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# CHINA DAILY

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Japanese police clash with anti-G7 protesters in Hiroshima, Japan, on Sunday as leaders of the G7 countries met for a summit. PHILIP FONG / AFP

## Summit charts course for cooperation

Leaders of China, Central Asia vow to work together for an even closer shared future

By CAO DESHENG  
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The China-Central Asia Summit, which concluded on Friday with fruitful achievements, has been hailed by political analysts and business executives as a milestone event.

They said the summit creates a model of cooperation featuring high-level complementarity and mutual benefit, and contributes to international fairness and justice in a world full of uncertainties.

During the summit in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, President Xi Jinping, together with Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov, Tajik President Emomali Rahmon, Turkmen President Serdar Berdimuhamedov and Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, reached a wide consensus on cooperation.

They pledged to work together for an even closer China-Central Asia community with a shared future featuring mutual assistance, common development, universal security and everlasting friendship.

The heads of state of the six countries jointly signed the Xi'an Declaration of the China-Central Asia Summit and charted a blueprint for the future development of China-Central Asia relations.

During the summit, China and the five Central Asian countries signed seven bilateral and multilateral documents as well as over 100 cooperation agreements.

In his keynote address to the summit, Xi announced that, to bolster cooperation with Central Asia, China will provide Central Asian countries with a total of 26 billion yuan (\$3.7 billion) of financing support and grants.

He highlighted that the world needs a harmonious Central Asia, saying: "No one has the right to sow discord or stoke confrontation

in the region, let alone seek selfish political interests."

In a media interview after the conclusion of the summit, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang said the summit provided new impetus for deepening China-Central Asia relations.

China and the Central Asian countries unanimously agreed to firmly defend multilateralism and resist unilateralism, hegemonism and power politics, injecting more certainty into a world full of uncertainties, Qin said.

S.L. Kanthan, a geopolitical analyst based in Bangalore, India, said the summit, which focused on peace, development, trade, infrastructure and cultural and people-to-people exchanges, was a genuine reflection of China's diplomatic, economic and cultural principles.

"China promotes cooperation and trade while the US spreads conflicts and wars. China promotes wholesome culture and traditional values while the US spreads destructive hedonism and divisive identity politics. China promotes a multipolar world of shared prosperity while the US imposes a unipolar world, with itself as the dictatorial hegemon," he added.

The choice is obvious for the rest of the world: perpetual wars and chaos versus peace, connectivity, trade and development, Kanthan added.

While meeting the media with the five Central Asian leaders on Friday, Xi said that China and the Central Asian countries will take the 10th anniversary of Belt and Road cooperation as a new starting point to build better synergy among development strategies, promote trade liberalization and facilitation, expand industrial and investment cooperation, and further develop transport corridors connecting China and Central Asia.

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## Group of Seven conducting economic warfare

There is a terrible irony in the location of the Group of Seven meeting and the changing focus of the G7. Held in Hiroshima, Japan, the first city to be destroyed by a nuclear attack, this year's meeting has made maintaining the hegemonic order its primary agenda.

Founded primarily to facilitate shared macroeconomic initiatives in response to contemporary economic problems, the G7 is now conducting economic warfare.

The official agenda proclaims that the purpose of the meeting is "demonstrating the G7's strong determination to uphold the international order based on the rule of law, firmly rejecting any unilateral attempt to change the status quo".

### WORLD WATCH By Daryl Guppy

The G7, by its very membership, fails to acknowledge that the economic status quo has changed and that it cannot prevent the second-largest economy from having a say in how this order may evolve in the future. A more useful focus would be on how to adjust to this change and peacefully develop a multipolar system.

The meeting agenda includes "strengthening outreach to the Global South, by demonstrating G7's contributions to the issues of

their concern". The G7 was to hold discussions on current development issues, taking into account the concept of "human security" and the "human-centered approach".

This agenda item is a belated, pale imitation of the Global Development Initiative, which was proposed by President Xi Jinping at the United Nations in 2021 and was not supported by the G7. It has all the characteristics of a rush to catch up on the lead established by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which supports development in the Global South without imposing a hegemonic ideological agenda.

The G7 agenda proposed that the meeting would reaffirm and

strengthen cooperation on a "free and open Indo-Pacific". The reaction of G7 members to recent Chinese naval exercises is ample evidence of the true purpose of this agenda item and the double standards of the group. "Free and open" use of international waters by China is apparently not permitted, while the aggressive "freedom of navigation" exercises by G7 members are acceptable.

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## Shipwrecks filled with relics found in deep sea

By WANG KAIHAO  
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Two ancient shipwrecks, probably dating back to the middle of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), have been found at a depth of 1,500 meters in the South China Sea, the National Cultural Heritage Administration announced on Sunday in the coastal city of Sanya, Hainan province.

A scientific research team from the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Deep-sea Science and Engineering discovered the shipwrecks on a continental slope in October. It was the first time that China had found such an expansive ancient shipwreck site so deep under the sea.

The shipwrecks have been named by researchers as "Northwest Continental Slope No 1 and No 2 Shipwrecks in the South China Sea".

According to Yan Yalin, director of the archaeology department of the National Cultural Heritage Administration, preliminary investigation showed that relics from the No 1 shipwreck were scattered over an area of around 10,000 square meters.

It is estimated that more than 100,000 cultural relics — mainly porcelain items — are lying concealed on the spot, as most of the ship is still buried in sand, and some of its exposed parts are buried by up to 3 meters of relics.

On board the No 2 shipwreck, which is about 20 kilometers from the No 1 shipwreck, several processed logs of wood were found, along with a small number of ceramic items.

"The well-preserved relics are of high historical, scientific and artistic value. It may be a world-class archaeological discovery in the deep sea," Yan said.

Items from Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province, and the Longquan kiln in present-day Zhejiang province — both key porcelain production and export hubs in ancient China — dominated the relics discovered near the No 1 shipwreck.

Archaeologists said that the logs found on the No 2 shipwreck indicate the nature of import trade at the time, as timber has been recorded as an imported item in ancient Chinese documents.

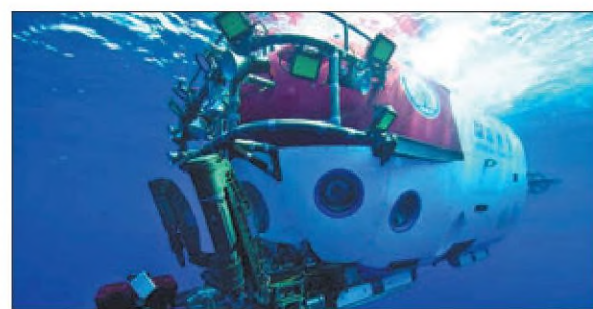
Tang Wei, director of the National Centre for Archaeology, said the new discoveries will provide key references for understanding the historical changes in trade routes across the South China Sea.

"Discovery of inbound and outbound ancient ships in the same area demonstrates the significance of the route. It helps us study the Maritime Silk Road's reciprocal flow," Tang said.

The first round of investigation into the two ancient shipwrecks was officially launched on Saturday and will continue through June.

The submersible *Shenhai Yongshi*, or Deep Sea Warrior, carried by China's scientific research vessel *Tansuo 1*, took researchers underwater for the exploration on Saturday.

Chen Chuanxu, a scientist at the Institute of Deep-sea Science and Engineering, said that another vessel, the *Tansuo 2*, equipped with the submersible *Fendouzhe*, or Striver, will join the mission.



Top: The manned submersible *Shenhai Yongshi*, or Deep Sea Warrior, is launched on Saturday for the first exploration mission involving two shipwrecks at a depth of about 1,500 meters in the South China Sea. Above: A photo released on Sunday by the National Cultural Heritage Administration shows porcelain scattered around one of the shipwrecks in the South China Sea. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Advanced technological approaches, including soft robotics inspired by bionics and material science, were employed during the operation to salvage some of the relics from the shipwreck sites. New methods of scanning, photography and monitoring were also used.

"Speaking of protecting and real-time monitoring of such a large underwater site at a depth of 1,500 meters, we have no precedent in the world," Chen said, adding that the researchers are currently trying to remotely monitor the site.

Between now and April 2024, the submersibles are projected to conduct around 50 dives, according to Song Jianzhong, a researcher at the National Centre for Archaeology.

"We first need to figure out the condition of the shipwrecks, and then we can draft plans for archaeological excavation and conservation," Song said.

He added that future expeditions will also cover geophysical and geological studies and research of marine life.

## ZIBO SETS HOT PACE WITH TRANSFORMATION

Barbecue trade brings influx of visitors, triggers internet sensation

By ZHAO RUIXUE  
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### in-depth

On a working day late last month, a yard that is home to more than 10 barbecue restaurants in Zibo, Shandong province, was packed with diners at about 5 pm.

Lines formed as people waited for tables at the businesses in the city's Linzi district. Some diners even made their way inside the restaurants to obtain skewers, instead of waiting for waiters to pass them the implements, as the staff members were so busy.

A 51-year-old resident, who wished to be named only as Yu, said: "In the past two months, we have seldom come to the yard for barbecue food because there are so many people. We had to wait in

line unless we arrived extremely early. Many diners come from outside Zibo, judging from the license plate numbers of vehicles parked near the yard."

Yu added that she had never seen such crowds in the area before.

Zibo, an old industrial city, barely featured on most people's list of must-visit places in the past, until its barbecue scene went viral, attracting a huge influx of visitors during the past three months. These arrivals, who are mainly young people, have made the city well-known nationwide.

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From left: Visitors enjoy barbecued food, pancakes and beer in Zibo, Shandong province. CAO BOYUAN AND WANG ZIRUI / FOR CHINA DAILY, HUANGPU XIAOWEN / XINHUA

## Zibo: Consumer market recovers well

From page 1

The once-thriving industrial hub with a population of 4.5 million is capitalizing on the fame of its sizzling culinary fare to fuel economic growth amid efforts to upgrade an old economic structure dominated by large industrial projects.

In the first quarter of this year, Zibo achieved GDP of 105.77 billion yuan (\$15.07 billion), a rise of 4.7 percent year-on-year, the city's bureau of statistics reported.

The bureau said the local consumer market showed a strong recovery in the first quarter, with retail sales of consumer goods reaching 31.36 billion yuan, a year-on-year rise of 8.3 percent.

Since March, an average of 135,800 customers a day have headed to the 1,288 barbecue businesses in the city, the Zibo Bureau of Commerce reported at the end of last month.

These customers generated a 35 percent year-on-year rise in revenue for major barbecue restaurants in Zhangdian district, the city's main urban area, while the districts of Zhoucun and Linzi reported rises of more than 20 percent compared with last year.

During the five-day May Day holiday, Badaju market, a wet market in Zibo, was China's most-visited destination, ahead of well-known tourist sites such as the Great Wall, data from Baidu Maps show.

Zibo railway station catered to 240,000 passengers during the holiday — growth of 55 percent compared with the same period in 2019.

The outstanding performance of barbecue restaurants attracted officials from many cities, especially those with heavy industrial projects, to Zibo in search of new development paths. The officials conducted field studies on how Zibo's barbecue industry went viral on the internet.

## Student posts

Zibo has long sought to publicize its unique take on roasted skewers of meat, vegetables, seafood and other foodstuffs in the hope of attracting business.

But it was only in March, when college students tried the barbecue food, took videos of themselves enjoying it, and posted the footage on social media that it went viral.

Last year, more than 12,000 college students from other cities were quarantined in Zibo during the COVID-19 pandemic. After they completed their quarantine, the local authorities treated them to barbecue food and invited them to return for a visit in spring, when the flowers are in bloom. Some students accepted the invitation, revisiting Zibo to sample its barbecued delights.

They unwittingly triggered a trend that spurred the hashtag "College students visit Zibo to try barbecue in groups", which went viral on social media platforms.

Since then, young people from across the country have flocked to Zibo to try its barbecued food.

During weekends last month, Yang Benxin, who has run a barbecue restaurant in the city for nearly three decades, used a loudspeaker to tell people waiting in line for a table to choose another restaurant because the meat at his business had sold out.

Yang's restaurant has 200 tables, which can accommodate about 1,000 diners. But almost every weekend for the past month, the number of people visiting the eatery surpassed its capacity, forcing him to tell those waiting to try elsewhere.

Zhu Wenbin, the owner of another local restaurant, has raised the number of tables at the business from 60 to 200 to cater to the influx of diners.

In Zibo, the food on barbecue skewers is 70-80 percent pre-cooked before it is brought to the table, where diners complete the cooking process on small stoves fueled by hot coals. In addition, pancakes, scallions and dressings are on the tables, so diners can assemble their own barbecue-filled packages, similar to the way in which Peking duck is eaten.

Zhang Hanzhe, 27, who visited Zibo with friends from Jinan, capital of Shandong, during the May Day holiday to try the city's barbecued food, said, "We prepared the food according to our own tastes, and it's also affordable."

The authorities in Zibo have been quick to capitalize on the sudden influx of visitors. The market supervision and public security authorities acted to ensure food safety and reasonable pricing in the barbecue sector, while the city's public transportation company launched bus routes especially for people visiting barbecue restaurants.

The city issued a notice ahead of the May Day holiday, warning that hotels in Zibo that raised their room rates by more than 50 percent during the holiday would be punished.

Fu Qiang, who runs a restaurant in the city, said, "Police officers have been patrolling the streets, and officials from the market supervision bureau monitored food quality to avoid health risks."

"Local people are friendly to visitors, and it seems that everyone in the city is working together to give them an enjoyable experience in Zibo."

Qu Chuang, a professor at Shandong University's School of Economics, doubted whether the barbecue craze in Zibo would last

long, but said the city's biggest gain is that it is now known by more people.

## Inspection tour

On May 6, a meeting of the standing committee of the Zibo municipal Party committee decided that the industrial sector, particularly manufacturing, is still key to Zibo's high-quality development, and that the city must always prioritize development of the industrial sector.

During an inspection tour of Linzi on May 9, Ma Xiaolei, Party secretary of Zibo, urged local authorities to seize the opportunities emerging from the city's reputation and influence, which have been enhanced recently by the barbecue trend. They should also continue to attract people and resources to woo high-end talent and lure innovation-oriented and manufacturing companies to the city, Ma said.

Ding Changfa, an associate professor in the Department of Economics at Xiamen University's School of Economics, was quoted

“Young people represent a major force driving this economic transformation.”

Qu Chuang, professor at Shandong University's School of Economics



by Time Weekly as saying, "In the long run, old industrial cities such as Zibo cannot rely solely on the barbecue, catering and cultural tourism sectors, because they don't have distinctive scenic spots. Such cities will continue to rely on innovation in the future."

Industrial projects have been developed in Zibo for more than 100 years since iron ore and coal were discovered in the city's Boshan district in the early 20th century.

The city was once an industrial hub for the chemical industry, with coal, iron, bauxite, silk, ceramics, glass, electricity and machinery the pillars of its economy.

About a decade ago, Zibo faced a series of problems, including resource depletion and environmental pollution, which forced the authorities to transform the local industrial structure.

Since 2018, the city has shut down heavy industrial projects, while introducing sustainable and high-tech ventures. During this time, the local authorities have closed steel production businesses, and the production capacity for producing ceramics, cement and coal has been significantly reduced. Instead, high-tech and innovation enterprises have been introduced.

To date, Zibo has attracted 65 national-level enterprises specializing in innovation and developing competitive products. A total of 20 enterprises in the city are recognized as single-product champions in manufacturing.

Qu said a digital economy, smart manufacturing and medical industries have been developed in Zibo in recent years, which will provide more jobs for young people.

The Zibo government said that in the past three years it has strived to create a working and living environment targeted especially at young people.

"Young people represent a major force driving this economic transformation," Qu said, adding that the city's performance during the craze for barbecue food will earn it a reputation among such an audience.

"When people come to Zibo for barbecue, they are impressed by the sincere attitude and considerate services provided by the local government and residents," Qu said.

He added that the attractive business environment and coordination among local authorities set an example for other industrial cities.

## Field studies

Many other Chinese cities with heavy industry, such as Jinzhou, Liaoning

province, also have barbecue areas. The trend in Zibo has encouraged the authorities in these cities to conduct field studies on ways in which barbecue food can be used to invigorate their economies.

A team of officials from Jinzhou, including those from the city's housing and construction, commerce, and market supervision and regulation bureaus, studied the barbecue business in Zibo from April 16-18.

Barbecue businesses emerged in Jinzhou in the 1980s, and flourished in the 1990s. In 2005, a barbecue association was founded in the city to promote development of this trade.

The local government worked to integrate the barbecue business with tourism development, but barbecue food in Jinzhou, which was promoted by the city's tourism sector, never became the viral sensation that it did in Zibo.

Li Zhi, director of the Jinzhou Barbecue Association, was quoted as saying by local media, "The point of the Zibo barbecue trend is the local people's sincere, hospitable, friendly and helpful attitude toward young people."

He added that the huge influx of visitors poses a challenge to the city. However, each sector in Zibo, from transportation and public security, to catering and accommodations, has coordinated well, enabling it to withstand such pressure.

However, analysts said the barbecue business alone is not sufficient to realize high-quality development in old industrial cities.

Zhou Mingqi, chief analyst at Jingjian Thinktank, a tourism marketing consulting company, was quoted by Caijing magazine as saying, "Barbecue can drive catering, hotels and tourism, but it cannot create bigger economic profits."

"It is impossible for old industrial cities to achieve quick success and instant benefits if they want to succeed in transformation. They still need to set up universities and train talent to drive urban innovation and development."

Ding, from Xiamen University, said such a transformation has been achieved in the city of Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania, United States.

Once known as an industrial hub focused on steel production, Pittsburgh has successfully transitioned into a diversified economy driven by technology, education, healthcare and research.

In Zibo, with the barbecue trend showcasing local hospitality, it will be easier for the city to attract more talent.

Local media reports said officials in Zibo, including Ma, the Party secretary, have visited universities in the past two months to woo graduates.

"Once you have talent, you obtain the power of innovation, which will unleash new development momentum," Ding said.

## TOP NEWS

# Accusations seen as sign of G7's failure

Bloc needs to reflect on its behavior and change course, Foreign Ministry says

By ZHANG YUNBI

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The fresh accusations made by the Group of Seven wealthy member nations against China cannot conceal their failures in advancing global governance as well as the G7's declining influence and obsession with fanning bloc confrontation, officials and experts said.

As the annual G7 Summit in Hiroshima, Japan, concluded over the weekend, observers warned that the grouping also outlined the United States-led Western countries' plans to further stir up the Asia-Pacific region politically, economically and militarily.

China was a hot topic in a series of documents adopted by the summit, such as the G7 Hiroshima Leaders' Communiqué.

Through these documents, the grouping hyped up the Taiwan Strait situation and made accusations regarding the East China Sea, the South China Sea, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the Xinjiang Uygur and Tibet autonomous regions and China's nuclear power.

Beijing strongly deplores and opposes this and "has made serious demarches to the summit's host Japan and other parties concerned," according to the Foreign Ministry.

"The G7 used issues concerning China to smear and attack China and brazenly interfere in China's internal affairs," said a Foreign Ministry spokesperson on Saturday.

The spokesperson said that the G7 claimed it was "promoting a peaceful, stable and prosperous world," but "what it does is hinder international peace, undermine regional stability and curb other countries' development."

Noting that the G7 continues to emphasize cross-strait peace without mentioning the need to oppose "Taiwan independence", the spokesperson said that this "constitutes connivance and support for 'Taiwan independence' forces, and will only result in having a serious impact on cross-strait peace and stability."

