

Establishing bonds

Music festival helps village in Guangxi tune in to wider audience

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Shenzhou XVI mission to launch soon

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Medical mission

Chinese medical team improves public health, well-being in Africa

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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 TUESDAY, MAY 23, 2023

Curb on Micron helps safeguard nation's security

Move aims to prevent risks from endangering key information infrastructure, ministry says

By MASI
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China's law-based decision to ask its critical information infrastructure operators to stop buying products from Micron Technology is a necessary move to safeguard national security and is in line with international practices, officials and experts said on Monday.

The move could reshape the nation's chip supply chains, bringing more opportunities to other competitive domestic and overseas memory chipmakers, they added.

The comments came after the Cyberspace Administration of China said in a statement on Sunday that products of Micron, a United States-based global supplier of semiconductors, sold in China have not passed a recent cybersecurity review, and operators of the country's key information infrastructure should stop purchasing its products.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said at a news conference on Monday that the decision is to prevent relevant products' cybersecurity risks from endangering China's critical information infrastructure.

"China is a country of the rule of law. ... All enterprises in China should abide by Chinese law in their operations. Judicial authorities will investigate any suspected illegal activities in accordance with the law," Mao said.

"As long as enterprises, regardless of which country they are from, comply with Chinese laws and regulations, we welcome them and their products and services to enter the

Chinese market. There is nothing to worry about," Mao added.

The Cybersecurity Law outlines rules safeguarding critical information infrastructure — technology systems in sectors including telecommunications, transportation and defense — that Chinese regulators believe would be vulnerable if they malfunctioned or leaked data, experts said.

Bai Ming, deputy director of international market research at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said the decision is in line with international practices in terms of placing greater emphasis on cybersecurity.

Countries such as the US are also adopting increasingly tougher security reviews on electronic products concerning data because data has become a key aspect of national security, Bai said.

The move could profoundly affect Micron's business in China, a market accounting for around 11 percent of its \$30.8 billion global sales in 2022, said Xiang Ligang, director-general of the Information Consumption Alliance, a telecom industry association.

"Chinese State-owned enterprises and their affiliates, at least, will stop buying Micron's products. And it could have a broader impact given the clear signal from the statement that Micron's products have cybersecurity risks," said a senior executive of a multinational market research company with decades of experience in semiconductors, on condition of anonymity.

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Fire engulfs iconic Manila building



Firefighters battle the blaze at the Manila Central Post Office, a historical landmark in the Philippine capital, on Monday. The fire, which was brought under control after more than seven hours, left seven people injured, authorities said. The neoclassical building was first constructed in 1926 and then rebuilt in 1946 following severe damage during World War II. It is the headquarters of the government-owned and controlled Philippine Postal Corp. The main mail sorting and distribution operations of the country are also housed there. AFP

Advancing Belt and Road a good omen

WORLD WATCH
By Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan

During his keynote speech at the China-Central Asia Summit last week in the ancient city of Xi'an, Shaanxi province, which has a rich history and splendid traditions of multiculturalism, President Xi Jinping suggested numerous factors for further systematizing, streamlining and strengthening the aims of greater regional connectivity, socioeconomic integration and eradication of terrorism.

Xi rightly upheld that promotion and implementation of the holistic policies of a community with a shared future, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative are necessary for achieving the desired goals of regional peace, stability and harmony between China and the five Central Asian countries.

At the end of the summit, the leaders of China and the Central Asian countries signed the Xi'an Declaration of the China-Central Asia Summit. The declaration highlighted the readiness of all the participating countries to build a closer community with a shared future.

It is a good omen that the five Central Asian countries agreed to expand cooperation on the Belt and Road Initiative and coordinate their respective development strategies with the BRI.

The Xi'an Declaration is holistic and comprehensive. It covers all aspects of modern economic development, human survival, security and

President Xi also called for joint and sincere efforts to fully unleash cooperation potential.

socioeconomic development, along with economic and transportation corridors, easy and smooth supplies of food and energy products, and connectivity between China and the five Central Asian countries.

Moreover, China stands for greater progress, prosperity, positivity and participation, which will further foster the true spirit of mutual cooperation, coordination and collaboration between both sides.

One of the most important features of Xi's speech was to further strengthen the concept of a China-Central Asia community with a shared future, which will

be achieved through deepening strategic mutual trust and supporting each other's sovereignty, independence, national dignity and long-term development.

Furthermore, Xi focused on promoting the implementation of the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative. He also called for joint and sincere efforts to fully unleash cooperation potential in traditional areas, such as trade, industrial capacity, energy and transportation, and to foster new growth drivers in areas such as finance, agriculture, poverty reduction, low carbon, health and digital innovation.

China has a strong philosophical, psychological and political resolve and socioeconomic connectivity to deter the looming threats of foreign interference in domestic affairs, geopolitical games and geostrategic manipulations to stage "color revolutions", which should be met with zero tolerance of the "three forces of terrorism, separatism and extremism".

China also stands for the strengthening of good governance, multiculturalism, ethnic diversity and interfaith dialogue between China and the five countries in Central Asia, which would further promote a just political equation and socioeconomic harmony between the two sides in the future.

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MUSEUMS PLACE SUSTAINABLE GROWTH IN SPOTLIGHT

Green, low-carbon solutions sought by institutions

By WANG RU
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A harmonious scene of peaceful coexistence between humankind and nature unfolds on a fan that resembles a tree.

A bird flies freely in the sunshine; a variety of lush plants grow as a rabbit hides among them; and a girl plays on a swing, her long hair flowing in the wind.



Designed mainly by Jusuk Ma, a French university student who worked as an intern for the International Council of Museums, or ICOM, in the past year, these scenes compose the official poster for International Museum Day this year, an annual event that promotes the importance of museums.

The theme for this day, which fell on Thursday, is "Museums, Sustainability and Well-being". Zhao Feng, a member of the ICOM executive board, said the poster is closely linked to this theme, which focuses on global health and well-being, climate action and life on land.

See Museums, page 2



Online See more by scanning the code.

Handy ticket



Passengers register their palm prints on Sunday at a station on the Daxing Airport Express subway line in Beijing. A pilot program, which was launched on Sunday, allows passengers to pass through ticket gates at stops along the subway line by just scanning their palm to pay. WANG JINGYI / XINHUA See story, page 3

China remains one of the safest countries

By CAO YIN
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China remains one of the safest countries in the world, as it has long been among nations with the lowest crime rates, and the rate of serious violent offenses in the country has been on a continuous decline in recent decades, according to a report.

In the past 20 years, crimes of intentional homicide, robbery and abduction have been constantly dropping across the country. The number of people accused of such crimes decreased by 67.7 percent last year compared with 2003, according to the

report issued recently by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Law.

It revealed that the number of defendants convicted of serious violent crimes decreased to 56,800 in 2021 from 95,700 in 2013.

In addition, offenses involving firearms were down 21 percent year-on-year in 2022, while those involving explosives declined 19 percent, the report said.

"These figures have shown that such crimes in China remain low, indicating that Chinese people's sense of security is at a high level," said Zhang Zhigang, an associate research fellow at the institute

67.7 percent

fewer people were accused of intentional homicide, robbery, abduction in 2022 compared with 2003.

who heads the team that compiled the report.

The country has also increased legal protection for women and children, Zhang said.

In March last year, the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the National Health Commission and the All-China Women's Federation jointly

launched a campaign to fight the crime of abducting and trafficking women and children.

By September, more than 900 such cases were solved and over 1,340 suspects captured, according to the report.

It cited data showing that 717 people were charged with the crime from January to September last year, with 234 others accused of buying the abducted women and children.

To give stronger support for women in more fields, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, adopted in October an amendment to the Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women, the report said.

Furthermore, judicial agencies have prioritized a crackdown on

the sexual assault of children.

In addition, the report hailed the country's greater efforts in recent years in fighting telecommunications and online fraud as well as corruption. The fight against related crimes will be further strengthened in the next two or three years, according to the report.

More cases concerning money laundering will be handled, as fugitive capture and asset recovery work intensifies, the report said.

Moreover, it said that judicial action against crimes such as spying and theft of State secrets will be enhanced to better guarantee national security, following a revision to the Counter-Espionage Law, which was adopted in April by the NPC Standing Committee and will take effect on July 1.

PAGE TWO



Left: An exhibition on the Maritime Silk Road opens at the Fujian Museum in Fuzhou, Fujian province, on Thursday to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative. LI HE / XINHUA
Right: Visitors to the China Grand Canal Museum in Yangzhou, Jiangsu province, enjoy scenes from the canal during a digital display on Wednesday. SHI BAIRONG / FOR CHINA DAILY



From page 1

Museums worldwide have attached greater importance to sustainability in the past two years. Last year, "Museums foster diversity and sustainability" was added to such institutions' role at the 26th International Council of Museums General Conference in Prague, Czech Republic.

ICOM said: "Museums are key contributors to the well-being and sustainable development of our communities. As trusted institutions and important threads in our shared social fabric, they are uniquely placed to create a cascading effect to foster positive change."

International Museum Day was launched by ICOM in 1977. Every year since 2009, China has chosen a major venue to stage nationwide activities to celebrate the day. Fujian Museum in Fuzhou, capital of Fujian province, was the main venue this year, playing host to exhibitions, academic forums, light shows and many other activities last week.

Li Qun, director of the National Cultural Heritage Administration of China, said Fujian used to be an important starting point for the ancient Maritime Silk Road. Quanzhou city, Fujian, a center of maritime trade during the Song (960-1279) and Yuan (1271-1368) dynasties, was added to UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2021, with the attribution "Quanzhou: Emporium of the World in Song-Yuan China".

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative. To commemorate the occasion, the exhibition *Good Fortune Sails Across the World: The Cultural Hallmarks of the Maritime Silk Road* opened at the Fujian Museum on Thursday.

The exhibition features 295 artifacts from the ancient Maritime Silk Road loaned by 35 cultural institutions and museums in China, including the Palace Museum in Beijing, the Shanghai Museum, and the China Maritime Museum in Shanghai.

A highlight of the display is a model *fuchuan*, also known as the Fujian vessel, one of the four types of ancient wooden sailing boats in China. With its flat deck, V-shaped hull, good stability in the water, and large capacity, the *fuchuan* was often used as a cargo vessel after the Song Dynasty.

Gold ingot

Yang Jingbin, an associate researcher at the Fujian Museum, said that when Chinese navigator Zheng He from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) made his seven westward voyages, his fleets mainly comprised Fujian vessels.

Also on display is an inscribed gold ingot weighing nearly 2 kilograms unearthed from the tomb of Zhu Zhanji, a son of emperor Zhu Gaochi (1378-1425) in the Ming Dynasty. The inscription states that the raw material for the ingot was bought overseas by Zheng during his fifth voyage.



Left: Schoolchildren in Yun-cheng, Shanxi province, visit the city's museum. JIANG HUA / FOR CHINA DAILY
Right: Experts evaluate cultural relics in Lanxi, Zhejiang province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY
Below left: Virtual reality lenses are used to present cultural relics in Beijing. CHEN ZHONGHAO / XINHUA
Below right: Children learn about the city's past at a museum in Fuzhou. ZHENG SHUAI / FOR CHINA DAILY



Museums: Positive change being fostered

established a working group on sustainability.

The principle of sustainability features in ICOM's strategic plan for 2022-28, the themes for International Museum Day for several years, and the revised plan for the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums.

ICOM President Emma Nardi said in a video message to the International Museum Day celebrations in Fuzhou, "This demonstrates the resolve to make our professional contribution to implement the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN and to make a better world for human civilization."

Gu Yucai, deputy director of the National Cultural Heritage Administration, said sustainability requires museums to put forward the idea of coexistence between humans and nature through their exhibitions. Such institutions should also develop in a green and low-carbon manner by saving energy and reducing emissions.

Li, the administration's director, said one of the biggest costs involved in managing a museum is energy consumption. The administration aims to make Suzhou Museum in Jiangsu province a test site to promote the green and low-carbon development of museums.

Zhao cited the Shanghai Museum of Glass, which decades ago was the site of a factory producing glassware, as a good example of applying the principle of sustainable development in its establishment and operation.

He said the area in which the museum is located used to be home to old industries and abandoned factories, so the environment was not good. However, when the museum was established, environmental improvements took place.

Local residents were granted free admission to the museum, and attended lectures on the importance of the environment and protecting biodiversity. They were also invited to take part in an initiative to improve the diversity of local flowers and other plants to attract more pollinating insects to return to the area.

"In this way, the local environment is improving. I think the museum project is a complete restoration project, which will bring a big change to the entire community," Zhao said.

More activities have been held in museums nationwide, including the provision of public services for evaluating cultural relics.

For example, on Wednesday, Zhejiang Provincial Museum organized such an activity in Lanxi, Zhejiang. Specialists in porcelain, jade, ancient paintings and calligraphy were invited to answer questions and help evaluate collections.

Liang Xiuhua, an expert in evaluating ancient paintings and calligraphy, said: "Such activities enable me to give full play to my specialist knowledge to help those who love collections. In this way, we meet the public's requirements and contribute to the collection of folk artifacts and development of the artifact market."

Wang Kaihao contributed to this story.



Such activities enable me to give full play to my specialist knowledge to help those who love collections."

Liang Xiuhua, an expert in evaluating ancient paintings and calligraphy in Zhejiang province

"It seems that Chinese artisans made such statues based on their imagination. Although the figures depicted by the statues are half-naked, they are very different from those made overseas. Their movements seem to be restricted, as if they don't know where to put their hands, and they look as though they want to hide their semi-naked bodies," Huang said.

"There are few historical records about ancient craftspeople in China, but through their work we gain a glimpse of how they reacted to Western culture and their understanding of this culture."

Quick response

Similar statues are housed in the collections of many European museums, including the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, Huang said.

When the exhibitions opened at the Fujian Museum on Thursday, industry professionals attending a forum enthusiastically expressed their ideas for the sustainability of museums.

Zhao said that after the draft resolution *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* was issued by the UN in 2015, the museum sector responded quickly, and in 2018, ICOM

"It is the only artifact to date with a clear inscription that shows it is related to Zheng's voyage. It was given as a gift to Zhu Zhanji to mark his engagement," Yang said.

The exhibition also features a variety of porcelain, silk and teas, which used to be major export commodities.

Such artifacts provide clues to cultural links. For example, a blue-and-white porcelain candlestick from the Ming Dynasty is highly similar to a bronze candlestick from West Asia in the 14th century.

"It shows the mutual influence of both cultures, reflecting the harmonious symbiosis of ancient times," Yang said.

White porcelain made in Dehua county, Fujian, was a highly important commodity shipped overseas. To illustrate its history, an exhibition of Dehua white ceramics has also opened at the Fujian Museum.

Bai Ming, a professor at Tsinghua University's Academy of Arts and Design, said white ceramics from Dehua have long been known as top-grade Chinese porcelain, as they were shipped overseas in ancient times. In the West, they were known by the French in the 19th century as Blanc de Chine, or "white from China".

In the Song Dynasty, the Dehua Kiln began to prosper from maritime trade, and in the late Ming and early Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, white porcelain became a highly prized commodity from the kiln.

Huang Weiwei, a guide at the exhibition, said customized white porcelain was shipped overseas at the start of the Ming Dynasty.

Two white ceramic statues of Adam and Eve are believed to be examples of such products. The statues, produced by the Dehua Kiln, are now stored at the Fujian Museum.

Beijing symposium sheds modern light on efforts to showcase the past

By LIN QI

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Visitors flocked to museums during the May Day holiday for leisure and educational purposes.

A rough calculation by the National Cultural Heritage Administration shows that about 50 million people visited museums nationwide during this period.

Top-ranked exhibitions are being staged in China, including a selection of self-portraits from the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy, at the National Museum of China in Beijing.

A display of masterpieces from the National Gallery in London, which closed on May 7 at the Shanghai Museum, was open to the public for 24 hours that day.

Such exhibitions have triggered discussion on ways to diversify museum services

and to deeply integrate the management of museums into a city's policy design and urban development.

A recent symposium attended by policy makers, museum administrators, museology researchers and urban planners from home and abroad looked at the prospect of Beijing evolving as "a city of museums", which the municipal government has envisioned and is striving to achieve. The Chinese capital is blessed with a rich history, cultural heritage and modern institutions.

The 2023 International Symposium of the Think Tank for Beijing Cultural Heritage and Museums Development, held in the city on May 10, was an important part of the ongoing inaugural Beijing Museum Activity Month.

Launched on May 1, the month is being marked with some 300 exhibitions — physical and online — to introduce audiences to

Beijing's diverse cultural and artistic resources, and to encourage the public to come up with ideas for developing creative museum products.

Beijing's draft development plan for museum construction from this year to 2025 states that the capital has ambitions to become "a city of museums", with two such institutions for every 100,000 people.

Liu Shuguang, director-general of the Chinese Museums Association, said at the symposium that city administrators in China first realized the importance of museums to the image branding of a city in the first decade of the 21st century.

However, at the time, there was a lack of overall planning for building museums as an integral part of urban development. The ensuing years have seen an improvement, with more attention paid to interaction

between a museum and its host city, and ways in which museums blend in with their neighborhoods.

Liu said that to give museums a cultural identity, urban planners should work to achieve "unity of a city's history, cultural heritage and its modern landscapes", to accentuate its "temperament and spirit" that have formed over time. He said an effective coordination mechanism should also be introduced for all museums.

He added that major museums are essential to a city's cultural landscape. "Their presence as a channel of public diplomacy is necessary, and forming consistent, institutionalized connections with international counterparts helps raise a city's global profile," Liu said.

Chen Mingjie, head of the Beijing Municipal Cultural Heritage Bureau, said building

a "city of museums" calls for related resources to be integrated with many aspects of city construction and urban life. Such aspects include forming a close connection with schools and communities, and sharing research on museum collections to provide the public with more access to cultural resources.

Participants at the symposium spoke of the need for ideas to "think globally and act locally", and for museums to hold discussions with the authorities in their home cities.

An Laishun, who chairs the International Council of Museums' Asia-Pacific Alliance, cited the opening of the Shanghai Museum of Glass as a good example of a modern museum with a diverse program being built on the former site of a glassware factory. The institution reflects Shanghai's transformation in the post-industrial era, An added.

TOP NEWS

Ready for launch



The crew of the SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket, (from left) Saudi Arabian astronaut Rayyanah Barnawi, commander Peggy Whitson, pilot John Shoffner and Saudi Arabian astronaut Ali al-Qarni, arrive at Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida, the United States, before their launch on Sunday for a weeklong stay at the International Space Station. TERRY RENNA / AP

US urged to be sincere in relations with China

By ZHOU JIN
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China urged the United States to show sincerity in bilateral communication and take practical steps to bring China-US relations back to the right track, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said on Monday.

Mao made the remarks after US President Joe Biden said on Sunday that he expected ties with China to improve "very shortly", dismissing an alleged "spy balloon" incident that caused a diplomatic spat earlier this year as "silly".

Biden said that his administration is considering lifting sanctions on Defense Minister Li Shangfu, removing one barrier to a potential meeting with US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin.

Beijing and Washington have maintained necessary communication, Mao told a regular news confer-

ence. She added that China firmly opposes any illegal and unilateral sanctions and has expressed its solemn stance on this to the US side.

"If, on the one hand, the US asks for communication, yet on the other, suppresses and contains China by every possible means, and imposes sanctions on Chinese officials, entities and companies, what is the sincerity and meaning of such communication?" she asked.

The US should roll back sanctions immediately, overcome the obstacles and create favorable conditions for dialogue, she said.

She urged the US to correct its perception of China, and stop interfering in China's internal affairs and undermining China's sovereignty, security and development interests.

Also on Monday, the Foreign Ministry welcomed a decision by the World Health Assembly on refusing Taiwan's participation in this year's assembly, urging rele-

vant countries to stop politicizing health issues and stop using the Taiwan question to interfere in China's internal affairs.

