Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

Enduring vitality

Small plants take root in barren land, curbing desert encroachment

GOING GREEN, PAGE 4



Young anglers take the world of fishing by storm

BUSINESS FOCUS, PAGE 10



Box-office smash

Spider-Man swings back into cinemas with new movie

LIFE, PAGE 14

CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日報 THURSDAY, JUNE 8, 2023

Xi: Advance prosperity of Chinese culture

He urges efforts to promote exchanges, mutual learning among civilizations

By **WANG RU** in Shenzhen, Guangdong and **XU WEI** in Beijing

President Xi Jinping underlined on Wednesday the need to continue to boost cultural prosperity, make China a leading country in culture and build a modern Chinese civilization.

In a congratulatory letter to the opening of the first Forum on Building up China's Cultural Strength, held in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, Xi called for continuous efforts to promote exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations.

The forum was held days after Xi presided over a symposium on cultural inheritance and development, during which he laid out a vision on building a modern Chinese civilization.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, highlighted the Party's commitment to creating new glories of socialist culture.

He noted that the Party has given priority to cultural development in governance of the nation since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, and made solid steps in turning China into a country with a strong socialist culture.

Xi called for the across-the-board implementation of the Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era and the guiding principles of the 20th CPC National Congress, which was held in October.

He called for more efforts to shoulder the new cultural mission, consolidate cultural confidence, remain open and inclusive, uphold fundamental principles and break new ground, and encourage the cultural innovation and creativity of the whole nation.

Li Shulei, a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and head of the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, read out Xi's letter and delivered a keynote speech at the forum.

He said that Xi's congratulatory letter charted the path for shouldering new cultural missions and building a modern Chinese civilization.

Li urged efforts to study and implement Xi's important instructions. He also called for advancing cultural prosperity and development, and promoting exchanges and mutual learning.

"This forum is being held to focus on our goal of building up China's cultural strength, and to gather wisdom and energy from all walks of life, promote continued efforts to make progress in the cultural field and open up new prospects," Li added.

Huang Kunming, a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Party secretary of Guangdong, and Tie Ning, vice-chairwoman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, also attended the forum and delivered speeches.

The forum, hosted by the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, has the theme of "Towards greater cultural confidence and mutual learning among civilizations". It brought together officials from news organizations and publicity departments and scholars from think tanks.

Wang Xudong, director of the Palace Museum, stressed the importance of preserving cultural heritage in building up cultural strength.

See ***Forum,*** *page 3*

Restored ties



Ali Al-Youssef (center), director of consular affairs at the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Alireza Bigdeli (right), deputy foreign minister of Iran, attend a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Tuesday to mark the reopening of the Iranian embassy in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, after seven years. The embassy was reopened nearly three months after the two countries agreed to restore bilateral relations under a China-brokered deal. FAYEZ NURELDINE / AFP

INSIDE

Impacts of EU carbon tariff loom large

Global Views, page 13



www.chinadailyglobal.com

A member of ANN ASIA NEWS NETWORK

China Daily Global ©2023 All Rights Reserved

Newsstand prices:
US $1 Canada C$1;
UK 1£ EU 1€
Kenya 50 Kenya Shilling
Asia Pacific: Thailand 120 thb; Philippines 120 php; Myanmar 2000 kyat; Japan 210 yen; Dubai 10 dirham; Pakistan 300 rupee



Pedestrians pass the One World Trade Center amidst a smokey haze from wildfires in Canada on Wednesday in New York. JULIE JACOBSON / AP

Canadian wildfires choke US Northeast

By **AI HEPING** in New York
aiheping@chinadailyusa.com

Haze and smoke with dangerous fumes from hundreds of Canadian wildfires covered most of the US Northeast for a second day Wednesday, with New York City experiencing the world's worst air quality over the last two days.

The Big Apple became The Big Orange by midday Wednesday as the sky over the nation's largest city plunged into a deep hazy orange. Streets in Manhattan resembled what they were like during the COVID-19 pandemic as residents and commuters again wore masks and heeded warnings from health officials about the impact of fine particles known as PM2.5, which can lead to respiratory illnesses.

New York Governor Kathy Hochul called the air quality "an emergency crisis" and said Wednesday that the state is making one million N95 masks available to the public.

Approximately 400,000 N95 masks will be distributed at New York state parks, and at subway stations and other locations in New York City, Hochul said at a press briefing. An additional 600,000 masks will be made available at Homeland Security stockpiles for local governments to pick up, she said.

Inside

See more, **page 6**

Hochul called the poor air quality "unprecedented" and "a very serious, dangerous situation." She recommended that people across the state cancel outdoor activities. "Simply stay indoors. Outdoors is dangerous in just about every part of our state," the governor said.

Officials at the briefing said they have been monitoring any potential upticks in respiratory illnesses or health issues due to the poor air quality, but that no spikes have yet been reported, Hochul said.

New York City's air quality index soared past 400 into the "hazardous" range on the AQI Wednesday afternoon, which is the worst category on the US government's air quality tracker. It was the highest AQI number for the city since records began in 1999.

The city's air was more polluted than all the world's major cities Wednesday morning, according to data from Swiss technology company IQAir. Dubai and Delhi came in second and third, respectively. At 10 pm Tuesday, the city had the worst air quality of any major city in the world, IQAir said.

For much of Wednesday, the air-quality index in Syracuse topped 400, according to AirNow. In Binghamton, about 60 miles south of Syracuse, Mike Hardiman, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service, told The New York Times the city "looks like Mars" and "smells like cigars".

In all, more than 100 million Americans were affected by air quality alerts, the Environmental Protection Agency said. The smoke and haze prompted serious air quality alerts in at least 16 states.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) had halted all inbound flights to New York's LaGuardia airport early Wednesday afternoon due to the wildfire smoke but lifted that restriction by late afternoon. However, delays remained at the airport. Low visibility was leading to a ground stop for some arriving flights at Newark Liberty International airport. The FAA also said the extreme wildfire smoke haze lingering over the Northeast could delay flights through Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, D.C., CNN reported.

Hundreds of fires have been burning in eastern Canada for weeks. Canadian officials listed more than 240 as "out of control". So far, Canada has seen more than 8.7 million acres burn — an area larger than the state of Vermont.

More smoke and haze are expected Thursday out of Canada from a cold front that is moving north to south. Zack Taylor, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in College Park, Maryland, said there is some chance of rain Thursday and Friday in the Northeast and New England that could help reduce air pollution.

New York City Mayor Eric Adams said students should still go to school on Wednesday, but all schools would cancel outdoor activities for a second day.

Vineyard Theater, an Off-Broadway nonprofit in the Union Square neighborhood of Manhattan, has canceled tonight's performance of the play "This Land Was Made", citing "hazardous air quality conditions".