The East China Sea and the South China Sea have remained stable overall, and relevant countries need to "stop using maritime issues to drive a wedge between regional countries and incite bloc confrontation", the spokesperson said.

"The G7 needs to reflect on its behavior and change course", as the world does not accept the G7-dominated Western rules that seek to divide the world based on ideologies and values, the spokesperson said.

Su Xiaohui, an associate research fellow at the China Institute of International Studies, said the G7's latest comments and documents show that "it is still failing in its role of tackling issues facing the whole of humanity, such as global governance."

"Although Washington has underscored increasing the G7's influence, it has not responded to concerns of the international community, and the grouping has ended

Routinely, the G7 summit is intended to discuss economic issues, but (Japan), as the host this year, has linked economic topics to politics and security."

Yang Bojiang, director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Japanese Studies

## Inside

up as a key tool for advancing US-driven strategic competition," she said.

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economic issues, but (Japan), as the host this year, has linked economic topics to politics and security, and the summit's documents involve a lot of content related to politics," said Yang Bojiang, director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Japanese Studies.

"By doing so, Tokyo is marching in lockstep with Washington in viewing China as a competitor and a threat," he said.

Yang noted that Japan also invited eight countries — most of them from the Asia-Pacific region — to attend the summit's expanded meeting this year in an attempt to encourage them to take sides and join the US-led coercion against China.

"Prioritizing 'dealing with China' is actually inviting external forces to further interfere in Asia-Pacific affairs and seeking collective hegemony. This will only add to tension and confrontation in this region and sabotage peace and stability here," he said.

On several occasions this year, the G7 also made claims about "economic coercion" that allude to China.

A spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in Japan said on Saturday that "in reality, it is the US itself that is engaged in economic coercion", and the US "has so far applied sanctions arbitrarily to the detriment of nearly half of the world's population, and even G7 members such as Japan are not immune."

Observers noted that in parallel with the G7 Hiroshima gathering, the China-Central Asia Summit was held in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, on Thursday and Friday.

The fruitful Xi'an summit issued seven bilateral and multilateral documents and witnessed the signing of over 100 cooperative documents, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang told reporters on Sunday.

"Our cooperation is not directed at any third party, nor is it subject to a third party, we do not engage in closed, exclusive 'small circles', and we oppose bloc politics and Cold War confrontation," he said.

## Colors of patriotism



Dancers perform on Saturday during National Day celebrations in Yaounde, Cameroon. The country marked the 51st anniversary of its National Day with military and civilian parades in the capital city, and festivities elsewhere. KEPSU / XINHUA



## 9 killed in stadium stampede

An injured soccer fan is carried away on Saturday night following a stampede at Cuscatlan Stadium in San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador. At least nine people were killed and dozens more injured when fans pushed through one of the access gates during a quarter-final Salvadoran league match between Alianza FC and Club Deportivo FAS.

MILTON FLORE / AP

## Hainan expected to give full play to RCEP

By WANG KEJU in Haikou

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The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the world's largest free trade agreement, will boost intraregional trade integration through lower tariffs and will accelerate the recovery and long-term growth and prosperity of the global economy, officials and experts said on Sunday.

As the world grapples with rising geopolitical tensions, increasing protectionism and unilateralism, and disruptions to industrial and supply chains, the trade pact — an open and inclusive cooperation system — will serve as a solid path toward mutual benefits, they added.

They made the remarks on Sunday in Haikou, Hainan province, at the third annual RCEP Media & Think Tank Forum, whose theme this year was "Jointly Build the World's Largest Free Trade Area". The forum was held by the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China Hainan Provincial Committee, China Daily and the China Institute for Reform and Development.

The trade pact, signed by 15 Asia-Pacific countries in November 2020, will be fully implemented among all member economies on June 2. The signatories are China, Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea, as well as the 10 states of the

Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Wang Bin, a member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Hainan Provincial Committee and head of the provincial Party committee's Publicity Department, said that the Hainan Free Trade Port will better take advantage of the RCEP and align with international economic and trade rules, in order to foster an institutional environment with global competitiveness and to open up wider and at higher levels.

Hainan is well positioned to serve as an important hub for comprehensive strategic cooperation between China and ASEAN countries due to its geographic proximity, Wang said. Furthermore, Hainan will make ASEAN a high priority in its cooperation agenda to promote bilateral trade and two-way investment and to push forward the new round of upgrade of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area, he added.

The province will also make good use of the RCEP's institutional advantages and Hainan's immense marine resources to scale up cooperation with RCEP member countries in such fields as marine ecosystem conservation and marine science-technology innovation, in order to promote sustainable marine development, Wang said.

In addition, efforts will be made to forge Hainan into a vital intersection

between China and the RCEP member economies, to further tap into policy effects and advance regional integrated development, he said.

Qu Yingpu, publisher and editor-in-chief of China Daily, said that peace and development — the themes of the times — are now facing severe challenges due to deepening geopolitical tensions, rising protectionism and other risk factors.

Solidarity and cooperation are the answer to help contend with uncertainty and instability and to stand against bullying and zero-sum games, Qu said. The RCEP, which pursues mutually beneficial cooperation, will facilitate the steady recovery and growth of the regional economy and inject new impetus into global development and prosperity, he added.

Qu noted that the RCEP is not only the world's largest and most dynamic free trade area with the greatest growth potential, but also boasts the biggest population of young people, who are the backbone in fueling regional development.

Building on the good momentum, all parties concerned should provide broader platforms for the younger generation to showcase their talents and attract more of them to participate in the high-quality implementation of the RCEP, Qu said. Such efforts will enable them to contribute their

part and advance the building of a community with a shared future for mankind, he added.

Chi Pulin, president of the China Institute for Reform and Development, said that the RCEP places a high premium on shared development, which will promote inclusive regional development and global economic growth.

The trade pact has established a mutually beneficial economic partnership that will facilitate the expansion of regional trade and investment, Chi said. Its progress proves that market- and rules-based regional economic cooperation is dynamic and has great vitality, and it will deliver long-term, sustainable growth to the region, he added.

High-standard opening-up is a key goal of the RCEP, and the openness pledged in the agreement should be fulfilled without delay, Chi said.

Moreover, he said, the alignment and integration of the RCEP with the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership will be advanced when appropriate, and efforts will be made to lay the groundwork for expediting the establishment of the Asia-Pacific free trade area.

The ASEAN countries and China provide the vitality and center of gravity for the RCEP region, and advancing the new round of upgrade of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area is key to promoting the RCEP's high-level opening-up, he added.

## Meeting: Legitimacy of bloc hurt by its stance

From page 1

It's difficult to treat the G7 meeting with the gravitas it aspires to when it excludes the world's second-largest economy, which contributes over 18 percent to world growth. This exclusion casts doubt on any claim that G7 decisions reflect a global consensus on a rules-based order.

Nonetheless, the G7 meeting is significant because this year's host, Japan, is trying to turn the G7 into a NATO-like defense bloc by Japan's aligning itself with the (once) great European colonial powers, as it did in World War I.

This objective is clear, not just from the focus of the agenda discussions, but from the invitation of eight nonmember countries, many of which wish to limit China's growth.

The G7 has become an anti-China coalition. This shift undermines the legitimacy of the organization, but that does not mean its pronouncements can be ignored. And these G7 edicts must be evaluated in the light of the G7 becoming an instrument of hegemony rather than of cooperation.

High on the list of aggressive tactics to preserve the G7 version of the rules-based order may be the proposal by the US to impose further sanctions on Russia.

Sanctions are a favorite weapon deployed by the US. It's a weapon that causes mass economic destruction, where the impact falls most heavily on the civilian population.

The potential continued use of sanctions as a weapon is a major concern for the Global South, where countries worry about the collateral damage inflicted on their economies and the way this hinders their progress toward prosperity.

It's a proposal that seems very much at odds with the promoted G7 policy of strengthening outreach to the Global South.

The G7 conclave cannot be ignored, although ultimately its influence will give way to broader representative organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The prestige of the G7 may linger, but the real centers of decision-making will continue to move toward regional trade groups such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and multilateral political organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, all of which acknowledge and are supported by China.

These moves are facilitated by a de-dollarization of international trade that is motivated by the way the US has weaponized the dollar-denominated trade settlement system.

It is good that the G7 observer invitation list acknowledges the need to be more inclusive, but it is nothing less than a desperate gamble for survival and relevance when the meeting excludes China.

Most of the world wants rules that are written in a multipolar or multilateral setting, not rules written by the US along with a few friends and allies in the G7.

The G7 approach is the very opposite of China's inclusive cooperation.

The author is an international financial technical analyst and a former national board member of the Australia China Business Council. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

## Ties: China, Central Asia to expand energy cooperation

From page 1

"Together, we will foster a new cooperation paradigm featuring high-level complementarity and mutual benefit," Xi said.

Looking forward, Xi said that China's relations with Central Asian countries will "forge ahead like a ship braving all winds and waves", offer new vitality to the development and revitalization of the six countries, and inject strong, positive energy to the peace and stability of the region.

Zafar Uddin Mahmood, former special envoy for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, said that what impressed him most about the summit was the spirit of optimism, harmony, cooperation, inclusiveness, engagement and stability.

"The conference discussed peace, development, cooperation and common prosperity, and a brighter future for people in the region. At the same time, the G7 Summit was talking about sanctions, confrontation, pessimism, decoupling, exclusiveness and disengagement," he said.

As part of the fruitful achievements of the Xi'an summit, China and the five Central Asian countries agreed to support the establishment of a China-Central Asia energy development partnership to expand full-chain energy cooperation.

The declaration released after the summit said that the six countries will further expand their partnership in traditional energy, such as in petroleum, natural gas and coal, strengthen renewable energy cooperation and intensify collaboration in the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Noting that their energy partnership is an important part of sustainable development in the region, the six countries underlined the importance of a stable energy supply to economic, trade and investment cooperation, and expressed support for speeding up construction of the D line of China-Central Asia natural gas pipeline, according to the declaration.

Nan Yi, chairman of Universal Energy, a Chinese renewable energy company based in Shanghai, said the company signed a 500-megawatt wind power cooperation investment agreement with the Ministry of Energy of Uzbekistan, and a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Energy of Kyrgyzstan during the summit.

"The summit greatly promoted economic and trade cooperation between China and Central Asian countries, and our company, for example, fully enjoyed the dividends brought by the summit," he said.

"It further deepens our business expansion in Central Asia and also helps to enhance mutual benefits and promote win-win cooperation in the region."

The six countries officially inaugurated the China-Central Asia Summit Mechanism, with China and Central Asian countries taking turns to host the biennial summit. They agreed that the second China-Central Asia Summit will be hosted by Kazakhstan in 2025. The six countries will work to flesh out the mechanism, and establish a permanent secretariat in China.

Xing Yi in London and Xu Weixi in Hong Kong contributed to this story.

## CHINA

In the past calendar year, Wang Yuzhu has traveled to Beijing twice, but unlike most visitors who exit the Beijing Railway Station he came to consult a doctor.

After being diagnosed with cancer, the 63-year-old had a procedure to form a permanent opening into his rectum. He was so exhausted after riding the train for 14 hours that he found it hard to get into a taxi at the roadside.

However, Wang's trip was easier than his previous visit because his daughter, Wang Yaru, had arranged for him to be accompanied by a hospital companion she had found online. Even though it was 8 pm, Zhao Haiwei, the companion, arrived at the railway station to greet Wang Yuzhu and his wife.

In recent years, hospital companions have become popular on social media platforms. As the name suggests, they accompany patients on hospital visits. People age 60 and older account for the majority of their clientele, while patients who come from outside the country's big cities also account for a significant proportion.

The various challenges that have arisen in modern medical treatment have created and even boosted this new sector.

### Provincial visitors

"Many people from my hometown come to Beijing to see doctors," said Wang Yuzhu, from Urad Front Banner, Bayannur, Inner Mongolia autonomous region. It was his third medical trip this year having already visited Baotou, Inner Mongolia, and Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. This time, his destination was the Beijing Cancer Hospital.

In the waiting rooms of Beijing's major tertiary hospitals, it is common to see people from other provinces carrying their luggage as they visit for medical treatment. Some even spend the night at the hospital entrance, hoping to grab the first number to consult an expert when the options are released early in the morning.

As of 2021, there were more than 1,400 first-tier hospitals in China, while the total number was more than 30,000, according to statistics released by the National Health Commission.

After being diagnosed with rectal cancer, Wang Yuzhu had surgery at a hospital in Baotou in 2021.

Later, he had difficulty urinating, so he underwent procedures to make rectal and bladder stomas that would allow feces and urine to drain easily from his body.

In September, he came to the Peking University First Hospital in Beijing for checks on his bladder problem. Having had the bladder stoma for about 18 months, Wang Yuzhu found it inconvenient.

"The doctor looked at the data for a long time before saying 'Just remove it. If there's leakage, let it leak. It's fine.' The doctor said that wearing a fistula band for a long time can easily cause other problems," he said.

Wang Yuzhu returned to Baotou and had the bladder stoma closed. "After that, there was no more leakage," he said.

Before Chinese New Year's Eve in February, Wang Yuzhu went to Baotou for a checkup and learned that his tumor had recurred.

His daughter, who had been searching for information online, saw that there was a famous doctor of traditional Chinese medicine in Yiwu, Zhejiang, but a face-to-face consultation was necessary. So on March 12, she took her father to Yiwu, more than 2,000 kilometers away, to see the practitioner.

However, just after landing in Hangzhou, Zhejiang's capital, Wang Yuzhu was rushed to the hospital



Hospital companion Zhao Haiwei (right) and a client examine an image from a CT scan at the Beijing Cancer Hospital in the capital on May 10. PHOTOS BY ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

## Hospital companions ease seniors' access to treatment

For many older people, modern hospitals are confusing places, so a new breed of personal assistant is emerging. **Yan Dongjie** reports.



From left: Zhao Haiwei (center) helps a client collect medication from the pharmacy at the Beijing Cancer Hospital on May 10. Zhao (right) arranges for a cab to take his client back to their accommodations in the capital.



with unbearable abdominal pain and underwent emergency surgery. It was his third operation.

The doctor at the hospital said the cause of the pain was an intestinal obstruction, which was probably related to problems with the original operation.

"Our hospital is not as good as those in Beijing or Shanghai. If you're seeking treatment in the north, you can go to Beijing. In the south, you can go to Shanghai," he told Wang Yuzhu.

### Complicated procedures

Wang Yaru was the 500th customer to connect with Zhao after the companion opened his Taobao platform in August.

Zhao often travels between a wide number of hospitals in the capital.

"Xuanwu Hospital is good for neurology, mainly for seniors' conditions such as Alzheimer's, strokes and Parkinson's disease. More patients go to

the Tiantan Hospital for neurosurgery. Out-of-towners are mostly familiar with two other facilities as general hospitals," he said.

Zhao charges 240 to 260 yuan (\$35 to \$38) for each visit, with an average hourly rate of around 60 yuan, but the online contact, consultation and guidance in the early stages are provided free of charge. "This service requires individual payment as it's not covered by medical insurance, but the fee is not expensive," he said.

When communicating with clients online, Zhao usually asks about their general health and suggests the most suitable hospital and best expert. He checks if the patient has medical insurance and the type of coverage. Then, he provides suggestions about things such as how to make an appointment and claim reimbursement of fees to provide greater convenience for clients who are unfamiliar with the procedures. "Take a very simple example, such

as a thyroid nodule biopsy: before the procedure can be performed, an examination is required, including blood checks and an electrocardiogram, and a written report is required to make an appointment," he said.

"Many out-of-town patients do not understand this process and come to Beijing to do the examination, but they may not have time for the biopsy after that. However, I have been to many hospitals, so I can directly provide this knowledge to help them plan their journey better. Being able to give clients relevant information based on experience, saving time and alleviating anxiety, is one of a companion's most important values."

Wang Yuzhu made an appointment for a consultation at Peking University Cancer Hospital on April 25. Zhao arrived promptly at 1:30 pm and accompanied him to the hospital, helping with security check-in,

card registration, number pickup, scanning codes and settling Wang Yuzhu in the waiting area.

"The procedures in Beijing's hospitals are very reasonable, and with online registration and other functions, seeking medical treatment is becoming easier. However, seniors may not be familiar with smartphones and using apps for registration, machine number retrieval, and payment," Zhao said.

Wang Yuzhu said, "Zhao is very responsible and I feel at ease with him."

### Difficult circumstances

At the end of 2021, nearly 270 million people in China were age 60 and older, accounting for 18.9 percent of the population, according to data from the National Bureau of Statistics.

While seniors make up the main customer base of hospital companions, it is usually their children who

place the orders. However, they are often their family's only child, and many are unable to take time off work or live too far away to help.

Wang Yaru is a senior high school teacher, and she is working hard to prepare her students for the fast-approaching national college entrance exam. "She really can't take any more leave. She has already taken leave for me many times," Wang Yuzhu said. As a high school teacher himself, he understands his daughter's situation.

After extensive prior communication, Zhao requested a preliminary consultation on behalf of Wang Yuzhu at the Beijing Cancer Hospital. He took the previous examination data to the doctor for a preliminary assessment. After, if it is deemed necessary, the patient can register and then see the doctor in person.

"This is much more convenient for patients from outside Beijing," Zhao said, adding that the price of a consultation on behalf of a patient is slightly higher than for regular hospital companion services.

He charges about 300 yuan for each consultation on behalf of a patient, which is still less than the special appointment fee for a well-known expert at a tertiary hospital in Beijing.

### Deep knowledge

A post titled "How to Become a Hospital Companion: A 5,000-Word Must-Read Guide for Medical Companions" said that being a true "medical companion" is not simply about helping patients get in line, receiving results and getting medication. They should be familiar with the basic situations in local hospitals and their medical procedures, possess medical and nursing knowledge, know basic first aid, be familiar with payment and insurance reimbursement procedures, and even understand laboratory reports. They should also possess some psychological knowledge to provide patients with good advice and counseling, and be able to communicate effectively with the experts, it said.

For Zhao, his job is not just about providing "company." For Wang Yuzhu's appointment, his most important task was to be a proxy family member and help the senior communicate more professionally, efficiently and accurately with the doctor.

After waiting nearly two hours, Wang Yuzhu's name appeared on the screen. Zhao brought him to the consultation room and produced a file of medical records. After discussing the case for more than 10 minutes, the doctor said surgery was unnecessary and chemotherapy was unsuitable. Instead, he suggested immediate radiotherapy and a further examination.

Zhao quickly informed Wang Yaru. After consulting with her, he helped Wang Yuzhu obtain the last radiotherapy number of the day from the registration machine.

Wang Yuzhu and his wife have now been in Beijing for more than a month. With Zhao's full-time assistance and support, the senior has started radiotherapy treatment at the Beijing Cancer Hospital.

As spring turns into summer, the doctor said the senior's health is gradually improving.

Ren Xianying contributed to this story.

Contact the writer at yandongjie@chinadaily.com.cn



Online

See more by scanning the code

### FIRST PERSON

## This job makes me feel valued by the patients

Wu Shuang, 35, part-time hospital companion in Beijing

I have accompanied various patients to hospitals in Beijing. There are college students who need a gastroscopy but whose parents are not around to help them, and young women who feel nervous about visiting a gynecologist because they lack knowledge. There are also those who want others to run errands for them to save time.

However, the majority of patients I meet are seniors, who cannot use smartphones or self-service machines in hospitals.

With the rapid development of the internet and smartphones, hospital systems have been updated constantly. Although the procedures in various hospitals are

similar, there are many steps involved. For example, patients need to make appointments online, which can be difficult for outsiders to navigate. Especially nonlocals, who may have difficulty deciding which department and doctor they need.