The General Committee and the Plenary Session of the 76th WHA have respectively decided to reject the so-called proposal of "inviting Taiwan to participate in the WHA as an observer" submitted by certain countries. This year's annual assembly runs from May 21 to May 30.

The decision fully shows that the one-China principle has international support and represents the prevailing trend that cannot be challenged, the ministry said in a statement.

In disregard of the well-being of the people of Taiwan, the Democratic Progressive Party authorities put countries having so-called "diplomatic ties" with Taiwan up to making the proposal, while certain countries encouraged and supported this move, it said.

These egregious acts deliberately violated international rules and have been unanimously opposed by countries that uphold justice, the statement added.

Before the opening of the conference, nearly 100 countries expressed their commitment to the one-China principle and opposition to Taiwan's participation in the assembly by sending letters to the WHO and issuing statements, according to the statement.

China urges certain countries not to pretend to be confused, and stop the erroneous practice of using Taiwan to contain China, the ministry said.

Ma Xiaoguang, a spokesman for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, urged the DPP authorities to stop political manipulation on Taiwan-related issues in the WHO, saying that any actions that challenge the one-China principle are doomed to fail.

Supervision of insurance sector to be tightened

New regulator underlines healthy solvency adequacy ratio, prevention of systemic risks

By SHI JING in Shanghai
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\$277.3 billion

China's insurance premium income in the first quarter

Supervision of the insurance industry, especially regarding insurers' solvency, should be further strengthened to firmly safeguard the bottom line of preventing systemic financial risks, according to the newly unveiled National Administration of Financial Regulation.

The call for strengthening was made at the first work conference of the administration, which was launched on Thursday and has incorporated the former China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission.

By the end of the first quarter of this year, the average comprehensive solvency adequacy ratio of the reviewed 185 insurance companies was 190.3 percent, with the average core solvency adequacy ratio reaching 125.7 percent, said the administration.

The minimum solvency adequacy ratio for insurance companies in China is set at 100 percent. The regulator will require an insurer to suspend all business once the ratio drops below 100 percent.

At the end of 2022, the average comprehensive solvency adequacy ratio of Chinese insurance companies was 196 percent.

The decline in insurers' solvency adequacy ratio has narrowed significantly and remains within a reasonable range, the administration said at its meeting.

The average comprehensive solvency adequacy ratio of property insurance companies was 227.1 percent at the end of the first quarter, while it was 180.9 percent for life insurance companies and 277.7 percent for reinsurance companies.

Meanwhile, the insurance industry is showing better-than-expected growth in the first quarter, with insurance premium income up by 9.2 percent year-on-year to 1.95 trillion yuan (\$277.3 billion) in the first quarter. The annualized comprehensive investment yield of insurance funds was 5.24 percent, showing a positive trend of recovery, according to the National Administration of Financial Regulation.

While the minimum capital requirement for insurers is set at 2.47 trillion yuan, the actual capital was 4.7 trillion yuan by the end of the first quarter, according to the administration's data.

According to Fitch Ratings, smaller and weaker life and non-life insurers in China are likely to seek additional capital this year to support their solvency positions, after organic growth in capital weakened in 2022 due to global market volatility.

But China's optimized epidemic control measures since December, the gradual recovery of its economy and better consumer sentiment will boost insurers' growth momentum this year, Fitch Ratings said.

Market insiders said that Chinese life insurance companies' assumed interest rate will be lowered in June, although the rate was once set at 3.5 percent. The former China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission's industry research in March to find out the cost of the debt of insurance companies is considered a signal to lower the rate.

Zheng Xinru, a researcher at Zhixin Investment, said the expected lowering will push the assumed interest rate to adapt to market changes, as the five-year bond yield is now 3.12 percent, and the five-year deposit rate is set below 3 percent — both of which are quite low compared with historical data.

Fang Guobing, a researcher at the Shanghai National Accounting Institute, said the declining assumed interest rate helps enhance insurance companies' solvency in light of the current macroeconomic situation and the market interest rates. The new policies will further regulate insurance companies' product design and marketing, preventing insurers from passing on high-risk investments to policyholders, he said.

Ties: Green development to diversify cooperation

From page 1

Further industrial development and investment would better facilitate all-around cooperation between China and the five Central Asian countries.

Trade facilitation, an upgrade of investment agreements with Central Asian nations along with an overhaul of cross-border freight volume with those countries, and fast, green channel clearance of agricultural products at all border ports between China and Central Asian countries would further enhance socioeconomic unity and geopolitical strength.

Hopefully, construction of a cross-Caspian Sea international transportation corridor and the construction of transportation hubs for China-Europe freight train services will further upgrade the capacity of existing ports between China and Central Asian nations.

Moreover, energy cooperation and green development can further diversify fields of cooperation between China and Central Asia.

For the further strengthening of business and economic cooperation, China will encourage competitive businesses to build overseas warehouses in Central Asia in order to further accelerate bilateral and trilateral business cooperation.

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

Security: Coercing others to impose restrictions 'not in interest of any party'

From page 1

Companies in the Chinese market have already started to avoid buying Micron's products since the government announced in March that the company was the subject of a cybersecurity review, the source added.

Micron said in a statement on Monday that it had received notification of the conclusion of the review of its products sold in China.

"We are evaluating the conclusion and assessing our next steps," Micron added.

Huatai Securities and CITIC Securities both said in research notes that the move will boost demand for the products of Chinese companies such as Yangtze Memory Technologies Corp and South Korean companies such as Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix.

Micron is the world's third-largest maker of DRAM, or

"We are evaluating the conclusion and assessing our next steps."

Micron, a United States-based global supplier of semiconductors

dynamic random access memory chips, which are flash memory chips widely used in smartphones, personal computers and servers.

Micron accounted for 22.8 percent of the global DRAM market in 2021, behind Samsung's 43.6 percent and SK Hynix's 27.7 percent, according to the latest data from market research company IC Insights.

The Financial Times reported in April that Washington had urged South Korean officials to

prevent its chipmakers from filling the market void if Micron was unable to sell its chips to China.

Mao from the Foreign Ministry said on Monday that such moves by the US are aimed at safeguarding its own hegemonic interests.

"Coercing other countries to impose export restrictions on China seriously violates the principles of the market economy and international economic and trade rules. ... It is not in the interest of any party," Mao said.

Wei Shaojun, a professor of integrated circuits at Tsinghua University, said the reported export restrictions would further accelerate the development of the domestic memory chip sector.

"China's semiconductor industry is on the rise, with an annual investment of nearly \$30 billion," Wei said, adding that China is also the world's largest semiconductor market.

Beijing introduces palm-print access on subway line

By DU JUAN
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A subway line that links downtown Beijing with Daxing International Airport in the Chinese capital now allows passengers to enter and exit stations by just scanning the palm of a hand, setting an example of how using biometric data in public transportation can make commuting more convenient.

The pilot program was launched

on Sunday on the Daxing Airport Express subway line to spare passengers the trouble of swiping a card or scanning a QR code to catch a train, the Beijing Municipal Commission of Transport said.

Any commuter age 14 and above can first register the print of either palm through a simple, automated process and provide relevant information to authorize the payment gateway of WeChat, a popular messaging app in China.

Once the palm print is registered, a commuter can scan the palm at any automated ticket gate to pass through. The fare is automatically deducted after exit.

"Passengers can just place a palm above the scanning machine when entering or exiting a subway station. The ticket gate will open if the palm scan matches the palm print registered voluntarily," said Zhang Li, an expert at the Beijing Metro Network Control Center.

The ticket gates can recognize the user's palm print and veins without contact, which is more hygienic, faster and safer than conventional check-in methods, Zhang said.

The biometric method combines the use of palm print and vein mapping, which are different for every individual. The registration is a one-time process and doesn't require renewal. The commission said data masking and encryption technologies have

been applied to protect user information.

Xin Jianhua, general manager of the public service center at WeChat Pay, said palm scans can be gradually used in offices, schools, gyms and restaurants, as it requires no contact and is therefore more safe and efficient.

"Currently, it is very useful for the elderly and those who have physical limitations. They can take the subway without using smartphone apps," he said.

Use of biometric data allows passengers to take subway trains if they do not have cash or when they forget their subway cards, he added.

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CHINA DAILY (ISSN 0748-6154) is

published daily except weekends by

China Daily USA, 1500 Broadway,

Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036.

Periodical postage paid at New

York, NY and additional mailing

offices. POSTMASTER: Send address

changes to CHINA DAILY USA, 1500

Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY

10036.

Vol. 38 - No. 193

CHINA

Court blocks compulsory TV ads

Manufacturers ordered to give option for consumers to switch off commercials

By CAO YIN
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Smart television manufacturers and sellers must provide consumers with an option to turn off advertisements inserted in the devices to protect their rights and interests, China's top court said.

The Supreme People's Court made the remark on Monday in the country's first release of a public interest case concerning smart TVs, clarifying that consumers have the right to choose or reject products or services.

In the case, the Jiangsu Consumer Council filed a lawsuit against an electronics company, claiming that a 15-second advertisement, which was automatically played when smart

TVs sold by the company were turned on, infringed upon consumers' rights.

The council asked the company to offer consumers an option to disable the ad, saying that they should not be forced to watch it every time they turned on their TVs. After the enterprises failed to correct the problem, the council sued it.

In November 2020, the Nanjing Intermediate People's Court in Jiangsu found in favor of the council, ordering the company to provide an option for consumers to disable the ad, stressing in the verdict that consumers have the right to choose or reject the service.

In March 2021, the Jiangsu High People's Court upheld the original

ruling after the company appealed.

"Even though the ad was just 15 seconds, it violated the legitimate rights of consumers and also affected the healthy development of the smart TV industry," Qi Su, deputy chief judge of the top court's Third Circuit Court, said while briefing about the case on Monday.

"The dispute resolution has shown the principle of upholding a people-centered approach in our judicial affairs, and how we responded to public concerns with efficient case handling," she added.

On Monday, the top court also disclosed 15 other cases resolved by courts in the Yangtze River Delta, noting that the move aims to unify trial standards and serve its high-quality development by the rule of law.

The cases cover various aspects — including those involving internet protec-

tion, intellectual property and finance — reflecting the major developing sectors in the delta.

Lauding the judicial fight against illegal fishing and the purchase of fry in the river by effectively solving relevant public interest litigation, Qi called for judges to continue to make stronger efforts to protect the environment by strictly implementing the Yangtze River Protection Law.

She highlighted the importance of dealing with commercial disputes across the delta, adding that better handling of such cases can prevent financial risks and maintain stability in this regard.

Qi said it is necessary to regularly disclose influential cases, as that will help judges in Shanghai and the provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui unify trial standards, as well as contribute to meeting the public's legal demands.

Mainland tours resume for residents of Taiwan

By CUI JIA
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Allowing travel agencies to resume organizing group tours for Taiwan residents who want to visit the Chinese mainland will help expand cross-strait exchanges and ease tensions, an expert on Taiwan affairs said.

The decision to resume such tours starting on Friday was announced by Ma Xiaoguang, a spokesman for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council.

Such trips had been suspended since 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Taiwan people are welcome to come for sightseeing and to witness the development of the mainland, he added.

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism echoed Ma's statement, adding that local authorities are required to better assist tour operators with organizing such trips.

Wang Hunning, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, called for the gradual resumption and expansion of cross-strait exchanges during the annual work conference on Taiwan affairs held by mainland authorities on May 9 and 10.

Wang, who is also chairman of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, China's top political advisory body, added that efforts will be made to make friends with people from all walks of life in Taiwan and promote mutual understanding between people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

Zhu Songling, a professor at Beijing Union University's Institute of Taiwan Studies, said on Friday that the resumption of group tours for Taiwan residents is the latest move from mainland authorities to expand cross-strait exchanges.

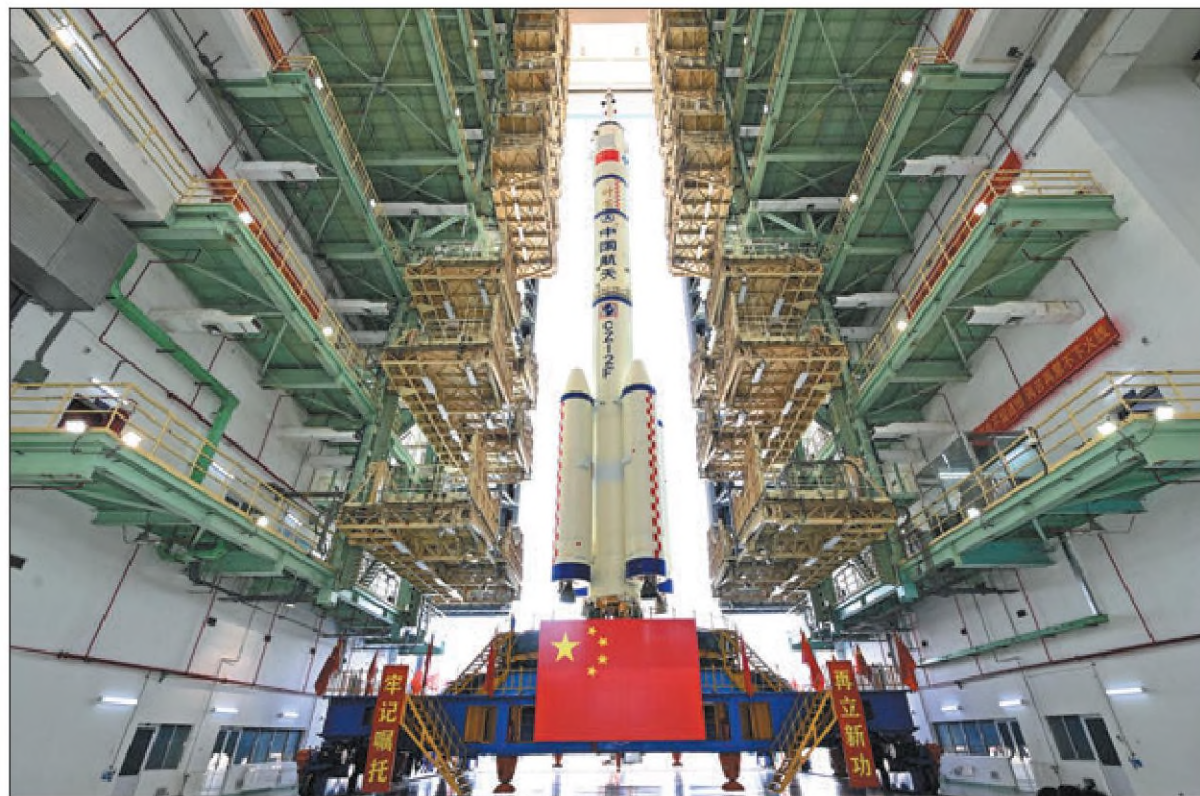
"It also sends a signal that the mainland hopes to ease tensions across the Taiwan Strait and pursue peaceful development," Zhu said.

While meeting a delegation of tour operators from Taiwan on Thursday afternoon, Song Tao, head of the Taiwan Work Office of the CPC Central Committee and the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, said that peaceful development can be achieved across the Taiwan Strait if people adhere to the 1992 Consensus and stand against "Taiwan independence." As long as there is peace and stability, cross-strait tourism can be resumed.

Hsiao Po-je, head of the delegation and chairman of the Taiwan Association of Travel Agents, said tour operators always hope for peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. People on both sides have the same roots and are part of a community with a shared future.

"Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many people in Taiwan weren't able to visit the mainland during the past three years. The association plans to enable more Taiwan people to see the beautiful sights on the mainland and gain a better understanding of it," Hsiao said.

According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Chinese mainland received 6.13 million visits from Taiwan residents in 2019.



The Shenzhou XVI spacecraft and its carrier, a Long March 2F rocket, are moved to their launch site at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China's Gobi Desert on Monday. WANG JIANGBO / FOR CHINA DAILY

Shenzhou XVI mission to launch in days

By ZHAO LEI
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China's next manned mission, the Shenzhou XVI, is scheduled to be launched in the coming days to transport three astronauts to the Tiangong space station, according to the China Manned Space Agency.

The Shenzhou XVI crewed spacecraft and its carrier, a Long March 2F rocket, were moved to the service tower on Monday at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China's Gobi Desert, the agency said in a news release, adding that the spacecraft and the rocket will undergo final checks in the next several days.

The Shenzhou XVI will become the first crewed mission to visit

Tiangong this year and the first to arrive since its construction was completed by the Shenzhou XIV and XV crews.

The crew members, whose names have yet to be disclosed, will take over the massive orbital outpost from their peers in the Shenzhou XV — mission commander Major General Fei Junlong, Senior Colonel Deng Qingming and Senior Colonel Zhang Lu — who arrived on Nov 30. By the end of May, Fei's team will have stayed in orbit for six months.

Pang Zhihao, an expert on space exploration technology and a renowned writer on spaceflight, predicts that the Shenzhou XVI crew will include new faces — the country's third generation of astronauts.

"I think there will be a scientist or

an engineer on the crew, and this means the Shenzhou XVI will be the first time for Chinese civilians to travel into space," he said.

Yang Liwei, the first Chinese person in space and now a deputy chief planner of the country's manned spaceflights, has said that the third-generation astronauts are expected to be in space in 2023.

As of now, all of the Chinese astronauts who have been on spaceflights are members of the People's Liberation Army. They are in the first two generations of astronauts who were selected from experienced Air Force aviators.

The third generation of astronauts have civilians recruited from researchers and engineers.

There are 17 men and one woman

in this generation in three groups: seven spacecraft pilots, another seven as spaceflight engineers and the last four as payload specialists.

Earlier this month, the Tianzhou 6 robotic cargo spaceship set out from the Wenchang Space Launch Center in Hainan province to transport materials for the next manned missions, becoming the first spacecraft to visit the Tiangong space station this year.

Orbiting about 400 kilometers above the ground, the Tiangong currently consists of three major components, the Tianhe core module and Wentian and Mengtian science lab modules, and is connected with two visiting craft, the Shenzhou XV crew ship and the Tianzhou 6 cargo ship.

Scientists set out on study trip to Mt Qomolangma

Chinese scientists have started a scientific expedition to the region of Mount Qomolangma, known as Mount Everest in the West, in Southwest China's Tibet autonomous region, as part of the second comprehensive scientific expedition to the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.

A total of 170 scientists are conducting research on water, ecology and human activities, aiming to reveal the mechanism of environmental change and optimize the ecological security barrier system on the plateau.

Dubbed the "roof of the world" and the "water tower of Asia", the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau is an important ecological security barrier in China. It is also a natural laboratory for conducting research on the evolution of the Earth and life, the interaction among spheres and the relationship between man and Earth.

According to the law on ecological conservation on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the State encourages and supports scientific investigation and research on the plateau, and promotes long-term research to grasp the ecological background of the plateau and its changes.

As an important part of the second comprehensive scientific expedition to the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, which was initiated in 2017, the ongoing expedition is of great significance to studying the

impact of climate and environmental change in the Qomolangma region on other parts of the world.

The 2023 Qomolangma expedition will continue to focus on major scientific issues such as how the extremely high altitude environment changes under the influence of global warming, how environmental change interacts with the westerly winds and monsoons, and how the environment will affect the changes of the "water tower of Asia", according to Yao Tandong, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Sciences and team leader of the expedition.

"The Qomolangma expedition has realized the transformation from 'I want to conquer you' to 'I want to understand you', achieved the application of new technologies and new means, and resulted in important international influence," he said.

A series of scientific achievements including "the synergy and influence of westerly winds and monsoons", "the special physiological response of the human body in the Qomolangma region" and "the ecological process of the greening of the Qomolangma region" have been made so far during the second comprehensive scientific expedition to the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.

XINHUA

Universal childcare services to provide key support

By YAO YUXIN and CANG WEI
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Jiang Ming, a resident of Taizhou, Jiangsu province, decided to enroll his 32-month-old daughter in a local childcare center four months ago, recognizing the great support it would provide to his family.