Due to the unhealthy air, Major League Baseball postponed Wednesday night's games in New York and Philadelphia.

As of Wednesday afternoon, IQAir said New York City's pollution was fourth worst in the world, behind New Delhi, India; Dhaka, Bangladesh; and Toronto, Canada.

Agencies contributed to this story.

VOLUNTEERS GUIDE RUNNERS IN OVERCOMING ADVERSITY

Charity group assists athletes with disabilities

By **XIN WEN**
xinwen@chinadaily.com.cn

in-depth

Every Thursday and Sunday morning, a group of runners with impaired vision or hearing sets off from a rest area near the south gate of Beijing Olympic Forest Park.

The area, one of several established at the park last year, sits beside the running and walking track, and serves as a warm-up base for the runners, who are accompanied by volunteers as they aim to improve their fitness levels.

Running not only benefits these athletes by enhancing their physical well-being, it also has a beneficial effect on the volunteers, who are inspired by their charges' perseverance, determination and optimistic outlook.

At 8 am on a sunny morning last month, Yao Taotao, 38, who has retinitis pigmentosa — a chronic hereditary eye disease — and has been legally blind since he was 1, did some stretches before taking to the track. He followed the movements of two volunteers, who act as regular trainers.

See ***Runner,*** *page 2*

Beijing fostering peace in Middle East

WORLD WATCH
By Arhama Siddiqa

The Middle East keeps warming up relations and exchanges amid waves of rapprochement between countries. High-echelon visits have been made by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud and Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, among others.

The thread that ties these countries together is China, the bedrock being the billion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative, which was proposed by China 10 years ago. The BRI is predicated on enhancing connectivity and promoting economic cooperation among participating countries. The initiative consists of two main components: the land-based Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road.

To date, the BRI is the most concrete example of Chinese implementation of South-South cooperation, which is based on the principle of solidarity, mutual benefit and shared development objectives between partner countries. The central tenets of South-South cooperation are economic interdependence, self-reliance and mutual benefit, all postulated on equality and mutual respect for territorial integrity and national sovereignty.

Chinese investment, infrastructure and technology, as well as the multilateral organizations initiated by Beijing, have become an increasingly vital component of the economic and political diversification strategies of numerous Arab states.

See ***Peace,*** *page 3*

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

PAGE TWO

Runners: Helpers offer additional support



Top: A volunteer leads a warmup routine at a rest area in Beijing Olympic Forest Park. **Above:** A visually impaired athlete is accompanied by a volunteer. PHOTOS BY WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

From page 1

The three runners set an impressive pace, completing the 5-kilometer lap of the southern part of the park within 40 minutes.

Yao and one of the volunteers were connected by a hemp rope as they ran at the same pace. They rarely spoke — the only sounds being the occasional summer breeze and the runners' breathing and footsteps.

"As I can no longer see, I place all my trust in the volunteers when I run," Yao said.

Even though he is not always accompanied to his local subway station, he cherishes the opportunity to run every week.

"As I'm completely blind now, when I walk from my home to take the subway to Olympic Forest Park, I have to rely on my memory of the route," said Yao, who works at a blind massage parlor in the Haidian district of Beijing.

"However, sometimes I receive help. For example, a kind couple saw me on the road this morning and offered to take me to the subway station."

Yao was one of 15 people with impaired vision or hearing who ran at Olympic Forest Park on the day, who were accompanied by more than 30 volunteers.

This activity, which has been staged for the past five years, is organized by the Beijing branch of Running in the Dark, a charity running group formed in October 2019.

The founder and organizer of the group's branch in the Chinese capital is He Xiaoyun, 52, a Beijing native. She and about five regular volunteers hold charity runs at Olympic Forest Park on Thursdays and Sundays at 7 am and 8 am.

About 1,600 volunteers have joined the Beijing branch, ranging in age from 5 to 74, and assisting more than 400 visually impaired and hearing impaired runners.

Volunteers accompanying the athletes walk or run varying distances, either walking for 3 km, or running for 5 km, 10 km or 15 km.

One or two days before a run, the volunteers post registration links on the branch's WeChat group, specifying their preferred distance and starting time. Volunteers from the logistics team, which usually comprises about 10 people, accompany visually impaired runners from the subway station and assist them during the run.

After registration, the volunteers meet up with the runners and gather at the rest area.

One of the volunteers then leads a warmup routine, which includes exercises such as turning, high-knee steps, and walking on the spot.

Experienced volunteers offer additional support by holding visually impaired participants' hands or arms.

Joint benefits

Ding Hua, 47, the mother of a 16-year-old daughter, has worked as a volunteer for the charity group for about two and a half years. She learned about Running in the Dark when she met with a visually impaired runner from the group on the Beijing subway last year.

A half-marathon runner, Ding had seldom accompanied others on a run previously, as she trained most of the time alone.

She said she enjoys being part of the charity group and running with visually impaired people because everyone is willing to communicate and connect with each other.

"Sometimes, when visually impaired friends run faster than me, I try my best to keep up with them. I occasionally feel like giving up after running 5 km, but the encouragement from my friends gives me the determination to keep going," Ding said.

The running track in the southern part of Olympic Forest Park passes various sites, including an arts center, the ecological corridor to the northern area of the park, a wetland, and Olympic Manifesto Square.

Ding seldom attempts to encourage her charges to run. Instead, she tells them about the potential dangers and obstacles that lie ahead.

"There are three more inclines in front of us, and after that, we will arrive at our final stop today," she tells them.

Many of the runners she accompanies reached the finishing line without making any stops.

"This gives me a sense of achievement, which is hard to find elsewhere in my daily life, as I am usually busy looking after my child and doing housework," she said.

Running can be enjoyable, but it is difficult to share enthusiasm for the sport with others, Ding said.

"That's where companionship comes in. By sharing the positive energy, excitement and upbeat attitude that comes from running and other forms of exercise, you help those who are visually impaired, or who are experiencing negative emotions," she said.

"Although I initially took up running to stay healthy and in shape, I soon found that sharing the activity with others made me happy and positive, which in turn pushed me to become more actively involved with running."

> "Ultimately, you may become addicted to this feeling of happiness that comes from helping others and being needed."
>
> **He Xiaoyun,** founder and organizer of Running in the Dark's Beijing branch

Regained confidence

The positive energy and sense of happiness gained from running can leave a lasting impression on visually impaired participants.

Despite experiencing the ups and downs of life, runners continue to join up with the charity group members because of the support and encouragement they provide.

Yao, the visually impaired runner, first came to Beijing in 2010 to work as a blind masseur and returned to his hometown in Handan, Hebei province, in 2015 to get married. Last year, he came back to the Chinese capital for work.

Born and raised in a small village in Handan, Yao, who has a sister and brother, said that when he was 15, his mother refused his request to learn massage techniques because this cost 1,800 yuan ($254), equivalent to three months' income for Yao's parents.