Hospital registration platforms were introduced a few years ago. Now, when people visit large hospitals, they need to download an app or follow a WeChat public account to register, and they have to provide information about their medical insurance. In recent years, hospitals have developed their own registration apps or public accounts.

Many seniors find it too difficult to navigate these platforms.

In addition to registration, there are triage, payment, medication collection, appointments for examinations, and report-collection procedures. These steps have been automated in Beijing's hospitals for some time now.

Patients need to operate the self-service machine themselves. However, I often see seniors standing in front of it for a long time, asking people for help. Though hospitals have their own volunteers or consulting desks, they are always very busy due to the large number of patients.

Although we companions don't

have any special registration or priority rights, as we help more patients our experience grows deeper. Whenever we provide useful information to patients or guide them in hospital procedures, I feel that we can help save their time and ease their anxiety. It makes me feel that I am valued.

One time, I accompanied a senior to check his thyroid nodules. The problem was discovered during a physical check, but he didn't pay much attention to it. Later, when he discovered that the nodules had grown and had become diseased, he went to the PLA General Hospital for a checkup.

That day, his child was not in

Beijing, so he came with his wife. In the consulting room, the doctor told him that the Color Doppler Ultrasound result was category 5 thyroid nodules, indicating a high risk of cancer. When he came out, his eyes were already red. I couldn't help but feel sympathetic as I accompanied him like a family member.

I remember that when I comforted him, I was struggling not to cry and my voice choked up.

The income of a medical companion is not high. I work part-time on Zhao Haiwei's platform. Every time I accompany a patient for about half a day, I earn about 200 yuan (\$29), far less than the

income from my full-time job as a museum publicist.

However, since I came into contact with this industry, I have felt needed and valued, so I plan to continue helping people receive medical treatment in my free time.

My parents live in my hometown. If they got sick and I wasn't around, I would definitely arrange hospital companion services for them without hesitation if they were available. I think most young people feel the same way.

This is a highly promising industry. Hospital companions and companion platforms are emerging rapidly. However, the sector still needs standardization to allow it to better play its full role.

Wu Shuang spoke with Yan Dongjie.

## RCEP MEDIA &amp; THINK TANK FORUM

## Experts urge integration at RCEP forum

China, Japan and South Korea should cooperate to strengthen ties, they say

By ZHONG NAN  
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Facing challenges caused by protectionism and geo-economic fragmentation, joint efforts should be made to boost regional economic integration among China, Japan and South Korea in the next stage, experts from home and abroad said on Sunday.

Speaking at a plenary session at a Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership-themed forum in Haikou, Hainan province, they said China, Japan and South Korea — the world's three major manufacturing powerhouses — should tackle common concerns through economic exchange mechanisms and promote talks on their trilateral free trade agreement.

As the United States' strategic competition policy toward China is undergoing a shift, its impact on supportive policies concerning high-end technology has been significant, said Zhang Yunling, a member of the academic committee of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and chair professor of Shandong University.

"This impact has particularly affected the highly interdependent semiconductor supply chain that China, Japan and South Korea share, consequently exerting an influence on trade and investment among these nations," he said, adding that fostering stronger business connections between local governments and businesses will lay a robust foundation for future cooperation at the national level.

Masakazu Toyoda, chairman and CEO of the Japan Economic Foundation in Tokyo, said the three countries need to create more favorable rules for their economic relationships, particularly in the digital and service sectors.

"It is imperative to exert enhanced efforts in coordinating the formulation of rules that effectively facilitate trade and investment. The primary objective should be to collaboratively establish regulations and ensure their compatibility, ultimately fostering a more convenient and cost-effective economic relationship," said Zhao Zhongxiu, president of the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing.

According to Zhao, the most effective approach to navigate the intricate dynamics between the three neighbors is to focus on shared interests while respecting individual differences.

To create more favorable conditions, he stressed that it is crucial for the three countries to implement the negative list management model for their companies in the area of trade in services in the next phase, and improve the recognition level of professional qualifications of the three countries.

As additional efforts and time

“It is imperative to exert enhanced efforts in coordinating the formulation of rules that effectively facilitate trade and investment.”

Zhao Zhongxiu, president of the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing

are still needed to finalize the China-Japan-South Korea free trade agreement, the implementation of the RCEP has indirectly provided a framework for a free trade agreement among the three countries, said Xia Deren, deputy director of the Economic Committee of the 13th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and former chairman of the CPPCC Liaoning Provincial Committee.

"We should fully utilize this opportunity, focus on strengthening cooperation among the three countries and create more growth points for China's northeastern region," Xia said.

Supported by a huge consumer market, continuous efforts toward industrial upgrading and further opening-up of its economy, China saw foreign direct investment from Japan soar 68.1 percent year-on-year in the first four months of this year, while FDI from South Korea has surged 30.7 percent on a yearly basis, data from the Ministry of Commerce showed.

With the RCEP set to take effect in the Philippines — the last member of the bloc to ratify the agreement — on June 2, Ou Boqian, secretary-general of the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat, called on all RCEP participating countries to set up a secretariat for the pact as soon as possible and speed up the formalization of this mega treaty to reduce the risks posed by geopolitical uncertainties.

Similar views were shared by Kim Do-hoon, former president of the Korea Institute for Industrial Economics and Trade.

"Many RCEP members as well as the entire world have experienced the rapid trend of digital transformation over the past several years," Kim said. "However, some members appear to have experienced a notable slowdown during this process."

He said that China, Japan and South Korea, which are relatively advanced in digital technologies, should offer more assistance to other signatory countries, especially some member economies of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, to enhance their digital transformation.



## Let's work together

Experts listen to a keynote speech on regional cooperation during a plenary meeting of the third annual RCEP Media & Think Tank Forum in Haikou, Hainan province, on Sunday.

ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

## Partnership agreement expected to accelerate regional economic growth

By FAN FEIFEI  
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The implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement is expected to inject fresh impetus into regional economic growth, and safeguard the security and stability of global industrial and supply chains amid mounting challenges and external uncertainties, according to participants of the RCEP Media & Think Tank Forum on Sunday.

Zhu Guangyao, China's former vice-minister of finance, said the agreement has created a better business environment and an upgraded regional production network, reducing transaction costs and increasing interconnectivity in the RCEP region.

Zhu called for greater efforts to strengthen communication among RCEP member states, to give full play to the role of the bloc in promoting the liberalization and facilitation of investment and trade, and to expand cooperation in trade in services that are critical in the global industrial and value chains.

The implementation of the RCEP is of vital significance in promoting a new round of high-level opening-up, establishing a secure regional supply chain system and maintaining the peace, stability and development of the Asia-Pacific region, said Wang Xiaohong, deputy director of the Department of Information at the China Center for International Economic Exchanges.

"The agreement will bolster the cross-border flow of commodities,

services, technology, talent, capital and data resources of the member states, stimulate the market vitality of the region and bolster the in-depth integration of industrial and supply chains among the RCEP economies," Wang said. "It is a highly inclusive, high-quality and win-win multilateral agreement."

More efforts should also be made to expand institutional opening-up in terms of rules, regulations, management and standards, to strengthen international cooperation in the digital economy, to boost the development of digital trade and to fully unleash the benefits of the RCEP, Wang added.

The RCEP agreement, which took effect on Jan 1 last year, covers 15 Asia-Pacific economies: China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and 10 member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. It has created the world's largest free trade bloc by promoting regional economic integration through tariff concessions and other trade and investment liberalization and facilitation measures.

The RCEP region covers a market of 2.2 billion people, or nearly 30 percent of the world's population, with a combined GDP of \$26.2 trillion, or about 30 percent of global GDP, accounting for nearly 28 percent of global trade.

Guo Yanjun, director of the Institute of Asian Studies at China Foreign Affairs University, said against the backdrop of trade protectionism from some countries and increasingly fierce competition on the global stage, it is very necessary

to establish the world's largest free trade bloc, which has showcased China's firm determination to advance high-level opening-up and promote global development.

Trade among RCEP countries has registered rapid growth. According to the General Administration of Customs, China's imports and exports with the other 14 RCEP countries reached 12.95 trillion yuan (\$1.8 trillion) last year, an increase of 7.5 percent year-on-year, accounting for 30.8 percent of its total foreign trade.

Chang Ka Mun, managing director of Li & Fung Development (China), and a senior adviser at Li & Fung Research Centre, highlighted the importance of the RCEP in propelling regional and global economic growth, saying the agreement will be a very important instrument for Asia to integrate the supply chain, and provide opportunities for less-developed countries to accelerate their industrialization.

Chang noted that China has already opened up its service sector to a very large extent in the RCEP region, including in the aviation and consulting management industries.

Xu Ningning, executive president of the China-ASEAN Business Council, chairman of the RCEP Industry Cooperation Committee and chief Chinese expert on China-ASEAN business, said China and ASEAN should make a big push to strengthen industrial cooperation, optimize regional industrial layouts and realize a more effective allocation of resources.

## Media, youth called on to play wider role in promoting bloc's trade deal

By ZHANG YUE  
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Media platforms and practitioners will continue focusing on the impact that the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement is having on businesses and people and encourage the younger generation to become more engaged so that they can benefit from it, experts and media officials said.

They made the remarks at a parallel forum under the 2023 RCEP Media & Think Tank Forum on Sunday. The forum discussions focused on how the media can fully play its role in promoting the RCEP.

Hu Zhengrong, dean of the University of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' School of Journalism and Communication, said that media platforms in all RCEP countries play a critical role in promoting the development of the economic bloc.

"We should see this as a process of secondary empowerment. For example, media platforms can focus on the economy and figure out how to tell China's economic story better. This is something that Chinese media should discuss

and research in the next step," he said.

Wei Jianhua, deputy director of global service at China's Xinhua News Agency, noted that it's important to recognize that the RCEP is a practical collaboration that includes various economies in the Asia-Pacific region amid the anti-globalization trend, and it is a new milestone in efforts to build a large, unified market.

He said that while economic globalization is currently faced with obstacles, the RCEP is a resounding response to the trend of "slow globalization."

"Against such a backdrop, the RCEP agreement has injected greater confidence in globalization and has strengthened momentum in the world economy," Wei said. "Compared to trade agreements dominated by developed countries, the RCEP is more inclusive by taking into account the different interests and demands of both developed and emerging economies. All member countries share the dividends unleashed by the RCEP."

Juliet Labog-Javellana, associate publisher of the Philippine Daily Inquirer, said that now that the RCEP agreement is in force, infor-

mation about it will be critical to its success and acceptance. One important mission for media practitioners in RCEP countries is to understand how the newly implemented agreement will impact their personal lives and benefit them.

"It's important to help citizens better understand how the RCEP will affect their lives, be it through jobs, affordable and quality goods, better technology, bigger markets, et cetera," she said. "It's important to get the younger generation involved in the RCEP, to generate awareness among young entrepreneurs, the digital and technology professionals about the opportunities for growth in the RCEP."

Her views were echoed at the forum by Wong Chun Wai, an adviser at Star Media Group in Malaysia, adding that to tell good RCEP stories, media workers should better understand the agreement.

"Specifically, we expect to see more English content and stories shared about the RCEP so that readers in all RCEP countries will understand," he said. "We also need to have information and news stories that are more people-oriented."

## Soundbites

As the world's largest free trade agreement and an engine for growth and investment, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership serves as an important economic bridge. It has contributed to the revitalization of the Thai economy and international trade through reduction in manufacturing costs, an increase in production efficiency and the expansion of export markets for Thai products and services.

Benjamin Sukranjanajtee, minister of the Thai Embassy in China

With growing geopolitical tensions in the world, policymakers in many countries have started to translate national security interests into policies of trade and investment, which can be very damaging for the global economy. The RCEP will be the change people wish to see in the world as it can be used as a platform to promote global cooperation.

Bert Hofman, director of the East Asian Institute at the National University of Singapore

In order to create new momentum for enhancing the integration of the RCEP, members should try to accelerate the speed of tariff reduction. China, Japan and South Korea should lead this movement if possible. This is also necessary to help economic drivers such as businesses begin to benefit quickly from the tangible growth of the RCEP. It would be better for enterprises to play an impulsive role in enhancing the effectiveness of the RCEP than for politicians and academia to do so.

Kim Do-hoon, former president of the Korea Institute for Industrial Economics and Trade

The media should consistently report on the issues concerning the implementation of the RCEP (agreement) processes, rules and mechanisms to help the policymakers and the governments respond to the challenges encountered by businesses.

Juliet Labog-Javellana, associate publisher of the Philippine Daily Inquirer

Various international institutions such as the World Bank and the World Trade Organization have projected a high probability of a global recession. As the crisis is around the corner, the RCEP member economies have chosen opening-up and economic cooperation over trade protectionism. They have given each other valuable support and leveraged regional economic integration to enhance economic resilience and anti-risk capability.

Yi Xiaozhun, former deputy director-general of the WTO

The RCEP is promoting greater market access among member countries by reducing or eliminating tariffs. It fosters a more predictable and transparent business environment. The RCEP also facilitates supply chain integration and regional production networks, and simplifies customs procedures. All of this makes it very important for countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

Shada Islam, founder of the China-EU Forum

CHINA DAILY

## United effort



Experts talk about building the world's largest free trade area during a parallel session of the RCEP Media & Think Tank Forum in Haikou, Hainan province, on Sunday. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

## WORLD

**Editor's note:** As a critical deadline looms in the United States, Democrats and Republicans are at loggerheads over the debt ceiling. This page looks at where things stand and at the economic consequences.

By AI HEPING in New York  
and ZHAO HUANXIN in Washington

The US government is stoking global economic fears as it faces another standoff over raising the debt ceiling as a deadline looms, with the country's two main political parties trading accusations as time runs out to avoid a potentially catastrophic US default.

President Joe Biden on Sunday called Republicans' demands for resolving the government's debt ceiling standoff "unacceptable" and said that Republicans must move off their "extreme positions" on the now-stalled talks to raise the \$31.4 trillion debt ceiling. Biden planned to call the Speaker of the House of Representatives Kevin McCarthy, from Air Force One on the way back to Washington after a Group of Seven summit in Hiroshima, Japan.

Biden's negotiating team briefed him on the status of talks that broke up on Friday with no signs of progress, according to a White House official.

US Treasury Department has warned that the federal government could be unable to pay all its debts by June 1. That would trigger a default that could cause chaos in financial markets and push up interest rates.

Officials did not meet on Saturday, and they announced no progress from their meetings on Friday or any plan to talk again. Instead, both sides cast the other's proposals as too extreme.

The White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Biden and McCarthy had agreed that any budget agreement would need to be bipartisan and accused Republicans of offering proposals too far to the right to pass Congress.

Late on Saturday afternoon, McCarthy said he did not think talks could advance until Biden was back in the country. He accused Democrats of taking a position that was too extreme toward the left.

The White House suggested earlier on Saturday that Republicans were negotiating in bad faith.

"Stay tuned" summarized the situation — at least stay tuned until Biden returns to Washington on Sunday from the G7 Summit.

Despite the breakdown in talks, Biden told reporters in Japan on Saturday that he was "not at all" worried about the talks. They tend to move in stages, and "I still believe that we'll be able to avoid a default," he said.

Biden had said an agreement needed to be reached this weekend to clear legislation by June 1. The debt ceiling is the legal limit on government borrowing — currently set at \$31.4 trillion — which was hit in January.

Unless there is an agreement, failure to raise the debt limit could trigger a first-ever US payments default. Economists have warned that failure to make critical payments such as military salaries, Social Security benefits or interest on previously issued debt could tip the nation into an unprecedented default and affect world economies.

The Washington Post reported on Saturday that Republican negotiators rejected a White House offer to limit spending next year on both the military and a wide range of critical domestic programs, according to three people with knowledge of the matter, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Republicans are instead pushing for higher defense spending and more significant domestic spending reductions, the people said.

During talks, Biden aides offered what they said was a key concession by proposing that Congress largely hold spending constant on a wide swath of domestic programs, including education, scientific research and housing aid.

Biden's negotiators also proposed essentially holding military spending flat for next year. Biden's budget



Members and supporters of the Writers Guild of America form a picket line in New York, on Tuesday. The strike kicked off on May 3, with writers demanding better pay. ALEX KENT / VIA GETTY IMAGES

## With debt parleys at impasse, economy teeters on brink

Democrats and Republicans talk at cross purposes over policy positions

earlier this year sought big increases to both, funded by higher taxes, and holding their funding constant instead would amount to a cut of as much as 5 percent because of year-over-year inflation.

On Friday McCarthy and negotiators said spending levels were a major sticking point.

On Saturday, in remarks on Fox Business, McCarthy said he had "been very clear about where we need to go. All we're simply saying is, spend less." He added: "I think we could probably find a pretty good agreement to be able to move forward, but the White House will not budge."

McCarthy has pushed for cuts that would cut \$100 billion from agency budgets, and spending cap restrictions for a decade.

Democrats want the spending cuts to last for about two years, after which appropriators could more easily increase the budget.

"This was always going to be an issue," G. William Hoagland, a senior vice-president at the Bipartisan Policy Center, a think tank in Washington, told The Washington Post. "Republicans are looking for major savings over the next 10 years, while the administration clearly does not want to lock in 10-year numbers and are looking at a much shorter time frame."

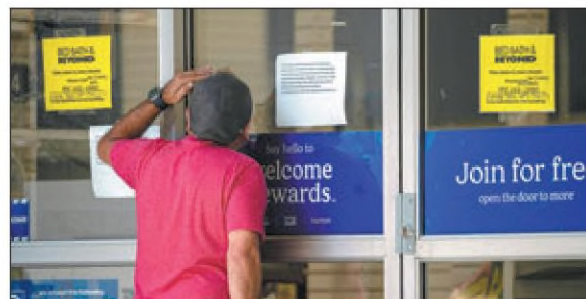
### Voicing opposition

Conservative and progressive wings of the Republican and Democratic caucuses have signaled opposition to parts of the negotiated talks.

The Senate is going ahead with a planned one-week recess this week. The Senate Majority Leader, Chuck Schumer, made the announcement



A Seattle police officer walks past tents used by homeless people on March 11, last year. TED S. WARREN / ASSOCIATED PRESS



A closed Bed Bath & Beyond store in San Francisco on April 24. The store will close all of its outlets over the next two months after the company filed for bankruptcy. DAVID PAUL MORRIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

“The recurrence of the debt ceiling ‘mini crises’ would erode the reliability, predictability and trustworthiness of the US government.”

Hung Tran, from the GeoEconomics Center of the Atlantic Council

on Thursday. However, if a debt deal is reached senators will return to vote on it, he said.

Democrats control the Senate by a 51-49 margin. Senate rules would require at least nine Republicans to go along with any deal.

Wall Street turned lower on Friday as negotiations ground to a sudden halt. Experts have warned that even the threat of a debt default could spark a recession.

Seven of the 11 primary S&P 500 sectors ended in red, with consumer discretionary and communication services leading the laggards by losing 0.84 percent and 0.49 percent respectively. Energy and health led the gainers by rising 0.73 percent and 0.46 percent respectively.

The stock market could fall sharply if a deal does not go through by the deadline, Peter Cohan, associate professor of management practice at Babson College, a private business school in Massachusetts, told Xinhua News Agency.

What happened during debt ceiling talks in 2011 could repeat itself, and it could be worse, although what happened in 2011 was essentially a short-term phenomenon, he said.

The S&P 500 Index fell nearly 17 percent between July 22 and Aug 8 during the debt ceiling impasse in 2011.

