stage performance with special

effects. In doing so, he brought to life this ancient tale, which also touches on themes of wartime romance.

"Usually, die-hard fans who often visit opera theaters primarily listen to their favorite plays, rather than watch them, as they are already familiar with the lyrics and lines," says Ma Chongjie. "By using visual effects to fill in the gaps in the imagination, these Peking Opera movies will draw more attention to the settings and close-ups, adding another layer of significance."

In some of his other films based on Peking Opera classics, such as *The Gathering of Heroes: Borrowing the East Wind*, visual effects have also played a significant role.

Adapted from the classic novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, written by Luo Guanzhong in the 14th century, the film weaves togeth-

er the tales of how Zhou Yu and Zhuge Liang, two military strategists from allied powers engaged in the wars following the collapse of the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220), defeat their enemies during a decisive battle in Chibi, located in what is now Central China's Hubei province.

According to Ma Chongjie, the movie uses computer-generated imagery to bring to life various battlefield scenes, ranging from the surging waters of the Yangtze River to an onslaught with thousands of arrows.

Ma Chongjie regards the movie — with its sprinkling of prestigious artists aged between 60 and 84 — as the most challenging undertaking of his directorial career.

"This play has been passed down for more than 200 years, encapsulating the artistic contributions of many different masters from vari-

ous schools. In 1957, it was adapted into a movie, featuring seven masters of that era," explains Ma Chongjie, emphasizing the pressure of seeking breakthroughs while retaining traditional nuances.

Although most Peking Opera tales tell stories of royalty and high-ranking officials, *The You Sisters of the Red Chamber*, created by the late master Xun Huiheng in 1932, shifts the focus to two ordinary women and their everyday struggles.

With veteran Peking Opera artist Liu Changyu, 81, serving as the movie's art consultant, the film retells a well-known story from the classic novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*, written by Cao Xueqin of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), about two beautiful sisters surnamed You who struggle to pursue love but both face tragedy.

Liu, who started to learn Peking Opera at 9 in 1951, says that she has repeatedly studied the classic novel and the movie script in great detail, in order to explore the experiences of women during feudal times.

"Most Peking Opera stories draw upon traditional Chinese culture and reflect the unique values, aesthetics and moral pursuits of the Chinese nation," says Liu. "Through film, we can better pass on the art of Peking Opera and allow more people, including locals in far-flung rural areas and Chinese soldiers guarding the borders, to experience it."

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Peking Opera classics get modern touch

Traditional art form given new twist with the latest cinematic technology as project celebrates masterpieces, **Xu Fan** reports.

HUANG XUAN
China Customs Anti-Ivory Campaigns Ambassador

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LIFE



A French connection

Interactive dance drama *Mobius*, jointly created by students and faculty of institutions in Beijing and Lyon, builds a unique bridge between artists and the audience, **Cheng Yuezhu** reports.

Upon arriving at the venue, it was almost difficult for members of the audience to tell when or where the performance began — there was no seating in the dimly lit space, and people dressed in futuristic costumes walked mechanically among them or simply did their own thing.

At that moment of wonder and bewilderment, perhaps only the projections on the wall, showing the name of the performance, *Mobius*, could reassure them that they had arrived at the right place.

When the show actually began, the audience members could choose where they viewed the performance — stand in the corner of the hall, lean on the banisters upstairs, or walk around following the particular performers they'd like to watch.

The immersive dance performance, *Mobius*, debuted at the CHAO Bridge Space in Beijing on April 22 as part of the 17th edition of Festival Croisements, an annual event of cultural exchanges between China and France.

This production is also a collaborative project between the two countries, jointly created by the School of Arts and Communication at Beijing Normal University and the Lyon National High Conservatory of Music and Dance in France.

"I prefer to see it as an artistic action rather than just a theater performance or a show," says Xiao Xiangrong, dean of the School of Arts and Communication, who is the project's cofounder and artistic director.

"It is open-ended. Only when the audience attends and participates in the performance, and interpersonal communication is established, can we say that our creative vision is fulfilled."

Diverting from the conventional idea that the audience is merely a viewer of the creators' works, according to Xiao, in this contemporary project, the audience plays a part along with the creators.

In one scene, for example, the dancers are holding mobile phones and filming one another, with the footage projected live on the wall. A lot of the viewers film the dancers, but what they do not know



The immersive dance performance *Mobius* is staged at the CHAO Bridge Space in Beijing. The production adopts futuristic outfits to present the relationship between people and technology.

is that a camera is recording them doing so.