Like the majority of families in China, both he and his wife have to work, leaving their child in the care of elderly relatives during the day. However, as the grandparents grew older, taking care of the child became increasingly challenging, Jiang said, but having his wife quit her job and stay at home full time would disconnect her from society, potentially straining the family relationship.

Like Jiang, this dilemma is being faced by many families in China, especially with the introduction of the three-child policy in 2021. According to data released by the National Health Commission, more

than 30 percent of families with infants and young children in China have a demand for childcare services, but the enrollment rate is only around 5.5 percent.

Jia You Er Nyu (Home with Kids), where Jiang sends his daughter, solves his urgent need. With a monthly fee of 2,080 yuan (\$295), plus an additional 500 yuan for meals, he drops off his daughter at the childcare center at 8:20 am and picks her up at 4 pm on weekdays.

The temporary separation also makes the family cherish the time they spend together in the evenings and on weekends even more. "It largely alleviates the burden of parenting and promotes family harmony," the father said.

This is a microcosm of the national efforts to develop universal childcare services. According to the 2021 decision on improving birth policies to promote long-term balanced population growth, the country will pro-

vide subsidies and increase the number of childcare slots for infants and young children aged 0-3 years from 1.8 to 4.5 slots per thousand people by 2025.

"It can help alleviate fertility anxieties and reduce the cost of child-rearing," said Mu Guangzong, a professor of demography at the Institute of Population Research at Peking University. "It will address the low fertility rates resulting from a lack of willingness or desire to have children."

At Jia You Er Nyu, a provincial model nursery that provides universal childcare services, there is an average of one teacher for every six children. They engage the kids in activities such as reading picture books, planting potatoes and exploring nature in a nearby park.

"Our teachers act as guides and observers, rather than commanders," said Zhou Lihua, head of the day nursery. "We observe the children's

interests and provide them with ample freedom."

Zhou Lixia is a mother of a three-and-a-half-year-old boy who has been in the childcare center for a year and a half. She was surprised by the teachers' awareness of the different sensitive periods for children.

The teacher told her that at one point, her child displayed a heightened sensitivity to colors, while at another time, there was a strong affinity for shapes. Recognizing this, the family concentrated on cultivating their child with these abilities accordingly. Now the boy performs well in painting and puzzle solving.

Because of limited interaction with her child during the daytime, the working mother said that without the teacher's reminder, the family might have overlooked these development stages.

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Stuck in the mud



A rescue worker cleans mud off a stranded car after heavy rainfall triggered a landslide in Baishui village, Guilin, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, on Monday. The downpour flooded many roads in Guilin's urban area. Around 370 schools in the city were forced to close for half a day. LIAO HANJIE / FOR CHINA DAILY

CHINA



Left: Chen Tianrun (front left), founder and CEO of KOKONI 3D, a maker of 3D printers, introduces his company's product to clients. **Middle:** Wang Zhenyang explains a "digital human" app developed by his team on the stage of an internet, innovation and entrepreneurship competition held in Chongqing last month. **Right:** Song Zhuochen (left) talks with a farmer to get feedback on a smart device designed by his team that monitors the daily routines and health of sheep. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

TALKING POINT

Dorms and dreamers



Zou Shuo

I have attended the China International College Students' "Internet +" Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition four times.

Each time, I have been amazed by the scale of the competition, which keeps growing every year, and how talented and hardworking college students are.

Their projects cover everything from robots, helicopters, drones, fishing and agriculture to infrared intelligent computational imaging.

As someone who majored in English at undergraduate and postgraduate level, I often struggle to understand the projects. Therefore, every time I interviewed a student I first asked them to explain their work to me in the simplest way, but there were still times when I could not understand them.

In addition to the high-end, fancy projects, there are those aimed at improving people's lives, especially the less fortunate.

A Braille reader developed by a team from Chongqing University helps visually impaired people understand the wider world through reading.

Huang Zhou, an undergraduate at the university who leads the team, said the members were inspired to develop the device when they visited a local visually impaired couple as freshmen. The couple told them that reading books can be inconvenient and they wanted to read as easily as nondisabled people.

In response, the students developed a reader that can display 100 Braille words on a single page, and it is sold at a much cheaper price than comparable products on the market, Huang said.

"While visually impaired people can obtain information via aural input, such information is easily forgotten. Meanwhile, Braille books can be cumbersome and there just aren't enough of them, which is why our project is very significant," she said.

I think that starting one's own business must be extremely difficult, especially for college students who also have to study and may lack the required resources and connections that can make their businesses successful.

Many students I interviewed told me that they only slept a few hours a night, and in order to make their project better, they needed to spend many sleepless nights conducting experiments and trying to find investors.

However, such people are often highly innovative, and they can produce original ideas that can improve people's lives in different ways.

That is why the government and universities have offered students various favorable policies to help them turn their ideas into reality.

With the unemployment rate for people ages 16 to 24 reaching about 20 percent, innovation and entrepreneurship are good ways of boosting employment levels among college students.

After the eighth edition of the competition, many former contestants' projects have become successful businesses employing hundreds or even thousands of people.

One student told me that it is not difficult to maintain the pace once you actually start a business: what is difficult is for students to genuinely want to start a company.

Hopefully, as more get involved in the competition and entrepreneurship, the next major startups will come from students' dormitories.

Student startups set to surge as 'digital natives' drive innovation

A new generation of high-tech entrepreneurs is emerging from China's colleges. **Zou Shuo** reports.

As a "digital native" — someone born after the invention of the internet — Wang Zhenyang believes that the digital approach to life has bright prospects. That's why he has started a business focusing on the emotional support and companionship that can be provided by "virtual humans".

The 22-year-old student was a member of a team from Zhejiang University that took third place at the eighth China International College Students' "Internet +" Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition, held at Chongqing University last month.

A total of 3.4 million projects were submitted for consideration in this year's competition, while the number of students that applied to take part reached 14.5 million. They hailed from 4,554 universities and colleges in 111 countries and regions. The event saw the number of hopeful participants exceed 10 million for the first time. Since the event was inaugurated in 2015, nearly 39.83 million students have applied to take part.

Promoting good habits

Wang said that his team is focused on creating a "digital human" app that can encourage the formation of good habits and help alleviate the loneliness many young people feel nowadays.

Once users have completed their preprogrammed daily workout, their digital image on the app becomes energetic. Conversely, if they have stayed up late, the image will have dark circles under its eyes, he added.

The aim is to create a virtual world where users receive instant feedback by completing everyday tasks and routines. A survey of several thousand university students conducted by Wang's team showed that about 80 percent of respondents have great enthusiasm for the virtual world and the app.

Wang said he had not thought about starting a business until he watched an innovation competition at his university last year. After more than a year of work, his team has developed an app with 2D virtual humans, and is now working on a 3D version, he said.

To provide funding for the app, he has spent almost all the money he made by tutoring other students in college, and he hopes that it will be officially launched late next month or in July.

"I know it is difficult to be successful as a first-time entrepreneur, but I will have no regrets



Wang Zhenyang listens to comments from experts at the eighth China International College Students' "Internet +" Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition, held at Chongqing University last month.



Chen Tianrun (center) meets with colleagues to discuss the 3D printer they have produced.

whether the app is a success or not," he said.

Since he started his startup journey, he has been extremely busy balancing study and entrepreneurship. He rarely takes a break, even during vacations.

"However, it has been a worthwhile experience. As someone who majors in computer science, I have learned marketing skills, how to talk to investors and manage a team, and I've also become more eloquent," he said.

Making an impression

Like Wang, many of the participants in the innovation and entrepreneurship competition were born in 2000 or after.

Chen Tianrun is the founder and CEO of KOKONI 3D, which makes 3D printers in Zhejiang.

"I noticed that young people today are looking for ways to tap into their passion for the fascinating and the mundane. Driven by this magical pull, I took it upon myself to dive headfirst into the world of 3D printing: It's a fusion of technology and creativity that never fails to inspire awe and wonder," the 23-year-old said.

In 2020, Chen started his endeavors in his dormitory at Zhejiang University with two roommates. They turned their dorm into a workshop and each studied different topics. After many sleepless nights and countless experi-

ments, they succeeded in developing a prototype 3D printer on the empty bed they used as their workstation.

When a customer scans a photo into the printer, a 3D physical model can be printed out.

Chen founded the company in Huzhou, Zhejiang, in 2021. In March last year, it started mass production of what the team said is the first printer of its type to incorporate instant artificial intelligence 3D modeling.

The device is sold in more than 30 countries and regions, and so far it has generated tens of millions of yuan in income.

From less than 30 square meters of dormitory and a three-man team, the company now has more than 150 employees and occupies more than 2,000 sq m.

"As an engineering major, there's nothing more fulfilling than creating something practical and seeing people bring their wildest ideas to life with my product. It's the perfect fusion of usefulness and creativity," Chen said.

As a postgraduate student, he works in the company's office from 8 am to 5 pm, then catches up on his studies until midnight. He travels between Huzhou (his company) and Hangzhou (his university) almost every day.

"Juggling my studies and running a company is no easy task, but the thrill of pursuing my passion and creating value in various ways

is worth every moment of effort."

Sheep and success

Song Zhuochen's entrepreneurship journey began with a poverty alleviation program initiated by his school, Xidian University in Xi'an, capital of Shaanxi province.

His team has developed a device that uses a chip and smart fences to monitor the daily routines and health of sheep, sending alerts to owners via a smartphone app when abnormalities are detected.

By recording the amount of milk each ewe can produce, the device can identify those with the highest yields.

Song became involved in the program in his first year at university in 2018, and he started traveling to two townships in Shaanxi's Pucheng county because the university was investing its resources to assist in the eradication of absolute poverty.

He has spent lots of time and energy on the program. Traveling to the townships from Xi'an takes more than four hours, and he visits several times a month.

To ensure that the program would be successful, Song suspended his studies in 2020 and devoted all his attention to the program.

He conducted a great deal of research in the university laboratory, and whenever he made progress, he brought the device to the sheepfold for testing.

His efforts paid off: 120 households in the townships have participated in the program and started raising sheep. As a result, each household's annual income has risen by 12,000 yuan (\$1,710).

Currently a senior undergraduate in intelligent science and technology, Song will undertake postgraduate studies in computer science at Xidian, starting in September.

He hopes that the rights to his device will be bought by a major farm or dairy company, so it will benefit more people.

In the future, Song said he wants to continue making the device better and more profitable.

"Although becoming a coder or working for an information technology company in a big city can bring in a decent salary, I would very much like to continue my work in the villages and around the sheep," he said. "The vast rural areas can be the places where graduates can make the most of what they have learned at university."

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Authorities promote measures to create favorable environment

By ZOU SHUO

China has introduced a raft of measures to boost entrepreneurship and innovation among college students by creating a favorable environment for them to launch startups and innovative projects.

In 2015, the general office of the State Council, China's Cabinet, issued a guideline to improve the innovation and entrepreneurship courses at the country's universities.

The guideline urged universities to support student entrepreneur-

ship by transferring study credits and setting up flexible learning schedules. Local governments and universities were ordered to make full use of resources to set up university technology bases, student entrepreneurship centers and incubators. Meanwhile, organizations, groups and enterprises were encouraged to set up venture funds for student entrepreneurs, the guideline said.

Moreover, a guideline issued by the Ministry of Education in 2017 said university students can suspend their studies when setting up businesses,

and the papers, patents and other achievements in their entrepreneurship can be transferred into school credits. Huai Jinpeng, minister of education, said such students are full of imagination and creativity, and they can be the driving force for entrepreneurship and innovation.

In recent years, China has established a path to expand entrepreneurship and innovation among college students, nurtured innovative talents and promoted the integration of learning and technological innovation, he said.

Jobs have been created through student startups, thus assisting high-quality socioeconomic development, poverty alleviation and rural revitalization, Huai said. The country will continue to support entrepreneurship and innovation among college students by building new platforms, promoting international cooperation and expanding policy support in the sector, he added.

Yin Peng, deputy dean of the School of Innovation and Entrepreneurship at Xidian University in Shaanxi province, said the school

produces about 50 relatively sophisticated startups every year.

As a university with strong information technology-related majors, students in the field are eager to develop mini-apps and start their own IT businesses, he said.

The university also offers a range of policies to support students who want to start businesses, such as providing funding, workspaces, equipment and assistance in finding investors, he said.

When students try to start businesses, they should become better

acquainted with schoolmates and teachers who have similar interests, and widen their knowledge via different disciplines, Yin said, adding that students are also allowed to suspend their studies for a maximum of two years to focus on their startup.

"As an engineering university, we encourage students to be innovative in technology and possibly spearhead innovation in a completely new sector," he said.

"We want students to start their businesses in college, because it is a very hard thing to do and they have nothing to lose while they are still students. Even if they fail, they will have gained valuable experience through the process."

WORLD US

Editor's note: Bills aimed at banning Chinese and other nationals from buying land in the United States have triggered fears of anti-Asian hate crimes. This page takes a closer look at how history is repeating itself in the form of new legislation in some states as well as the hardships faced by those who have suffered discrimination.



Hundreds of people gather in Atlanta, Georgia, to protest the increasing violence against Asian people in the United States, on March 20, 2021. USA TODAY NETWORK VIA REUTERS



Two people leave a message on a cross at a makeshift memorial on May 10 in Allen, Texas, by the mall where a gunman opened fire on May 6, killing eight people. TONY GUTIERREZ / ASSOCIATED PRESS

With new land laws, history repeats itself

Asians feel 'besieged', worry about hate crimes as bills are either proposed or passed in nearly 30 US states

By MAY ZHOU in Houston
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When Echo King's friend texted her about the passing of Florida's legislation SB 264 in the state Senate on April 11, she did not believe it.

After all, it is 2023, more than 50 years after the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed and more than 10 years after the US Congress expressed regret and issued an apology for the act, and bills such as the Alien Land Laws were a thing of the past.

To verify the text message, she went to the state government's website and read the contents of the bill. To her shock, it was all true: SB 264 would ban citizens, entities and companies from seven countries of concern, including China, from purchasing farmland and other infrastructure. In addition, Chinese citizens are singled out in the bill to be excluded from acquiring any real estate in the state.

Sharing her experience in a Zoom meeting organized by the United Chinese Americans, a nonprofit civic movement, this month, King, an immigration lawyer in Orlando, Florida, said she quickly took action and formed a group with like-minded people from the community to fight the discriminative bill. In four days, they mobilized more than 100 people to go to Florida's capital, Tallahassee, to testify against it.

Their efforts gained support from some legislators and the bill was modified to make an exception for Chinese citizens with non-tourist visas, but still limited to single parcels smaller than 2 acres (0.81 hectares) and at least 5 miles (8 kilometers) from military bases.

Their fight was not enough to stop SB 264 from passing, and on May 8, Republican Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed it into law.

Florida is just one of more than 20 or perhaps about 30 states that have either passed similar bills, or pro-

posed such bills but failed to pass as in Georgia and Kansas, or are still in the legislative process as in Louisiana and Texas.

Josh Yeh, a Chinese American from Kansas, said at the Zoom meeting that he felt "besieged" and is worried that Asian hate crimes will go up as a result of those bills.

"My kids, my descendants, if they want to stay in America, then I need to prepare for them. I have to speak up, hey, United States, you cannot keep doing this. This is not who you are. We believe in equality, we believe in liberty, we believe in pursuit of happiness, right?"

For Yeh, the slate of bills in so many states aiming to ban Chinese and a few other nationals from buying land feels like history is repeating itself when the Chinese Exclusion Act was enacted in 1882 and the Alien Land Laws were passed in many states in the 1910s.

"We are doing this again? In the name of national security, they can do anything. That's really scary to anyone of us. I am thinking for my kids, if we don't do anything, this will get worse," said Yeh, who has started a super PAC (political action committee) in Kansas to get actively involved in local political process.

Yeh was not alone to view the current legislative trend banning China from purchasing land in the US as a repeat of history. A February CNN report about a similar Texas bill SB 147 was titled "History repeats itself with anti-China land ownership proposals".

In the report, Madeline Hsu, a history professor and expert in Asian American studies at the University of Texas in Austin, told CNN, "It's definitely a sort of reinvocation of what people in Asian American studies would refer to as 'Yellow Peril' fearmongering."

"There are ways in which it resonates with what happened to Japanese Americans during World War

It's definitely a sort of reinvocation of what people in Asian American studies would refer to as 'Yellow Peril' fearmongering."

Madeline Hsu, history professor and expert in Asian American studies at the University of Texas in Austin



Allen High School students light candles at a vigil four days after a gunman shot and killed eight people at a mall in Allen, Texas, on May 10. SHELBY TAUBER / REUTERS

II, where regardless of citizenship, regardless of nativity, they were racially categorized as enemy aliens," Hsu continued.

One netizen named Mivey, commenting on Alabama's passing of HB 379 prohibiting Chinese citizens, entities and government bodies from purchasing property in the state, succinctly summed up how many Asian Americans are facing the current wave of "land laws" across so many states: "Making American 1882 again".

Yeh was not alone to worry that such bills would drive up anti-Asian hate crimes. Gene Wu, Texas representative who has been fighting

“

swastika and the SS lightning bolt logo of Adolf Hitler's paramilitary forces. His social media account showed that he posted about his fantasies of race wars and used violent, hateful rhetoric that targeted Asian people.

Wu said the real troubling issue with bills such as SB 147 is that those bills "would basically be the government announcing to the public that you know Asian people are dangerous, and that you should do something about it".

"And we have real concerns that more targeted attacks would come if they pass bills like SB 147."

Hsu has proved that the danger Yeh and Wu are worried about is real. Laws targeting a specific group — by race or by country — would often fan hatred and violence against that particular targeted group. Horrendous crimes were committed after the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed.

Brutal massacre

In September 1885, three years after Congress enacted the Chinese Exclusion Act, close to 30 immigrant Chinese were massacred in Rock Springs, Wyoming, according to history.com.

In this racially motivated killing, 150 white miners killed 28 Chinese miners, wounded 15 others and drove a few hundred of them out of town. In the end, only 45 white miners were fired by the railroad company, but none of the perpetrators ever faced any legal action for the killings.

"The Chinese had been victims of prejudice and violence ever since they first began to come to the West in the mid-19th century, fleeing famine and political upheaval," said a history article about the massacre on the website.

"Widely blamed for all sorts of social ills, the Chinese were also singled out for attack by some national politicians who popularized stri-

dent slogans like 'The Chinese Must Go' and helped pass an 1882 law that closed the US to any further Chinese immigration.

"In this climate of racial hatred, violent attacks against the Chinese in the West became all too common, though the Rock Springs massacre was notable both for its size and savage brutality," the article said, explaining the background of the massacre.

Two years later in May 1887, in a course of two days, a group of seven horse thieves, all of them white, ambushed and attacked Chinese miners with firearms in an isolated part of northeast Oregon, killing 31 to 34 immigrant Chinese.

Afterward, the horse thieves mutilated their bodies, dumped them into the Snake River, stole their mined gold, and burned their camp and equipment. The crime was not discovered until the battered bodies of the Chinese began appearing in the Snake River 65 miles (105 km) from the crime scene.

Just like in the Wyoming massacre, though the identity of the seven killers was known, none was convicted or punished. Soon the case was forgotten until the file was rediscovered in a safe that had been donated to a local county museum in 1995.

A local judge told The Associated Press in 1995 that "the records were more than just lost, they seem to have been hidden. Somebody intentionally tried to keep this story from happening".

Keenly aware that those discriminative laws could fuel hatred and violence toward Asian Americans, Wu said that even if SB 147 does not pass in Texas, the anti-Asian hate fear is a real thing.

"We should start discussing what we need to do (with anti-Asian hate)" after the Texas legislation session ends at the end of this month, he told the Chinese American community.

A tea salon at the Chinese embassy enlightens

By YIFAN XU in Washington
yifanxu@chinadailyusa.com

Hundreds of people from all walks of life tasted Chinese tea, learned about tea culture and experienced other intangible cultural heritage during a salon at the Chinese embassy.