However, in his 20s, he was able to study basic massage therapy skills for free with the support of national policies, and began earning a living through this work.

He gradually improved his skills by practicing and paying for more advanced courses in massage therapy, before securing a masseur's job in Beijing that paid more than 10,000 yuan per month.

"My feeling toward my parents now is that they brought me up from childhood, and I will take care of them when they are old," Yao said.

"However, when I lost my sight and the doctor concluded that it could not be restored, I thought my parents were disheartened by my disability and decided I could do little apart from staying at home.

"But my confidence has been restored, thanks largely to the massage therapy skills that enable me to earn a living. Running with volunteers in the park also helps, as it not only improves my cardiovascular fitness but broadens the mind."

Yao said that when he first started running in the winter of 2014, he struggled to complete 3 km at a time, running about 1.5 km before walking for the same distance. His strength and stamina improved as he continued to run.

The female volunteer who accompanied him in 2014 worked at a police station in Haidian. Yao said that even though they no longer run together, he keeps in touch with her on WeChat.

"As we ran, we shared stories about our daily life, discussed our favorite places to visit, food to eat, or the cases she was handling at work," Yao said.

Information exchange

Volunteers joining the charity running group quickly realize that their charges do not easily concede defeat.

By offering their time and energy, the volunteers enable these participants to have similar experiences to those with normal vision or hearing.

Qi Longlin, 54, who is a frequent runner, often noticed visually or hearing impaired people running in Olympic Forest Park, so he joined the charity organization late last month.

He accompanied three visually impaired athletes, and during his second run, he met with Yang Kun, the fastest such runner in the charity group. Despite keeping up with Yang on the first lap, Qi was frustrated when he eventually had to stop because of Yang's faster pace.

But his mood improved when Chai Jingtai, a 47-year-old visually impaired athlete, joined him for a run.

Without paying much attention to their speed, the pair talked most of the time they were running. When they completed half a lap of the track, Chai told Qi that he lost 110,000 yuan in a scam last year.

Qi said, "If we can't control other people's behavior, why let it make us unhappy by thinking about it?" He told a story to comfort Chai, whose mood lightened as he sang a song he wrote and composed for Qi.

After bonding for about 50 minutes, the pair found that in addition to running, they had other common interests.

Qi started consulting Chai, a blind masseur, on the specific details of nutrition and the acupoints used in traditional Chinese massage.

He asked Chai, "If I accompany you on a run, can you tell me how I can further improve my health in the future?" The latter happily agreed.

Fresh hope

He, the founder and organizer of Running in the Dark's Beijing branch, said: "As a group, we are involved with many runners, not just our visually impaired friends, who join us because other groups do not accept them. They are considered old, weak and disabled by these groups, who favor fast runners. However, we accept them all."

Running in the Dark has received considerable support, including participating quotas for important marathon events. Representatives from technology companies such as Apple and VMware occasionally visit Olympic Forest Park to join the charity group in interacting with visually impaired runners and giving them emotional support.

Visually impaired people are often more resilient and determined than others because of their physical limitations, He said. They strive harder to achieve the same level of success as those without such disabilities.

"When they complete tasks that someone who is not visually impaired cannot do, they feel especially proud of themselves. Such a feeling is crucial for them to take part in sports, as it gives them new hope for their lives," He said.

As a volunteer, He said she feels fulfilled, as her achievements have been recognized by others.

"Ultimately, you may become addicted to this feeling of happiness that comes from helping others and being needed," she said.

In April, on her 52nd birthday, He received dozens of congratulatory messages, including notes from runners with impaired hearing. She also received video messages in sign language wishing her good health.

She even received congratulatory messages from volunteers and runners from outside Beijing.

"These are things that money can't buy. I received those messages because of what I have done. My work and that of the volunteers in the running group make us feel appreciated," she said.







Left: Chai Jingtai (front) stretches with other visually impaired runners and volunteers before a morning run at Beijing Olympic Forest Park this month. **Center:** Yao Taotao (front left) is accompanied by two volunteers at the park. **Right**: A volunteer guides a visually impaired runner with a hemp rope at the park this month. PHOTOS BY WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

TOP NEWS



Teachers in Beijing offer encouragement to a student who is about to take the national college entrance exam, also known as the *gaokao*, on Wednesday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

Chorus of well wishes, support as *gaokao* gets underway

By **CHENG SI**
chengsi@chinadaily.com.cn

From supportive parents dressed in the lucky color red to sporting legends offering their well wishes, the nationwide college entrance exam got underway on Wednesday with a record number of participants taking the test.

Such is the importance of the entrance exam, or *gaokao*, in shaping the futures and careers of candidates that family, friends, teachers and fellow students lined the entrances of some examination venues to urge the participants on.

In Jinan, Shandong province, a male senior high student surnamed Li wore a *qipao* — a traditional Chinese dress considered auspicious — to cheer on his peers. Li, who has already been recommended for admission to Zhongshan University in Guangdong province, didn't need to take the entrance exam this year.

He said the *qipao* was his mother's, and she had intended to wear it for his gaokao. Li said while he felt a "little bit shy" wearing the dress, he wanted to pass on his well wishes and good luck to his classmates.

Many tertiary institutions across China, including Tsinghua University and Renmin University of China, also sent their well wishes and greetings to the candidates via Sina Weibo.

The fame of the gaokao, considered one of the toughest college entrance exams in world, also drew the attention of English soccer great David Beckham. He posted a video on social media recently, saying that he knows the *gaokao* is very important for every Chinese student, and urged all the participants success with a cry of "Come on!" in Chinese.

The examination this year is the first since China optimized its COVID-19 response measures. A record 12.91 million examinees have signed up to participate in the *gaokao* this year, a year-on-year increase of 980,000, according to the Ministry of Education. It will last between two and four days, depending on the location.

However, just as anxious as the students about the life-altering exam were their parents, many of whom accompanied their children to the test venues dressed in the color red for good luck.

"We arrived at the test site around 7:30 am," said a mother aged in her 40s at an exam venue in Beijing. "I feel more anxious and worried than my daughter herself. But I don't want to put more pressure on her."

She said her daughter wanted to be an art student and she had counseled her that "mastering a skill will be beneficial to her future employment".

Yan Zegang and his wife, both from Changsha, Hunan province, accompanied their daughter to the test venue and waited for her to finish the exam. "We made sure we had a red shirt and a *qipao* a month before the examination, hoping they will bring good luck to my little girl," Yan said.

The 47-year-old said the *gaokao* is quite important for every student in China and can pave the way for their futures.

"But I don't want my child to be too nervous about the test," he said. "I told her this morning to take the examination as a life adventure, and whatever the result may be she is always the best of our family."