"In the end we will produce a video, that will truly complete the work. That's why I consider it an artistic action that achieves people-to-people interaction," Xiao adds.

Dai Jian, another cofounder of the project and an associate professor from

the Beijing school, says that the title comes from the founders' thoughts about the relationship between people and technology.

Initially agreeing to present an intercultural exchange, the creators decided to zoom in on the changes of life brought by the universal experiences of facing technological advances.

"Technological development has made people's lives much more convenient, but it has also complicated our lives. We probably need to learn a new skill every month to keep up with the times, and other issues have arisen such as environmental damage," Dai says.

"The information society has two sides. Our pursuit of progress is also restricting or stifling us. One day, Xiao proposed the concept of the Mobius strip, which can concretely demonstrate the transition between the positive and negative aspects of a cycle."

Consisting of three parts — order, manipulation and celebration — the production aims to present humans moving between reality and the virtual world, and inspires the audience to reflect on its relationship with artificial entities such as manufacturing, technology and information.

The collaborations between the two institutions began in 2014, when representatives from Beijing Normal University visited the French conservatory. In 2019, the institutions made a plan to deepen exchanges among their students and teachers, and jointly produce cross-cultural works.

The institutions have since been exploring ways to cooperate in various aspects, including curricula, seminars, workshops and artistic creation. Over the past two years, teachers and students from both institutions cocreated the production and rehearsed online.

"In this production, one can see the beautiful and precise body language of dancers, but also the casual or even flashy movements often seen in clubs or on social media. We have incorporated all these different types of body language because they present a diverse picture of contemporary culture," Dai says.

"Modern dance is not just a genre with a specific body language. It is a sense of open-mindedness, inclusiveness, catharsis and individual choice. We are exploring ways to give more space to the performers and the audience."

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Selfless villager sees the wood from the trees

GUIYANG — At dawn every morning, after breakfast, Xiao Tikui sets off to patrol a forest of more than 1,333 hectares, covering the rolling mountains of Southwest China's Guizhou province.

"Increasing vegetation coverage has brought tremendous changes to nearby villages," says the forest ranger, 68, who hails from Guizhou's Xiayi village.

"In the past, floods would roll down the bare mountains carrying sand and mud when it rained heavily, washing away the farmlands at the foot of the mountains and resulting in serious soil erosion," Xiao says.

In 1984, China introduced a policy allowing farmers to contract out the long-term management of barren hills and beaches. In the same year, when Xiao was 29, he contracted about 100 hectares of barren mountain land in the village and began to plant trees.

"I just wanted to do something for my hometown and save the farmland from being destroyed," he says.

The first milestone came in 1994, by which time Xiao had spent 10 years planting trees across the once barren hills.



I knew it was difficult to make a forest by myself. Only by mobilizing other villagers can more of the wasteland on the mountains be dressed in green."

Xiao Tikui, forest ranger in Guizhou province

"I was more than proud seeing the trees," he says. "However, I knew it was difficult to make a forest by myself. Only by mobilizing other villagers can more of the wasteland on the mountains be dressed in green."

To gather more people to his afforestation cause, Xiao went door-to-door, persuading more residents to join the campaign. It wasn't long before trees gradually covered the mountain slopes.

As saplings grew taller and thicker, Xiao became a volunteer forest ranger. He built a shed approximately 5 kilometers from his home, living there from September to May each year, during the hay season.

In 1999, Xiao was hired by the local government as a forest ranger, responsible for protecting the mountain forests that he and other villagers had planted.

To increase efficiency in his work, in 2013, Xiao and his wife went to live in the mountains full-time, walking more than 20 km every day during his forest patrols.

He says that making a life in the mountains is easier and more convenient than it used to be, as the local power department has set up a special electricity line for the couple.

At about 6 pm every day, Xiao returns home from his patrol and sits on the bench in front of his house. Rolling up his trouser legs, several scars are clearly visible. During his 39 years of afforestation work and his efforts to protect the mountains, Xiao suffered six fractures.

"I've worn out hundreds of pairs of shoes from walking in the mountains over the years," he says. "I have to buy at least two or three pairs of shoes at a time, and the shoe sellers are always happy when they see me."

Xiao says that his children currently work in big cities, and when he retires, he would like to ask them to return to the village and continue his work.

Looking at the tree-lined hills in the distance and recalling the past, Xiao says he feels all sorts of emotions in his heart.

"Floods pulling down mud during heavy rains have not been seen for more than 20 years."



The main production members and performers of *Mobius*. PHOTOS BY FU XIAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

XINHUA

LIFE

The poetic fruits of success

Writers of today celebrate rich and ancient literary heritage of Huangyan, **Xing Wen** reports.