As Democrats say they will not support deficit reduction to pay for tax cuts that drive back up the deficit and Republicans say they will not agree to anything that limits tax cuts, there is no basis for an agreement, David Super, professor of law and economics at Georgetown University Law Center, told Xinhua.

It is likely there will be an extension of the debt limit for about two months and that "negotiations will continue for most of the summer", he said.

The markets could be very unsettled in the short term, and the situation in the market could be worse than that during debt ceiling talks in 2011, Super said.

A default is likely to be catastrophic for the US economy, with spillover throughout the globe, and would probably spark a recession, observers say.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen warned last week that a national default would destroy jobs and businesses and would probably leave millions of families who rely on federal government payments unpaid, including Social Security beneficiaries, veterans and military families.

The US has had a legal debt ceiling for more than a century and has raised it more than 100 times, and though Congress has never failed to raise the ceiling, partisan battles have sometimes taken the country to the edge of default, as in 2011, Cal Jillson, a historian at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, told China Daily.

"When there is a Democrat president and the Republicans control one or both houses of Congress, as is the case now, the Republicans commonly try to leverage spending cuts," said Jillson, also a political scientist. "They are not so moved when the president is a Republican."

"If the US government were to default, meaning be unable to pay some or all of its obligations in a timely way, that certainly would detract from the government's credibility."

### Heightening uncertainty

Hung Tran, a nonresident senior fellow at the GeoEconomics Center of the Atlantic Council, a think tank in Washington, said political wrangling over the national debt ceiling has heightened uncertainty at the wrong time and is helping to raise the chances of a severe recession.

"Beyond the near-term outlook, the recurrence of the debt ceiling 'mini crises' would erode the reliability, predictability and trustworthiness of the US government — possibly causing it to eventually lose its AAA rating and raising its funding costs," said Tran, a former deputy director at the International Monetary Fund.

"More fundamentally, the practice of using the debt ceiling as a political tool to change or terminate federal programs approved by previous Congresses reflects bad governance in the US — notwithstanding the fact that the US public debt/GDP ratio is too high and needs to be reduced over time."

Many economists and budget experts have predicted that a default would trigger significant interest rate rises, a fall in the stock market, instability throughout the financial system and the weakening of the dollar's leading role in the global economy, said William Galston, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington.

Galston said that since 1932 voters have held the president responsible for overall economic conditions, so if not raising the debt ceiling brings about the catastrophe that many experts fear, Biden is likely to pay a price, even if his Republican challenger advocated an inflexible position that contributed to the default.

"Although the president and his advisers seem confident that they have the upper hand in this fight, a debt default could propel the Republican presidential candidate to victory in 2024," Galston wrote in a post on the Brookings' website on May 15.

Agencies and Xinhua contributed to this story.

## Financial crises, spending on wars add to growing US national misery

By AI HEPING

Why is the United States facing a \$31.4 trillion legal limit on borrowing? Blame both Democrats and Republicans.

The deficit grew by \$12.7 trillion when Republican presidents George W. Bush and Donald Trump were in office, and by \$13 trillion under the Democratic administrations of Barack Obama and Joe Biden.

It has been nearly a quarter-century since the federal government

has spent less than it received in taxes.

Congress has borrowed to its legal limit to finance wars and tax cuts, expand federal spending, and provide for programs such as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, as well as "pet" projects for constituents.

The biggest drivers of debt have been the federal responses to two sharp economic downturns: the 2008 financial crisis and the 2020 pandemic recession.

"There have been bipartisan tax cuts and bipartisan spending

increases" driving that growth, Maya MacGuineas, president of the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget and perhaps the preeminent deficit hawk in Washington, told The New York Times. "It's not the simple story of Republicans cutting taxes and Democrats growing spending. Actually, they all like to do all of it."

The terrorist attacks on the US in 2001 spurred Washington into a rearmament push, as Bush mobilized for wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

He did not raise taxes to pay for those conflicts. Neither did his successor, Obama, who inherited the conflicts. The resulting spending added trillions of dollars to the national debt.

Then in 2018, Trump spurred a new round of tax cuts — which did not include spending cuts to offset their cost.

Trump and his fellow Republicans claimed those cuts would "pay for themselves" by boosting economic growth and tax revenue. The nonpartisan Congressional

Budget Office, or CBO, estimated in 2018 that the cuts would add more than \$1.2 trillion to the debt through the 2022 fiscal year, even after accounting for increased economic growth.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a think tank, estimated that from 2001 through 2018, tax cuts and the additional interest costs of borrowing to finance them added up to \$5.6 trillion — or about one-third of the additional debt the government had incurred at that time.

The CBO projects that the US government will run trillion-dollar deficits over the next 10 years, resulting in a cumulative deficit of \$20.3 trillion between 2024 and 2033.

Deficits are not cheap. The federal government pays interest on its debt. It was \$476 billion in 2022 and is projected to rise to \$1.4 trillion by 2033. This year, the federal government will spend more on net interest costs than on Medicaid and Social Security programs.

Agencies contributed to this story.

## WORLD

# Arab summit lays base for resetting ties

Leaders resolve to focus on actions to support stability, development in region

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong  
jan@chinadailyusa.com

The 32nd Arab League summit in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, ended on Friday on a promising note, with a joint declaration focusing on strengthening Arab actions that would support stability and development in the region, and free from foreign interference.

Despite differing views on Syria's President Bashar al-Assad's participation at the summit for the first time since the Syrian civil war in 2011, and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky's surprise appearance, the high-level meeting provided a platform to reset relationships where world dynamics are changing rapidly, analysts say.

The summit provided a "unique chance for countries in the region to put behind them tumultuous decades and move forward in a world where the dynamics are changing rapidly and allies continue to shift," said Arhama Siddiqi, a Middle East analyst and research fellow at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad in Pakistan.

In a joint communique by the Arab League published by the Saudi Press Agency, the bloc reaffirmed the centrality of the Palestinian issue to their countries as one of the key factors of stability in the region, condemned violations targeting Palestinians, their lives, property and existence, and stressed the importance of having a two-state solution.

The declaration also welcomed the resumption of the Syrian government's participation in meetings of the Arab League and affiliated bodies in hopes that it would intensify pan-Arab efforts aimed at helping Syria overcome its crisis.

Support for Yemen and the efforts of its Presidential Leadership Council to achieve security, stability and peace were also highlighted.

Haydar Oruc, a former researcher at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies in Turkey, said the summit declaration helped draw attention to Israeli attacks on Palestine and

included members of the union that still have conflicts and wish to end them, mainly, Palestine, Sudan, Lebanon and Yemen, and Syria, and to ensure stability in these countries.

He also said that the Arab League had fundamental issues that are hindering it from becoming a major player in world politics, citing, for example, lack of consensus in the league when Kuwait, Qatar and Morocco have not normalized ties with Syria.

During his speech at the summit, Assad said he hoped the summit would be a starting point for Arab action and solidarity among Arab states to achieve peace, prosperity and development in the region instead of war and destruction, state media Syrian Arab News Agency reported.

## Historic opportunity

"We are in front of a historic opportunity to rearrange our affairs with the least amount of foreign intervention," Assad said, adding that the joint Arab action "is in need for common visions, strategies and targets."

Muslim Imran, director at the Asia Middle East Center for Research and Dialogue, a think tank in Malaysia, said the meeting could also be an opportunity for the 22-member Arab League to do some "soul-searching and reformation" over what has happened over the past decade, especially after the disastrous "Arab Spring" in 2010.

It was also an opportunity to focus on empowering youth, and to double down on nation-building and regional priorities in the face of external threats, he said.

Siddiqi said: "It is interesting to consider how world events can bring people together and create new opportunities for growth and change, and it will be fascinating to see how these developments play out in the coming years."

"It showcases Arab solidarity in the face of adversity and gives hope that the region might still see sustainable peace."

# Xi congratulates Montenegro, Micronesia leaders

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Saturday congratulated Jakov Milatovic on assuming office as president of Montenegro.

In his message, Xi said that China and Montenegro have always respected and trusted each other and treated each other as equals, and the two peoples appreciate and respect each other.

The Chinese president said he holds in high regard the development of China-Montenegro relations and stands ready to work with President Milatovic to carry forward the profound friendship between the two countries, strengthen communication on governance experience and jointly chart the course for further growth of bilateral relations to deliver benefits to both peoples.

Milatovic, a 36-year-old economic expert, won the presidential

runoff election in Montenegro last month, in which he secured nearly 60 percent of the vote, while former president Milo Djukanovic garnered 40 percent.

The newly elected president took the oath of office on Saturday at the country's parliament in Podgorica.

Milatovic said he will serve as the president of all citizens, emphasizing economic development and ties with neighboring countries, as well as the country's path to full membership of the European Union.

"The elimination of internal divisions, the building of strong and independent institutions, the affirmation of human rights, the impartial distribution of justice, a society of equal opportunities, as well as the establishment of a sustainable economic model will require the

full commitment of both decision-makers and those who execute those decisions," he said in a speech, which was broadcast live on the national television RTCG.

In addition, Milatovic had said in an interview with The Associated Press that he will advocate for stronger ties with Serbia and other Balkan neighbors.

On Thursday, Xi sent a message to Wesley W. Simina to congratulate him on his inauguration as president of the Federated States of Micronesia, underlining Beijing's commitment to further developing ties with Micronesia.

Xi said that over the past 34 years since the establishment of two-way diplomatic relations, the two countries have made great strides in their relations on the basis of mutual respect and treating each other on an equal footing, bringing tangible

benefits to the people of both sides.

In his message sent on Thursday, Xi voiced his great appreciation to President Simina for the latter's lasting commitment to promoting China-Micronesia friendship.

Xi said he attaches great importance to the development of China-Micronesia relations and is willing to work hand in hand with President Simina to support each other on issues related to each other's core interests, deepen exchanges and cooperation in various fields and promote the continuous development of the China-Micronesia comprehensive strategic partnership for the greater benefit of the two peoples.

Zhang Yunbi in Beijing contributed to this story.

XINHUA—AGENCIES



Zhang Jun, China's permanent representative to the United Nations, and Munir Akram, his counterpart from Pakistan hold tea gift bags that were distributed during the celebration of International Tea Day held at UN Headquarters in New York on Friday. MINLUZHANG / CHINA DAILY

# A celebration of tea at the UN

By MINLUZHANG  
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When examining the Chinese character for "tea," the composition reveals three parts: grass on top, people in the middle, and wood at the bottom. The character depicts "people living in nature," explained China's top envoy to the United Nations.

"Tea helps us sip the taste of life, enjoy the spiritual tranquility, evoke enlightenment, and bring our heart and soul back to mother nature.

For thousands of years, the sustainable cycle from tea planting to tea drinking has been a vivid example of harmonious co-existence between humans and nature," Zhang Jun, China's permanent representative to the UN, said in his opening remarks on the celebration of International Tea Day on Friday.

In December 2019, the 74th session of the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution establishing May 21 as International Tea Day.

After three years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Permanent Mission of China to the UN on Friday held the first in-person celebration for International Tea Day at UN Headquarters in New York.

Under the theme of "Tea for Green Development," Zhang said

he hoped the face-to-face exchanges would "not only enhance our friendship, but also explore the intrinsic link between tea and human development, and seek common development and a shared future."

The booming of tea and its related drinking products and industries creates many jobs and much economic value, Zhang said, adding that tea is a bond between civilizations, and the development of tea culture is "an epitome of mutual learning between human civilizations," he said.

From the ancient Silk Road and Tea-Horse Road to the Belt and Road Initiative, tea has transcended time and borders and promoted mutual understanding and friendship among peoples and diverse and harmonious coexistence among civilizations, said Zhang.

"In today's challenge-ridden world, we wish to use tea as a medium to promote international exchange and cooperation, enhance mutual learning, mutual understanding and mutual trust among civilizations, and achieve harmonious coexistence," he said.

Over 100 guests, including Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Li Junhua, Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support Atul Khare, Chief Economist of the Food and Agriculture

Organization Maximo Torero Cullen, as well as representatives from more than 20 countries including Pakistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Singapore, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Portugal, Belgium, Hungary, Greece, Slovenia, Argentina, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Eritrea, Sierra Leone and South Africa gathered for the tea event.

Representatives from Cambodia, Indonesia, Eritrea, Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan and other countries' permanent representatives to the UN said that tea is a key driver for social and economic development. They said tea is an effective means to help less developed regions eradicate poverty, increase farmers' income and empower women.

"I enjoy drinking tea, and my favorite Chinese tea is Longjing tea. It's a kind of green tea, which is very nice to drink in the summer when it's hot. And in winter, I prefer to drink Puer tea. It makes me feel very relaxed and happy," Ivaylo, a staff member at the Permanent Mission of Bulgaria to the UN told China Daily.

"I have a lot of tea at home, much more than I can drink, and a lot of teapots. I love tea ceremonies," he said. "I think Chinese tea culture is a great cultural asset that China can use and does use around the world."

# US state faces suit over ban on TikTok

LOS ANGELES—Five TikTok content creators are suing Montana's attorney general over plans to impose a statewide ban on TikTok, arguing the ban that would prohibit Montana residents from using the popular app infringes on First Amendment rights and is "unconstitutional and preempted by federal law."

The move came after the Governor of Montana, Greg Gianforte, signed a bill on Wednesday making Montana the first US state to prohibit the use of or access to the social network for everyone.

The five plaintiffs, including a businesswoman, a rancher, a student and a veteran, all create, publish, view, interact with and share TikTok videos with "significant audiences."

They said these communities allow users to connect, build livelihoods, make friends and share information, so they must bring this action to preserve their rights to publish this.

In their 44-page indictment applied to the District Court in Missoula of Montana, the group of creators said the law "attempts to exercise powers over national security that Montana does not have and to ban speech Montana may not suppress."

"Montana's claimed interests in (the law) are not legitimate and do not support a blanket ban on TikTok," the suit said.

The ban on TikTok in Montana "violated the First Amendment and the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, as well as the Foreign Affairs and Commerce Clauses of the United States Constitution," it said.

Gianforte said the move was aimed at defending the "State of Montana and its people against threats to our security, privacy and way of life."

However, local TikTok creators rejected this, saying the US government, instead of TikTok, was always collecting people's data.

The online magazine Slate quoted Christian Poole, who lives in the town of Bozeman, as saying: "No matter how far away you get from the government, no matter how secluded, you still are going to have some government presence in your everyday life, in everything you do."

XINHUA

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# Kenyan, Chinese experts applaud BRI as it turns 10

By EDITH MUTETHYA  
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Experts from China and Kenya have praised the achievements of the Belt and Road Initiative as it marks 10 years of its establishment.

Experts who gathered for a symposium at the Chinese embassy in Kenya on Friday were committed to working together for high-quality BRI cooperation between the two countries.

John Kimondi, secretary-general of the China Africa Friendship Association-Kenya Chapter, said the BRI has greatly benefited Kenya through construction of roads, railways, bridges and hospitals as well as support in the education sector.

"We appreciate it because without China, Kenya wouldn't be where it is today," he said.

"While making a speech four days ago in South Africa, President William Ruto indicated the importance of Kenya being part and parcel of the discussion but not being told what to do. China has been good in engaging us in discussion but not telling us what to do."

Dennis Munene, executive director of the China-Africa Centre at the Kenya-based Africa Policy Institute, said the BRI is inherently emancipating rather than enslaving Africa.

It is based on the continent's own priorities rather than external lenders, and the impact of the BRI in Africa is visible, positive and trans-

formative, Munene said, adding that Kenya is a true beneficiary of the BRI and "we look forward to a more fruitful engagement between the two countries".

Li Bin, president of the African-Chinese People's Friendship Association, said Kenya is one of the countries with the most BRI projects. "Many projects such as the standard gauge railway, Nairobi Expressway and the global trade center have effectively promoted local economic and social development."

China is Kenya's largest trade partner, and Kenyan fresh avocados are selling in China, Li said, adding that many of her students are studying in China.

Zhou Pingjian, the Chinese ambassador to Kenya, said the East

African country is an important participant in the BRI.

"Kenya and China share growth through cooperation and discussions. There is a huge potential for construction of BRI projects. We can make full play of people-to-people exchanges."

China will stick to the principles of sincerity, real results, amity and good faith as well as pursuing the greater good and shared interest with Kenya, Zhou said.

Peter Kagwanja, chief executive of the Africa Policy Institute, said the BRI is a shining jewel of China's independent path to modernization, noting that it has been praised by experts as the most ambitious project in human history.

"Here in Africa, Chinese modern-



Contestants perform in the final stage of the 22nd Chinese Bridge-Chinese language proficiency contest for foreign college students at the University of Nairobi, in Kenya, on May 12. WANG GUANSEN / XINHUA

ization meets African renaissance at the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation and BRI."

Through the BRI, China and Ken-

ya are expanding the frontiers of globalization and working hand in hand to build a community of shared future for humanity, he said.

## BUSINESS

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## Growth spurs mild China property uptrend

Optimized policies, hopes of stronger recovery seen boosting demand

By WANG YING in Shanghai  
wang\_ying@chinadaily.com.cn

The first May Day holiday in China after the COVID-19 pandemic control measures were optimized saw a mild pickup in property trading — and the uptrend will likely extend into the coming months, considering the macroeconomic acceleration and the anticipated further release of pent-up demand for homes, industry experts said.

The continuous optimization of property-related policies by local governments as well as the ongoing steady economic improvement will set the tone for the real estate market from now on, with hot-spot cities expected to see a more buoyant performance, they said.

Though the volume of deals for residential properties during the five-day holiday was well behind the pre-pandemic levels, transactions in key cities for both new and existing homes saw double-digit growth year-on-year, said Guan Rongxue, a senior analyst with the Zhuge Real Estate Data Research Center.

More than 5,200 new homes were traded between April 29 and May 3 in the 15 cities surveyed by the research center, up nearly 26 percent year-on-year. More than 785 pre-owned homes were also traded in six key cities, up 20 percent year-on-year, the center said.

"The data indicate that both new and existing home markets in many Chinese cities are on course to improvement, boosting market confidence," Guan said.

Pro-market measures introduced to stabilize the market proved effective during the holiday. Sales of homes will further improve and the market will regain stability by the end of this year and might even rebound, Guan said.

"A weak recovery was seen at the beginning of the year. It was followed by a bit of consolidation in key cities in February and March. Sales of commercial properties in March reported first positive year-on-year growth since July 2021," said Xie Chen, head of research with CBRE China, a commercial real estate services and investment firm.

Measures like stabilization of the property market and ensuring timely delivery of residential projects, together with the release of pent-up demand, had supported the improvement of the property market in the first quarter in terms of sales, investment, land bidding and construction, among others, said Yao Yao, head of research at JLL China, a real estate consultancy.

"As the real estate industrial chain is gradually gaining momentum, the industry is expected to form a virtuous circle step by step, and guide market expectation, confidence and capital in the positive direction," Yao said.

Agreed Shaun Brodie, senior director and head of occupier research of China at Cushman & Wakefield, a global real estate services firm. "This year, with a good start to China's economic growth, the real estate market in China has



Salespeople introduce a residential property project to prospective homebuyers in Huizhou, Guangdong province, on March 21. ZHOU NAN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Top: A real estate project is under construction in Fuzhou, Fujian province, on April 1. LYU MING / CHINA NEWS SERVICE. Above: Visitors read information on a rental housing project of Beike, an integrated online and offline platform for housing transactions and services, during Jinling STYLE living festival in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, on April 30. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

recovered and stabilized in terms of a number of key indicators. Ahead, however, there is still further policy

work to be done to ensure market stabilization remains a long-term phenomenon."