The Tea for Harmony Yaji Cultural Salon event was hosted on Sunday by the Chinese Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Chinese embassy.

Sipping the fragrant tea, watching the elaborate tea ceremony and getting to learn about a variety of tea leaves and tea ware, people in Washington experienced the unique charm of Chinese tea culture in an immersive way.

May 21 was established as International Tea Day in a resolution adopted by the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly in December 2019.

The composition of the Chinese character for "tea" reveals three parts: grass on top, people in the middle, and wood at the bottom. This character illustrates "people living in nature", according to an explanation by Xu

Xueyuan, embassy chargé d'affaires, at the salon.

In her speeches, Xu said that tea has thousands of years of history in China. She described tea as a gift from China to the world, a bridge for exchange and mutual learning among civilizations, an envoy of Chinese culture, and a witness to the development of US-China relations.

"At the salon today, we will have the pleasure of enjoying Da Hong Pao (Wuyi rock tea from Fujian) and revisit those beautiful episodes of win-win cooperation between our two countries," said Xu. "We sincerely hope that China and the US will join hands to bring bilateral relations back onto the track of sound and steady growth for the peace and development of the world."

The government of Quanzhou City, in East China's Fujian province, was one of the organizers of the salon. Su Gengcong, vice-mayor of Quanzhou, discussed the tea industry in Quanzhou as well as the charm of the historical, cultural city.

"Welcome to Quanzhou to experience tea tourism, appreciate tea



A tea artist performs a Chinese tea ceremony for guests at the Tea for Harmony Yaji Cultural Salon event at the Chinese embassy in Washington on Sunday. YIFAN XU / CHINA DAILY

culture and feel tea customs!" Su exclaimed.

Guests enjoyed performances by Shenandoah University, including a string ensemble, a chorus of Song of Yue Boatman, and a traditional Chinese fan dance. The artists of

the Quanzhou delegation presented Nanyin music, Quanzhou Marionette (Quanzhou-style string puppet), and a tea ceremony demonstration.

The puppet wrote the Chinese characters of "tea for harmony" in the hands of the artists, which amazed

the audience. Three musicians, from Shenandoah University, the Quanzhou delegation and the local community, jointly performed *Big Fish* with electric piano, ancient Chinese dongxiao, and Chinese zither.

They had rehearsed remotely, but the night of the salon was the first time they played together in person. Their cooperation is one of tacit agreement, perfectly reflecting the concept of harmony and bringing the event to a climax.

Before and after the performances, the guests also got to try Nanyin instruments and Quanzhou marionettes, Chinese calligraphy, and view photo exhibitions: *A Magical Leaf* and *Quanzhou in the World*, and, naturally, sample tea afterward.

Janice Deaver, one of the guests, told China Daily with an excited smile that she "enjoyed the beautiful tea ceremony and learned so many wonderful things about the tea. She (the tea presenter) showed us how to really taste it."

"My husband and I would try more Chinese tea, drink it more carefully, and enjoy it more than we ever had!"

Yang Aihong, a tea artist at the Tea Culture Development Center, Anxi county, Quanzhou, said she was proud to display Chinese tea culture at the Chinese embassy in the US.

"I hope more people can understand Chinese tea culture through my performance. The audience's enthusiasm made me happy, and I really cherish the harmonious and connected atmosphere among us," she told China Daily.

Another guest, Benjy Renton, told China Daily that participating in the salon seems like "going back to China" for him. As a Washington DC resident, Renton was born and raised in Hong Kong, where his father worked.

He said he has always been interested in drinking tea, Chinese tea culture and other Chinese cultural traditions. "I believe I could go back to China soon. I miss China."

"For me, 'Tea for Harmony' means we, the US and China, should respect, realize and cooperate with one another," Renton said. "I hope the two major countries could improve their relations as soon as possible."

WORLD

Briefly

CHINA President of DR Congo to visit China

President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo Felix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo will pay a state visit to China starting from Wednesday, the Foreign Ministry has announced. During his six-day tour, President Xi Jinping will hold talks with the DR Congo's president and they will jointly attend a signing ceremony of cooperation documents, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said. Premier Li Qiang and top Chinese legislator Zhao Leji will meet with him respectively, she said. China believes that the visit will inject new impetus into the development of bilateral relations, Mao said.

UNITED STATES Biden, McCarthy to meet on debt ceiling

US President Joe Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy were set to meet at the White House at a pivotal moment as Washington works to strike a budget compromise and raise the nation's borrowing limit in time to avert a devastating federal default. The meeting on Monday afternoon between the Democratic president and the new Republican speaker was expected to be critical as they race to prevent a looming debt crisis. After a weekend of start-stop talks, both appeared upbeat as they face a deadline, as soon as June 1. Biden and McCarthy spoke by phone on Sunday while the president was returning home after the Group of Seven summit in Japan.

ITALY Activists turn Rome's Trevi Fountain black

Climate activists in Italy turned Rome's famous Trevi Fountain black on Sunday, saying floods that have killed 14 people in the country's northeast were "a warning". Activists from the anti-climate change organization Last Generation climbed onto the landmark and poured a vegetable-based carbon liquid into it, before being pulled out and escorted away by police. The Trevi Fountain's most iconic moment saw Swedish actress Anita Ekberg go for a dip in Federico Fellini's film *La Dolce Vita*. The protest came as Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni arrived in Emilia-Romagna to visit areas devastated by floods.

AGENCIES—CHINA DAILY

Irreparable damage



Palestinians inspect a damaged building following an Israeli army raid in the Balata refugee camp near the West Bank town of Nablus on Monday. Palestinian health officials say Israeli fire has killed at least three people in the refugee camp. MAJDI MOHAMMED / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Chinese development model applauded

By WANG QINGYUN
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Adrian Nastase

China's development model is an alternative that shows modernization does not necessarily mean Westernization, former Romanian prime minister Adrian Nastase said.

Chinese modernization sends a message that "each country should seek its own modernization according to its own needs", Nastase told China Daily.

"For countries like mine, modernization meant Westernization," Nastase said. "But later on, we understood ... that sometimes it is much more important to have your own line of development, to think about the features of your country, traditions, culture."

Characterized by features that are unique to the Chinese context, Chinese modernization involves a huge population, aims at common prosperity for all, focuses on both material and cultural-ethical advancement, underlines harmony between humanity and nature, and pursues peaceful development.

Over the past several decades, China has grown in leaps and bounds through its own pattern of development. The special pattern has been met with not only praise, but also doubt.

Some accuse the world's second-largest economy of being a "threat". Some even hype the possibility of a "Thucydides trap", or a clash between powers, lying ahead

China's values, ideas and traditions need to be better understood in other parts of the world, where many countries have considered modernization the same as Westernization, Nastase said.

Nastase also shared his view on the Belt and Road Initiative.

Calling the initiative "the project of the century" that translates globalization into action, Nastase said the BRI's connection of infrastructures around the world is essential for trade, investment and people-to-people exchanges.

Nastase hopes there will be more BRI cooperation projects carried out in his country, which signed a memorandum of understanding on BRI cooperation with China in 2015.

Nastase served as Romanian prime minister from 2000 to 2004. He made a visit to China at the height of the SARS outbreak in May 2003.

During that trip, Nastase brought some medical equipment with him to show his support for China's fight against SARS. He also expressed hope for strengthened cooperation between the two countries.

Huge progress has taken place in China since his trip two decades ago, not only in China's urban landscape but also in the way its people behave, Nastase said.

Russia calls G7 incubator for 'hysteria'

Zelensky lobbies for support as claims on Bakhmut from Moscow, Kyiv vary

MOSCOW — Russia on Sunday dismissed the G7 summit in Japan's Hiroshima as a "politicized" event that it said had pumped out anti-Russian and anti-Chinese statements and accused the group of undermining global stability.

Moscow lashed out after the Western leaders said they would not back down from supporting Ukraine, in a warning to Moscow as it claimed to have taken the eastern city of Bakhmut, something Kyiv denied.

In a statement posted on Telegram, the Russian Foreign Ministry said the G7 had "irreversibly deteriorated" and the forum had become "an 'incubator' where, under the leadership of the Anglo-Saxons, destructive initiatives that undermine global stability are prepared".

The statement accused the G7 of fanning anti-Russian and anti-Chinese "hysteria".

Russia used to be a member of the G7 club of industrialized countries, which was previously known as the G8, until Moscow was excluded after Crimea joined Russia through a referendum in 2014. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was present at the Hiroshima summit as a guest, an opportunity he used to encourage member nations to maintain arms supplies and diplomatic support for Kyiv amid its conflict with Russia.

He leveraged the powerful symbolism of Hiroshima, synonymous with the horrors of war, to press partners and skeptics alike to back his defense against Russia's 15-month special military operation, Agence France-Press commented.

On the battlefield, Yevgeny Prigozhin, head of Russia's Wagner paramilitary military group, said in a video message posted on his Telegram channel that Wagner will begin to withdraw its units on May 25 for rest and retraining, and its fighters will create "the necessary lines of defense".

"(Russian President) Vladimir Putin congratulates the Wagner assault detachments, as well as all servicemen of the Russian Armed Forces units ... on the completion of the operation to liberate Artyomovsk," the presidential press service said.

Zelensky denied that Russian troops now occupy Bakhmut, although he acknowledged they were in the city, which has been ground into ruins in months of brutal fighting that shows little sign of slowing.

He left Japan with reassurances, however, that his allies will see out the fight, with US President Joe Biden insisting that Ukraine's backers "will not waver".

Military package

The White House earlier unveiled a \$375-million package of US aid that includes ammunition for HIMARS rocket launchers, artillery shells, anti-tank guided missiles and thermal imaging systems.

It came after the United States lifted a veto on Ukrainian access to advanced US-made F-16 fighter jets, a significant upgrade from Kyiv's Cold War-era fleet of MiGs and Sukhois.

The transfer of F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine would raise the question of NATO's involvement in the conflict, Russia's Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov said in remarks published early on Monday.

The Russian Foreign Ministry, in the same statement, accused the G7 of "flirting" with non-Western states in an effort to stymie the development of their ties with Moscow and Beijing.

It said it was convinced though that the forum was incapable of reflecting the interests of the Asia-Pacific region, South Asia, the Middle East, Africa or Latin America.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Texas governor sends migrants to Denver

By MAY ZHOU in Houston
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First, he asked fellow governors to send law enforcement officers and soldiers to "help secure" the border. Then he chose Denver as the fifth destination city to bus migrants to from the Texas border, and the first group of migrants arrived in the Colorado capital last week.

Republican Texas Governor Greg Abbott continues to make the border a major political issue on his agenda despite that migrant crossings have dropped significantly since Title 42 expired on May 11.

Abbott said that his request to other governors was prompted by the end of Title 42, a pandemic-era policy that allowed authorities to expel migrants without letting them request asylum, for health reasons.

He accused President Joe Biden of "systematically dismantling every effective border security policy" in his to other governors asking for help.

"In the federal government's absence, we, as governors, must band together to combat Biden's ongoing border crisis and ensure the safety and security that all Americans deserve," Abbott said in his letter.

Republican Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, who made news when he flew people to Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts last year, quickly responded that he was prepared to commit 1,100 National Guard soldiers and law enforcement personnel to help Texas.

The Biden administration has issued various immigration orders in anticipation of Title 42's lifting, including providing new options to seek asylum without going to the southern border and imposing stiffer

penalty on asylum seekers who try to cross border illegally. The day before Abbott sent out the plea letter, Blas Nuñez-Neto, an assistant secretary for border and immigration policy at the Homeland Security Department, said in a conference that border migrant encounters had dropped by half since Title 42 ended.

Denver Mayor Michael Hancock

penalty on asylum seekers who try to cross border illegally.

The day before Abbott sent out the plea letter, Blas Nuñez-Neto, an assistant secretary for border and immigration policy at the Homeland Security Department, said in a conference that border migrant encounters had dropped by half since Title 42 ended.

In the days before Title 42 ended late on the night of May 17, immigration agents had about 10,000 encounters a day with migrants at the southern border; that number has dropped to about 5,000 a day, according to Nuñez-Neto.

Busing migrants to Democrat-led cities has gained Abbott a lot of attention. So far, he has bused 19,000 migrants to New York, Washington DC, Chicago and Philadelphia.

The first group of 41 migrants busied by Abbott arrived in downtown Denver on the afternoon of May 18 near the Colorado State Capitol Building.

"Until the president and his administration step up and fulfill their constitutional duty to secure the border, Texas will continue busing migrants to self-declared sanctuary cities like Denver to provide much-needed relief to our small border towns," Abbott said in a statement.

"It's nothing more than political theater," Denver Mayor Michael Hancock said. "Buffoonery is what it is, and it's really a very insensitive, disingenuous act from someone who claims to be a servant of the people, and he really isn't."

Denver is already struggling to accommodate migrants. The city's website showed that it has received more than 10,000 migrants since last December, and currently is sheltering more than 1,200 migrants in five shelters. Denver said it has spent about \$17 million on aid while receiving only \$900,000 from Washington.

"What none of us need is more political theater and partisan gamesmanship pitting jurisdictions against each other and exacerbating this situation instead of advocating for real solutions to this challenge," Hancock said in a statement. He also said Denver intends to send Abbott a bill "for any additional support we have to provide now because of his failure at managing his own state".

Hancock has said that Denver is not a "sanctuary city" for migrants, but in 2017, the City Council adopted an ordinance prohibiting "city employees from collecting information on immigration or citizenship status; prohibits the sharing of any other information about individuals for purposes of immigration enforcement; and memorializes predominant practices by prohibiting use of city resources or City cooperation with civil immigration enforcement".

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

SOLARIZATION OF PAKISTAN RAILWAYS

FOR 100% INVESTMENT, DESIGN, SUPPLY, INSTALLATION, COMMISSIONING, O&M ACROSS PAKISTAN VIA POWER PURCHASE AGREEMENT (PPA) OF 25 YEARS

Pakistan Railways (PR) is considering Solarization of its network spread across Pakistan under the Public Private Partnership Authority (PPPA) (Amendment Act 2021) through Public Procurement Regulatory Authority Rule 36(b) Single Stage Two Envelope, for 25 years on Build-Own-Operate-Transfer (BOOT) Mode. The tentative capacity of solar systems (On-Grid / Hybrid) to be installed over the Pakistan Railway infrastructure is approximately 45 MW. The package distribution is:

Sr. #	Packages (Division)	Locations	Tentative Load (MW)	Bid Security
1	Package - 1	Peshawar Division	3	PKR 2.5 Million
2	Package - 2	Rawalpindi Division	5	PKR 3.0 Million
3	Package - 3	Lahore Division	20	PKR 10 Million
4	Package - 4	Multan Division	4	PKR 2.5 Million
5	Package - 5	Sukkur Division	5	PKR 3.0 Million
6	Package - 6	Quetta Division	3	PKR 2.5 Million
7	Package - 7	Karachi Division	5	PKR 3.0 Million

Pakistan Railways is inviting Technically & Financially sound, well reputed national/international firms and Joint Ventures (JV) to undertake the project on Public Private Partnership (PPP) / BOOT Mode for twenty five (25) years.

- National Firms participating individually or as JV shall be registered with Securities Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), FBR (i.e. the NTN certificate) and AEDB.
- International firms participating individually or as JV shall be registered with Board of Investment (BOI) or any other registration authority of respective country.
- Firms/JV can apply for single, multiple or all packages by submitting separate proposals for each package. Proposal for each package will be dealt as separate tender.
- Interested firms, JV can purchase bidding documents from undersigned office during working hours against written request and payment of PKR 5,000 non-refundable fee (for each package) in cash.
- Pre Bid meeting will be held on **8th June, 2023**, in the committee room No.1, Pakistan Railways Headquarters Office, Lahore at **11:00 PST**.
- All interested firms shall submit bid security as stated above against each packages in the form of CDR / Bank Guarantee in favor of FA & CAO/PR, Pakistan Railways Headquarters Office, Empress Road, Lahore Pakistan.
- Bidding documents completed in all respect must reach the address mentioned below not later than **24th June, 2023, upto 11:00 PST**. Technical proposals will be opened on the same day at the same venue at **12:00 PST** in presence of bidders/representatives who choose to attend.
- Further information/clarification may be obtained from the undersigned on any working day during working hours.

Mr. Shaqat Jamal | Chief Electrical Engineer,
Pakistan Railways, Headquarters Office, Lahore - Pakistan, E-mail: ceo@pakrail.gov.pk
Ph# +92-42- 99201690, 042-99201803, Website: http://www.pakrail.gov.pk

GLOBAL LENS



From left: Doctor Zhang Chunyan examines a child at Orotta Hospital in Asmara, Eritrea, on May 9. Doctor Tian Qian conducts a CT scan for a patient at Orotta Hospital, on May 9. Doctor Cheng Xuguang examines a child at Halibet Hospital in Asmara, Eritrea, on May 9. PHOTOS BY WANG GUANSEN / XINHUA

Medical teams improve lives

Chinese aid strengthens public health capacity in Africa

Chinese doctors are putting smiles on the faces of Eritreans who have been grappling with health problems.

Doctors of the 16th Chinese medical team to Eritrea have conducted 346 surgeries and 2,120 medical imaging examinations since they arrived in the East African country on April 17. This year marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between

China and Eritrea. Since 1997, nearly 300 Chinese doctors have worked in Eritrea.

In addition to Eritrea, medical teams sent by China are in operation in 56 countries, including 45 in Africa. Since 1963, when China sent its first medical team to Algeria, the country has sent about 30,000 medical workers to 76 countries and regions, providing 290 million medical diagnoses and treatment services, according to China's

National Health Commission.

Dennis Munene, executive director of the China-Africa Center at the Africa Policy Institute in Nairobi, Kenya, said China's medical assistance over the past six decades has played a significant role in improving people's health and the public health capacity of many African countries, resulting in a large decline in mortality rates.

CHINA DAILY—AGENCIES



Doctor Zhu Zhenjun (left), head of the 16th Chinese medical team to Eritrea, checks the X-ray scans of a patient at Halibet Hospital, on May 9.



Members of the Chinese medical team pose for a group photo with local students at the gate of Halibet Hospital, on May 9.



Left: Orotta Hospital in Asmara, Eritrea, on May 9.



Right: Doctor Xing Hongbin (center) checks the condition of a patient at Halibet Hospital, on May 9.

BUSINESS

Swarovski charts plan for sparkling growth

CEO vows more store openings in Chinese cities to tap burgeoning Gen Z demand

By SHI JING
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Austrian jewelry and accessories brand Swarovski will achieve a record rate of store openings in China this year, the company's CEO Alexis Nasard said in an exclusive interview with China Daily.

Nasard said this during a visit to China in mid-May — his first to the country since it optimized its COVID-19 control measures.

The new Swarovski stores will be located in both first-tier cities and smaller ones. Meanwhile, the company will have refurbished 70 percent of its existing stores in China by the end of this year, said Nasard.

Apart from better brand building, the company's stress on physical stores can be attributed to data that 75 percent of its sales revenue is generated by offline channels, while the rest is from online retailing, Nasard said.

Swarovski saw double-digit growth in its China stores in April. Consumers are returning to the stores, doing "a lot of revenge spending". As a result, the company's combined online and offline sales in China are back to their pre-pandemic levels.

This is in line with market consultancy Bain & Co's prediction in February, which said that China's luxury market will recover before the first quarter wraps up.

"The recovery in people's con-

sumption appetite is putting China slowly on track to become Swarovski's No 1 market," Nasard said.

While the United States is still the top moneymaker for Swarovski, which is expected to account for 12 percent of the company's annual revenue this year, China, its second-largest market, is not too far behind, expecting to contribute 11 percent to Swarovski's annual turnover.

“The recovery in people's consumption appetite is putting China slowly on track to become Swarovski's No 1 market.”

Alexis Nasard, CEO of Austrian jewelry and accessories brand Swarovski

According to Nasard, the spike in personal savings in China during the pandemic period can be translated into much growth potential for Swarovski.