Patriotic Chinese poet Qu Yuan from the Warring States Period (475-221 BC) once wrote *Ju Song*, or Ode to the Orange Tree, praising the grace and beauty of an orange tree in southern China.

This literary masterpiece shows Chinese people's pursuit of beauty and virtue, and cements the symbolic significance of oranges in classical Chinese literature.

More than two millennia later, a group of contemporary poets and writers visited Huangyan district in Taizhou, East China's Zhejiang province, widely hailed as the hometown of Chinese honey oranges.

Amid the large stretch of orange groves there, they retraced the literary heritage of ancient literati who celebrated the allure of the scented fruit.

With an enriched vocabulary and refined sentence structure, these modern-day literati continue the tradition of poetic adulation for this cherished symbol of beauty and good fortune.

A poetry recitation, singing, and dance performance centered around promoting orange culture took place on the night of May 5 at an orange production base in Huangyan, where the luminous moonbeams caress the water of Yongning River, serenaded by the soothing melody of croaking frogs in the orange groves. The aroma of orange flowers intermingles with the moist air of the coastal area, giving rise to a poetic ambience. Together, these elements are likely to weave a tapestry of literary inspiration that envelops the senses of those present.

The event also kicked off a three-day field trip for a group of well-known writers and poets from across the country to explore the rural areas of Huangyan.

Yi ethnic group poet Jidi Majia, also former vice-president of the China Writers Association, encourages poets and writers to capture



Above: An aerial view of Huangyan district, Taizhou city, Zhejiang province, known as the hometown of Chinese honey oranges.

Top left: Oranges hang temptingly at a production base in Huangyan. **Top right:** A town in Huangyan retains its ancient appeal.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Left: Contemporary literati share their views on how to depict rural areas in modern times in a salon held in Huangyan district.

Right: Yi ethnic group poet Jidi Majia (center), former president of the China Writers Association, at a museum in Huangyan during a recent field trip. PHOTOS BY KE GUOYING / FOR CHINA DAILY

touching daily moments of local people and personally experience the vitality of the countryside, where livelihoods and ecology have been remarkably improved.

"I hope that more literary works could be created to promote orange culture in Huangyan, further arousing people's love for

nature and the pursuit of a natural lifestyle, and stimulating the inherent driving force of rural spiritual and cultural development," he says.

He also expresses his hope to develop the gathering into an international event. "There are many regions in the world that are

known for producing citrus fruits, and there are also many poets and writers who have a spiritual connection with oranges, orange trees, orange blossoms, and orange groves. I believe that Huangyan has the potential to host an international poetry event with an orange theme."

Huangyan has been growing honey oranges for more than 1,700 years. It has been making efforts to leverage high-tech facilities and agricultural talents as key drivers for revitalizing and developing its orange cultivation. To this end, Huangyan has collaborated with the Huazhong Agricultural Univer-



sity, the citrus research institute in Southwest University, Zhejiang Citrus Research Institute, and Zhejiang University, with plans to bring in over 100 experts to work in Huangyan.

"Such planting facilities as intelligent greenhouses have shown us the amazing transformation of citrus cultivation from relying on weather conditions to working with knowledge of the weather. The change provides us with rich creative materials for literary creation," says essayist Mai Ge.

During the field trip, the group of literati visited ancient villages, city parks, historic sites, and wetlands, which gave them a glimpse into the transformation of Huangyan's countryside and its achievements in ecological conservation.

Author Feng Quzi suggests that fellow writers and poets should approach nature with reverence and seek to connect with it by returning to their hometown or exploring the countryside.

"We should rely on our instinctual senses to listen, understand, and appreciate natural sounds. In doing so, we can uncover the secrets of the land and humanity, as well as explore the profound spiritual realm," she says.

Jiang Zi, a winner of the prestigious Lu Xun Literature Award last year, adds that rural areas serve as a crucial point for every Chinese writer to ponder upon the world.

"Today, with a global outlook in mind, the modernization of China's countryside and rural lifestyle will present new prospects for our literary creations themed on rural areas," he says.

Along with the aforementioned event, Huangyan will host a series of events, including a contemporary poetry art exhibition, poetry concerts, reader meet-and-greets and literary lover salons, in the following month.