Industry experts agreed the way ahead may see ups and downs as the market pursues an overall recovery.

After the early spring recovery in the first quarter, major Chinese cities saw a universal retreat in realty deals in April as the supply of newly built houses reached a five-year low across the 30 key cities tracked by China Real Estate Information Corp, or CRIC, a unit of E-House (China) Enterprise Holdings Ltd.

At the same time, trade volume in April declined by 27 percent month-on-month, said Yang Kewei, vice-general manager of CRIC's research center.

"Although home transactions in April rose by 37 percent year-on-year, the figure remained lower than the levels seen between 2019 and 2021, because of the low comparison base of last year, when the pandemic eroded market performance. This shows the market recovery still needs more steam," said Yang.

The bump in the home market in April indicated that market confidence is yet to recover fully, and the digest of the accumulated inelastic demand in the previous months led to a market slowdown, Yang said.

Li Guo, 32, a white-collar professional working for a construction company and a prospective homebuyer, understands the current market situation. He and his wife bought a three-bedroom apartment in 2015 in one of the suburban areas of Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. Since their only child is about to enter primary school in September, the Lis are considering to sell their existing home for a smaller one located in downtown area that is known to be home to better schools. "But the uncertainties of the

home market make it very hard for us to figure out the right timing for selling and then buying," Li said.

With regard to such unstable demand recovery, Xie said he expects more easing in measures in the coming months targeted at supporting inelastic and improving demand, ensuring timely home deliveries and stabilizing the market.

Experts said the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee meeting held on April 28 laid a solid policy foundation for market stabilization in the second half of the year.

The meeting highlighted the stable and healthy development of the real estate market, the establishment of a new development model for the real estate industry, the need to meet demand for homes for living (not for speculation purposes), market stabilization, raising people's life quality, urbanization, and green and high-quality development, said Yao with JLL.

Property developers will come up with quality products and services via adoption of various methodologies, and at the same time keep an eye on risk prevention, cost control and productivity enhancement. Local governments are tending to launch measures to address their specific situation, and striving to ensure the effective execution of central government policies, said Yao.

Overall, the confidence reflects the great importance accorded to the real estate market and is expected to promote a more stable and healthy development of the market, said Brodie.

"Housing demand is expected to further improve due to the three-

child policy and recent economic development. The new trends in China's real estate industry, including the increasing popularity of newly completed homes and the further exploration of flexible housing loan repayment methods, are helping consumers and suppliers improve the quality of cash flow and delivery, thereby further helping restore vitality of the overall economy," Brodie said.

The central government also hopes to further ensure the hand-over of buildings, protect people's livelihoods and ensure stability through the efforts of local governments, he said.

The meeting also sent positive signals to drive consumption, said Chen Wenjing, director of research with the China Index Academy.

"It indicated that the existing property policies will be maintained in the near future, and the market should continue to stabilize homebuyers' confidence and market expectations," Chen said.

Xie said he believes the weak recovery so far will likely continue in the second quarter. Differentiation between regions, cities and even districts of a city will intensify due to their respective conditions.

The Chinese property market may see gradual stabilization in the second quarter on the back of optimization of local policies and steady economic recovery, Chen said.

"There might be a small-digit month-on-month home sales growth nationwide. Market differentiation might appear from city to city. Hot-spot cities that seek policy optimization and improved supply will remain vigorous, but the vast majority will continue to undergo a market adjustment."

## Home as perk: Creating a better housing system with many supply channels

## REPORTER'S LOG

By Wang Ying

Construction of a residential project for 4,000-odd employees of Chinese e-commerce giant JD kicked off in Beijing on May 4, China's Youth Day. Industry experts believe projects like this can supplement the mainstream residential property segment well.

With a total gross floor area of more than 300,000 square meters, the project entails an investment of more than 6 billion yuan (\$854.49 million). Named JD Youth City, the

project will equip each of its flats with furniture and electrical appliances to allow employees of the company to move in immediately upon completion, according to the Beijing-headquartered e-commerce company.

JD Youth City will consist of facilities for leisure activities, entertainment and sports. In addition, a kindergarten can hold up to 12 classes will be set up.

The facility is consistent with JD's efforts to improve its employees' living conditions. In the past two decades, the company has spent more than 22 billion yuan in building over 25,000 employee flats nationwide, said Zhang Pang, chief human resources officer of JD.

Projects such as JD Youth City can

address shortage of adequate housing demand in hot-spot cities and effectively meet the demand for high-quality rental as well as self-owned housing from non-local residents and the younger generation. They can also contribute to the establishment of a long-term housing system with multiple supply channels and attach equal importance to both leasing and homebuying, said Xie Chen, head of research with CBRE China, a commercial real estate services and investment firm.

Augmenting employee benefits by way of staff apartments certainly alleviates the housing pressure, said Shaun Brodie, senior director and head of occupier research of China at Cushman & Wakefield, a global real estate services firm.

A good living environment also meets the needs of the younger generation who seek a good quality of life. For most companies, attracting high-level talent and being able to retain them is crucial for their (companies') long-term development — and employer-offered accommodation is one important tool in the box that companies with the resources can use, Brodie said.

"Big-name Chinese enterprises such as Gree, Huawei, JD, Wahaha and Hongxing Erke are building apartments for their own employees and thus setting a trend," said Li Yujia, chief researcher at the Guangdong Planning Institute's residential policy research center.

The idea of offering housing as a perk for employees is fast becoming

popular among domestic enterprises. Such housing projects will satisfy younger staff members' requirements for living in a place that can make them feel at home, where they can live with dignity and respect, Li said.

For years, the real estate industry has been operating under the principle of "housing is for living in, not for speculation". In this context, measures like large companies building staff apartments align well with current market trends, Brodie said.

As the country keeps accelerating the development of rental housing with diversified investment and multiple supply channels, many organizations are increasing their efforts to solve the middle-aged and

younger generations' living problems, said Sheng Xiuxiu, residential sector research director at JLL China, a global real estate advisor.

Employee apartments can also be regarded as a strategy for labor-intensive companies to better attract and retain their employees, Sheng said.

According to Brodie, facilities such as JD Youth City can help spur regional economic development by attracting young talent to an area, city or region.

Sheng said, "For local governments, their support for enterprises' construction of employee apartments will undoubtedly bring benefits to local investments, boost drives to attract talent and help transform or upgrade local industrial structure."

# BUSINESS

## Unified system puts focus on property tax

Expert says timing of taxation not ripe until home market conditions stabilize

By WANG YING in Shanghai  
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Property tax, the topic that has sparked countless debates and speculation in the past decade, has again raised eyebrows as China completed building a national and unified system for real estate registration. But industry experts suggest that the establishment of the system does not necessarily mean the introduction of property tax in the near future, especially considering the status quo of the real estate sector.

After 10 years of effort, the country has established a unified registration system that covers all types of immovable property rights, said Wang Guanghua, minister of natural resources, at a national work conference on natural resources and immovable property registration held on April 25.

China's property registration, perfected over the years, has lent better protection to property rights and enabled safer transactions, forming a stronger foundation for the social-

ist market economy regarding property rights, Wang stated.

However, regardless of the multiple functions of the system, including enhancing real estate transaction efficiency and better protecting property owners' lawful rights, public attention is mostly focused on the unified registration system's potential linkage to property tax.

"A unified real estate registration lays an important foundation for raising property tax, but the taxation may not come immediately, especially considering the current home market that is still in the process of stabilization with insufficient market sentiment and expectations," said Chen Wenjing, director of research with the China Index Academy.

Hui Jianqiang, head of research at Beijing Zhongfang-Yanxie Technology Service Ltd, also said that the timing for such taxation was not ripe.

"It should only be collected during an upward and vibrant property market when the broad economy



Citizens (right) apply for real estate property ownership certificates at a real estate registration center in Qingdao, Shandong province, on Feb 23. LI ZIHEG / XINHUA

and people's incomes are on a steady growth path," said Hui.

The unified registration of immovable property has fully realized and will create conditions for the collection of the real estate tax, clarify the basic details of property ownership and define the sources of the real estate tax, said Shaun Brodie, senior director and head of occupier research of China at Cush-

man & Wakefield, a global real estate services firm.

During the first four months, despite a 24.1 percent year-on-year growth in the average monthly sales volume of newly built housing in the 100 major cities that the China Index Academy monitors, the sales figure has remained low since 2016.

"Since pent-up demand from

last year has mostly been digested, income and employment expectation have yet improved, the property market is still under downward pressure in the second quarter," Chen said.

The connection between the registration system and a possible property tax became closer when industrial insiders recalled an article published earlier this year written by former minister of finance Lou Jiwei.

In the article, Lou pointed out that real estate tax is the most suitable type of local tax and the pilot should be launched as soon as possible after economic growth normalizes.

"Although property tax is a necessary part of the long-term housing mechanism establishment and perfection, the registration and rolling out of taxation will be taken step-by-step," said Xie Chen, head of research with CBRE China, a commercial real estate services and investment firm.

According to Xie, the launch of property taxes will help establish a housing system that sticks to the principle of "housing is for living in, not speculation" as well as attach equal importance to renting and home buying. Further, the real

estate tax will do good to the overall tax structure optimization for home trading and ownership.

The real estate industry is a pillar industry within China's overall economy and plays an important role in driving economic growth. The universal collection of the real estate tax is an inevitable event, said Brodie.

"When looking to the future, given the differentiated market within China as well as within cities, the level of property tax imposed might need to be tweaked according to the local market conditions," Brodie added.

Shanghai and Chongqing became the only two cities on the Chinese mainland to levy property tax in 2011. In Shanghai, the taxation is only collected for families having a housing area of more than 60 square meters per person, taxed at a rate of 0.4 percent or 0.6 percent of the total property value annually, depending on the apartment's price per square meter.

While in Chongqing, the trial tax is focused more on taming investment speculation in high-end properties, with the rate set between 0.5 percent and 1.2 percent of the property value annually.

## China-Ecuador FTA to help bilateral relations, trade touch new highs

QUITO — The recently signed free trade agreement between Ecuador and China will enhance trade exchanges and bilateral relations that will lead to mutual benefits, according to officials and experts.

"I must express the enormous joy I feel at having finalized this free trade agreement between Ecuador and the People's Republic of China," Guillermo Lasso, President of Ecuador, said following the signing on May 10.

The pact was signed by China's Commerce Minister Wang Wentao and Ecuador's Minister for Production, Foreign Trade, Investment and Fisheries Julio Prado via video conference after a year of negotiations, according to the Chinese Ministry of Commerce.

"The FTA will translate into well-being for citizens, development and more income for thousands of families," said Lasso, adding that "both countries win with this agreement".

At a press conference following the signing, Prado called the deal "historic", saying that "the agreement takes into account the interests of both countries and expands opportunities for collaboration to achieve a more sustainable development of our countries in the present and the future".

"It puts Ecuador on the map of

Asia and makes China (Ecuador's) largest supplier of consumer goods, raw materials and capital goods, which will contribute to improving the competitiveness of Ecuador's industry," said Prado.

China, he noted, is the world's leading market, with more than 1.4 billion consumers. Hence, the agreement "is tremendously interesting for the export, production and consumer sectors, as well as being good business for everyone".

"The specific potential of this agreement, from the perspective of exports, is an additional \$3 to \$4 billion over the next 10 years," Prado said, adding that Ecuador's employment outlook is also poised to benefit.

"Through the trade agreement with China and others that are being negotiated with several countries, we estimate that in the next seven years, we will double the number of productive jobs in the export sector, which currently stands at 1.2 million," he said.

Ecuador is the fourth Latin American country to sign an FTA with China, after Chile, Peru and Costa Rica. The FTA needs to be approved and ratified by the Constitutional Court and the National Assembly of Ecuador before taking effect.

In the meantime, exporters and



Ecuadorian President Guillermo Lasso (right) and Minister for Production, Foreign Trade, Investment and Fisheries Julio Prado display documents of the free trade agreement between China and Ecuador in Quito, Ecuador, on May 10. XINHUA

business leaders hailed the agreement as a boon for growth.

"The size of the Chinese market will allow us to leverage exports much more, especially as China's economy has proven resilient — expanding despite the challenging global landscape," according to Xavier Rosero, vice-president of the Ecuadorian

Exporters Federation.

China is Ecuador's second-largest trading partner. In 2022, the two countries witnessed double-digit growth in trade for the second year in a row, with bilateral trade reaching \$13.1 billion, up 19.7 percent year-on-year, according to data from the Chinese Ministry of Commerce.

"The Chinese economy has shown that it can sustain this dynamism of growth ... It is one of the economies that lead global growth, and that means its purchasing power for imported products has stayed significantly high," said Rosero.

Alberto Acosta, an economic consultant and international analyst, said the signing of the FTA with Chi-

na "is excellent news" for Ecuador, adding that it would increase trade and strengthen bilateral relations.

"International trade always unites and creates opportunities," said Acosta. "That will mean a much closer relationship because there will be more exchanges."

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## BUSINESSINSIGHT

## Sound system will protect banks from risks

EAGLE EYE

By Wang Hongzhang

The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2022 delivered a key report that has stressed the importance of strengthening and refining modern financial regulation, reinforcing the systems that safeguard financial stability and ensuring no systemic risks arise.

Such requirements have assumed even greater strategic significance following recent risk events in the United States and Europe, which has made it important to monitor the situation of global financial risks.

The collapse of Silicon Valley Bank has shown that macroeconomic policy adjustments play a decisive role in maintaining financial stability. Interest rate policy is a crucial factor influencing liquidity risk.

The US Federal Reserve had maintained a low interest rate environment — even zero interest rates for some time — for a decade since 2012. From March 2022, however, the Fed raised interest rates 10 times as of May this year to fight inflation, increasing the target range for the federal funds rate to between 5 percent and 5.25 percent, versus zero percent and 0.25 percent in early 2022.

Such a rollercoaster ride in interest rates has threatened the stability of the financial system. For SVB, the drastic increase in interest rates led to substantial losses in its long-term financial assets, triggering its collapse.

Some may point out that the maturity mismatch of SVB's assets and liabilities was the main reason for its failure. But the collapse of other banks, including Signature Bank and First Republic Bank, shortly after SVB's collapse, indicates that the main source of risk lies in the external environment — the aggressive change in interest rates has exposed multiple banks to similar risks.

The Fed's radical rate hikes have not yielded the desired results in terms of curbing inflation. They have instead led to a rapid deterioration in bank liquidity and triggered a crisis, indicating that US macroeconomic policy adjustments lack thorough analysis and appropriate policy tools.

Based on the experience of the Fed's rate hikes, it is clear that central banks should strike an appropriate balance between taming inflation by tightening liquidity conditions and controlling the risks financial institutions face.

Ensuring a proper pace of macroeconomic policy adjustments is crucial for financial stability.

The bank failures also reveal a deficiency in banking industry regu-



LUO JIE / CHINA DAILY

lation. In 2018, the US raised the banks' stress test threshold to \$250 billion in assets. SVB's asset size before its collapse was \$220 billion.

SVB did not have to meet regulatory requirements on the liquidity coverage ratio and net stable funding ratio. While the LCR aims to ensure that banks have enough cash or high-quality bonds to survive stresses in markets for a month, the NSFR seeks to reduce funding risks over a longer-term horizon.

As a result, SVB failed to maintain an adequate level of liquidity to address the risk of deposit outflows. In 2022, the bank's deposits decreased by as much as 9 percent.

In the digital age, determining whether systemic risks will arise is no

**The Fed's radical rate hikes have not yielded the desired results in terms of curbing inflation. They have instead led to a rapid deterioration in bank liquidity and triggered a crisis, indicating that US macroeconomic policy adjustments lack thorough analysis and appropriate policy tools.**

longer possible solely based on the size of an individual bank and its connections with its peers. Although SVB was not a large-sized bank nor systemically important, the US ultimately handled its collapse under the principle of "systemic risk exception".

The risk transmission of bank runs in the digital age may have undergone significant changes. The speed of bank runs is faster — SVB collapsed almost instantly, and the effect is wider, thus more likely to threaten financial stability.

Therefore, regulatory authorities need to enhance their understanding of the banking industry in response to evolving technologies and emerging risks.

Going forward, attention should

be paid to the evolution of financial risks in the United States. The surge in interest rates could raise the funding cost of vulnerable small and medium-sized banks and expose some of them to liquidity risks. If the Fed raises interest rates further, it is difficult to say whether the US' financial situation will undergo unexpected changes.

Partly due to SVB's failure, more than \$200 billion in deposits were withdrawn from US small banks in March, while US money market funds saw a net inflow of about \$304 billion in the three weeks through March 29. This shift of funds can create imbalances in the financial market.

The US commercial real estate

industry is also experiencing a cyclical adjustment and smaller banks have significant exposure to related risks. Around \$2.6 trillion in commercial mortgages — 80 percent of which are from small banks — will mature between 2023 and 2027.

Luckily, the effect of the overseas banking crisis on China has been relatively mild as activity in the US and Europe only accounts for a limited share of Chinese banks' operations. The sound asset quality of China's banking industry and the independence of the country's monetary policy from overseas adjustments will also help isolate Chinese banks from the upheaval.

Nevertheless, as the US and Europe are important trade partners of China, any economic recession in these regions can affect China's exports.

Chinese policymakers have stepped up efforts to expand domestic demand and prioritize the recovery and expansion of consumption, which will help counter the external uncertainties and ensure high-quality development.

The US banking crisis also serves as a reminder for China that it is important to consider the comprehensive impact on the economy while adjusting macroeconomic policies.

Looking ahead, the global economy is expected to face a challenging environment characterized by high interest rates, high inflation, high debt and low growth, leading to inevitable market volatility.

Within this context, policymakers should take into account the wide-ranging effect that macroeconomic policy adjustments may have. Financial stability in particular needs to be fully considered in policymaking as the goal of macroprudential regulation is to avoid systemic financial risks.

It is also essential to ensure that there are sufficient tools and resources to address any potential bank collapse. In the past, the cost of such risk events has primarily been borne by the central bank or local governments in China.

Going forward, it may be sensible to let the market assume a greater share of responsibility. In addition to the existing deposit insurance system, a mechanism can be established whereby funds contributed by large commercial banks provide temporary liquidity relief to small and medium-sized banks.

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## Inflation not yet a constraint on China's monetary policy

MAIN STREET

By Ma Shuyuan and Guan Tao

China's financial numbers have repeatedly come in better than expected this year.

The country's broad money supply, or M2, grew by 12.7 percent year-on-year by the end of March, reaching its highest level since April 2016.

Meanwhile, the outstanding aggregate social financing increased by 10 percent, up 0.4 percentage point from the end of 2022.

In the first quarter, new yuan-denominated loans totaled 10.6 trillion yuan (\$1.51 trillion), an increase of 2.3 trillion yuan year-on-year.

On March 17, the People's Bank of China, the central bank, unexpectedly said that it would cut the reserve requirement ratio, proactively implementing stabilizing growth policies and on time.

The country's outstanding loans through central bank structural monetary policy tools increased by 375.4 billion yuan in the first quarter. That was mainly from a carbon reduction supporting tool, a re-lending facility for the clean and efficient

use of coal and a re-lending facility to support technological innovation, which totaled 264.8 billion yuan and accounted for 71 percent of the total increase.

China's economy has made a good start this year amid supportive government policies and optimized COVID-19 control measures.

The economy grew by 4.5 percent year-on-year in the first quarter, higher than the market expectation of 4 percent.