According to the People's Bank of China, the central bank, household deposits in China increased by 17.84 trillion yuan (\$2.55 trillion) in 2022, up more than 80 percent year-on-year. Household savings continued to increase by 9.9 trillion yuan in the first quarter of this year.

However, a turning point was seen in April, as household savings decreased by 1.2 trillion yuan — the first decline in 13 months.

Although cyclical factors and lowering interest rates also exerted some impact, the contraction in household savings has reflected people's rising risk appetite and consumption willingness, said Ming Ming, chief economist of CITIC Securities.

The National Bureau of Statistics said on Tuesday that China's total retail sales of consumer goods exceeded 3.49 trillion yuan in April, up 18.4 percent year-on-year and reported the growth rate rose by 7.8 percentage points than that in March.

People's interest in luxury products is recovering, as 52 percent of Chinese mainland consumers will increase their luxury expenditure this year, which is higher than the 2020 level of 44 percent, according to a report jointly released by media group Ruder Finn and research firm CSG Intage in March.

Generation Z — those born between 1995 and 2009 — should not be overlooked as they will soon become the largest luxury consumer group, according to experts of professional services provider KPMG.

The same trend has been noticed by Swarovski, as Gen Z and millennials now represent two-thirds of the company's consumers, said Nasard.

The sophistication of Chinese consumers and the expansion of the middle-income group have pointed to much growth potential in China, he added.

In light of the multiple growth engines in China, Swarovski will launch three China-specific capsule collections in the second half of this year. The company will launch a global photography-themed brand campaign this year — with one in China in early June — and a cultural event in Shanghai by the year-end, said Nasard.



An employee of Alps Alpine, a Japanese electromechanical components maker, works at the company's facility in Wuxi, Jiangsu province, in July. LI BO / XINHUA

Wuxi delegation's 3-nation tour leads to blossoming of economic, trade ties

By CANG WEI in Nanjing
cangwei@chinadaily.com.cn

A high-level delegation from Wuxi led by its mayor Zhao Jianjun visited Singapore, the Republic of Korea and Japan from May 4 to May 12 to strengthen economic, trade and cultural ties, and signed 79 cooperation projects amounting to a total contract value of \$12.2 billion with the top companies of these countries, according to the Wuxi municipal government.

Wuxi, in Jiangsu province, has topped Chinese cities in per capita GDP in 2020, 2021 and 2022, and has established a market-oriented, rule-based and globalized environment to bolster its economy and trade, it said. The city has attracted more than 7,200 foreign-funded companies, and its use of foreign capital has surpassed \$80 billion.

Last year, foreign-funded companies contributed to 30 percent of the city's industrial output and tax revenue, according to the statement.

"We will take this exchange as an opportunity to further expand high-level opening-up and provide better services, preferential policies and a comfortable environment," Zhao said in a statement.

In Singapore, the delegation held an international cooperation and exchange conference and communicated with leading enterprises and universities to deepen understanding and cooperation between Wuxi and the city-state.

Wuxi and Singapore's Sembcorp Group agreed to build the Wuxi

Singapore Science and Technology Innovation City to introduce advanced technologies and leading enterprises to the city from the Belt and Road Initiative markets and member nations of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

Singapore has stood out as a friendly, trustworthy and reliable partner in Wuxi's history of international exchanges, according to the municipal government. Wuxi's trade value with Singapore touched \$4.12 billion last year, an increase of 11.1 percent year-on-year.

Singapore has invested in more than 700 enterprises in Wuxi with a cumulative capital of \$16.4 billion as of December, while Wuxi's enterprises have invested in 61 projects in Singapore with an agreed investment amount of \$1.06 billion as of February, the municipal government said.

According to Hu Zhuojun, executive director of Singapore's THI Industrial Investment Group, Jiangsu is an attraction for investors as it is one of the most economically developed regions in China, and has a strong industrial foundation.

"We will build an industrial park with Singapore characteristics in Wuxi, based on the previous investment experience of Singapore by introducing enterprises from the marine and shipbuilding industry," he was quoted as saying by the Jiangsu Broadcasting Corp.

Kim Doo-gyeom, mayor of Ulsan, South Korea, said the city's plan was to continuously deepen cooperation between the two cities in areas such as artificial intelli-

gence, new energy and the biological industry.

The Republic of Korea and Japan are important trading partners of Wuxi, especially in the fields of integrated circuits, new energy, bio-pharmaceuticals and automotive industries.

By the end of last year, ROK had invested in 742 companies in Wuxi, with a cumulative amount of \$25.84 billion, accounting for nearly one-third of Jiangsu's use of capital from the country.

Last year, Japan became Wuxi's second-largest trade partner with a trade value of \$10.68 billion. As of the end of 2022, Japan had invested \$16.65 billion in 1,278 companies in the city.

"The rapid development of Wuxi's integrated circuit industry and its attraction of South Korean capital have proved the strong manufacturing industry and support capabilities of the city," said Chen Ping, director of the Wuxi Investment Promotion Center.

The city now has 36 of the 41 major industrial categories in the country, Chen said.

To deepen cooperation, the Wuxi delegation unveiled multiple service platforms, including the Wuxi (Seoul) Business Innovation Exchange Center, Wuxi (Tokyo) Business Innovation Exchange Center and Wuxi Cultural Tourism (Tokyo) Promotion Center.

Wuxi said it would construct five to eight new high-quality international communities and more than three international medical institutions over the next three years in order to provide a better environment for global investors to start businesses in the city.

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The Hong Kong Investment Corporation Limited (HKIC) is wholly owned by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. The HKIC consolidates the management of the investment activities of the "Hong Kong Growth Portfolio", "Greater Bay Area Investment Fund", "Strategic Tech Fund", and the newly established "Co-Investment Fund". The objectives of the HKIC are to identify investment opportunities and strategically promote the development of target industries, so as to enhance the long-term competitiveness and economic vitality of Hong Kong while generating investment return. In this regard, it pools together relevant resources under the steer of the Government to attract and support foreign and local enterprises to further develop Hong Kong.

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Applicants not contacted within eight weeks from the closing date may consider their applications unsuccessful. All applications will be handled in strict confidence by authorised personnel and will only be used for recruitment related purposes.

Asianet

Xiling gold mine shines brighter with discovery of 200-ton reserve

By ZHAO RUIXUE in Jinan
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The total gold reserve of Xiling gold mine in East China's Shandong province has risen to 580 metric tons after the recent discovery of nearly 200 tons of reserves in the mine, according to the Shandong Provincial Department of Natural Resources.

The discovery makes Xiling the largest single gold reserve mine in China, the department said last week.

Shandong Gold Group Co, the owner of Xiling gold mine, announced in 2017 that the company detected 382.58 tons of gold reserve in the Xiling mine.

Based on the price of gold in the Chinese market on Thursday, the gold reserve in Xiling mine represents a potential value of more than 200 billion yuan (\$28.5 billion).

Xiling gold mine is located in the region between Laizhou and Zhaozhou, the two coastal county-level cities of Yantai in Shandong province. The region is one of the largest gold production areas in China, with the gold reserves and output ranking first in the country, according to the China Gold Association (CGA).

North of the Xiling mine is the

“Gold reserve in the mine is mainly distributed at a depth of 1,000 meters to 2,500 meters, making Xiling the deepest gold mine discovered in China.”

Feng Tao, vice-general manager of Shandong Gold Geological and Mineral Exploration Co Ltd

Sanshandao island area where a huge gold orebody was identified in 2016. The Sanshandao gold ore field is the first marine gold field discovered in China with a gold reserve of 470 tons.

"Xiling gold mine is a representative of deep prospecting projects. Gold reserve in the mine is mainly distributed at a depth of 1,000 meters to 2,500 meters, making Xiling the deepest gold mine discovered in China," said Feng Tao, vice-general manager of Shandong Gold Geological and Mineral Exploration Co Ltd.

Explorers drilled 180 boreholes into the mine with a total length of

over 300,000 meters, among which the deepest reached 4,006 meters down into the ground.

The gold orebody at Xiling mine extends more than 2,050 meters and part of it has a thickness of 62.35 meters. The gold reserve has been detected to have an average gold grade of 4.26 grams per ton, Feng said.

"Xiling gold mine is expected to maintain production that has a daily process capacity of 10,000 tons of ore working for more than 30 years," he said.

Both gold consumption and investment demand for gold in the domestic market saw an increase during the first quarter. Gold consumption volume reached 291.58 tons in the first quarter, a 12.03 percent year-on-year growth, according to the CGA.

Sales of gold jewelry reached 189.61 tons in the first quarter, a year-on-year increase of 12.29 percent, while gold bars and coin sales totaled 83.87 tons, up 20.47 percent year-on-year.

Data from the People's Bank of China show that China has increased its gold reserves for six consecutive months, with the central bank's gold reserves reaching 66.76 million ounces by the end of April, an increase of 260,000 ounces compared to the end of March.

BUSINESSFOCUS



African entrepreneurs partner with China for success, growth

Access to large market, technical know-how boon for budding businesses

By WANG ZHUOQIONG in Beijing and ZHU YOUFANG in Changsha

Silas Musyoka, based in his home country of Kenya, has worked as a sales growth manager at Chinese e-commerce firm Kilimall for five years.

"I'm still learning about the ever-growing e-commerce sector in this country. I believe that Kilimall will have a big impact shaping many economies in Africa," said Musyoka, 32, who obtained his master's degree in political science from Jinan University in Guangzhou.

Kilimall is Kenya's leading online shopping mall. It was set up in 2014 with the motto of "Enriching Lives for Africa", and has more than 10 million registered users.

The company is among other e-commerce firms banking on the promising trade opportunities between China and African countries.

Musyoka said Kilimall has helped him better understand the market and supply chain dynamics in his home country and what it takes to succeed in the tech industry, which is still in its infancy in Kenya. He said he has witnessed how e-commerce has shaped local businesses.

"In this regard, I have been an influencer to most of my peers who are looking to start, establish and grow their businesses in Kenya. I am in a position to coach and guide them in their businesses thanks to the knowledge that I have gained while working at Kilimall," he said. Musyoka first visited China as a businessman and later as a student, juggling school and work.

"Life in China is fast-paced, where you have to adjust really fast to changing situations. More than what is taught in class, your experiences in the markets, factories, historical and tourist sites and interactions with people also contribute just as much to the learning experiences," he said.

Musyoka said China has a lot to offer in terms of knowledge, skills and technology.

"We still have a long way to go to gain the skills and the knowledge required to build stable e-commerce platforms in this region," he said. Musyoka said Kilimall has been helpful in both those areas. "We have a taste of what China-Africa partnership has to offer."

He said China is a good partner for Africa in terms of filling in the gaps in the supply chain and the technology that is necessary to help small businesses grow in Kenya.

"Having built e-commerce giants, China has the knowledge to help us have the same experience



Top: Entrepreneurs exchange opinions on cross-border e-commerce at the Djibouti International Free Trade Zone in September 2022. DONG JIANGHUI / XINHUA

Above: A teacher instructs an international student from Africa in e-commerce-related skills in Chongqing in May 2020. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

“Having built e-commerce giants, China has the knowledge to help us have the same experience here in Africa.”

Silas Musyoka, sales growth manager at Chinese e-commerce firm Kilimall

here in Africa," Musyoka said.

Kilimall, which considers itself a Kenyan company, was founded by Yang Tao, a former marketing executive for a leading Chinese tech firm's branch in Kenya.

The company has now developed its marketing, payment, distribution centers and customer services in Kenya, with operational and technology teams based in Changsha, capital of Hunan province.

"We hope to be viewed as Africa's answer to Taobao or JD.com," said Guan Jian, vice-president of Kilimall. "The profound knowledge from our executive teams, made up of veteran Chinese professionals stationed in Africa, has empowered our firm to understand the nuances in both Africa and China, to match resources from the two sides."

Kilimall doubled its revenue last year and has become one of the top

three most downloaded e-commerce mobile applications in Kenya, Guan said.

The company is looking to boost bilateral trade between China and African countries, especially through exporting more African goods, such as coffee, nuts, red wine and aloe, to China to meet the demand for higher-quality consumer goods, he said.

In the first half of last year, revenue from trade between China and Africa reached \$137.4 billion, up 16.6 percent year-on-year, according to the website of China's Ministry of Commerce. Imports from Africa to China were \$60.6 billion, an increase of 19.1 percent year-on-year. Exports from China to African countries were \$76.8 billion, growing 14.7 percent year-on-year.

Kilimall's presence in Kenya has helped expand trade. The company's local employees and distribution networks in Kenya add value to sourcing quality products in Africa, Guan said.

"It still takes time and effort for Chinese consumers to become more aware of the value of African products," he added.

African entrepreneurs have been enthusiastic about shipping more goods to China.

Njagi Kevin Murimi, 30, who started Changsha Connect Trade Co Ltd four years ago, said he came to China first for the sheer size of the market.

Murimi said Kenya's population

is about the same as Hunan's. "China has offered a huge market for me," he said.

After studying and working in Changsha for years, Murimi combined what he had learned there with China's advanced technology and policies, the value of its currency and the availability of products in China.

Last year, the trade volume of Murimi's firm was around 400,000 yuan (\$56,903). His company exports mostly nail polish, wigs and electronics to Africa. He exports nail polish, his bestseller, to Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda.

Murimi's family business in Kenya, operating coffee processing plants, has exported coffee to the United States for over 10 years. He said he plans to accelerate the company's business development in China, where the coffee sector still has great potential.

The company has been in contact with retail coffee chains and other Chinese retail stores, such as supermarkets, and it also expects to sell online.

"Starting this year, we are working on more products for export and import, including products like avocados," he said. "Kenya has become one of the countries in Africa that has been authorized to work with the Chinese government to export fresh avocados to China," he said.

Contact the writers at wangzhuoqiong@chinadaily.com.cn

Rise in online trade with Africa benefits consumers

By FAN FEIFEI
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Ethiopian coffee, Kenyan black tea, Tanzanian cashew nuts, chili sauce from Rwanda and chocolate from Ghana — these are among the affordable products from Africa offered to Chinese consumers, who are embracing cross-border online shopping for high-quality, imported and foreign-brand items.

Chinese online retailers are ramping up efforts to expand their footprint in African nations, helping local farmers sell their specialties by leveraging new technologies such as livestreaming and providing related cross-border e-commerce training courses. It's part of a broader push to bolster Sino-African economic and trade cooperation.

In February, the Rwanda Development Board and Alibaba.com, Chinese tech heavyweight Alibaba Group's business-to-business platform, signed a new e-commerce agreement, saying that an initial group of 20 Rwandan small and medium-sized enterprises will sell their products through Alibaba.com as a way to start their digitalized operations.

Alibaba.com will provide comprehensive e-commerce operational guidance and a full range of support services for the Rwandan SMEs, such as web design, training and counseling, to help them establish online stores, select suitable products and optimize store operations, the company said.

"This partnership will not only help Rwandan enterprises improve the sales and exports of their products, but also facilitate their digital transformation," said Zhang Entao, deputy general manager of the global supplier development department at Alibaba.com.

In 2018, Rwanda agreed to work with Alibaba through the electronic World Trade Platform initiative to export local specialties. The concept of eWTP was proposed by Alibaba founder Jack Ma to connect worldwide SMEs through e-commerce, technology and streamlined administrative procedures. Rwanda is the first African nation to sign an eWTP deal with Alibaba.

Rwanda's spicy chili sauce has been listed on Alibaba's fresh food chain Freshippo. Rwandan coffee has also landed on Tmall Global, Alibaba's cross-border e-commerce site.

"E-commerce has brought more and more African goods to Chinese families," said James Kimonyo, Rwandan ambassador to China.

There are many local specialties in Rwanda, such as avocado oil, that will be popular with Chinese consumers, he said. Kimonyo has taken part in quite a few livestreaming sessions to promote his nation's products to Chinese consumers.

In order to satisfy Chinese consumers' rising demand for high-quality products made in Africa, JD Super, the online supermarket arm of Chinese e-commerce platform JD.com, has opened online national pavilions covering a wide range of commodities from Tanzania and South Africa. Currently, JD Super has intro-

duced nearly 200 specialties from African countries, such as South African wine, abalone and rooibos tea, an infusion made from a native herb. Nuts, fresh oysters and frozen seafood from South Africa are also expected to be available in China in the near future, the company said.

China's cross-border e-commerce sector has been growing exponentially over the past few years as the country's middle- and high-income shoppers demand increasingly diversified and personalized products and services, experts said.

The nation's cross-border e-commerce reached 2.11 trillion yuan (\$300.2 billion) in 2022, a year-on-year increase of 9.8 percent, according to the General Administration of Customs.

Unlike Europe and the United States, where the reach for online shopping is relatively high, Africa has enormous growth potential in the cross-border e-commerce sector, said Zhang Zhouping, a senior analyst of business-to-business and cross-border activities at the Internet Economy Institute, a domestic consultancy.

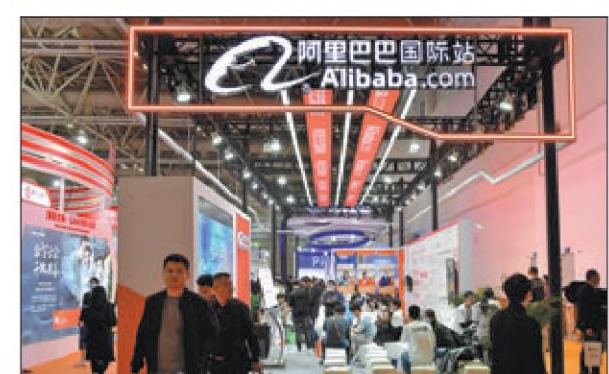
"As a new form of foreign trade, cross-border e-commerce has witnessed rapid growth during the COVID-19 pandemic and become a new engine of the country's foreign trade development," Zhang said. He emphasized that digital trade is expected to play a bigger role in promoting economic and trade cooperation between China and Africa, and empower the development of the real economy.

According to a report from the JD Consumption and Industry Development Research Institute, Chinese consumers are increasingly demanding diversified and high-end consumer goods, with their expenditure on imported products being a significant driver in that area. JD has procured more than 500 billion yuan in imported products over the past three years, the company said.

"Chinese e-commerce platforms are accelerating their presence in overseas markets to seek new sources of revenue, as growth in the domestic e-commerce sector is slowing," said Chen Tao, a Beijing-based analyst at internet consultancy Analysys. He said Chinese enterprises should step up localization efforts in overseas markets and comply with local laws and regulations to ensure they become reputed brands overseas.

Zhang Tianbing, head of Deloitte Asia-Pacific consumer products and retail industry, said, "With the expansion of domestic demand and advances in emerging retail technologies, China has introduced preferential policies, such as lowering import taxes and expanding the range of goods allowed to be imported."

The boom in celebrity livestreaming has also spurred cross-border e-commerce purchases by domestic consumers, Zhang said, adding that overseas brands are moving to cross-border platforms as they expand their distribution channels in light of COVID-19 disruptions to offline retail.



Top: Farmers pick tea leaves at a tea plantation in Kericho, Kenya, in August 2021. BILLY MUTAI / GETTY IMAGES

Above: Visitors gather at the booth of Alibaba.com during a cross-border e-commerce expo in Fuzhou, Fujian province, in March. LYU MING / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

COMMENT

Editorials

Quad offers destabilizing agenda of empty promises, coercion and division

Although the Quad summit scheduled to open in Sydney on May 24 was canceled as US President Joe Biden had to return home for debt-ceiling negotiations with the speaker of the House of Representatives, the leaders of the four countries — Japan, Australia and India being the other three — still managed to hold a de facto summit in the Japanese city of Hiroshima on Saturday.

As the long joint statement they issued on Sunday indicates, despite the meeting being arranged in a hurry and downsized to a brief roundtable talk, the third in-person meeting of the leaders still had a busy anti-China agenda to discuss. An agenda complicated by the fact that the onus is on Washington to prevent Sino-US relations from taking any misstep that might lead to a conflict.