Local authorities across the country implemented tailored policies this year allowing for the *gaokao* to proceed safely and securely after the optimization of COVID-19 measures.

For example, Shandong required candidates to monitor their health for three days before the start of the exam. Those who test positive can take the test in a separate room.

In Beijing, some 6,600 police officers will be on duty every day during the exam to guarantee the security of 58,000 participants in the capital.

The Beijing Public Security said that it has opened 5,800 temporary parking lots for parents who drive their children to the exams. In addition, 546 construction sites near test centers have been told not to make noise during the exams.

Zou Shuo contributed to this story.

Forum: Civilizations' exchanges seen as key

From page 1

Wang quoted remarks made by President Xi during an inspection of Fujian province in March 2021, saying: "Without the 5,000-year Chinese civilization, Chinese characteristics could not be formed. And without Chinese characteristics, the successful path of socialism with Chinese characteristics we follow today could not be found."

He added that cultural heritage is nonrenewable and cannot be replaced, and stressed the need to have a sense of responsibility and a clear understanding of the complicated situations that pose challenges to protection efforts.

A number of scholars expressed their ideas on Chinese civilization and modernization, including Chen Lai, director of the Tsinghua Academy of Chinese Learning, Zhao Tingyang, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Philosophy, and Zheng Yongnian, a professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Shenzhen).

According to Chen, China's modernization is different from that of Western countries. "Some foreigners consider Confucian culture and modernization to be contradictory, but that's not true. People who grow up being influenced by Chinese culture and accept Confucian values can certainly achieve outstanding economic progress," said Chen.

Zheng agreed, highlighting the contributions made by Chinese civilization to the world's modernization, mainly in technological inventions in ancient times, as well as in political systems and philosophical concepts.

Zhao pointed to obstacles in communication between different civilizations and offered suggestions to overcome these.

On Thursday, discussions will take place at the forum on topics including fostering the development of art and literature, the development and application of cutting-edge technology in digital publishing, and building up the cultural strength of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

Contact the writers at wangru1@chinadaily.com.cn

Peace: Chinese initiatives gain Arab nations' support

From page 1

Examples include the United Arab Emirates' Khalifa Port, Qatar's Lusail Stadium and the Haramain High-Speed Railway in Saudi Arabia. This also helps explain why the UAE, Bahrain and Kuwait have applied to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as dialogue partners, after Saudi Arabia became a dialogue partner earlier.

Similarly, the Middle East is of crucial importance due to its location at the crossroads of three continents — Europe, Africa and Asia — and the convergence of the Mediterranean, Red, Arabian, Caspian and Black seas. China and the Middle East states have mutual interests in integrating the BRI into national regeneration programs, which have included Saudi Vision 2030, UAE Vision 2021, Jordan 2025, Turkiye's Middle Corridor and Kuwait's Vision 2035.

In recent years, there has been a sharp increase in trade between China and the Middle East, especially in the energy sector, which remains the substratum of China's associations with the region. China has also signed comprehensive strategic partnership agreements with a number of countries, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iran. In 2022, Syria also came into the BRI fold.

Arab countries have expressed their support for Chinese initiatives on numerous occasions, the most recent being joint statements signed at the China-Arab States Summit and the China-Gulf Cooperation Council Summit in December.

It is important to note that, even though Syria became a BRI partner in 2022, the prevailing unrest in the country threatened to upend any chances of progress. In this context, China sought to mediate and promote peaceful resolutions, ensuring the advancement of its projects while fostering stability and prosperity in the region. Through active engagement in diplomatic efforts, China is managing to successfully navigate the complexities of the region, paving the way for successful BRI implementation and contributing to the overall development and well-being of the Middle East.

China's global strides have not gone unnoticed by the United States. In 2020, the US' Caesar Act took effect, establishing in part that sanctions would be imposed on those who provide support to the Syrian government or knowingly provide certain goods or services to Syria. The following year, US President Joe Biden unveiled the Build Back Better World initiative, which more or less competes with the BRI, and the G7 introduced the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment, though pledges to developing nations are yet to be met.

What has further prompted Middle Eastern states' inclination toward China is a growing frustration with the US' fluctuating priorities, conflict-prone approaches and inconsistent engagement with the region as a whole. Other precursors for the need to enter into more pragmatic agreements have been the global financial crunch brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and the fuel crisis exacerbated by the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Nonetheless, Middle Eastern nations are not perceiving regional developments in a binary fashion. Numerous Arab states are adopting a more pragmatic approach based on national interests. Instead of pursuing alignment with a single great power, they want to participate in the multilateral arrangements directed by Washington and Beijing. All these countries list China as their largest trading partner and the US as their strategic partner.

Hence, while Washington still maintains a significant military presence in almost every Middle Eastern country, Gulf states have responded to the changing geopolitical landscape by engaging in long-standing strategic relationships with Western countries while increasing their economic and energy ties with Beijing.

The author, a Middle East analyst, is a research fellow at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad in Pakistan. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

More policy support urged for foreign trade growth

Expert: Better inclusive financing services, tax cuts can ease burden on enterprises

By **WANG KEJU**
wangkeju@chinadaily.com.cn

China's foreign trade grew at a much slower pace than expected in May amid multiple headwinds, such as intensifying geopolitical tensions and a sagging world economy, which subdued global demand, prompting experts to call for greater policy support to stabilize the country's export growth.

As the global economic outlook is forecast to remain gloomy and external demand is expected to weaken, China's foreign trade will face some pressure. Stronger government support should be provided on an ongoing basis to help address concerns of businesses and sustain stable growth, experts said on Wednesday.

In May, China's foreign trade expanded 0.5 percent to 3.45 trillion yuan ($485 billion). Exports witnessed a 0.8 year-on-year decrease to 1.95 trillion yuan while import climbed 2.3 percent to 1.5 trillion yuan, according to data from the General Administration of Customs.

Zhou Maohua, an analyst at China Everbright Bank, said the country's exports logged a modest drop in May, partly due to a relatively high base figure recorded in the same period last year. Also, as domestic exporters fulfilled a backlog of orders in the past few months that had been disrupted by the pandemic, inadequate market demand caused the decline.

Weighed down by the effects of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, a stubbornly high inflation and tighter monetary policy, the world economy and global trade have been in the doldrums. Shrinking external demand will be a major drag on China's foreign trade for some time, Zhou said.

The foundation for recovery of the country's foreign trade is not yet fully established. Further supportive policies should be provided to help tackle various challenges and ensure stable growth, he added.

Xu Hongcai, deputy director of the China Association of Policy Science's economic policy committee, said that diversification of international markets must be better leveraged to cushion dampening demand from countries such as the United States and Japan.

Between January and May, China's total imports and exports grew 4.7 percent year-on-year to 16.77 trillion yuan, with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations remaining the country's largest trading partner, according to the administration.