Investment remains a key driver of stable domestic demand, with capital formation contributing 34.7 percent of economic growth in the first quarter. In the first three months, fixed-asset investment grew by 5.1 percent year-on-year, flat from the growth seen in 2022.

Infrastructure investment increased by 10.8 percent in the first quarter, down 0.7 percentage point from the full-year growth of 2022. Real estate investment fell by 5.8 percent year-on-year, with the drop narrowing by 4.2 percentage points from that in 2022.

In the first quarter, the consumption and service sector began to recover. China's final consumption expenditure contributed 66.6 percent to economic growth in the first quarter. Retail sales rose by 5.8 percent compared to the same period last year, 1.9 percentage points high-

er than the average compound growth rate from 2020 to 2022.

Despite the rebound in domestic economic development, there are mounting uncertainties, especially due to the changing overseas environment, which is vastly different from that of 2021.

In the first quarter, external demand made a negative contribution of 1.3 percent to China's economic growth. During the same period, private investment remained sluggish, with a year-on-year growth of 0.6 percent, down 0.3 percentage point from the whole year in 2022.

There has been a lack of rebound in "revenge spending", as the contribution of final consumption expenditure to the first-quarter economic growth decreased by 0.24 percentage point year-on-year. Enterprise operations remained difficult and the profits of China's large industrial enterprises fell by 21.4 percent year-on-year in the first quarter.

According to a meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee held in April, the improvement seen in the economy is mainly restorative with the endogenous driving force still weak and demand insufficient.

As per the meeting, it is important to give full play to the effectiveness of policies while boosting the vitality of business entities. It is also neces-

sary to step up efforts in making proactive fiscal policy more effective and prudent monetary policy more targeted so as to create synergy for expanding demand.

The following are some predictions for China's monetary policy in the second half of the year.

First, inflation does not yet pose a constraint to monetary policy. In recent years, China's inflation has remained stable. Previously, given the experience of developed economies, there was a worry that China's pent-up demand could be released in the short term, leading to a significant increase in the economy above its potential growth rate, thus causing high domestic inflation.

However, with the limited rebound in the core consumer price index and the producer price index remaining in negative territory in the first quarter of 2023, there are concerns about the risk of hidden deflation in China.

This year is indeed significantly different from previous years, such as 2021, due to the anti-inflationary forces and the "scar effect" from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Developed countries, including the United States, did not experience sustained demand suppression in previous years, such as in 2021, and the pandemic did not significantly

change consumer behavior in Europe and the US. But Chinese consumers are more conservative and cautious, and it is difficult to replicate the experience of Europe and the US.

Moreover, slightly higher inflation is not a bad thing. The key is that after enterprise income rises, it can form a virtuous cycle with labor, further consolidating the foundation of economic recovery. The PBOC has said that the overall trend of inflation in China this year will remain mild and inflationary pressure is controllable in the short term.

Currently, China's economy is in a process of recovery, and the main contradiction is still insufficient effective demand. In this sense, it is difficult for monetary policy to make a rapid transition from accommodative to tight during the year.

Next, the country will not resort to strong monetary stimulus, like the extreme monetary easing followed by extreme tightening by major economies' central banks.

Further, monetary policy is ultimately a debt instrument that can only address liquidity issues. In 2022, although M2 increased rapidly, it did not generate effective real economic growth, resulting in China's monetary velocity being not only much lower than that of the US, but lower than that of Japan during the same period.

It is estimated that by the end of the first quarter of 2023, the macro leverage ratio of China's real economy may have increased by 8.8 percentage points quarter-on-quarter.

Compared to the previous quarterly meeting, the monetary policy committee meeting in the first quarter of 2023 changed "strengthening cross-cyclical and countercyclical adjustments" to "effectively implementing cross-cyclical adjustments".

It also changed "maintaining effective growth in credit supply" to "maintaining a reasonable and steady growth in credit supply", while emphasizing that structural monetary policy tools should be reasonable, moderate and focused on key fields.

The next step should focus on the follow-up arrangements for structural tools, as well as innovative structural tools for key areas and weak links.

There may hardly be interest rate cuts in the second half of the year.

In 2022, China took measures such as multiple RRR and interest rate cuts to guide a reduction in financing costs of the real economy. This year, RRR cuts may be prioritized over interest rate cuts when necessary.

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## COMMENT

## Editorials

## G7 communique reveals Washington has imposed its will to make it a G1

The communique issued at the conclusion of the G7 summit in Hiroshima, Japan, shows the extent to which the other members are in thrall to the United States.

As the China-related parts of the document make clear, Washington has successfully imprinted its disposition to act as the common will of the group.

The "regional issues" the G7 group took advantage of to smear and attack Beijing, ranging from the Taiwan question to the situations in Hong Kong, Tibet and Xinjiang, are all China's internal affairs.

While jointly affirming the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait as "indispensable" to security and prosperity in the international community, they said nothing about the need to oppose "Taiwan independence", even though they said their one-China policy had not changed. Upholding the one-China principle is a prerequisite for diplomatic relations with Beijing.

The other six countries of the group are well aware that it is Washington that is playing the "Taiwan card", which has triggered waves of tensions across the Strait. And it is the secessionist-minded authorities in Taipei, with the collusion of Washington, that seek to change the status quo of the Strait.

What consolidates the collective will of the group is that, as loyal acolytes of the US, the other six countries enjoy privileged status in its invited-members-only club. Should they choose not to follow Washington's lead, they risk punishment and expul-

sion from the group as happened to Russia which led to eight becoming seven. That in turn has enabled Washington to plan, orchestrate, manipulate and prolong the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

The other six members, by surrendering their strategic autonomy, have exposed the hollowness of the "democratic values" that Washington claims is the common bond among the members of the group.

Instead, "the values" the group upholds are now military suppression, diplomatic coercion and trade bullying, all carried out under the banner of "democracy" in a bid to obstruct reform of the international order so that it is more representative of the emerging market economies and less-developed countries. While claiming "to keep the door open to cooperation", the communique made it quite plain that contrary to its claims, the G7's policy approaches are designed to harm China and to thwart the country's economic progress and development.

As all the members know, including the US, that does not serve their interests. Yet the notion of American exceptionalism now has such a hold on Washington, it has become a psychosis. In its delusion, it is trying to impose that notion on others.

As such, although the G7 makes high-sounding claims about "promoting a peaceful, stable and prosperous world", what it does is the US' bidding. That in effect does the contrary, undermining peace, sabotaging stability and stifling the development of other countries.

## Sneaky bid to expand 'sovereign space' bites dust

As the 76th World Health Assembly opens in Geneva, Switzerland, with no invitation sent to Taipei, the ruling Democratic Progressive Party's attempt to sneak into the world's most important annual public health meeting has failed for the seventh time.

Each year since it assumed leadership on the island, the independence-minded DPP has tried everything possible to make that happen, in the hope to expand Taiwan's "international space" with a seat in a gathering for sovereign countries.

Seven consecutive failures should make it clear to both the DPP and its external supporters what they are pursuing is nothing but a pipe dream.

For eight consecutive years from 2009 to 2016, the island's health authority was able to participate in the WHA as an observer in the name of Chinese Taipei. This was a special arrangement on the basis of adherence to the 1992 Consensus, which embodies the one-China principle. Since taking office in 2016, the DPP has placed political calculations before the Taiwan people's welfare and remained headstrong on "Taiwan independence". As a result, the political foundation for the island to participate in the WHA does not exist.

The DPP in Taiwan has always been relentless in its pursuit of independence, de facto and de jure. It was particularly hopeful this year, in the blind belief that it could take advantage of the unprecedented international attention it was receiving amid the United States' efforts to contain the Chinese mainland.

In a speech on Saturday commemorating her sev-

en years in office, Taiwan leader Tsai Ing-wen highlighted as one of her key achievements that her administration has "let the world see yet again the essential presence of Taiwan in the world". She has been proactive in promoting the island's international visibility, taking advantage of the West's ongoing strategic pivot to the "Indo-Pacific". Presenting Taiwan as a like-minded partner of Western "democracies" and as an example of "freedom and democracy", she is hyping up the "threat" from across the Taiwan Strait to garner international sympathy.

In her Friday meeting with United Kingdom Member of Parliament and former prime minister Liz Truss, for instance, she thanked the UK for "elevating the Taiwan Strait issue from a regional to a global matter". The latter, a fierce Beijing critic and ardent follower of Washington, proposed the idea of "an economic NATO" "to challenge coercion by authoritarian regimes".

As the continuous absence of Taiwan at the WHA indicates, however, Taiwan, as a part of China, is not a sovereign entity, and its presence and representation at inter-governmental organizations is conditional under existing international law. A fundamental principle laid out in both United Nations Resolution 2758 and WHA Resolution 25.1 stipulates Taiwan's participation in international institutions must be handled in accordance with the one-China principle.

In their efforts to hollow out that fundamental principle, the DPP authorities and their Western supporters are showing their total disregard for international law, as well as regional peace and stability.

## Exorcising Japan of militarism ghosts is a must

That the Japanese Foreign Ministry took issue with the headline used by Time magazine for an article about an interview with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida highlights something fundamental.

It was reported that the Japanese Foreign Ministry claimed that the headline did not accurately convey his remarks about Japan's defense policy.

The headline in the print edition of Time magazine reads: "Prime Minister Fumio Kishida wants to abandon Pacifism — make his country a true military power". After the ministry's complaint, the headline of the online version of the same article was changed to "Kishida is giving a once pacifist Japan a more assertive role on the global stage".

What is the essential point, however, is not the headline but the connection the article mentioned between the haunted official residence of the Japanese prime minister and the increasingly perilous world, which troubles Kishida like ghosts.

There are indeed ghosts that have been lingering on in the minds of Japanese rightists, and they are the ones of its past militarism, which were recognized worldwide as the major culprits behind the aggressive wars Japan launched against its neighboring countries and the atrocities its troops committed in those countries during World War II.

What the Japanese government has done in the past years has demonstrated that the ghosts of Japanese militarism have never been exorcised. In Decem-

ber last year, Kishida unveiled Japan's biggest military budget since World War II, which raises Japan's military spending to 2 percent of its GDP by 2027, giving the country the world's third largest defense budget. The three new documents on national security strategy, national defense strategy and national defense buildup program the Kishida government approved, also in December, can be considered a manifestation indicating that Japan has given up its pacifist defense policy. What Time magazine article headline says is exactly what the Kishida government is doing: To make Japan a true military power.

One of the pretexts the right-leaning Japanese government cites to expand Japan's military might is the "threat from China". China is Japan's largest trade partner, but ridiculous as that pretext is, the Kishida government considers the pretext a stone that can kill two birds. It can not only make it convincing for Japan to expand its defense buildup as China has a military might much stronger than its own. It also serves the need for Japan to play its role as a de facto vassal state of the United States in the latter's global strategy to contain the rise of China.

Japan under the Kishida government is doing a disservice to the peace and development of the region by becoming a destabilizing military power. Japan urgently needs to exorcise the ghosts of militarism that haunt its politics, not only for the healthy development of the country, but also for regional peace and development.

Song Chen



## Opinion Line

## Nuclear briefcase in Hiroshima reminder of root cause of tragedy

When leaders attending the G7 summit in Japan were invited to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, the officer accompanying US President Joe Biden carrying the so-called nuclear briefcase caught people's attention.

Although the briefcase always accompanies a US president on visits both at home and abroad, and it has appeared in Hiroshima before, very few noticed it. But this time, with the rising volatility in the world, fears of a nuclear war have been heightened and people are very alert to the possibility that the unthinkable might be thinkable to someone.

No one knows whether the host took the nuclear briefcase into consideration while arranging the visit, but the worldwide attention to that

detail shows people's anxieties about the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki being repeated elsewhere.

Yet it is wrong for Japanese politicians to mix the cause with the result and portray imperialistic Japan as a "victim" of World War II. While telling the world how Japanese people suffered from the nuclear attacks by the United States, it is equally important to remind everybody that it was imperialist Japan's ambitions and moves that led to the tragedies.

The Japanese government has been trying to cover up the country's history of aggression by seeking an apology for the nuclear attacks in a bid to portray the country as a victim of the war. But although the Japanese people in

Hiroshima and Nagasaki suffered from the dropping of "Fat Man" and "Little Boy", it was the country's imperialist ambitions that were the root cause of their sufferings.

The White House made it clear before the summit that President Biden would not offer an apology for the US' use of nuclear weapons against Japan.

Now, 78 years after the end of WWII, militarism is once again on the rise in Japan and there are constant attempts to revise the nation's so-called pacifist Constitution.

The Japanese people should know better than anyone the horrors of nuclear weapons, but it seems the Japanese politicians have forgotten the lessons of history.

— ZHANG ZHOXIANG, CHINA DAILY

## Development solution to youth unemployment

Data from the National Bureau of Statistics show that the urban survey unemployment rate for the 16-to-24 age group reached 20.4 percent in April, a historical high in recent years.

High youth unemployment rates are a common challenge worldwide. In recent years, the urban unemployment rate for Chinese youth aged 16 to 24 has consistently remained high, affected by structural factors.

On the one hand, the number of college graduates has increased year by year, reaching 11.58 million this year, making the task of promoting employment even more challenging.

On the other hand, structural employment contradictions among the youth population are becoming more prominent, with a mismatch between supply and demand. Industrial transforma-

tion and upgrading are also posing greater challenges for the employment of youths with lower educational levels.

China has placed greater emphasis on promoting youth employment, especially the employment of college graduates, with policies continuously strengthened at various levels from the central to local governments.

Ample attention should be paid to the enterprises that have faced difficulties in production and operations due to the lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has resulted in a decline in their capacity to absorb employment.

Great efforts should be made to develop market-oriented employment channels, focusing on the service industry, private economy, and small and micro-sized enterprises with large employment capacities. Youth employment is not only

related to individual growth and development, it is also crucial for the future development of the country. Policies should be combined with incentives and services, and overall promotion should be accompanied by targeted assistance.

However, the fundamental solution to increasing employment lies in economic development.

By expanding effective demand and boosting market confidence, employment growth and economic development can mutually promote each other. With the continuous recovery of the economy, especially the sustained improvement in the service industry, the effectiveness of employment stabilization policies will become more evident, and the employment situation for young people will gradually improve.

— THEPAPER.CN

## What They Say

## Epidemic situation needs to be viewed rationally

According to monitoring data from the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, since the middle of April, the number of reported confirmed cases of novel coronavirus infections has been on the rise in China, although the upward trend has slowed in the past week.

The increase in the number of confirmed infections, coupled with the presence of "long COVID", has inevitably led to some anxiety and panic. Comments from netizens such as "There have been so many cases recently" reflect the lack of sufficient psychological preparedness in the face of the recent wave of infections and public awareness of the current situation.

After the COVID-19 epidemic entered a more stable phase of control, the debate surrounding post-

COVID conditions and concerns over the enhanced immune escape capabilities of new variants and "long COVID" seem to have become new social concerns.

Everyone wishes for good health and hopes to avoid being infected by the virus, but excessive worry in this regard is unnecessary.

If we divide the anti-epidemic process into two periods, the first period focused on blocking the transmission pathways for the virus, during which the resilience of the entire epidemic prevention system has withstood the test.

In the later period, as the virulence of the virus has weakened, the focus of epidemic prevention has shifted from "preventing infection" to "protecting health and preventing severe cases". Testing positive for the virus is no longer a fearful

thing, but that does not mean that we can be completely carefree in the face of the novel coronavirus. Just as some experts pointed out, we should neither fear COVID-19 excessively nor underestimate it.

The domestic vaccine and drug development efforts continue to make progress, with 13 COVID-19 vaccines having been approved conditionally or for emergency use. Even after a large number of people were infected at the end of last year, there is still effective protection available.

Furthermore, seeking medical treatment is more convenient for COVID-19 patients now, and the healthcare system has gained more experience in dealing with the virus after addressing the initial challenges of the epidemic.

— BEIJING NEWS

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## COMMENT



China and the World Roundtable | G7 Summit

**Editor's note:** The G7 hardly ever mentions the UN Charter, instead, it keeps talking about "democracy" and the so-called rules-based international order. However, when the G7 countries talk about international rules, they mean the rules set by the West that draw lines based on the ideology and values of a small circle and could escalate regional confrontations. Three experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

Dan Steinbock

## US tech decoupling self-destructive

US President Joe Biden's expanded technology war is bad news to American business, financial giants, high-tech industries and consumers. Over time, it will penalize Asia's economic recovery and global economic prospects.

Under pressure to clarify its economic and security policies toward China, the Biden administration recently dispatched two top emissaries to "explain" that the United States does not seek to "decouple" from China (which it effectively seems to be doing).

Both US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan left unanswered the question of how Washington plans to curb tech transfers to and investments in China. That fostered perception that the new US measures could harm investors and disrupt the world's trading system. The US is risking a misguided tech war.

Over the past few years, US Congress has strengthened the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, while using its authority to scrutinize some of the US enterprises' overseas investments. In 2018, Congress also overhauled the systems screening investments into the US and imposing controls on the exports of goods and technology. Last October, the Biden administration announced sweeping and highly controversial restrictions on the exports of sensitive technologies to China with the aim of undermining the country's ability to buy advanced chips and chip-making equipment.

Also, the administration has built "guardrails" into the CHIPS and Science Act by limiting the investments recipients of subsidies can make in China. Besides, financial sanctions have been added to the Treasury's "specially designated nationals" list.

Hence, to argue, as Yellen and Sullivan did, that the administration will only impose "narrow" investment restrictions, is self-illusory. After all, the measures have both broad and untargeted negative implications, especially at a time when the US economy is teetering at the edge of recession, and facing a spreading banking crisis and rising debt default risk.

In addition to the proposed ban on foreign investment by US companies in Chinese tech companies, the administration now wants to restrict the num-



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ber and kinds of technologies that can be sold to China. With their initial focus on high-end semiconductors, the guidelines may extend to artificial intelligence, quantum computing, electric vehicles and rare earth metals; in brief, the perceived emerging industries of the future.

Ironically, both the White House and a bipartisan group in Congress have had a hard time reaching a consensus on restriction on outward investment. Seeking competitive leverage as always, US businesses and financial giants still want to work with China, while ordinary Americans, any day, prefer cheap, affordable prices. Yet the Biden administration, Capitol Hill and the Pentagon have different goals.

As US think tanks have projected, Biden's executive order targeting China will have far-reaching impacts on

investments in publicly-listed Chinese enterprises by individuals and companies, investments in startups by venture capital and private equity funds, investments by US companies, typically in research and development or production facilities in China, and the activities of US companies' subsidiaries and foreign enterprises' US subsidiaries.

Despite the administration's efforts to multilateralize these misguided policies, the US will likely be alone in having to walk the talk. Although the European Union has signaled rhetorical interest in an outbound regime, it is unlikely to turn its willingness into action in the near term. And Japan and the Republic of Korea do have outbound investment review regimes, but both are narrowly targeted.

If that's the case, why is the Biden administration in such a hurry? Two weeks after Biden announced his re-election campaign, his approval ratings sank to a record low of 36 percent. As the administration failed to reset its ties with China, opted to expand the trade war into a tech war, issued contested economic policies and engaged in a controversial proxy war in Ukraine, Biden's ratings began to plunge.

And with fiscal policy feeding into runaway inflation, the intensifying banking crisis and another debt-limit debacle, this trend is not likely to change anytime soon.

Whatever meager security benefit the Biden administration hopes to gain from withholding US investment and international recognition from Chinese high-tech companies may be offset by the huge collateral damage these new restrictions are likely to cause.

Over time, the restrictions may virtually ensure that Americans will not learn from Chinese tech companies, many of which are already at or close to the top in their fields in science and technology.