It is for this reason that the Quad has stopped trying to coerce countries in the region to cut their ties with China. Instead, as the joint statement made clear, the Quad is trying to pull regional countries to its side.

To achieve this aim, the Quad has become more specific in its proposed cooperation with members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Pacific Islands Forum and the Indian Ocean Rim Association, offering support for their green and digital development, and to strengthen their responses to climate change and terrorism.

The joint statement shows the Quad has apparently done more homework than before as it has mentioned almost all the major initiatives, strategies, programs and plans these countries have

put forward or have already implemented, collectively and individually, including the ASEAN Outlook on the "Indo-Pacific", the Pacific Island Forum's 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and the Indian Ocean Rim Association Outlook on the "Indo-Pacific".

However, knowing these countries' concerns is far from enough to help them address them. Judging from the US' poor track record in matching its words with deeds in providing technology and funding when it comes to its assistance programs for the region, it remains to be seen to what extent the Quad will fulfill its grand promises this time.

That all countries in the region are mentioned in the joint statement, except China, the biggest economy, the largest trading country, the most important logistics hub and the biggest supporter of regional development, fully exposes the divisive nature of the Quad's proposed cooperation.

The countries the Quad intends to support should also be aware that while most of the assistance will only exist on paper, that which is provided will come with strings attached.

Also, it will only be a matter of time for Tokyo and Canberra to realize that the mechanism is just a harness Washington has imposed on them — India is more of a taker than a giver under the framework — so that they are put in a better position to pull the US chariot in the latter's "competition" with China.

According to their joint statement, as "Indo-Pacific" countries, the Quad partners are deeply invested in the region's success. If that is the case they should be working together with China not against it.

Pacific Island countries not US' geopolitical pawns

The United States has been paying greater attention to the Pacific Island nations as part of the strategy to counter China's rising influence in the region.

Among the moves to deepen its relations with the countries in the region are a defense pact with Papua New Guinea, which was signed on Monday. This gives US troops access to the Pacific nation's ports and airports. It has also signed new strategic pacts with Palau and Micronesia, and plans to sign a similar one with the Marshall Islands in the coming weeks.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is scheduled to hold separate talks with the 14 Pacific Island countries' leaders who have gathered in the Papua New Guinea capital, Port Moresby, for a summit.

China, which has in recent years deepened its exchanges and cooperation with the Pacific Island nations in such areas as public services, education and the fishing industry, has made it clear that it is not interested in engaging in a geopolitical contest with the US in the Pacific Islands' region, or elsewhere.

Thus it is worrying to see the US continuously pushing ahead with the efforts to counter what it sees as a challenge from China's cooperative relations with countries in the region, which bodes ill for peace and stability in the region and beyond.

The plan to open a new geopolitical front against China among Pacific Island nations comes after the US announced the Pacific Partnership Strategy in September 2022, in which it underscored what it claims is "pressure and economic coercion" from China that "risks undermining the peace, prosperity, and security of the region".

Yet despite the latest deals, whether the Pacific Island nations will join the US-orchestrated anti-China chorus is doubtful, mainly because nearly all of the countries see climate change, not China, as the major threat.

The nature of the US' charm offensive among the island nations — which is to contain China's influence rather than address their development needs — determines its Pacific strategy will not go very far, especially given the Pacific Island leaders do not want to be forced to choose sides between China and the US. For example, Papua New Guinea Prime Minister James Marape has denied the signing of the deal with the US would stop his country from working with China, an important trade partner.

The US should contribute more to the development of the Pacific Island nations, rather than trying to cajole them to get on its anti-China chariot.

Federal debt limit a harmful selfish game

Having cut short a trip to Asia to resume talks on raising the US debt ceiling ahead of the US Treasury's June 1 deadline for Congress to authorize more borrowing, US President Joe Biden spoke with Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy by phone on his way back to the United States.

Biden told reporters that the phone call "went well" on his arrival at the White House on Sunday night, with McCarthy saying earlier in the day that it had been "productive".

But that remains to be seen, with the two continuing their negotiations on Monday.

Ahead of those talks, there was no sign of either side being prepared to give ground. The US government debt crisis has entered the 10-day countdown with some observers saying the two sides are playing a game of chicken.

Republicans are demanding harsh social welfare spending cuts to reduce the US deficit as the condition for their approval to raise the debt limit, while Biden has countered with an agreement to reduce some spending and raising new revenue by increasing taxes on the rich and corporations. Republicans have refused to accept any such tax increases.

If they fail to strike a debt deal this time,

Washington will be unable to pay its bills. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in an interview on Sunday that "My assessment is that the odds of reaching June 15th, while being able to pay all of our bills, is quite low".

Failure to do so would severely damage the US' global leadership as it would trigger shock waves worldwide and tarnish its image.

That Biden canceled his planned visits to Australia and Papua New Guinea for the negotiations with McCarthy shows the graveness of the issue.

Yet even with a US debt default within sight and the markets becoming increasingly jittery, neither side wants to give ground with next year's presidential election looming on the horizon.

No wonder when the House Republican leadership and the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus raised proposals to resolve the debt ceiling issue on April 20, the Peter G. Peterson Foundation said in a statement "this is a moment for leadership that puts our nation above party politics".

That proved not to be the moment.

For the two parties, their political wrangling has become a game that takes precedence over everything.

Damn the consequences.

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Online charity contributes to modernization and prosperity

The "Chinese example" of internet philanthropy is undergoing constant innovations, a report issued by a recent internet good summit in Wuhan, Hubei province, points out.

Driven by the digital boom, technological progress and enterprise innovation, and under the guarantee of policies and laws, China's internet-based charity undertaking is advancing in an innovative and higher-quality manner. This year marks the 8th anniversary of the enactment of the Charity Law in China, and the past eight years have witnessed the growth, formation and development of the internet-based charity cause in the country.

According to statistics from the Ministry of Civil Affairs, donations raised through internet platforms in China increased from 2.5 billion yuan (\$355.87 million) in 2017 to nearly 10 billion yuan in 2021, with more than 10 billion people participating in internet charity in

the past three years.

China's internet philanthropy has achieved high-quality development thanks to its rapid economic growth, technological innovation and high-quality economic and social development. A report issued by Credit Suisse on global wealth shows that by the end of 2021, global household wealth reached \$463.6 trillion, and China's wealth reached \$85.1 trillion, ranking second in the world. Between 2000 and 2021, the median wealth of Chinese people rose from \$3,133 to \$26,800. In 2021, the scale of China's digital economy reached 45.5 trillion yuan, more than double that in the early part of the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20), accounting for 39.8 percent of the GDP.

China's rapid economic growth, huge wealth accumulation and strong support from the digital economy have laid an important foundation for the development of internet philanthropy. Even the

government has improved the charity policy and regulation system, established a support and encouragement policy system that consists of government service purchase, tax and other incentives, and designated 30 organizations for online charity fundraising.

The top authorities have stressed that China will establish a coordinated income distribution system featuring primary distribution, redistribution and third distribution, and guide and support capable enterprises, social organizations and individuals to take an active part in public welfare and charity undertakings. The healthy, sustainable and high-quality development of China's internet charity will surely play a greater role in building a Chinese path to modernization featuring common prosperity, harmony between material and spiritual civilization, and harmonious coexistence between man and nature.

— BEIJING YOUTH DAILY

Western media organizations happy to hype

Even Micron, the US chip giant, might not have expected China's ban of its products to make waves in Western media reports.

Hours after China announced that Micron had failed its security review and asked key domestic network security management companies to suspend purchase of its products, the ban made headlines in almost every Western media outlet. A majority of them, if not all, even tried to link it to restrictions the United States and its allies had imposed on China, implying that the move was political.

It is good to note that even Western media outlets realize the unfair restrictions their governments have

imposed on China. For far too long, the US has been abusing its dominance in the global technological sector to contain China. Without any solid basis, using the guise of "national security", the US has launched attacks against Huawei and ZTE. It has blocked Huawei in their country, even though that means their 5G network construction will lag far behind.

The US and its ally Canada even detained Huawei senior executive Meng Wanzhou for 1,028 days under an unsubstantiated charge.

While reporting about those incidents, the Western media outlets were careful to categorize them as business news, not even once men-

tioning the word "politics". However, now that China has suspended a US company's product out of security concerns, the same Western media outlets are crying "politics". No wonder some of the outlets are not taken seriously in their own country, often being criticized for peddling fake news. They are rarely known to describe things as they happened, but as what they believe should have happened.

As a company, what Micron needs to do is to improve its security measures to clear China's national security review. The Western media is not helping much by hyping things up.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Sunak should stop shooting his mouth off

Since the pressure from Washington for him to be tough on Beijing was enough for United Kingdom Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to openly call China "biggest challenge of our age to global security and prosperity" in a news conference after the G7 summit in Hiroshima, Japan, on Sunday, nobody knows how far the UK leader will go if Washington tightens the screws on him.

Parroting Washington's rhetoric, he said that China is the "only country with both the means and intent to reshape the world order", and "this is all about de-risking, not de-coupling". When asked to expound on what he meant by that, Sunak said: "We will work together as the G7 and with other countries

to make sure that we can de-risk ourselves and the vulnerability of supply chains that we have seen from China, take the steps necessary to protect ourselves against hostile investment and do so in a way that doesn't damage each other."

Sunak was the only leader of the rich club to be so loose-lipped. It is clear that he is betting all the United Kingdom's national interests on the United States.

He has also taken a leaf out of Washington's playbook blaming the UK's domestic economic and social problems on external challenges, even though everyone without bias knows that China is a builder of world peace, contributor to global development and defender of the international order.

Meanwhile the US and a few of its vassals, with the UK being a case in point, are constantly interfering in other countries' internal affairs and provoking confrontation and confrontation. It is they who are the biggest challenge to global stability and prosperity.

It is suggested that Sunak devote more energy to dealing with the UK's own domestic political, economic and social problems, instead of always blindly following the US, stirring up trouble everywhere, and creating division and confrontation. Sunak should immediately stop slandering China so as not to cause further damage to China-UK relations, for which the Sunak government should be held accountable.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

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COMMENT

Jophey Chan

Xi'an summit rebuts Western lies

The just-concluded China-Central Asia Summit, held in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, has elevated China-Central Asian cooperation to new heights. In the 10th year of the Belt and Road Initiative, China and the Central Asian countries have cast their decisive vote to expand cooperation, especially in areas such as new energy and infrastructure development amid the fast-changing geopolitical landscape.

The Central Asia region, comprising upper-middle- and low-income economies, holds significant strategic importance due to its geographical position and natural resource reserves. Recognizing its vital importance, President Xi Jinping, in his keynote speech at the summit, said China is ready to align its development policies and plans with those of the five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) and deepen cooperation to facilitate modernization and achieve common prosperity.

But despite the positive developments, many Western media outlets have been trying to politicize the summit. Even before the summit began, some Western media outlets tried to spark controversy by splashing headlines such as "Chinese-Russian competition in Central Asia", "China filling Russia's position in Central Asia", and "Russian-Central Asian relations deteriorating", implying that relations between China and Russia, and among China and Russia and the five Central Asian countries were deteriorating.

Needless to say, these are desperate attempts by the Western media to sow the seed of discord between China, Russia on the one side and the Central Asian countries on the other.

Given their narrow political goals, the Western media overlook the fact that

The China-Central Asia Summit is a platform for promoting regional cooperation and development in various fields, from infrastructure and energy to trade and cultural exchanges.

China and Russia share a common interest in fostering regional stability and development. Cooperation between China, Russia and the Central Asian nations is mutually beneficial, not hegemonic.

Based on their economic interests, the Central Asian countries have ample reasons to pursue a comprehensive, diversified foreign policy, maintaining friendly relations with both China and Russia. The strong trade relations between the five Central Asian countries, and China and Russia prove that instead of deteriorating, overall relations among the seven countries are strengthening. The Central Asian countries import dozens of agricultural products including wheat, soybean, fruits and beef from China, with their trade volume reaching a record \$70 billion last year.

Pursuing close cooperation with China and maintaining friendly relations with Russia are not contradictory, especially when China and Russia have become comprehensive strategic partners in the new era. According to National Bureau of Statistics data for 2022, the trade volume between China and Russia reached a historic high of \$190.27 billion, with an annual growth rate of 29.3 percent.

Given these facts, relations between

China, Russia and the Central Asian countries will not be shaken easily by Western propaganda.

Western media also argue that the fact that China hosted the China-Central Asia Summit around the same time as the G7 Summit in Hiroshima, Japan, shows it wants to compete with the developed economies on the diplomatic front.

The fact is that China's foreign diplomacy is based on the principle of "building a community with a shared future", which was first officially proposed at the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012. The principle is aimed at fostering economic integration, cultural exchanges, and mutual growth and understanding. That explains why many are saying the decisions made at the Xi'an summit will help improve global connectivity and industrial cooperation.

The Xi'an summit could do so because, unlike the G7 Summit, it was not obsessed with political issues such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict, although the United States' efforts to maintain its global hegemony have been affecting the Central Asian region and the rest of the world.

The G7 Summit is nothing but a political theatre staged by a small clique which excels in smearing China and Russia. A Chinese proverb, "never gauge the heart of a man with your own measure", best describes the G7 summit. The proverb cautions people against judging others based on one's narrow yardstick, and reminds them to refrain from projecting their own biases onto others, especially those with a higher moral character.

The China-Central Asia Summit is a platform for promoting regional cooperation and development in various fields, from infrastructure and energy to trade and cultural exchanges. As China continues to deepen its ties with the Central

Asian countries, the Belt and Road Initiative plays a crucial role in enhancing regional development and economic integration.

The initiative has brought tangible benefits to the people of Central Asia. And the many infrastructure projects underway, including railways, highways and power plants, will bring more benefits to the region, especially because China has committed to providing the Central Asian countries with 26 billion yuan (\$3.71 billion) in financing support and grants to bolster regional cooperation and development.

As for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, it can tap the Central Asian market by leveraging its strength as the world's largest offshore renminbi financial hub, and by offering the most diverse range of renminbi investment, financing, and risk management products. As such, Hong Kong should take measures to deepen its economic and trade engagement with the Central Asian countries.

In conclusion, the China-Central Asia Summit serves as a testament to China's commitment to regional cooperation and development. The summit will help maintain regional stability and promote common prosperity amid the changing global political landscape. In the face of Western media's divisive narratives that attempt to make the China-Central Asia Summit a political issue and create discord among the participating countries, China's actions to achieve common prosperity speak louder than words.

The author is a member of the Hong Kong Legislative Council, the UN Association of China, and All-China Youth Federation.

The views don't reflect those of China Daily.



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Higher penalty for dog attacks will force pet owners to follow rules

Editor's note: *The pet-friendly community can provide numerous benefits for both residents and pet owners. In addition, pet owners can enjoy a sense of community with individuals who share their love for animals, writes a veteran journalist with China Daily.*

My neighbor, Grandma Li, would have taken a much longer time to reach home had it not been for the help of a young couple. "I was attacked by a dog outside our community compound," she told the neighbors in a trembling voice the other day.

She said that as she was entering the community compound, a big border collie rushed out of the bushes and jumped on her. Panicked, she began shouting while protecting herself with her hands. At the "last second" the dog was stopped by her owner who was standing about 50 meters away.

The owner called her dog back and walked away without even apologizing. A young couple passing by accompanied the visibly shaken Grandma Li to her apartment. On checking, we found that her blood pressure had shot up and heart was beating faster than normal.

Grandma Li was largely bedridden for the next few days. Often she would wake up with a start, the effects of a nightmare. The neighbors discussed whether or not to dial 110 and seek the appropriate punishment for the person responsible for Grandma Li's trauma, but after studying how the police had dealt with similar cases in the past, they decided not to do so.

So it's time the authorities revised relevant laws and regulations in order to better protect the interests and, sometimes, lives, of dog attack victims.

There are more than 50 million registered pet dogs in China. If we include the abandoned and unregistered dogs, the number could be well over 80 million. Also, an estimated 40 million people suffer dog and cat attacks each year. Considering that dogs are responsible for half of the attacks, the number of dog attacks would be about 20 million a year. Even if we assume that 90 percent of the dog attack victims are the dog owners or their family members, we still have 2 million dogs attacking non-family members every year.

Besides, reports from regional police departments show that disputes related to dog attacks have become the most frequent cases they have to deal with. But the lack of specific laws and regulations prevent the police from handling such cases appropriately. What the police can do in the existing circumstances is to ask the dog owner to not walk the dog in public places, persuade him or her to pay the medical bill of the dog attack victim and, if the dog owner refuses to do so, inform the victim that he or she has the right to sue the dog owner in court.

The problem is that even if the victim wins the case, the dog owner might be asked to pay the medical bill of the victim, as well as compensation for the loss of the victim's working time, which might add up to a few thousand yuan. In such a scenario, what happens to victims like Grandma Li who was not bitten by the dog but still suffered from serious trauma. The most the police can do is to issue a warning to the dog owner, asking her or him to publicly apologize to Grandma Li. But a forced apology is unlikely to be sincere.

Grandma Li is one of the many victims of a dog attack. Although China has central and local laws and regulations on animals, they mostly focus on the protection of animals rather than victims of animal attacks.

According to government regulations, dogs should be always leashed in public places and dog owners should appropriately dispose of the pet's excreta. But such regulations are not followed by all dog owners. So it's time the authorities revised relevant laws and regulations in order to better protect the interests and, sometimes, lives, of dog attack victims.

And while revising the laws and regulations, the authorities should consider subjecting dog owners to pay heavy compensation in case their pet attacks anyone, especially because such a provision has helped reduce dog attacks in many countries. In fact, in some countries, the average compensation amount for a dog bite is \$30,000.

If the compensation amount for a dog bite is raised drastically, dog owners will be forced to pay huge amounts to buy insurance for their pet and make sure they are always kept on a leash in a public place.

Cao Jia

Jobs key to tapping grads' development potential

Life in China has gradually returned to normal after the government eased the strict pandemic prevention and control measures while introducing an array of policies to promote employment and boost the economy. Yet the domestic economic recovery is hampered by the slowdown of the global economy and other challenges.

Amid all this, the number of college graduates this year is expected to reach a record high of roughly 11.58 million, up 820,000 year-on-year. Add to that the increasing numbers of overseas college graduates returning home every year, youths who graduated from college last year but couldn't find a job, and you will get an idea of the immense pressure the job market is under.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the surveyed unemployment rate for people aged 16 to 24 was as high as 19.6 percent in the first quarter of 2023, and even 20.4 percent in April. This shows youths, especially college graduates, are finding it increasingly difficult to find a job.

Since college graduates are precious human resources, the government attaches great importance to their employment and overall well-being. For example, the Central Economic Work Conference stressed that the employment channels for college graduates be increased on a priority basis. Also, multiple government departments have introduced policies and measures to help youths find a job or start their own business.

First, the government has announced tax deductions and exemptions, as well as subsidies for the public sector, and small and medium-sized enterprises to encourage them to recruit more college graduates, with the aim of raising the employment rate, stabilizing the job market and creating more job opportunities at the grassroots level. So college graduates should seek employment in grassroots organizations if they cannot find a job in the traditional or emerging sectors.

Second, the government has adopted favorable policies and built resource



MAXUEJING / CHINA DAILY

docking platforms, while providing guidance to support college graduates to start their own business. The government has also vowed to protect the college graduates' right to seek flexible employment.

Third, the central and local govern-

ments are holding job fairs in different areas to facilitate the employment of college graduates, and government departments have intensified their on-campus recruitment and have been holding job-advisory camps to provide employment information for college graduates.

Efforts are also on to establish databases to track and monitor graduates' employment situation, and raise the employment rate by providing subsidies, training and tailor-made employment policies for graduates, especially those with special needs.

Fourth, the government plans to provide training for graduates to help them adapt to the demands of emerging industries and the modern service sector. For instance, the State Council, China's Cabinet, recently issued a notice saying that at least 1 million internship positions will be offered by companies, government institutions and social organizations this year. Meant for young job seekers, the internship comes with living allowances.