3.45 trillion yuan
China's foreign trade in May, according to data from the General Administration of Customs

China's trade with ASEAN member states amounted to 2.59 trillion yuan, up 9.9 percent year-on-year, while the nation's trade with countries and regions involved in the Belt and Road Initiative expanded 13.2 percent year-on-year to 5.78 trillion yuan, data from the administration showed.

Countries and regions involved in the BRI and ASEAN member states are becoming new growth engines of China's foreign trade. Further steps should be employed to tap into their trade potential, Xu said, adding that the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, which has been fully enforced for all its 15 members, should be better harnessed to expand the market in Southeast Asia with preferential tax rates.

Zhou from China's Everbright Bank said the exports from high-end manufacturing industries, as highlighted by automobile exports, should play a bigger role in facilitating the stable growth of China's foreign trade.

Between January and May, China's mechanical and electrical product exports grew 9.5 percent year-on-year to 5.57 trillion yuan. In particular, automobile exports amounted to 266.78 billion yuan, up 124.1 percent year-on-year, data from the administration showed.

Domestic manufacturers should stay abreast of shifting demand in the global market and invest more in innovation and production capacity, in order to provide global buyers with higher value-added products and secure more orders, Zhou said.

Zhang Jianping, head of the Center for Regional Economic Cooperation at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said that policies to enable greater foreign trade facilitation should be improved to lower the overall costs of businesses and enhance their competitiveness.

Better inclusive financing services should be provided and deeper tax and fee cuts introduced to lighten the burden on foreign trade enterprises. The coverage of export credit insurance should also be expanded. Industry associations and chambers of commerce should play a key role in helping firms secure more orders, he added.

Clashes in Paris



French police clash with a protester during a demonstration in Paris on Tuesday after the French government pushed through its pension reforms using a constitutional mechanism that allowed it to avoid a vote in the National Assembly. FIRAS ABDULLAH / GETTY IMAGES

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

Editor's note: *As protection of the planet's flora, fauna and resources becomes increasingly important, China Daily is publishing a series of stories to illustrate the country's commitment to safeguarding the natural world.*







Clockwise from top left: A farmer plows land ready for sweetvetch shrubs to be planted in the Tengger Desert, Inner Mongolia autonomous region. SURINA / FOR CHINA DAILY Volunteers take part in an anti-desertification activity in Hulunbuir, Inner Mongolia. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Sand-control workers help prepare barriers that will house sand-resistant plants in Gansu province. YANG YONGWEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Anti-desertification efforts to drive environmental security

Mass public participation in afforestation efforts takes root. **Zheng Jinran** and **Yuan Hui** report from Chifeng, Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

In the Tengger Desert last month, yellow sand danced on the breeze and a profusion of sweetvetch swung its green leaves.

"In summer, you can see an amazing flower ocean when the plants bloom with their small pink, yellow or purplish petals," said Liang Cunxin, from Alshaa Left Banner, Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

"The enduring vitality of such plants on the barren land is astonishing," said the 53-year-old, whose family lived in the area for decades but was forced to relocate in 2007 as a result of desert encroachment.

"The government encouraged us to plant saxaul and littleleaf pea shrubs, which are commonly used to fix dunes in deserts, but the survival rate was unsatisfactory so we switched to this plant, and it has worked," he said.

The Tengger covers about 43,000 square kilometers in Inner Mongolia and Gansu province, making it China's fourth-largest arid area.

More than 2 million sweetvetch shrubs have been planted since 2017, and the hardy perennial has gradually covered more than 33 sq km of desert, Liang added.

Like Liang's family and their peers, about 400 million people from 30 provinces and regions have been affected by desertification, which by 2019 had covered a combined area of 1.68 million sq km, or 17.58 percent of China's total land area, according to data from the National Forestry and Grassland Administration.

Essential tasks

Speaking on Tuesday during a meeting with officials after a fact-finding trip to Inner Mongolia's Bayannuur, President Xi Jinping said the strengthening of efforts to fight desertification and move forward with key projects, such as the Three-North Shelter Forest Program, is related to China's environmental security, the building of a strong nation and the sustained development of the Chinese nation.

Xi called for sustained efforts to create new miracles in tackling desertification. He reiterated the need to adopt a holistic approach to conserving mountains, rivers, forests, farmland, lakes, grassland and deserts, and to prioritize the prevention and control of desertification as part of broader steps to build up a shield for environmental security in northern China.

Sun Tao, director of the desertification monitoring center with the Forestry Survey and Planning Institute at the NFGA, said, "China has made tremendous anti-desertification efforts, especially in the vast northern and northwestern regions, as the arid land in these areas has been a major source of sandstorms. Severe sandstorms can affect even large regions and their populations."

A series of storms from March 19 to 22 swept across 3.62 million sq km and affected 560 million people, the administration said.

Sun noted that the storms, with sand mainly originating in Mongolia and the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, were divided into three routes — eastern, middle and western — mainly based on their origins and main routes. He added that Beijing is usually affected by those in the eastern and middle routes.

Eight rounds of sandstorms were recorded in March and April, Sun said, adding that five were in the eastern and middle routes.

"Sandstorms occur when all three required factors are present: sources of sand; volatile air conditions; and winds," he said, noting that sand and dust is lifted into the air and carried long distances by strong winds.

"The only factors that we, as humans, can affect are the sources of sand, thus making desertification-control measures important to controlling storms," he said.

Global issue

The fight against desertification has become a global issue, making international cooperation essential. As such, Chinese methods could be shared with countries facing similar problems, Sun said.

Lying to the north, the Gobi Desert region of Mongolia, especially the part that borders China, has become a major source of dust and sand.

During March and April, the area accounted for more than 42 percent of the dust and sand concentrations across northern China, according to recent research conducted by Huang Jianping, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Sciences and a professor at Lanzhou University.

Huang's work also showed that Xinjiang's Taklimakan — China's largest desert — accounted for 26 percent of airborne sand during the same two months.

Sun said China and Mongolia have discussed establishing a joint center to control and prevent desertification, adding that China and a number of Arab nations also plan to found a research center on drought, desertification and land degradation.

"But more importantly, we need to do our greening efforts well, which could effectively mitigate the impact of sand and dust storms," he said.

President Xi has also called for extensive international exchanges and cooperation in fulfilling China's commitments to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. China will actively participate in global anti-desertification and environmental governance efforts, strengthen cooperation with neighboring countries and support desertification-control initiatives under the Belt and Road Initiative, he said.



A resident plants Scots pine saplings in the Mu Us Desert in Shenmu city, Shanxi province JIANG QIMING / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Systematic measures

At least 30 herding households are helping Liang Cunxin plant sweetvetch in the Tengger. They plan to cover about 66 sq km in the next three years, doubling the area currently under cultivation.