In early 2021, former World Trade Organization economist Anne Krueger said that previous US president Donald Trump's modus operandi was to bully Beijing "on trade, foreign investment, cyberspace, e-commerce, intellectual property, the South China Sea, Taiwan, and other issues". She proposed a thorough reset in the US-China trade ties.

If Trump's bombastic, go-it-alone approach was fundamentally flawed, Biden's tech restrictions will penalize US businesses, investors and consumers, and derail global recovery, while causing massive losses in missed opportunities. It is the wrong thing to do at the wrong time.

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



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Xiang Haoyu

## Japan using G7 to provoke confrontation

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida appears on the cover of the May edition of Time magazine along with a text that reads: "Prime Minister Fumio Kishida wants to abandon decades of pacifism — and make his country a true military power."

The cover story inside, however, says "some believe that Japan's rearmament chafes with Kishida's longstanding pledges to work toward a nuclear-free world", especially because he was born in Hiroshima.

Despite Japan formulating a pacifist Constitution after the end of World War II and vowing to adhere to peace and development, the country is no longer a "peaceful country" even in the eyes of its most intimate ally, the United States.

Kishida worked really hard trying to make the three-day G7 Summit in his hometown of Hiroshima that concluded on Sunday a success.

The three main features of Japan's G7 diplomacy are: condemning Russia, containing China, and winning over the Global South. However, Japan's efforts to win over the Global South to its side failed, making it difficult for the G7 to be included in its summit declaration.

True, the purported goal of the G7 Summit was to build an "ideal", nuclear-free world. But when it comes to denuclearization and disarmament, the G7 resorts to double standard, using different sets of rules to judge the actions of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Japan and other advanced countries on the one side, and those of China and Russia on the other.

So when Japan says it wants to play a leading role in addressing global problems, it actually means that it wants to manipulate geopolitical issues and pro-

voke bloc confrontation.

As Japan is the only Asian member of the G7, some Japanese politicians claim that the country has been playing the role of "Asian spokesman for global leaders", because of its "ideological superiority".

Hiroshima is one of the two cities in the world that has suffered a nuclear attack. So Kishida used that to promote the idea of creating "a world without nuclear weapons" at the G7 Summit, and assume the global leadership in nuclear disarmament.

Paradoxically, Kishida's Cabinet has approved the revision of three national security documents, which authorizes Japan to launch (preemptive) "counter-strikes" against enemy bases. Also, Kishida's government has approved a record increase in Japan's defense budget, signaling a radical shift in Japan's postwar defense and security policy.

The defense strategy of Kishida, considered a dove by many, is actually more aggressive than that of the hawkish Shinzo Abe, Japan's longest serving prime minister who was assassinated last year in Nara, Honshu.

Kishida's efforts to militarize Japan in order to counter non-existent external threats have created a sense of déjà vu among some Japanese scholars, who say the atmosphere in Japan today seems similar to that in the 1930s when Japan launched its most aggressive, brutal expansionist move.

Hence, when G7 leaders pay their respects to the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, they should not forget the main reason behind the tragedy.

Japan's pacifist Constitution exists only in name today, as the Kishida administration intends to allocate 2



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percent of Japan's GDP to the defense budget by 2027, which is a 60 percent increase over the present amount. That the move will make Japan's defense budget the third-largest in the world shows Japan is on the way to becoming a military power again, and once again its target is China.

The G7 Summit discussed a lot of China-related issues including China's so-called use of "economic coercion", and devoted much time to find ways to contain China's rise. This is not surprising, considering that all G7 members, except Japan, are also members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and Japan has been strengthening its ties with NATO since last year.

In fact, NATO is planning to open a liaison office in Tokyo, its first in Asia. And Japan seems eager to act as a catalyst to NATO's expansion in the Asia-Pacific.

But Japan's efforts to build an anti-China alliance risk triggering divisions, which could lead to confrontations in the region.

Worse, Japan and its Western allies, especially the US, have been claiming there is a "similarity" between the Ukraine crisis and the Taiwan question, which is a lie. But people who do not know the full cross-Taiwan Strait history may be fooled into believing that lie.

The truth is, there is only one China, and Taiwan is an integral part of China — only that Japan colonized the island for 50 years, from 1895 to 1945.

Therefore, the international society should condemn Japan's attempt to use the G7 Summit to peddle lies. When the G7 was established in the 1970s as a grouping of major industrialized countries, its aim was to promote good global governance, particularly in the field of macroeconomics, because the G7's share of global GDP at the time was about 60 percent.

But today, the G7's share of the global economy has dropped to 40 percent thanks to the dramatic rise of emerging economies. So should the G7 still act as the leader of the global economy and play the leading role in global governance?

The G7 countries have failed to lead global economic recovery and, instead, some of them have been trying to shift the economic pressure to others by continuously raising interest rates and resorting to trade protectionism.

The world is no longer interested in knowing how much the G7 economies contribute to global economic recovery, because their contribution has reduced drastically over the years. Instead, it just wants the G7 countries to not cause another financial or economic turmoil through their foolish and selfish actions.

In fact, there is no reason why the G7 should exist today, given that it lost its relevance years ago. However, by using the G7 Summit to further his agenda and fulfill his narrow goals, Kishida might have unwittingly triggered the process of the G7's slow death.

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

Liu Litao

## Seoul stands to lose by reconciling with Tokyo

Northeast Asia is undergoing remarkable changes. Under Prime Minister Yoon Suk-yeol, the Republic of Korea has been trying to improve ROK-Japan relations by turning a blind eye to history, especially Japan's militarist past and the atrocities the Imperial Japanese Army committed in Korea and other parts of the Asia-Pacific region including China. And the United States, Japan and the ROK are aggressively strengthening their strategic ties.

But by doing so, the US-Japan-ROK alliance risks triggering confrontations in Northeast Asia.

More important, by trying to establish friendly relations with Japan and mostly depending on the US to boost its economy, by reducing trade and other relations with China, the ROK could end up on the opposite side of the global economic trend. ROK-Japan relations have always been the weakest link in the US-Japan-ROK alliance, with Seoul-Tokyo ties hitting rock bottom during the term of Moon Jae-in as ROK president, with open spats over history and territory.

But Seoul's attitude toward Tokyo has changed since Yoon became ROK president. On March 1, the 104th anniversary of the 1919 Independence Movement of Korea, a movement that called for complete independence from imperial Japanese rule, Yoon unabashedly claimed that Japan has changed from an "aggressor" to a "partner".

Under the Yoon administration's scheme, the Foundation for Victims of Forced Mobilization funded by ROK enterprises, paid compensation to some of the Korean people who were enslaved by Japanese companies before and during World War II. This allowed the Japanese companies to wash their hands of the crime of wartime forced labor.

The ROK's unilateral concession has paved the way for the improvement of ROK-Japan relations. And Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's visit to Seoul earlier this month came less than two months after Yoon Suk-yeol paid a visit to Tokyo, marking the resumption of "shuttle diplomacy" between the two neighbors after a 12-year suspension caused by their differences over Japan's occupation of Korea and war crimes.

That in turn bolstered the US-Japan-ROK alliance, and from now on, the ROK will share more information with Japan on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's missile launch and other nuclear programs. Also, the US, Japan and the ROK are working to strengthen their trilateral security mechanism through frequent bilateral and trilateral meetings.

While Seoul is trying to consolidate its security alliance with Washington, Yoon has been emphasizing that the ROK-US alliance is an alliance of value, aimed at safeguarding the universal values of freedom and democracy. During his visit to the US in April, Yoon even said that "the alliance was forged in blood as a result of our fight for freedom".

Besides, the US and ROK leaders issued the Washington Declaration in April, saying they are committed to strengthening their security alliance.

As for China-ROK relations, the Yoon government has challenged China's core interests and joined the US-led anti-China club by abandoning its years-long balanced diplomacy. The Yoon administration, it appears, prefers dancing to the US' tune to promote the so-called value-oriented diplomacy and counter China, rather than doing what is best for his country and its people. The ROK seems to rely on the US for both security and economic development, instead of adhering to its earlier policy of relying on the US for security and China for trade and economic growth.

However, the ROK-Japan unprincipled reconciliation may not last long, and decoupling with China will harm the ROK's national interests. The sooner Yoon realizes this, the better for the ROK. He should also realize that the Seoul-Tokyo reconciliation is not in the best interest of the ROK, as the thousands of people protesting against the ROK's move have been saying.

Some Japanese conservative forces claim that Japan's annexation of Korea was legal based on the Japan-Korea Treaty of 1910, while the Japanese government has been insisting that all its colonial era issues from 1910 to 1945 had been settled through the 1965 Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the ROK, which led to the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two sides.

The treaty included an agreement in which Japan provided loans to the ROK, which in Japan's views covered the compensation for wartime forced labor.

Moreover, the Kishida administration aims to build Japan into a global military power with the help of the US, and Japan's attitude toward the ROK has always been condescending. So if the US-Japan-ROK alliance triggers a confrontation in Northeast Asia, the ROK would perhaps suffer the most as the spearhead of the trilateral alliance.

Given the interdependence of the Chinese and ROK economies, the latter may suffer huge economic losses by following the US' diktat and decoupling with China, not least because China is its biggest trading partner. This could be the tragic reality for the ROK also because the Joe Biden administration has enacted the CHIPS and Science Act and the Inflation Reduction Act to "reshore" cutting-edge technologies and manufacturing in order to maintain the US' competitive advantage, rather than helping its allies — and also because the US does not want to lose the Chinese market, despite its "contain-China" strategy.

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

## GLOBAL VIEWS

ERIK SOLHEIM

## Guardian of nature

China's clear waters and green mountains are invaluable examples as well as assets

On Aug 15, 2005, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Anji, a wonderful hillside town surrounded by forest within an hour or so drive from Hangzhou. He was the Party chief of Zhejiang province and famously said that "clear waters and green mountains are invaluable assets".

This idea has shown its transformative power. At that time, development in China came with heavy pollution, now it is pursuing green growth. At the time, all the focus in China was on highest possible economic growth, now high quality growth is front and center.

Anji county, which once relied on mines and cement and was plagued by heavy industrial pollution, is now a national 4A beautiful scenic town, named a Best Tourist Village by the United Nations World Tourism Organization. I visited Huzhou city, where Anji is located, last week. I saw a city brimming with ambitions for being a global eco-city hub. Huzhou hosts first class conservation wetlands where endangered birds are being brought back from the brink with top modern science. It is home to wonderful forest resorts and to amazing waterside tourism at Lake Tai.

Having originated in the United States in 1872, national parks have now been founded in more than 100 countries. President Theodore Roosevelt, himself an outdoors man, once said that "there is nothing as American as a national park". Now China is running with this American idea. What makes China's national park system stand out?

One is speed. From the proposal of the construction plan to the establishment of the first five national parks, it took only eight years, with the fastest, the Hainan Tropical Forests National Park, taking only two or three years.

Second range. The first five national parks cover a total area of 230,000 square kilometers. By 2035, around 50 national parks will be created, and the number may eventually total as many as 80. The country's determined will to ensure ecological protection is evident.

Third community outreach through win-win policy. The Three-

River-Source National Park is China's largest and the world's highest altitude national park. It provides a valuable experience on improving ecological protection, alleviating poverty and promoting community development at the same time.

Situated in Qinghai province in Northwest China, the park was constructed in an underdeveloped area. One of the big challenges was to gain the local herders' support and secure the communities' livelihoods. A public welfare mechanism has been established, ensuring each household gets a park ranger job with a stable monthly salary. Public service capacity has been greatly enlarged, such as medical care, pensions, education and e-commerce. Local herders have also been guided to develop family ranches. This is key to conservation everywhere, the mobilization of local communities. A beautiful China must be built with local buy-in. The conservation successes in Africa, India and Europe are also based on making local people the front line defenders of nature.

China's vast territory and rich nature are home to a host of rare and endangered species, including the Asian elephant. In order to take good care of the largest mammal in Asia, well-planned conservation efforts have been put in place. Success is visible as the habitats for Asian elephant are expanding and its population growing. In 2021, a herd of wild Asian elephants made global headlines when they wandered hundreds of kilometers through Yunnan province from their jungle paradise all the way to the province's capital city of Kunming and back.

Mangrove conservation and restoration is another important accomplishment of China's green effort. Known as "coast guard", the ecological functions of mangrove forests range from dissipating winds and waves to purifying ocean water, from sheltering wildlife to storing huge amounts of carbon. President Xi last month paid a visit to the mangrove area on Jinniu Island in Guangdong province, South China and said that mangroves are "a national treasure" and should be well protected like the

human eye. China is one of the few countries in the world with a net gain in its mangrove cover. By 2025, over 18,000 hectares of mangroves will be created and restored. Shenzhen, Guangdong province, will host the first international mangrove center. And the Belt and Road Initiative provides a platform where China can share its mangrove experiences with the world.

The 10-year fishing ban in the Yangtze River, the ambitious tree planting plans, successful conservation of giant pandas in Sichuan province and snow leopards in western China, the greening of the Kubuqi Desert in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, the effective river clean-ups in Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces, the ecological redline system, the restoration of West Lake in Hangzhou or Dianchi Lake in Kunming — China has a lot of best practice on nature conservation to share with the world.

Development can be achieved without the destruction of nature. When Mother Earth smiles, we flourish. Actions and efforts in creating harmony between man and nature need to win the hearts and minds of people. Any conservation effort must be people-oriented and aimed at combining economy and ecology. Mass greening campaigns prioritize the well-being of the people and the benefit of communities.

From beautiful villages to green cities I see the future of green as a triple-win formula for the people, the economy and the ecology. President Xi's Anji speech provided a direction for China, and its progress will have a massive positive impact on the world. While applauding China's great achievements and hard work, we should exchange best practices and learn from each other. I am confident China will continue contributing wonderful green stories. Let's all look forward to the Beautiful China by 2035.

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WANG YUE / FOR CHINA DAILY

LI XINLEI AND HAO JUNYI

## Coming clean

Sino-EU green cooperation and competition have put forth some new patterns but China has come up with coping strategies

China and the European Union have been cooperating in the field of clean energy for more than 30 years. Facing the challenge of achieving carbon neutrality, the cooperation has displayed some new patterns.

In March, the European Commission published two new acts: the Net-Zero Industry Act and the European Critical Raw Materials Act. The aim was to boost the EU's green economy and prevent the EU from deep reliance on other countries. In April, the European Parliament approved the legislation for the implementation of its Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, which is designed to reduce the effects of carbon leakage resulting from global trade in emissions-intensive goods, as part of the EU's "Fit for 55" package, which aims to align EU legislation with its objective of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 percent by 2030.

The recent actions of the EU have once again put the competition between the EU and China in the spotlight. Recently, China and the EU have been engaged in an increasingly sharp struggle for market share, material resources, and structural leadership. However, even though the increasing competition between China and the EU is genuine, it is in their interests to keep cooperating and coordinating with each other on clean energy. To make Europe the first climate-neutral continent in the world, the EU released the European Green Deal in 2019 and wrote the goals set out in the Green Deal into the European Climate Law. China released its carbon neutrality goal for 2060 one year later in 2020. In the same year, it published its 1+N policy framework, consisting of a guiding policy and various supporting policies, to ensure the achievement of carbon peaking and carbon neutrality.

With both sides setting goals to realize carbon neutrality, China and the EU have rising demands for bilateral cooperation to achieve

green growth. Recently, China and the EU increased the strategic importance of their partnership on climate change. On Sept 14, 2020, the China-EU High-Level Environment and Climate Dialogue was initiated to forge green and digital partnerships. The mechanism provided another important institutionalized platform for China and the EU to strengthen communications and foster cooperation on climate change and clean energy.

Meanwhile, the interdependence of China and the EU in green trade has been increasing, which is also paving the way for their strengthened bilateral cooperation. There is an upward trend in the trade of products related to green energy between China and the EU, and the EU has become China's largest trading partner for exports of green products. According to statistics from Eurostat, in 2021, the EU imported solar panels (89 percent) worth 8.72 billion euros (\$9.57 billion) and wind turbines (64 percent) worth 384 million euros from China, making China its largest import source of green energy products.

In addition, their complementarity in green industries highlighted by the energy crisis has built the base for strengthened Sino-EU cooperation. With its leading manufacturing ability for wind turbines and solar panels, China is the EU's largest source of extra-EU imports of wind turbines and solar panels and an important supplier of critical raw materials. In response to the global energy market disruption caused by the Ukraine conflict, the EU launched its REPowerEU Plan to make Europe independent from Russian fossil fuels well before 2030, setting out ambitious goals for its clean energy industry. To achieve those goals, the EU needs to strengthen cooperation with China.

To further strengthen cooperation between the EU and China, the two sides should continue promoting policy coordination, try to construct a practical and inclusive

clean energy partnership network, and deepen cooperation on new agendas in multilateral climate governance.

First, scaling up global clean energy development to boost economic recovery and achieve climate neutrality goals requires clear international standards on green trade, green finance and digital technology. A closer alignment of standards in those areas between China and the EU would provide a basis for the establishment of just global green economy standards.

Second, the existing China-EU climate energy partnership is expected to be further improved and expanded. While more interest conflicts in green infrastructure have emerged in recent years, there is great potential for China and the EU to expand their cooperation network by aligning their financial investment and technical support in third countries.

Third, besides bilateral policy coordination, Beijing can also pursue more coordinated action with the EU on new agendas within multilateral governance frameworks. For example, in the area of sustainable finance, China and the EU have initiated a working group on taxonomies under the International Platform on Sustainable Finance. In November 2021, with joint efforts from China and the EU, the IPSF Taxonomy Working Group published the first version of the Common Ground Taxonomy report, which provided a common classification tool for the global sustainable finance market.

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HAN JINGWEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

# LIFE



*Beijing 2022*, the official film of last year's Winter Olympic Games, revisits some of the cherished moments of top athletes like snowboarder Su Yiming (left), Japanese figure skater Yuzuru Hanyu (center), speed skaters Ren Ziwei and Wu Dajing (right). PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

During the Beijing Winter Olympics last year, Japanese figure skater Yuzuru Hanyu held a news conference a few days after missing the podium for the men's singles free skate competition, taking fourth place.

Sitting alone behind a long, white table, the sports star faced a group of reporters taking photos or videos of him. Hanyu held his hands behind his back, interlocked his fingers and stirred them.

The scene was captured from an unusual angle for the documentary, *Beijing 2022*, officially produced for the Winter Olympic Games.

Debuting as the opener for the 13th Beijing International Film Festival, which ran from April 22-29, the feature promises to take audiences to revisit the grand competition. It went on screen domestically on Friday.

For director Lu Chuan, the movie marks a return to his interest in recording realistic human moments after tracing the footprints of wild creatures for the DisneyNature documentary *Born in China* seven years ago.

*Beijing 2022* was prepared and shot over a period of nearly three years between 2020 and 2023, with more than 1,000 crew members involved in the production. They were divided into different teams and sent to several countries, following the training and family moments of involved athletes, such as the Hungarian-born short-track speedskating brothers Sandor Liu Shaolin and Liu Shaoang, and American snowboarder Chris Corning.

A total of 700 hours of video footage was shot, which was ultimately edited down to the 103-minute film.

The content has been interwoven into three chapters, respectively titled *Ji* (Fast), *Yong* (Brave) and *Rong* (Merging). The font of the three Chinese characters is derived from ancient inscriptions, as Lu hopes to interpret the modern spirit of sports in the manner of Chinese classical culture.