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Book looks at early pre-Qin social rituals

By WANG RU
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Liji, or The Book of Rites, a collection of texts about rituals before the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC), which also shows the philosophical, educational, political and aesthetic ideas of the time, is an ancient classic of early Confucianism. But since the texts were disorderly, they didn't attract much attention of researchers until more records about them were unearthed from archaeological excavations in recent years, according to Liu Feng, a researcher with the Institute of Philosophy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

He is the author of a book on the collection, *Classics and Their Meaning: Evolution of Li and Early Confucianism*, which was recently published by the China Social Sciences Press, and released in Beijing on May 5.

Liu has studied *li* (ritual) and Confucianism for more than two decades.

According to him, early Confucianism refers to that which was popular before the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), especially the Warring States Period (475-221 BC).

"*Li* is a very important issue stressed in early Confucianism. ... It



Four books launched as major academic findings by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing on May 5, including *Classics and Their Meaning: Evolution of Li and Early Confucianism* (right), a book on the study of *li* (ritual) and early Confucianism.

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promotes the development of early Confucianism. The study of *Liji* can help make clear the process of how early Confucianism developed and became divided," says Liu.

He also mentions *li* lies at the core of Chinese culture and a social system that originated from the Western Zhou Dynasty (c. 11th century-771 BC) with regulations on ritual and music to strengthen people's concept of hierarchy and thus maintain social order.

The book mainly discusses the issue from four perspectives, including the development of Confucian thought in the Warring States Period and the construction of early Confucian political philosophy.

It also covers the formation of the early Confucian philosophy of history and the integration of *li* into the society of the Warring States Period.

"*Liji* not only plays a significant role in our study of early Confucianism, but also offers us some influen-

tial ideas in traditional Chinese culture, like 'when the Grand Course is pursued, a public and common spirit rules all under the sky,' and 'acting in good faith and being friendly to others,'" says Liu.

He also mentions that China's traditional philosophical ideas, such as pursuing harmony between people and nature, the people as the foundation of a state, and governing on the basis of virtues, are fully discussed in *Liji*.

"In-depth research on the collection unveils the rich connotations contained in it, and is significant for spreading the traditional culture of China," he adds.

The book was promoted with three other books as major academic results of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in May. According to Gao Peiyong, deputy director of the academy, he hopes the books can help build an academic system of philosophical and social sciences with Chinese characteristics.

Translating classics a story of endeavor

CHONGQING — From *Grimm's Fairy Tales* to *Magic Mountain*, from *The Sorrows of Young Werther* to *Siddhartha*, Yang Wuneng has translated more than 30 German classics into Chinese and boasts millions of readers in China. At 85, he is determined to stay healthy and live longer for the career he loves.

"I slept six hours last night, including two hours of deep sleep," said Yang, as he showed his smartwatch during an interview earlier in April, adding that he had not slept that long for years.

He became a celebrity in China last year after a documentary about his work went viral on Bilibili, one of the country's largest online video platforms. It has renewed Chinese readers' interest in German literature and many avid young readers who grew up reading Yang's translation of *Grimm's Fairy Tales* are now reading his *Magic Mountain* and *Narcissus and Goldmund*.

Yang translated *The Sorrows of Young Werther* in 1981, when he was studying for a master's degree in Beijing. More than 1 million copies have been sold since and the book served as a source of literary enlightenment for many Chinese readers.

Born into a worker's family in Southwest China's Chongqing, Yang said he became a translator by chance. In his younger days, he dreamed of becoming an electrical engineer, but was denied entry into a polytechnic university because he was colorblind. In 1957, he entered Nanjing University in East China's Jiangsu province to study German,



Translator Yang Wuneng talks to young readers about *Grimm's Fairy Tales* at an activity organized by Chongqing Library. XINHUA

and began translating German essays and stories for local newspapers to support his family with the earnings.

In this way, he embarked on a literary translation career that was to last more than 60 years.

He continued his studies in Germany, spending decades translating and retranslating German classics and winning many awards, including the German Federal Cross of Merit and Goethe Medal.

This year, 22 volumes of Yang's translations of German literary classics will be published.

Yang compared his career as a translator to "running uphill", something he enjoys doing due to the geographical conditions of his home city of Chongqing. He spent 20 years translating *Magic Moun-*

tain, which, to him, was like an exploration of a unique and amazing new world. "This enabled me to observe myself and the world with a new vision, and I would say that's the most charming part of being a translator"

Yang loves communicating with his readers by telling the stories behind the works through his account on the social media platform WeChat, as well as at cultural events hosted by local libraries.

"One eye is full of tears and the other, of laughter ... Yet with only one heart, how can I hold two lands, and twice my nostalgia?" he wrote in a poem in fond memory of Germany, which is like his second home.

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