They are part of mass public participation in regional afforestation efforts to extend the vegetation cover.

Their home, Inner Mongolia, accounts for 23.7 percent of the national area of desertified land, making it one of China's most badly affected regions. As such, it has implemented significant measures, especially afforestation efforts.

"We have expanded forest coverage by over 6,666 sq km annually, and grassland by over 20,000 sq km," said Ma Qiang, deputy head of the regional forestry and grassland administration, adding that more than 2 billion trees have been planted via voluntary public afforestation initiatives. He noted that the efforts have seen the area of desertified land in the region fall for 15 consecutive years.

According to the regional forestry authority, along with extensive afforestation efforts, Inner Mongolia has implemented such measures as strict grazing controls and grassland conservation projects, explored new techniques, and established policies and regulations to guide sustainable land management practices. The measures are part of broader national initiatives to combat desertification and restore degraded ecosystems.

Moreover, China has taken a systematic and scientific approach to combating desertification in recent decades, encompassing mountains, bodies of water, forests, farmland, lakes, grassland and deserts. As one of the leading guidelines, the National Desertification Prevention and Control Plan (2021-30), lists coordinated measures among different regions, based on their situations, and outlines measures to reach various targets.

More than 6.67 million hectares of desertified land will be treated by 2025, rising to over 12.4 million hectares by 2030, according to the plan.

"Specific projects are being implemented, such as the Three-North Shelter Forest Program, protection and restoration of natural forests, control of sources of sand and dust storms in the Beijing-Tianjin region, and environmental restoration in mining areas. The goals are to improve ecosystem stability and mitigate desertification," said Sun, from the National Forestry and Grassland Administration's desertification monitoring center.

President Xi has set a goal of developing the Three-North program — launched in 1978 to retard expansion of the Gobi Desert — into an unbreakable "Great Green Wall" within 10 years. He highlighted 2021-30, the project's sixth phase, as the key period for consolidation and expanding achievements.

Innovative participation

Anti-desertification measures allow communities to enjoy better living conditions and more sustainable socioeconomic growth, which encourages greater participation from people in affected areas.

For example, the Three-North program, which extends across China's northwestern, northern and northeastern regions, helped lift 15 million rural residents out of poverty by the end of 2020, data from the National Forestry and Grassland Administration show.

Regions involved with the program have received around 385 million visits every year, with annual direct tourism revenue reaching 48 billion yuan ($6.7 billion), it added.

In addition to the traditional revenue generated by the agricultural and tourism service sectors, residents enjoy extra benefits.

At the Qiansongba Forest Farm in Chengde, Hebei province, the carbon credits from its carbon sink forest — used to offset emissions of greenhouse gases — generated more than 3.59 million yuan from December 2014 to April 2020, said Ma Shuen, an engineer with the farm.

"The villagers were surprised to receive extra money (as government subsidies), so more people were motivated to apply for their own planted areas to become carbon sink forests," he said. Ma added that the price of carbon credits may rise because of the government support, so he's confident that people will continue to plant trees.

Meanwhile, Ant Forest, an app developed by Ant Group, allows users to earn virtual "green energy" points through eco-friendly behaviors, such as walking instead of driving and by using public transportation.

Users can convert points into trees planted in designated areas, track the progress of planting and the effect of their contribution.

So far, it has attracted over 650 million users, the group's data show.

"I want to accumulate points, which encourages me to adopt a green, healthy life — like walking or riding bicycles — and I urge my friends to join in. So far, I have planted over 2,000 trees via Ant Forest," said Liu Shuangming, who works in the construction industry.

He said the innovative approach provides him with a tangible way to contribute to reforestation efforts.

"Now, I know more about how individuals can help protect the environment, and it's amazing to track my trees," he said.

Liang Zheng, head of the sustainable public welfare department at Ant Group, said that more than 400 million trees have been planted since 2016, half of them in Inner Mongolia.

"The project will invest 100 billion yuan to support pilot projects at the Hunshandake Forest Farm over the next three years," she said.

Rising awareness

Xie Mingyu, head of the Hunshandake Forest Farm in Inner Mongolia, praised such active participation, saying rising awareness of environmental protection and diverse participation helps promote the projects.

Liang Cunxin, the farmer who grows sweetvetch, gained the nickname Uncle Sweetvetch after showing off his flowers in the desert via online videos and receiving tens of thousands of likes.

"People are welcome to view the flower ocean in the desert and enjoy this miracle," he said with a big smile.

Contact the writers at zhengjinran@chinadaily.com.cn

On-site surveys confirm program's success

By **ZHENG JINRAN**

For two weeks, Zhu Yanjun and her team walked from dawn till dusk, checking more than 40,000 trees across about 6,660 hectares in Alshaa Front Banner, Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

The 25-year-old, who works for the East China Forestry Survey and Planning Institution at the National Forestry and Grassland Administration, has conducted many on-site field checks.

"Counting trees in forests gives me a better idea of the planting project's success and allows me to see the contribution individuals can make to the environment," she said.

Meanwhile, Wu Yang, from the Qiansongba Forest Farm in Chengde, Hebei province, said the farm's annual field checks play a crucial role in afforestation efforts.

"When the survival rate in a section is lower than 80 percent, new seedlings are required to fill the gaps, and we only acknowledge success when the survival rate rises back above 80 percent," he said.

Afforestation projects invite forestry authorities or third-party organizations to conduct on-site tree counts to assess survival rates and the project's impact, and to provide essential data for management and other purposes, he said.

In addition to on-site checks, people counting trees across large areas have adopted several methods and technologies to monitor and estimate tree populations, such as aerial surveys and remote-sensing techniques. For example, in some regions, satellites have been used to observe and verify tree numbers.

Ant Forest, a mobile application launched by Ant Group, encourages users to adopt eco-friendly behaviors to reduce carbon emissions and earn virtual "green energy" points that can be converted into trees planted in designated areas.

Since 2016, more than 400 million trees have been planted via Ant Forest, half of them in Inner Mongolia, the group's data show. Third-party organizations like Zhu's team and GAGO Group, which provides support for the agricultural industry, use on-site visits and remote-sensing techniques to check tree numbers.

"Through the processed images, we can clearly observe the changes in the bare soil, where dots appear (indicating trees) that connect to become lines, then the lines extend to become networks," said Zhang Gong, GAGO's CEO. The difference made by these green networks is clear even when seen via satellite images, showing China's sustainable, scientific afforestation efforts and her contribution to improving the environment, he added.