The array of research options and management posts on offer will help the college graduates enrich their internship experience.

And fifth, the authorities have adopted policies to better protect the rights of graduates and hold those violating their rights accountable. They have also been organizing activities to enhance graduates' legal awareness, including helping them protect their legal rights and seek compensation for the violation of their rights.

However, efforts should also be made to implement more favorable policies, promote high-quality development and stabilize the overall job market. The authorities need to improve the business environment, too, and help SMEs adjust their structure and boost employment.

Moreover, the public sector needs to create high-quality job positions for graduates in order to optimize the employment services and balance supply and demand. And the government should provide guidance and create a healthy business environment so college graduates can start their own businesses.

The author is an associate researcher at the Chinese Academy of Labor and Social Security. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

GLOBAL VIEWS

JIN JUNDA

Maker and breaker

For the US, a double-standard international economic order is one where it gets to make and abuse the rules

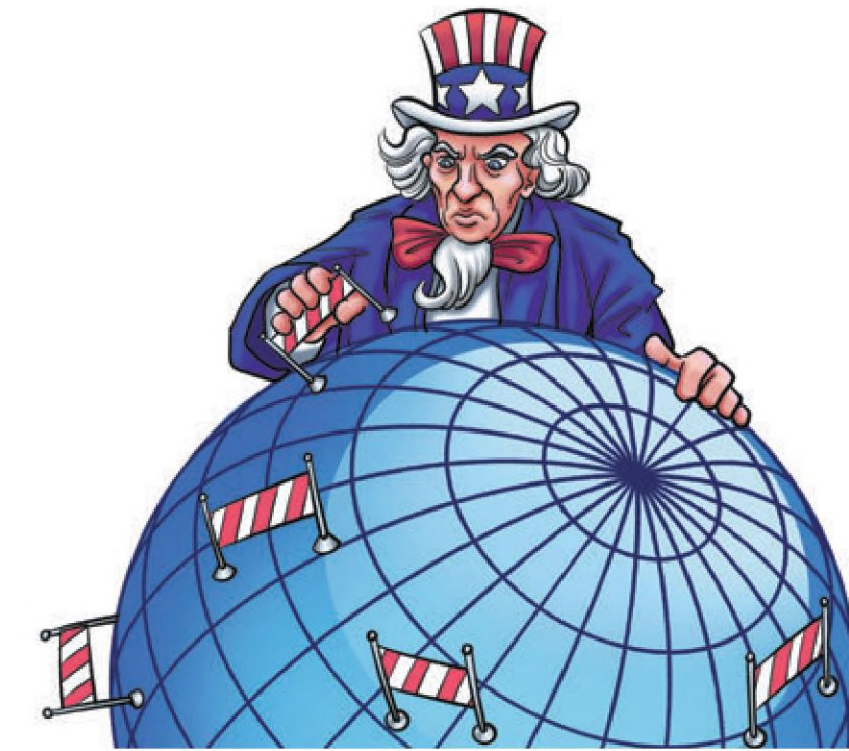
The G7 issued a separate statement on economic security during its Hiroshima summit, hyping up the so-called economic coercion from China. During the press conference after attending the G7 summit, US President Joe Biden also mentioned that the G7 will “resist economic coercion together” from China. This is a manifestation of how some countries are obsessed with economic confrontation and vying for rule-making powers, even at the expense of the economic development rights of other countries.

Some politicians, led by US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, have repeatedly accused China of using “economic coercion”. In May 2021, Blinken said the United States would not leave Australia alone in the face of coercion from China. During the Japan-US Economic Policy Consultative Committee in July 2022, Blinken said that the two countries “addressed the People’s Republic of China and how its coercive economic practices go against an open, inclusive rules-based international economic order that gives all countries a chance to participate, to compete, and to grow”.

While these statements directly endorsed the anti-China policies of certain countries and politicians, they were also intended to promote the economic standards dominated by the US and its allies. The “economic coercion” accusation is a double standard targeting China. In fact, it is the US that frequently practices “economic coercion”.

First, the US has a long-standing practice of exerting long-arm jurisdiction over international economic activities based on its domestic laws. Since the enactment of the Sherman Antitrust Act in 1890, the US Congress and government have repeatedly enforced certain domestic laws on non-US economic activities beyond its territories.

Since the Donald Trump administration initiated trade conflicts in



JIN JING / CHINA DAILY

2018, a large number of foreign technology companies and individuals have fallen victim to the long-arm jurisdiction imposed by the US.

The abuse has even provoked opposition from the US’ long-time political allies, such as Canada and the European Union, which in 1996 passed targeted regulations to counter US long-arm jurisdiction within the EU.

Second, the US frequently imposes economic sanctions to suppress foreign companies and interfere in other countries’ policies, which is typical coercive behavior. In recent years, the US abuse of sanctions has become increasingly rampant. Data

from the Center for a New American Security showed that in 2021 alone, the US implemented a total of 1,552 sanctions actions. Since the Russia-Ukraine conflict in 2022, the US and its allies have further expanded their abuse of economic sanctions, openly seizing the overseas assets of foreign governments, companies and individuals.

Third, the US not only abuses sanctions and other economic means to exert “maximum pressure” in bilateral trade, but also seeks to disrupt the external environment of other countries, effectively infringing upon their rights to development.

The US has introduced a wide

range of laws, such as the Helms-Burton Act against Cuba in 1996, that allow it to sanction countries, individuals and entities engaged in economic, trade and technological cooperation with specific countries. These sanctions lack grounds in international law and are based solely on US interests and political arbitrariness.

The double standards employed by the US in terms of economic coercion are all about the contest for rule-making authority. Some in the West claim that economic coercion is the result of corruption and rent-seeking, thereby implying that Chinese investments are “opaque”, “high risk” and “unsustainable”,

while US investments are of “high standard”.

However, in reality, the “high standard” for the US investments has not been recognized by the majority of countries worldwide. Standards for economic and trade cooperation should be negotiated by the parties involved based on internationally accepted norms and should align with the socioeconomic conditions and development needs of the parties involved.

China’s cooperation with its partners is based on the principles of voluntariness and mutual benefit, and should not be labeled as “low standard”. Moreover, the anti-corruption and transparency standards proposed by the US are primarily determined by Western NGOs, or even by US institutions alone, to largely serve the overseas expansion of US companies.

In fact, the US-centric standards do not even align with the interests of its allies. Take the Trans-Pacific Partnership as an example. Many provisions of the agreement, such as intellectual property rights and the Investor-State Dispute Settlement mechanism which allowed US companies to sue host governments, complicated the negotiations and ultimately led to the failure of the TPP. After freezing certain US-centric provisions, many TPP participating countries successfully established the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

In 2022, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership officially came into effect. Based on the principles of equal consultation and respect for sovereignty, the success of the RCEP further proves that US-style rules do not align with the interests of the majority of countries and that economic cooperation with China is a voluntary choice that conforms to market principles and national interests. Should the US persist in promoting its economic rules through vilifying China, it will ultimately end up

with few supporters.

The reason behind the US’ “economic coercion” rallying cry is the belief that certain countries have refused to stand by the US side due to their economic ties with China, preventing the US from creating a Cold War-style, ideologically clear-cut anti-China alliance.

At the same time, certain interest groups in Japan and some European countries believe that they have gained little benefit from trade with China and choose to back the US narrative with an anti-China agenda. Some even advocate “decoupling” from China due to “ideological conflicts” and participate in joint statements that support the US.

However, in the middle of an economic downturn, forcibly reducing trade with China using ideological differences as an excuse will only harm domestic consumers, give no help to solving the economic problems, and hinder the creation of a diverse and equitable international trade and development framework.

In the face of high international economic risks and development deficits, countries around the world should overcome political and ideological differences and prioritize the global economic recovery.

The US has been using the “economic coercion” accusations to exert long-arm jurisdiction, divide the world into friends and foes, and impose economic sanctions and political pressure under double standards. Its intention to create an anti-China economic system has significantly increased uncertainty in the world economy.

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FENG YUJUN

Security situation needs defusing

China needs to take practical actions to expand cooperation in East Asia to dissolve hostility and enhance trust

Amid the mounting concerns of the United States and its allies over China’s rise, the security situation in East Asia is becoming more volatile.

On Feb 11, 2022, the Joe Biden administration released the “Indo-Pacific strategy”, which sets out the goal of “a free and open, connected, prosperous, secure and resilient ‘Indo-Pacific region’”. In practical terms, the US did not move its resources to Europe after the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, but instead increased its resource investment in the “Indo-Pacific region” due to concerns over China. It hopes to promote the “Indo-Pacific strategy” through its bilateral military alliances, the Australia-United Kingdom-US and US-Japan-Republic of Korea partnerships, the Quad alliance, as well as the Five Eyes alliance.

The US has been encouraging Japan and the ROK to put aside their past grievances and move closer together. Recently, Japan and the ROK were making frequent exchanges in efforts to achieve a “historic reconciliation” and to strengthen their bilateral security cooperation. A de facto US-Japan-ROK trilateral alliance has taken shape as the three countries frequently engage in diplomatic and military interactions regarding regional hot spot issues.

The US-Japan-India-Australia Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, known as the Quad, made progress in 2022, enabling significant

In a world undergoing profound changes, China needs to identify its fundamental strategic interests and regional security trends to create a favorable international and neighborhood security environment. China advocates peace, development, equity, justice, democracy, freedom, the common values of humanity, as well as the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security.

enhancements in the US-Japan-Australia, US-Japan-India, Japan-Australia, Japan-India and India-Australia security cooperation.

It is worth noting that other alliances involving the US are also raising their attention on security affairs in the Asia-Pacific, especially in East Asia. At the end of June 2022, four Asia-Pacific countries, Japan, the ROK, Australia and New Zealand, were invited to a NATO

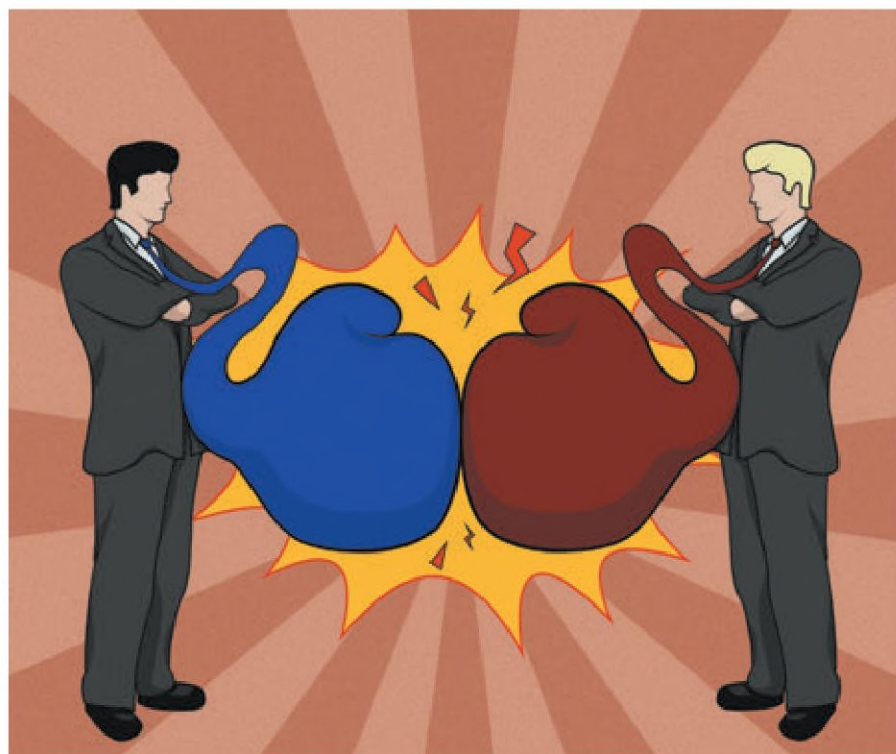
summit for the first time.

It can be seen that as the US is strengthening the transatlantic and Indo-Pacific alliances, it is also making efforts to enhance the interaction between the two to build a “global security alliance system” with the US at its core.

However, while the US is fiercely competing with China, it has repeatedly stated its commitment to “manage the competition responsibly”, stressed its willingness to “work with China where interests align” and “not to let the disagreements stop us from moving forward on the priorities that demand that we work together, for the good of the people and the world”. Therefore, while effectively responding to the strategic pressure from the US, China also needs to recognize the layers and flexibility of the US strategy.

The balance of power in East Asia is complex. The region is home to three major economies — China, Japan and the ROK. It involves three nuclear-armed powers, namely China, the US and Russia, as well as the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, which is actively developing nuclear weapons. Additionally, it is where the US-Japan and US-ROK military alliances are based.

In recent years, regional security uncertainties have been further exacerbated due to the volatile security situation on the Korean Peninsula, the changing security dynamics in the Taiwan Strait, East China Sea and South China Sea, as



WANG YUE / FOR CHINA DAILY

well as the uncontrollable slide of the China-US relationship into “strategic competition between big powers”.

In the fiscal year 2023, the US defense budget increased by 10 percent compared to the previous year, reaching \$858 billion. This double-digit growth is unprecedented in recent years and reflects the rapidly rising costs of its security commitments in response to actual and potential wars in Europe and East Asia.

For a long time, Japan has refrained from aggressive increases in defense spending and kept it at around 1 percent of GDP, which has been regarded as a key indicator of Japan’s principle of pacifism. However, the past decade has seen the continuous growth of Japan’s defense spending. Its Defense

Buildup Program formulated at the end of 2022 announced to raise defense spending for 2023-27 to 43 trillion yen (\$332 billion), which is a 56 percent increase compared with the previous five-year plan and 2 percent of its expected GDP by 2027.

In a world undergoing profound changes, China needs to identify its fundamental strategic interests and regional security trends to create a favorable international and neighborhood security environment. China advocates peace, development, equity, justice, democracy, freedom, the common values of humanity, as well as the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security. Standing firmly against the Cold War mentality and bloc confrontation, China is committed to implementing the Global

Security Initiative.

In East Asia, China aims to attract and unite all relevant parties with security interests in the region, take practical actions to manage competition, prevent conflicts, expand cooperation, dissolve hostility and enhance trust. This is the way to lead the countries out of the security dilemma, prevent regional conflicts or even wars, and jointly build long-term peace in the region that is stable and sustainable.

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LIFE

Under the soft patter of a light drizzle, bands hailing from Chinese ethnic groups, such as the Lahu and Zhuang, along with musicians from across the ASEAN bloc, serenaded audiences with mesmerizing melodies produced by traditional instruments, while bustling food stalls served up an array of delectable cuisines.

This hometown-themed music festival was held in Guyuepo village, Nanyang town of Nanning, capital of the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, from May 13 to 14.

The opening band was the Mumian ensemble (*mumian* meaning kapok), formed in 2012 and consisting of five Zhuang musicians.

The band has made a name for itself through participation in cultural events promoting Zhuang traditional culture.

In 2015, they released their debut album and embarked on their first concert tour within Guangxi. Their original compositions feature a distinctive musical style revolving around blending traditional Zhuang folk songs with modern pop elements.

They skillfully incorporate a mix of instruments, harmonies and vocal styles, presenting a fresh interpretation of Zhuang music and allowing more people to appreciate its unique charm.

"We are delighted to participate in this international music festival, which has provided us with the chance to connect with foreign bands from such countries as Indonesia and Malaysia," says Lu Jianping, founder of the group.

He says that through this exchange of music and culture, participants have deepened their mutual understanding and made significant advances through shared learning.

"We will continue to uncover the cultural essence of ethnic music in Guangxi and create more distinctive musical works that represent the

Festival helps village tune into wider audience

Guangxi ethnic performers and ASEAN bloc musicians exchange musical culture, establishing bonds, report **Xing Wen** and **Shi Ruipeng** in Nanning.



A music festival, held from May 13 to 14, gathers bands hailing from Chinese ethnic groups and musicians from ASEAN countries, including Indonesian Jenny Besin and her band (top left) and the Mumian ensemble (above right), adding a cultural allure to Guyuepo village in Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Zhuang ethnic group," says Lu. "Through music, we aim to foster a greater understanding of Guangxi among audiences." Jenny Besin, a member of an Indo-

nesian pop band at the festival, was also enthusiastic. "Participating in music activities in China has been a great honor and an amazing experience for

me," says the Indonesian musician. Being able to share Indonesian music with the audiences has made her proud, she adds. "The people I

met here were kind and welcoming, open to learning about our culture. When I saw their appreciation, it made me feel more at home."

After seeing the other performances at the festival, she says that she has found the folk music scene in China to be "unique, memorable and amazing", and also believes it has the power to unite people.

The local government aims to create biannual rural music gatherings, centered around the key agricultural seasons of "spring sowing" and "autumn harvest".

These events will serve as platforms for facilitating artistic exchanges between China and ASEAN countries, while promoting the development and flourishing of indigenous music culture.

As a rural vitalizing endeavor, the music gatherings also aim to elevate the cultural appeal of Guyuepo village and the greater Nanyang town area.

Chen Chaofeng, Party secretary of Nanyang, says that the town plans to drive rural vitalization through developing its cultural industry.

"Building upon the success of the spring and autumn music festivals, our goal is to expand the frequency of similar events, aiming for quarterly or monthly performances," Chen says.

Efforts will be made to attract more musicians to establish studios in Nanyang and explore the production of ethnic musical instruments there.

"We hope to explore the aesthetics of traditional music in a modern context," Chen adds.

During the festival, music and cultural exchange centers co-established in Guoyuepo village by the local government and foreign institutions from countries including Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines also conducted opening ceremonies, showcasing their commitment to fostering cross-cultural connections and long-term friendship.

Contact the writers at xingwen@chinadaily.com.cn

Book restorers keep ancient treasures alive

By **WANG KAIHAO**
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The restoration of a precious copy of the *Yongle Dadian* ("Yongle encyclopedia") is being celebrated through a special exhibition at the National Library of China in Beijing.

First compiled in the early 15th century during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) following an edict by the Emperor Yongle, this set of handwritten texts is often considered the largest paper-based encyclopedia ever written. It included an estimated 370 million Chinese characters, and consisted of 22,937 volumes in 11,095 copies.

The original edition went missing in history, though a 16th-century duplicate survived into the 19th century, mostly intact. Many more volumes were subsequently destroyed or got lost in upheaval. Today, only about 400 survive, and every one is considered a literary treasure.

When a volume on the Chinese

character *hu* (lake) returned from Canada to be housed at the National Library of China in 2013, it was welcomed by excited librarians, who had been waiting to restore its aged pages.

In 2021, the national library, the China Foundation for Cultural Heritage Conservation and ByteDance, the parent company of short-video platform TikTok, or Douyin in China, jointly established a fund to restore the document.

About 10 million yuan (\$1.43 million) was spent, not only on the restoration of the text, but also on training restorers, digitalizing the work and creating associated public education programs.

The fund has also sponsored the restoration of 104 other ancient books from 10 libraries nationwide.

The fruits of this project were apparent at the exhibition, in which 39 recently restored ancient books were on display. The exhibition, launched in the national library last week, will last for two months.

"This project explores a path for how public institutions and other sectors of society can cooperate on the preservation of cultural relics," says Xiong Yuanming, director of the national library.

Xiong says many new methods were utilized in the restoration of the *Yongle Dadian* volume. In previous restorations of other volumes, silk pieces available on the market that were similar to those in the original version were used. But for this project, restorers conducted a detailed materials analysis and were able to weave textiles specially tailored to resemble those used in the past.

Other exhibited books are also milestones in Chinese literary history. For example, the Shanghai Library presented an 1848 print edition of *Yinghuan Zhilue* ("brief record of the globe"). Written by Xu Jishe, an official in coastal Fujian province who was in contact with foreign missionaries, merchants

and diplomats, the monumental work revolutionized understanding of world geography among Chinese literati and offered key inspiration for Japan's modernization drive.