Sports fans can relive the exhilarating moments of athletes winning medals, ranging from snowboarding prodigy Su Yiming's victory lap to claim first place in the Big Air freeski, to short-track speedskating icon Wu Dajing's final run in the mixed team relay that earned China its first gold medal at the Beijing Winter Olympics.

The movie not only showcases the highlights, but also sheds light on the often-overlooked contributions of unsung heroes such as medical staff, volunteers, and journalists.

"Winning Olympic champions are just the visible tip of an iceberg, while the ordinary people who work tirelessly behind the scenes form the larger, hidden part underwater. Their contributions may not be as celebrated, but they still play a critical role in the success of the event and deserve recognition," says Lu.

The director expressed gratitude for the strong support that his team received from the main operation center of the Beijing Winter Olympics Organizing Committee. The crew members were given permission to set up

## Documentary highlights true Olympic ideal

Film chronicles efforts of athletes and support staff alike as it reveals the indomitable spirit of winter event, **Xu Fan** reports.



**Clockwise from top:** (From second left) Director Lu Chuan, Olympic stars Wu Dajing and Su Yiming at the 13th Beijing International Film Festival's opening ceremony on April 21. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY. A poster for the film. Snowboarding prodigy Su Yiming. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



cameras in Olympic offices and venues, which enabled them to document China's efforts to hold the Games during the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, Lu and his team also faced a lot of unexpected challenges, struggling to convince ideal candidates to accept being shot for the documentary.

"We had a meeting every night at 10 pm to discuss what footage we had captured. Sometimes, it entirely depended on luck," says Lu.

Even with the consent of athletes to follow them from their accommodations to competition venues, Lu said he still had his own concerns. "We feared that the cameras might distract the athletes and hinder their chance of winning," he explains.

As the saying goes, "when one door closes, another opens." For Lu, this proved to be true. Although the filming plan did not go as originally envisioned, they were still able to discover the shining moments of ordinary people.

These stories include a barber who gave up time with his family during the Spring Festival holiday to serve the event, as well as a group of doctors who played sports with improvised "equipment", such as mineral water buckets, to entertain themselves during their stay at the Olympic Village for over 80 days.

A renowned director known for critically acclaimed movies such as *City of Life and Death*, Lu has also paid close attention to the domestic film industry, saying that he hopes the industry's recovery will also benefit his upcoming documentary, even though documentaries are still considered a niche market.

Recalling his attendance at the opening ceremony of the Beijing film festival, where he was surrounded by throngs of people, Lu says he has been prompted to reflect more deeply on the role of cinema and its future.

"The spring of Chinese cinema has returned, and everything is moving positively in the right direction," he says.

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

### What's on

#### Porcelain glamor

The National Museum of China has recently completed upgrading the layout of several of its permanent exhibitions including *Ancient Chinese Porcelain*, which shows more than 300 fine specimens from different periods in its collection. The show introduces the many



aspects of ceramic-making in China — methods of creation, technical advancements throughout the centuries, the diversity of shapes and decoration styles, and the role of porcelain in exchanges between China and the rest of the world. The display includes some of the most famous types of Chinese porcelain, such as a cobalt-blue *qinghua* jar of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), a black-glazed *jianzhan* teacup, produced in the famous kilns of Jianyang, East China's Fujian province, used at tea ceremonies in the Song Dynasty (960-1279), and famille rose ware, a popular, pink-enameled decoration at the court of Emperor Qianlong of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). It is a celebration of the aesthetics held dear by ancient Chinese. 9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays.

16 Chang'an Avenue, Dongcheng district, Beijing. 010-6511-6400.

#### A trailblazer



Qiu Ting, whose works are marked by refined brushwork, has been recognized as a leading figure in ink art since the 1990s. He rose to fame for a work produced in college — a copy of *Dwelling in Seclusion in the Qingbian Mountains* by the 14th-century painter Wang Meng, which

reflected a long-term accumulation of skill since childhood. While Qiu is not an ink painter in the traditional sense, he has been exploring ways to push forward the frontier of ink art by introducing elements of other forms of art. *Blazing a Brilliant Trail*, an exhibition that will end on Sunday at Tsinghua University Art Museum in Beijing, navigates his experiments with the language of ink and brush over time. In his work, Qiu has consistently sought to accentuate the spirituality of nature and the philosophical take on the relations between people and the universe, which are essential to the traditions of Chinese painting. He also pays much attention to the interaction of his creations with the modern exhibition space, and has turned to technology to create digital ink works, so as to give the ink tradition a revival.

9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. Tsinghua University campus, Haidian district, Beijing. 010-6278-1012.

#### Immersed in Cezanne

Hailed as "the father of modern art", Paul Cezanne (1839-1906) inspired generations of artists active in the first half of the 20th century such as Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso. Cezanne gave form to his subjects with energetic, abrupt strokes and powerful colors. Underlying these was the painter's quest to present his understanding of the rules of nature, the order of the world and the essence of matter. *Seasons of Cezanne: The Immersive Experience*, an ongoing digital exhibition at Today Art Museum in Beijing, guides the audience through the



artistic evolution of Cezanne with digitalized, animated images of the French painter's works, showing nature and the world thriving and reviving in cycles, themes captured by Cezanne's vibrant brushwork. It introduces the uninitiated to a great artistic mind, inducing them to feel his pride and loneliness. 10 am-6 pm, closed on Mondays. 32 Baizhuan Road, Chaoyang district, Beijing. 010-5876-0600.

## LIFE

## Granny's trip of discovery

Online series looks at a stereotype-smashing elderly woman's journey of adventure, **Wang Ru** reports.

When it comes to elderly people, the stereotype is that they should live a peaceful existence after retirement, lingering in parks, doing exercise, walking their dogs and taking care of their grandchildren. The range of their activities should not be very far from home.

But newly released internet drama series *Grandma's New World* depicts a "rebellious" woman, Sun Yuping, in her 60s, who runs away from home and undertakes an adventurous journey. As a result, her granddaughter Dou Qi and twin sister Sun Yulan embark on trips to look for her, and thus reveal her colorful experiences on the road.

Starring actress Yan Ni and Deng Enxi, the 18-episode series began streaming on the video platform iQiyi on May 7.

The series is adapted from a comic created by cartoonist Kuang Fuyao (pen name) in 2020. "My friend recommended that I read this comic, and I liked it very much," says Li Qiang, the scriptwriter.

"A woman in her 60s abandons her family and work, and runs away from home to discover new possibilities and directions in an unknown world. What has prompted her to go on such a trip of self-discovery that even young people would be scared to undertake? The image of a character who refuses to yield to old age and fearlessly seeks new things and changes in life attracts me very much," he adds.

Altogether, 12 stories of Sun Yuping's adventure are told in the production, and each one can be viewed through a different lens: comedy, suspense, crime, workplace drama and even thriller.

"Different types of stories can cover more facets of society, reflecting the problems and dilemmas faced by people of different social strata and in different situations. In this way we can make the series more diversified," says Li.

The roles of Sun Yulan and Dou, according to Li's perspective, are similar to those of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson, as they try to piece together reasons for Sun Yuping's absence from home with clues they discover on the road. The narrative angle adds the charm of a detective story to the series, Li says.

The process enables Sun Yulan and Dou to gain a deeper understanding of Sun Yuping. Although they are family members, it seems they don't know each other that well.

"A person is just like a puzzle. With limited energy, we don't want to piece together a complete image of



Scenes from internet series *Grandma's New World*, which depicts Sun Yuping's experiences after running away from home in her 60s. She encounters various situations that test her newfound sense of independence, including (clockwise from top) shooting a short video in a park, trying to find a job but being cheated, and pursuing an animal abuser. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

them, as long as we basically know what they are like. In terms of family members, we like to believe that we are familiar with them, while ignoring the parts of them that lie in our blind spots. Sun Yulan and Dou's search for Sun Yuping means they must seek out the hidden parts of her, and finally create a more accurate portrait of her," says Li.

The production also discusses the feeling of incapability that anyone can meet in life. "For example, in this series, in the face of the failure

“Different types of stories can cover more facets of society, reflecting the problems and dilemmas faced by people of different social strata and in different situations. In this way we can make the series more diversified.”

Li Qiang, scriptwriter

of her own, and her daughter's, marriage, misunderstanding and alienation among family members and unpredictable vicious things she meets in society, Sun Yuping has a desperate feeling of incapability, and that urges her to leave home and seek more possibilities in life," says Li.

"Reflecting history, the improvements of productivity, thoughts and systems all come from people's exhausting struggle with the feeling of incapability. But when we put an

end to one type of feeling, a new one appears," he adds.

He believes that proactive free will and a feeling of ceaseless incapability are two sides of one coin. Without feeling incapable, people's free will would become aimless and could not be stimulated to make further progress. Without proactive free will, life would become hopeless and meaningless for people, says Li.

"Sun Yuping's journey is to restore and improve herself, instead of trying in vain to banish the feeling of incapability in her life. She hopes to build a stronger and richer inner self, so that she will not be defeated by the feeling," says Li.

According to Li, in general, it's a story of someone who discovers, restores and improves herself, and how she influences others during the process.

"With continuous development of society, do people have a better ability to know themselves? I don't think so. 'Who am I?' That is still a basic philosophical question. In an era exploding with information, and an increasingly faster pace of life, we actually don't have much time for introspection compared to people from earlier generations," says Li.

"Sun Yuping's story reminds us that a person's life is shaped by their own choices. And the courage to make such choices is gained on the basis of examining their own life, which is a starting point of self-discovery," he adds.

According to Yan, who plays the roles of both Sun Yuping and Sun Yulan in the series, she went to great lengths trying to accurately portray elderly people. Initially, it was through makeup, but then, she paid attention to her posture and movements when filming.

"Getting accustomed to the stature of old people is a long process. Sometimes I had a dreamy feeling of seeing myself in my old age," Yan told Global Times.

Speaking about the series, Yan said: "What I want to show the audience is youth. When Sun Yuping gets old, she can still maintain a curious and innocent perspective of the world, and she has the courage to start a new journey and meet different people.

"Youth is not about age, but a mindset. Sun Yuping's story tells us that you should not lose your gloss. You are supposed to open yourself up like a clam and see the world."

You should always have the courage to live with a youthful mindset, she added.

Contact the writer at wangru@chinadaily.com.cn

## Young people help preserve Xinjiang's cultural heritage

URUMQI — With his target in sight, Zhao Hu pulled the string of a traditional bow. The arrow hit the bull's-eye and was followed by a roaring cheer from the audience.

They were cheering not only for Zhao's skill, but also for the bow, handmade by the 31-year-old archer of the Xibe ethnic group.

"I love making bows and arrows, as my hometown has a long tradition of archery," says Zhao, who works as a guide at a museum in Qapqal Xibe autonomous county of Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

Initially a fashion designer, he became fascinated with archery, a tradition of his ethnic group — the Xibe people used bows and arrows as hunting weapons long before archery became a sport.

In 2019, he returned to Qapqal, where many local archers have won medals in major competitions at home and abroad. He started systematically learning Xibe ethnic bow-and-arrow making, which was listed as a national intangible cultural heritage in 2008, from his father. Zhao was not alone.

According to Zhou Qingfu, head of the Chinese National Academy of Arts, an increasing number of young people are carrying on the heritage of traditional arts and techniques.

"The traditional arts and tech-

niques, through which it is viable to gain economic benefits, are highly relevant to the activities of the younger generation," he says.

## Publicizing the bow

Talking about his experience of learning bow-and-arrow making, Zhao says: "Keep trying, constantly fail, and progress inch by inch."

The process of making traditional bows is complicated, using more than 10 types of material and dozens of tools. Making a bow requires cutting, grinding, shaping, gluing, painting and other procedures before it takes shape.

Zhao notes that, in the past, limited by materials, tools and weather conditions, it could take as long as a year to make a single bow. Machines and tools have now shortened the production process, but bow-making is still anything but easy.

"Before a bow is made, I sometimes have to fail twice," he says, adding that success is gained through experience.

After five years of study, Zhao has become an adept craftsman. He has now taken on another role: a guide at the bow and arrow museum in Qapqal. He started a bow-making workshop inside the museum to give lessons to primary and middle school students.

"During the 45-minute session, students can fit together the half-

finished parts to produce a bow and try it themselves on the archery field," he says.

Gao Juntao, vice-president of the federation of literary and art circles in Qapqal, says: "We provide Zhao with a venue to design, produce, demonstrate and exhibit bows and arrows, so that the visitors can thoroughly learn about the Xibe culture."

China has been supporting the establishment of intangible cultural heritage workshops in recent years, a move encouraged by a document jointly released at the end of 2021 by three government departments, including the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Xinjiang now boasts 120 regional-level intangible cultural heritage protection and inheritance bases, six Uygur Muqam art inheritance centers, and 10 inheritance centers for other types of art.

## Old art forms

An iconic form of intangible cultural heritage in Xinjiang is Muqam, which means classical music in the Uygur language. A traditional art of the Uygur ethnic group, it integrates songs, dances, and folk and classical music. In 2005, the Xinjiang Uygur Muqam Arts of China was approved by UNESCO as a "Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity".

Wang Jiangjiang, 38, has been engaged in documenting and recording intangible cultural heritage in Xinjiang for 13 years. He says it was predestined for him to come to the region from his hometown in Hebei province, nearly 3,000 kilometers away, to witness Muqam and other cultural elements.

"The first time I heard and watched a performance, I was fascinated by the unpredictable melody and the passion of the performers. Thus, I hoped to learn more about this art," he says.

With curiosity and passion, Wang arrived in southern Xinjiang in 2010, where he befriended local people and learned the Uygur language.

Gradually, he became aware of a problem: most of the video documentaries of Muqam were about group performances, rather than individual artists.

"Without musical scores, people only learned the art orally and seldom could one sing the entire piece," he says. "At the time, most of the Muqam artists in Xinjiang were very old, so I had the idea to 'retain' them through video, pictures and sound."

In 2017, Wang began to document inheritors of intangible cultural heritage in Yarkant county in Kashgar prefecture, using video cameras to digitalize their art, and recorded

318 folk artists over six months. "There was only one college student who helped me back then. Now we have a team and have established a studio," he says.

Starting in 2020, with the support of the regional government, Wang and his team began to rerecord Muqam art in a more detailed and in-depth way. Currently, 45 varieties of Muqam and oral biographies of 77 Muqam inheritors have been completed. They have traveled to more than 300 villages and towns in Xinjiang and formed a catalog of Muqam art through videos, photos, sounds and biographies.

Apart from Muqam, Wang and his team are also recording other forms of artistic intangible cultural heritage in Xinjiang, like songs and dances, and have collected the information of more than 2,000 folk artists from different ethnic groups.

"The records can provide inspiration for musicians, which can also be used for future generations to study and spread our culture and art," he says.

## Injecting vitality

While people like Wang are busy recording the old art forms, some others are injecting vitality to the traditional ones with creative cultural products or livestreaming.

Cui Yang is founder of the Onetone design firm. Their poster series combining the exhibits from the Museum of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and the 24 traditional Chinese solar terms won a national design award earlier this year.

Cui notes that Onetone has some 30 employees with an average age of 28, while their museum counterpart consists of 12 people, almost all of whom are from the post-90s generation.

"Our cultural relics should not only be preserved in museums, but also offered to young people in creative ways, so that they can easily learn the culture behind them and share that on social media," he says.

Guan Yi, who is in charge of the museum's cultural and creative products development, says: "Giving full play to our professional advantages, we excavate stories behind the cultural relics."

The museum also hosted various events to bring the intangible cultural heritage to visitors, including shadow puppetry, paper-cutting and calligraphy.

"Trying to revive the daily lives of ancient people probably sounds romantic to Chinese people today," says Guan.

XINHUA

# SPORTS

## PARA JUDO

China's finest visually impaired para judokas showcase their extraordinary skills at national championships



Li Peng (left) and Li Yanchen fight for gold in the men's +90kg J2 final at the national para judo championships last week.  
WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

# Fighting through the darkness

By SHI FUTIAN  
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With no clear sight of their opponents, the astonishing precision, power, passion and persistence of visually impaired para judokas is truly something to behold.

Last week's national para judo championships in Beijing showcased these warriors' extraordinary feats of athleticism and skill. As well as serving up pulsating action, the championships glue this sporting community together, with judokas from across the nation forming close bonds and lasting friendships through the event.

Among the 135 competitors was 2016 Rio Paralympics gold medalist Li Liqing, who won the women's -48kg title. Despite being a veteran of the sport, Li Liqing is still pushing her limits on the mat.

"Winning a national title was actually not so hard for me, as I have been practicing para judo for over a decade. I'm a very experienced veteran, but I certainly noticed the superb performances of a number of young athletes here. With these youngsters on the rise, our sport has a bright future," Li Liqing told China Daily.

Recalling her early career, Li Liqing said being unable to see the coaches' moves in practice was especially difficult. Para athletes, therefore, rely heavily on touch and feel to learn their take-downs and throws.

After years of honing her skills, all Li Liqing's hard work paid off in 2016 when she claimed gold at the Rio Paralympics.

"Before my victory at the Paralympics, I was the type of youngster who feared nothing and no one. However, after reaching the highest podium, things changed. Suddenly I was at the top and everyone started to study my moves, and I became the target," said the 29-year-old who failed to earn a medal at the Tokyo Paralympics.

"I had no advantages and I was faced with new challenges. So after Tokyo, I began exploring new methods. Based on my body size, I needed to figure out better ways to attack and how to be more flexible. So, that's what I've been working on."

Li Liqing says her judo journey has been



A total of 135 athletes participated in the National Para Judo Championships in Beijing last week. Hunan province topped the medal table with five golds. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

transformational — making her more persistent and resilient, both on and off the mat.

"Against tough rivals, I'm fearless. The greater the pressure, the more motivated I become. There are always younger athletes coming through, so I constantly need to adapt in order

to figure out how to beat them," Li Liqing added.

"But I've also learned that one cannot always be at the top. Inevitably, there will be ups and downs. So when I'm at the top, I need to think what challenges might lie ahead. And when I face these challenges, I just tell myself to have the right mentality

and finish my training every day."

Para judo has also changed the life of Li Peng, who won the men's +90kg J2 level gold last Tuesday at the nationals.

"Picking up para judo has broadened my horizons. I have seen a much bigger world and it has boosted my confidence. Before I took up this sport, I spent most days at school and then at work. I knew very few people, but para judo has allowed me to integrate a lot more in society," the 32-year-old told China Daily.

Li Peng admits that he initially found the sport intimidating when he was introduced to it back in 2009.

"When I first heard the sound of an athlete being thrown on the mat, of course I was scared. I was afraid that I could break my arms or legs. But after training, I learned how to protect myself and my opponents," said Li Peng.

"Actually, I know most of the opponents here. We have been competing for many years, so we've learned from each other and also cheer for each other. We are all great friends."

Among the cheering spectators in the stands at the national championships on Tuesday was the Chinese para ice hockey team, which surprised the nation by winning a precious bronze medal at the Beijing 2022 Paralympic Winter Games. Even for hardy hockey players, the energy and spirit of the para judo athletes were astonishing.

"This is the first time myself and my teammates have attended a para judo competition. It's truly amazing and we are cheering them on," said Wang Zhidong, a core player of the hockey team and a Team China flag-bearer at the Beijing 2022 opening ceremony.

"Our training base is not too far away from this competition venue. The skills that the para judokas are showcasing here are really impressive. They are so strong physically and have great spirit."

The Chinese para judo team was founded in 1994. Since then, the squad has won nine gold, nine silver and six bronze Paralympic medals. Last week's nationals acted as one of the trials for the Asian Para Games, which will take place in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, in October.