In addition, on-site checks, satellites and other remote-sensing techniques are among the methods used in comprehensive monitoring programs for factors such as forest coverage and biodiversity. Much of the data collected can be accessed through a management platform launched by the National Forestry and Grassland Administration.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

WORLD

Report finds world off track on meeting UN energy goals

By **EARLE GALE** in London
earle@mail.chinadailyuk.com

The world is not on track to meet the United Nations' sustainable development goals for energy by the target year of 2030, new research from the International Energy Agency, International Renewable Energy Agency, United Nations Statistics Division, World Bank, and World Health Organization has concluded.

Their joint report, titled "Tracking Sustainable Development Goal 7: The Energy Progress Report", looked at the UN's aspiration for everyone to have access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern sources of energy by 2030.

The report, released on Tuesday, is the latest in a series of studies published annually by the organizations since 2018.

It found that the doubling of historic rates of efficiency improvements and the massive increase in the use of renewable energy, which is needed to meet the goals, have not happened to the necessary extent.

The report said that, while achieving the goal would have a major impact on people's health and help reduce air pollution and minimize global warming, the world has not managed to invest enough time and effort into making it happen.

The research found, for example, that 567 million people in sub-Saharan Africa were still without access to electricity in 2021 — the most recent year for which data was available. This accounted for 80 percent of the global total of people who do not have electricity.

The situation in sub-Saharan Africa in 2021 was virtually the same as it had been in 2010, the report added.

The document concluded that around 2.3 billion people globally are still using polluting fuels to cook their food. The World Health Organization said 3.2 million people die every year from illnesses attributed to the use of such fuels.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the WHO's director-general, said: "We must protect the next generation by acting now. Investing in clean and renewable solutions to support universal energy access is how we can make real change."

He said clean cooking technologies in homes "and reliable electricity in healthcare facilities" would "play a crucial role in protecting the health of our most vulnerable populations".

Fatih Birol, executive director of the International Energy Agency, said a global energy crisis largely attributed to the Russia-Ukraine conflict had led to high energy prices in recent months that had exacerbated the problem.

Sustainable access

"While the clean energy transition is moving faster than many think, there is still a great deal of work needed to deliver sustainable, secure and affordable access to modern energy services for the billions of people who live without it," Birol said.

The report writers said some progress had been made since last year's document but that "the current pace is not adequate to achieve any of the 2030 targets".

They noted that progress had been slowed recently by a range of factors, including "an uncertain macroeconomic outlook, high levels of inflation, currency fluctuations, debt distress in a growing number of countries, lack of financing, supply chain bottlenecks, tighter fiscal circumstances, and soaring prices of materials". They also said the novel coronavirus pandemic had been a factor.

Cloud concept



An artist uses spray paint to help create a design of clouds, conceived by Brazilian graffiti artist Toz, at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on Tuesday. CARL DE SOUZA / AFP

Briefly

MIDDLE EAST

Embassy reopening seen helpful to region

The reopening of Iran's embassy in Saudi Arabia is helpful for the region, said United Nations spokesman Stephane Dujarric on Tuesday, in response to a question at a daily press briefing. Iran reopened its embassy in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday after seven years of closure, nearly three months after the two countries agreed to restore bilateral ties under a China-brokered deal. In March, Saudi Arabia and Iran reached a groundbreaking agreement in Beijing to resume diplomatic relations and reopen their embassies and missions.

UNITED NATIONS

New members elected to Security Council

Algeria, Guyana, Sierra Leone and South Korea on Tuesday were elected unopposed to the United Nations Security Council as nonpermanent members, while Slovenia won the fifth open seat by soundly beating Belarus. The Security Council is made up of 15 member states, five permanent veto-wielding countries and 10 others that serve two-year terms. Each year, five of those spots are up for grabs. The 10 nonpermanent seats are allocated to represent all regions equally. In a secret ballot during the UN General Assembly, Slovenia, which was competing with Belarus for the seat reserved for Eastern Europe, won by a vote count of 153-38. Algeria and Sierra Leone will represent Africa, South Korea won the Asia-Pacific seat, and Guyana won a seat reserved for Latin America and the Caribbean.

UNITED STATES

On-site inspection of plane crash to end

The National Transportation Safety Board said investigators plan to conclude its on-site investigative work on Wednesday from the southwestern Virginia crash site of the light plane that caused a security scare on Sunday when it flew over heavily restricted airspace near Washington. Four people, including the pilot of the Cessna Citation 560, were killed in the crash in a mountainous wooded area, the Federal Aviation Administration said. The Department of Defense scrambled F-16 fighter jets, which created a sonic boom over the US capital as they pursued the Cessna.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Rescue efforts



People carry an injured person away from a house that collapsed due to an earthquake in Jeremie, Haiti, on Tuesday. The quake has left at least four people dead and 36 others injured, reports said, quoting civil protection authorities. RALPH SIMON / AP

Thousands evacuated after dam destruction

Russia, Ukraine trade accusations; Chinese envoy voices grave concerns

KHERSON/MOSCOW — Thousands of people have been evacuated after an attack on a major dam unleashed a torrent of water, inundating two dozen villages and sparking fears of "grave and far-reaching consequences".

Moscow and Kyiv have traded blame for ripping a gaping hole in the Kakhovka dam, which is located on the front line and provides cooling water for Europe's largest nuclear plant.

A state of emergency has been imposed in Kherson, Russia's TASS state news agency reported on Wednesday.

The agency, citing emergency services, said about 2,700 houses were flooded after the destruction of the dam on Tuesday and almost 1,300 people had been evacuated. At least seven people were missing, officials said.

The destruction of the dam on the Dnipro River flooded a large part of the front line in the Kherson region.

Residents sloshed through knee-deep waters in inundated homes as videos posted on social media showed scenes, including rescue workers carrying people to safety, and what looked like the triangular roof of an entire building that had been uprooted drifting downstream. Footage taken from the air showed waters filling the streets on the eastern side of the river.

In a statement on Tuesday, the Russian Foreign Ministry strongly condemned the destruction of the power plant "by the armed forces of Ukraine", calling on the international community "to condemn the criminal acts of the Ukrainian authorities".

Earlier in the day, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Russian forces had destroyed the dam. According to Ukraine's state-run nuclear energy operator Energoatom, the destruction of the dam may have negative consequences for the Zaporizhzhia plant.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called the attack "another devastating consequence" of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

Devastating consequences

UN Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths on Tuesday warned of the grave consequences of the destruction of the dam, describing it as possibly the most significant incident of damage to civilian infrastructure since the start of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in February 2022.

"The sheer magnitude of the catastrophe will only become fully realized in the coming days. But it is already clear that it will have grave and far-reaching consequences for thousands of people in southern Ukraine," he told an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council.

A Chinese envoy on Tuesday also voiced grave concerns over the destruction of the dam.

The protection of civilians and critical civilian facilities in armed conflict is an important principle enshrined in international humanitarian law, said Zhang Jun, China's permanent representative to the UN.