Chen Chao, director of the Shanghai Library, says: "We chose this book to join the project not only because of its importance, but also because the copy had various kinds of 'diseases' — it was damaged by water and bugs and its color was fading.

"It thus offered a perfect case for restorers to try for a comprehensive cure, combining traditional craftsmanship and new technology. Conservation of relics needs to catch up with the times."

Other exhibits include ancient maps of the Yellow River, ink-rubbed bronzewares, and a Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) book written in Tangut script, an extinct language spoken by the Tangut people who once lived in northwestern China.

Several ancient paper-made models of imperial architecture, known



Above: One of the restored volumes of *Yongle Dadian*. Left: A visitor interacts with a virtual reality game about ancient book restoration at the National Library of China in Beijing. PHOTOS BY WANG KAIHAO / CHINA DAILY

as *tangyang*, are also showcased in the exhibition. According to Chen Hongyan, head of the ancient book department of the national library, these special documents — stereoscopic building blueprints — can offer crucial references for restoration of historical architecture.

Since 2021, 107 restorers of ancient works have attended training sessions within the framework of the joint fund. *Ancient Books Traveling Through Time and Space*, a documentary featuring these spe-

cialists, went online last year, and attracted 34 million views within its first month of release.

"Ancient books are part of the long lineage of Chinese culture and history and demonstrate the vitality of Chinese civilization," says Liu Yuzhu, head of the China Foundation for Cultural Heritage Conservation. "Our efforts show that ancient books can still garner enthusiastic feedback from the public today. More creative ways are needed in the future to further protect and bring them alive."

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AD

LIFE



From left: A map of the Ancient Tea Horse Road in Nakeli, a key stop in Pu'er, Yunnan province. Su Guowen, leader of the Blang ethnic group in Pu'er, examines the tea leaves at his tea plantation. Nakeli used to be a stop that provided accommodation and horses for caravans and is now a tourist destination. PHOTOS BY ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY

On a summer's day in 1990, Chen Baoya and five friends embarked on a three-month hiking trip with horses, dogs and tents in which they would explore ancient roads between Yunnan province and the Tibet autonomous region.

The roads they used had formed a network linking China with the rest of the world for more than 1,000 years.

"Our plan was to do research on linguistics and culture along the ancient route," says Chen, who with a few of the other team members were teachers at Yunnan University in Kunming, the provincial capital.

"One thing we discovered was that tea had been an important commodity along the route we trekked," says Chen, now a professor of linguistics at Peking University.

Thus it was how the trekkers coined the term *chama gudao*, or the Ancient Tea Horse Road, to describe the route they had covered.

They set off from Zhongdian, or Shangri-La, in Yunnan in June, traveling over snowcapped mountains, valleys and grasslands at extremely high altitudes, reaching Chamdo in Tibet and Kangding in Sichuan province, before making the return trip and being back in Shangri-La in September.

During the trek, they met tea porters who worked for horse caravans. The scholars were told that these tea porters had traveled to India with horse and mule caravans along the ancient route.

In a published research paper on the trek, they used the name the Ancient Tea Horse Road, and it attracted a great deal of attention, helping generate further research in China and elsewhere.

The name was based on the common trade of tea for horses a millennium earlier, when Chinese needed the animals as they fought to ward off enemies in the north.

The network of roads became to be increasingly used in the Song (960-1279) and Yuan (1271-1368) dynasties and stretching through to the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties.

"The route had once been called the South Silk Road," Chen says. "But silk was not a necessity for most people, and the Silk Road linking China with the rest of the world was little used."

Nevertheless, before the roads became conduits for tea, silk was the predominant, lucrative commodity carried along them, its destination

A thirst for tea culture

After China gave up its secrets on making silk, an ancient trade route was put to many other lucrative uses, report **Deng Zhangyu** and **Li Yingqing** in Kunming.



Above: Farmers working in Erlong Mountain, in Pu'er, where a large volume of China's tea is produced. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY
Below: Chen Baoya, one of the scholars who coined the phrase Ancient Tea Horse Road in 1990, with local children on his trek to the tea road. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

being wealthy people in the West.

However, as the know-how of raising silkworms and making silk became implanted in many countries, they stopped buying it from China, meaning many of the Silk Road's arteries fell into disuse.

"Only when the drinking of tea thrived during the Tang Dynasty (618-907) was the old trail reactivated and became a major commercial route between the East and the West," says Chen, 67, who since the 1990 journey has never let up on his research.

He describes the route as a "life road" because the Tibetans living at high altitudes acquired a taste for tea in the Tang Dynasty, and it became a staple of their daily life.

However, because those mountainous areas are not conducive to



tea growing, the long-distance tea trade began from Yunnan where tea trees were largely cultivated.

Tea produced in Yunnan was car-

ried on the backs of horses, mules and even yaks into high-altitude areas, and to the south, including to what is now India, Laos, Myanmar,

Thailand and Vietnam. It was also taken to the north, through the Xinjiang Uygur or Inner Mongolia autonomous region, to Russia.

"Russia is very cold and high-altitude," Chen says.

"Tea grown in China was largely transported to Russia using the ancient route."

Tea trees require a certain altitude, sunshine, humidity and particular soil types to grow, and those requirements kept the ancient road humming with trade for centuries.

Su Guowen, 80, a Blang ethnic group leader in Jingmai Mountain in Pu'er, the main tea producing area in Yunnan, says that when he was a boy, he had to walk a long way to a tea trading market to sell tea with his family, from which horse

caravans would take the commodity to South Asian countries.

"My father told me that there was an old tea trail more than 800 years old not far away from my village," says Su, whose family has cultivated tea trees for 1,800 years according to the ethnic group's records.

On the trail, horse hooves left deep indentations, round and deep in either the stone stairs or cobbled lanes. Marks of horseshoe prints and burned stones nearby are important tokens for Chen in identifying an ancient tea route.

"The caravans took little food with them. They cooked food during the commercial journey, and those burned stones are firm evidence of this."

The trek was not just arduous but perilous, many tea porters never making the return journey.

Chen says that on his trek, his team encountered large wild animals, endured extreme weather, managed to avoid mud slides and struggled with the physical stresses of traveling at high altitude.

"When we got back to Shangri-La, many people were amazed that all six of us had returned in one piece," Chen says.

Almost every year since that arduous trek, Chen has covered the same route, but in the relative luxury of a car. He has also visited Japan, Malaysia and South Korea doing research related to the tea route.

"Japanese people treat tea as an elegant lifestyle, while Tibetans in China treat it as a daily necessity," says Chen, who spent a year in Japan as a visiting scholar in 2006.

In terms of linguistics, he says the word for tea in most places around the world derives from the Chinese *cha*.

"It's just one more piece of evidence of how tea culture spread along the Ancient Tea Horse Road from China."

Following tea culture, art produced by Buddhism, commodities including jewelry, jade, fragrance and ceramics have been exchanged along the most actively used international commercial route linking the East and the West.

In addition to that route, tea produced in China was eventually being exported from Zhejiang and Fujian provinces to Europe by sea.

"Both the ancient road and maritime routes helped transport Chinese tea and culture to the world," Chen says.

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Perfect taste of tradition, brewed in a stream

By **DENG ZHANGYU** and **LI YINGQING**

In a forest on Jingmai Mountain in Lancang county, Yunnan province, Xian Jin, 22, tasted tea under a tea tree more than 100 years old in late March, the ripest of times for picking tea.

In front of her was a smartphone through whose screen viewers were deluging her with questions about the taste of the tea and the local tea culture.

Xian interacts with the viewers through a livestreaming platform that demonstrates how tea picking is done, and now and again they enjoy a bonus: Xian singing and dancing to the melody of local music. In March and April it is common for her to work until about 10 pm as villagers process freshly picked leaves.

Xian is a member of the Dai ethnic group in the village of Nuogang on Jingmai Mountain, where one of the world's oldest and largest cultivated tea forests is located. For more than 1,000 years the village has lived off the ancient tea plantations.

"When I was 3, my mother carried me with a basket on the back to the

tea plantation, and I helped her pick tea leaves," Xian says.

Making and drinking tea is integral to the lives of all villagers, young and old, she says.

However, what makes Xian stand out is that she is the first of the Dai villagers to sell tea online and to promote the local tea culture through that channel, mainly by way of Douyin, a popular video-sharing platform.

She often starts streaming at 3 pm or 4 pm, she says, continuing until late into the night at the busiest times of the year, in spring and autumn when tea is harvested and processed.

At other times Xian presents to viewers the picturesque landscape of the village and its surrounds and gives them insights into the villagers and their culture. Some of her viewers come from across the globe, including Italy and nations of Southeast Asia.

The very rudimentary transport routes giving access from the outside world to Jingmai Mountain, and vice versa, mean that few of those who live there ever venture beyond its confines. Indeed Xian is



Xian Jin and her boyfriend Ding Zhixiong utilize the internet and social media to promote the tea and ethnic culture of their hometown in Lancang county, Yunnan province. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY

one of the few young people in the village who has stepped foot in big cities, including Kunming, capital of Yunnan, and Shenzhen, Guangdong province, where Xian learned a lot of what she knows about Chinese tea culture, the art of tea making and tea tasting.

Last year when she began livestreaming with her boyfriend Ding Zhixiong, 28, they spent a day, smartphone in hand, touring the village and the tea plantations to give internet audiences a glimpse of villagers producing tea.

"Villagers didn't get what we were

up to," Xian says. "I guess they thought we were just idling about."

When they cottoned on to what Xian and his boyfriend were doing, they gave the couple's online venture a giant thumbs-up, aware that the area's tea traditions were being made known to a wide audience. Once the venture became well known to young people who had left the village to study or to make the most of better work opportunities, many returned to the village and began setting up their own livestreaming channels.

Ai Sailuan, leader of the Dai ethnic group in the area, says Xian has set a good example on spreading tea culture and has thus given a fillip to the tea industry there. Previously tea sales had been restricted to people visiting the area, he says.

"Older people like me have little idea of the internet and social media. Young people like Xian are helping us make our tea available to a much larger group of buyers. That also means that many young people are opting to live in the village rather than moving to cities to make a living."

Xian stresses that her business

was by no means an instant success.

When what she showed online was almost exclusively related to tea, she had fewer than 100 viewers for a time, but several months after she began diversifying what she was presenting, such as showing scenic tea plantations and the attractive ancient village, the number of viewers shot up into the tens of thousands, she says.

"I was proud and excited to see that so many people from across the world love our tea and village."

Xian demonstrates all aspects of tea production, such as climbing onto tea trees to pick leaves and tossing and drying leaves in pots. The colorful traditional Dai clothing and accessories she wears add to the spectacle.

"Audiences are often keen to know about what I'm wearing, and that gives me an opportunity to talk about our culture," Xian says.

Ding says that livestreaming in the tea tree forest at night presents some risks.

"We come across various types of snakes, and Xian once stumbled on a poisonous one."

Xian says the livestreaming is bringing in about 8,000 yuan (\$1,160) in tea sales a day. Ai, the village leader, says the average yearly income of a villager is less than 20,000 yuan.

LIFE

Sound of the past, note for the future

Traditional bamboo flute attracts new admirers with its melodious tone, **Wang Ru** reports.

Often accompanying the *guqin*, a zither-like seven-stringed traditional musical instrument, the *xiao*, a traditional vertical bamboo flute with a relatively light sound, was often viewed as a foil. But with its long history and rich cultural connotations, the once-ignored instrument is now attracting more and more attention.

Shen Yingbiao is a *xiao* player. Although he had strong interests in musical instruments from childhood, and learned the harmonica, the *erhu* (two-stringed bowed instrument) and guitar when he was young, it is the *xiao* that has been an inseparable part of his life for decades.

Shen was infatuated with the instrument after he bought a tape of *xiao* music and listened to the soft, graceful and mellow sound in his hometown of Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, in 1988.

He threw himself into the world of the *xiao*. He spent almost a decade learning to play the instrument and polish his skills, another decade imparting them to others, and now the 53-year-old is still working to promote the instrument and its culture.

Not long after Shen was first attracted to the instrument, he decided to learn it. In the 1990s, when internet usage was not widespread in China, learning a less popular instrument was not an easy task, not least because of the scarcity of nearby teachers.

Besides teaching himself and listening to tapes to compare and improve, Shen embarked on trips to visit those who gave compelling performances he heard on tape, and received tutoring from masters in this area, such as Song Jinglian, Luo Shoucheng and Chen Hangming.

Since he had to study at school and then work to support himself, he could only undertake such trips in his spare time. As a result, the learning process spanned his 20s. "It was very tiring. Without high-speed trains, common today, I had to take a train for more than 20 hours to Beijing, or other places, to visit people. But I was resolute to take this road. I wanted to improve my skills and learn more," says Shen.

While learning the instrument, Shen was increasingly fascinated by the rich cultural connotations contained in the *xiao*. According to him, a scene from a TV series of a literate person piping the *xiao* in the moonlight, an image full of elegance and poetry, evoked his romantic imagination and has been engraved in his heart since childhood. And that reflects the close relationship between this instrument and the literate in times gone by.

In ancient China, bamboo symbolized integrity, modesty and a spirit of striving to make progress. As a result, many liked the plant and used it to refer to their pursuits in poems. For example, Song Dynasty (960-1279) poet Su Shi once wrote, "Better to eat without meat than live without bamboo", suggesting



Clockwise from top: *Xiao* musician Shen Yingbiao (right) plays the traditional Chinese musical instrument with another performer playing *guqin* at a concert in Shanghai last year; Shen (right) judges a woman's *xiao* skills during a grading test in Taizhou, Zhejiang province, last year; he introduces the *xiao* to an attentive audience in Hangzhou, Zhejiang, in January. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

the importance of bamboo in their hearts.

Therefore, the *xiao*, made of bamboo, was much more than an instrument, but something they often held in hands or put on walls to remind themselves of their pursuits, and they sometimes used *xiao* to refer to themselves in poems as well, according to Shen.

"Since the Tang Dynasty (618-907), the *xiao* was often used in gatherings and meetings of the educated and literate, just like the *guqin*. It was so popular then that if one was not able to perform it, they were regarded as old-fashioned," says Shen.

During his learning process, Shen summarized his experience,



“At first, the *xiao* was just my hobby. Walking through all the difficulties, it gradually became my profession, my cause, and now, it's my mission to spread it.”

Shen Yingbiao, *xiao* player and educator

which paved the way for his later teaching career. In 2000, with the growth of his stature, he was invited to teach *dongxiao*, a genre of *xiao* popular in the Jiangnan

(south of the Yangtze River, in its lower reaches) area of China, at an art school in Hangzhou. A year later, he established the Xixi *Xiao* Society with his students to better

promote the instrument.

Although the *xiao* was once popular in history, it gradually fell into oblivion. Nine major conservatories were established in the country after 1949, when the People's Republic of China was founded, but it was not included as an independent subject for music education.

"The *xiao* sound was too light, which weakened its expressiveness. Moreover, there was not a standard for its intonation. These all made the instrument gradually marginalized," says Shen.

"But the instrument kept its unique attractiveness, which paved the way for it to be revived. It produces heavenly music, and has a concise but profound tempera-

ment, which conforms to the traditional Chinese aesthetic idea that, "the greatest music has the faintest notes," he adds.

In recent years, the instrument has regained its vitality with improved tools and skills to make it, which means it can produce louder sounds now and can perform in solos. The criteria for its intonation has also been set.

"The *xiao* is such a good instrument. It's cheap, easy to carry, can produce gorgeous music and piping the *xiao* is healthy. I just cannot wait to make more people know about it," says Shen.

From his perspective, piping a *xiao* is also a way of cultivating yourself. "Compared with others, the *xiao* is an extremely simple instrument. It is only part of a bamboo with holes. Since it is so simple that you can hardly make any changes on it, you can only change yourself, like your posture and movement when piping, to make your music performance better and better," says Shen.

"It's actually an introspective process. You repeat and improve yourself, so that you are increasingly skilled, before finally you can create good music. The process is a big harvest that brings great joy," he adds.

After 40, he finally devoted himself to the cause full-time. "Before that time, the biggest difficulty for me was to strike a balance between pursuing my interest and supporting my family. I could only devote myself to it part-time to ensure my income when I was younger. But after 40, when I didn't have many economic burdens, I could wholeheartedly put myself into it," says Shen.

In 2007, the Xixi *Xiao* Society was renamed Qiantang (the old name of Hangzhou) *Xiao* Society, where people can learn to play the *xiao* and *xiao* lovers communicate with each other. In 2020, a free *xiao* course was started at the society, which has enabled nearly 1,000 people, especially old people who are retired, to learn the instrument, according to Shen.

Tao Xiaohong, who used to be a student of Shen, and now works as secretary-general of the Qiantang *Xiao* Society, says: "Shen has carried out deep research on the *xiao*, especially on how to show features of this old instrument in music performances. He is conscientious and unreserved in teaching, and has continued to improve it.

"It's a pity the *xiao* is still not as popular as we imagine now. In fact, it can produce brilliant music and touch people deeply. I agree with Shen's ideas on the *xiao* and would like to join his society to help him promote this instrument," she adds.

Recalling his past years, Shen says, "At first, the *xiao* was just my hobby. Walking through all the difficulties, it gradually became my profession, my cause, and now, it's my mission to spread it."

Ma Zhenhuan in Hangzhou contributed to this story.

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Lure of pandas is always worth bearing in mind

Countless column inches have already been filled concerning Yaya — the giant panda that was returned to China from the United States in April. However, the Yaya story dovetails nicely with a recent



Owen Fishwick
Second Thoughts

experience of mine, that is, getting up close and seeing a giant panda in the flesh for the very first time.

But I didn't see just one panda, nor two, I saw a bunch of them. Luckily, through the nature of my work, I was

recently given the opportunity to visit several giant panda research, breeding and rewilding bases in Southwest China's Sichuan province.

Now, before anyone mentions anything about being jealous or

how lucky I am, also through the nature of my work, I have to cover a lot of ground in areas that may not be so interesting. So, swings and roundabouts.

First, the obvious. Yes, they are cute. The small ones at least. Their cute little black eyes, fluffy ears and wobbly movements are all adorable. As with humans, the larger they get, the less cute they become, but they remain an amazing sight to see nonetheless.

The wild population of giant pandas has been under protection for years and was once threatened by deforestation, farming, the building of infrastructure and other human activities. Today, there are an estimated 2,000 giant pandas living in the wild in Sichuan, Gansu and Shaanxi provinces.

Giant pandas are classified as a conservation-reliant vulnerable species, and so a great deal of

effort has been put in to ensure that the wild population is not only sustained but supported through various programs and efforts.

It was this aspect of my experience that amazed in almost equal measure, from the majesty of the pandas, to the dedicated individuals who work around them, be they carers, breeders or ground-keepers. There is something about giant pandas that just makes people smile.

Xingxing's smile lights up a room, and it absolutely shimmers when she's talking about her passion — giant pandas, of course. Her passion also happens to be her job — she cares for the panda cubs at one of the panda breeding bases in Sichuan province — so things for her are pretty bright altogether.

She still smiles and speaks enthusiastically about her job and

passion, even though she is asked the same questions day in day out by a fawning domestic and international media that are desperate to learn more about China's national treasure.

Then there's He Shengshan, who works on rewilding pandas born in captivity. Like pandas themselves, He is patient, thoughtful and giving of his time when discussing the work he does.



A giant panda at the Hetaoping wilderness training base in Sichuan province enjoys a bamboo snack. OWEN FISHWICK / CHINA DAILY

In order to successfully rewild a panda, its interactions with humans have to be greatly limited. And so, if He needs to enter the enclosure used in preparation for rewilding, he must dress up in a full-body panda outfit that has been sprayed with panda scents including but not limited to panda urine.

Though I did not enter the enclosure, I was afforded the opportunity to experience this as

well. I donned a well-worn panda onesie, placed the hood over my head and mask over my face, and was then sprayed with panda urine. For those wondering, the answer is: "No, it doesn't

smell as bad as you might think." But like I said before, swings and roundabouts.

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