"We are deeply concerned about the resulting humanitarian, economic, and ecological consequences. We call on all parties to the conflict to abide by international humanitarian law and do their utmost to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure," he said.

The reservoir, formed by the dam, is also a major source of cooling water for the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. China notes that the director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency has confirmed that the dam's destruction has not posed any safety risk to the nuclear power plant. However, as the water in the reservoir continues to recede, it may not be possible to continue pumping water to the nuclear power plant in the future.

The director of the plant, Yuri Chernichuk, said water levels in the cooling pond had not changed and "at the moment, there is no security threat to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant".

In another development, Russia's defense ministry said on Wednesday that "Ukrainian saboteurs" had blown up a section of the Togliatti-Odesa ammonia pipeline that carries fertilizer from Russia to Ukraine in Kharkiv region on Tuesday.

There was no immediate comment from Ukraine.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Japan's plan to dump toxic water condemned

By **ZHOU JIN**
zhoujin@chinadaily.com.cn

It is selfish and irresponsible of Japan to discharge nuclear-contaminated water into the ocean, which saves the cost for itself at the expense of the world, Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said on Wednesday.

A report issued by the plant's operator Tokyo Electric Power Company on Monday showed that the radioactive elements in marine fish caught in a harbor near the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant far exceeded safety levels for human consumption.

In particular, the data showed that the content of Cs-137, a radioactive element that is a common byproduct in nuclear reactors, is 180 times that of the standard maximum stipulated in Japan's food safety law.

During the daily news conference on Wednesday, Wang noted that the Japanese government has repeatedly sought to whitewash its discharge of the wastewater, claiming the water to be harmless and the discharge to be justified and calling it the only option. Facts, however, prove otherwise.

"If the polluted water is indeed as safe as the Japanese government says, why doesn't Tokyo discharge it into its inland lakes?" Wang asked. "Why has Japan insisted on building a discharge tunnel and eagerly launching it?"

The answer, Wang said, is that discharge into the sea is the cheapest option with the minimum risk of polluting Japan itself.

Common property

"The ocean is common property for the whole world, not a private sewer for Japan," Wang said.

Apart from the discharge plan, Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry had offered five proposals and experts from neighboring countries proposed safer plans such as long-term storage.

However, without fully assessing the alternatives, the Japanese government has unilaterally decided to dump the water into the ocean, Wang said.

"Such a selfish move that damages the common interests of all humanity will not persuade people from either Japan or other countries, but will only bring disgrace on Tokyo," Wang said.

The move will also harm Japan's neighbors and Pacific Island countries, and Tokyo will further lose the trust of the international community, he said.

On Monday, TEPCO started sending seawater into an underwater tunnel to be diluted before releasing the treated nuclear wastewater into the ocean. The company said all facilities for the water release system are expected to be completed by the end of this month.

China-Canada trade grows despite 'turbulence'

By **RENA LI** in Toronto
renali@chinadailyusa.com

Despite diplomatic relations that are still fraught with difficulties, trade relations between Canada and China have continued to grow, according to an economist from the Royal Bank of Canada, or RBC.

"We can see exports of Canadian goods to China have declined marginally in 2022, but the stuff that Canada imported from China as a share of total imports from the world is actually as high as a record high. That's really interesting," said Claire Fan, an RBC economist who recently addressed a group of Chinese Canadian media on the Canadian macroeconomic outlook and trade relations with China.

Fan said that although former US president Donald Trump-era geopolitical tensions and the pandemic had severely disrupted the global supply chain and trade system, the period was basically a black swan event of uncertainty, and that talks have largely continued to the present day.

"But moving forward, businesses are obviously aware of high amounts of uncertainties that are associated with political tensions. So, businesses will shelter themselves to make sure that the risks were essential," Fan added.

Meanwhile, according to a recent Canada-China trade report released by the University of Alberta, last year saw a return to growth in both exports and imports between the two countries. Because of the turbulence in exports and consistent growth in imports, Canada's trade deficit with China continued to grow.

In particular, exports to China expanded dramatically in the last few months of 2022. The rebound in exports can largely be explained by the easing of COVID-related policies in China, and the country's lifting of export restrictions on Canadian canola.

Furthermore, statistics show that Canada's imports from China in 2022 grew once again, at a rate of 16.36 percent compared to 2021. The year 2022 also marked the first time that imports from China surpassed C$100 billion ($74.5 billion), with the total value of imports at C$100.03 billion.

In line with previous years, telephone and communication technology was the top import product of 2022, with a total value of C$9.83 billion and a moderate growth rate of 7.5 percent year-on-year. Automatic data processing machines were the second-largest import category, with a total value of C$8.07 billion (-0.3 percent YoY), according to the report.

Complexity seen

The report concluded that broad relations between China and Canada had chilled throughout 2022, which will unquestionably have some impact on the complexity of future trading and investment relations.

"It is important to note, however, that through this turbulence, Canada-China trade has continued to grow to historic levels and this growth is expected to continue into 2023," said the report.

On the other hand, the RBC has also predicted that a recession will hit at the midpoint of 2023. Fan noted that the bank's earlier expectation of mild recessions in Canada and the US hasn't changed and is driven by several factors, such as inflation that is more persistent than expected, rapid interest rate hikes as a response from central banks, and a slower consumer spending profile.

"Our forecasts see a slowing in economic growth in Canada through 2023, led by slower household consumption as more consumers are constrained by higher prices and rising expenses to service existing borrowings," said Fan. "We're already seeing indications that growth in the economy is losing steam. That includes weakness in the labor markets as job openings decline, and rising consumer delinquency."

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

WORLD US

2022 saw worsening level of US drug deaths

By BELINDA ROBINSON
in New York
belindarobinson@chinadailyusa.com

More than 100,000 Americans died from drug overdoses last year, as experts suggest drug use was worsened by the stress, anxiety and worry of the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic.

Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that 109,680 deaths were caused by drug overdoses in 2022. It was two percent higher than the 107,622 overdose deaths in 2021.

Data also show that the largest number of drug overdoses in 2022 were due to fentanyl and synthetic opioids. Fentanyl is involved in more deaths of Americans under age 50 than suicide, homicide or cancer, the Drug Enforcement Administration said.

Karen Cassiday, a clinical psychologist, managing director of the Anxiety Treatment Center of Greater Chicago and past president of the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, told China Daily: "The pandemic had several unique characteristics that lent themselves to triggering anxiety, depression, substance abuse and eating disorders."

Texas and Washington State both saw the biggest increases in drug-related deaths in 2022, with approximately 500 more deaths per state.

Several other states including Florida, Kentucky, Indiana, Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia had increases of 100 or more deaths due to the misuse of drugs. Deaths from drugs have been high for the past few years.

Since the 1990s, the US has been battling against the misuse of opioid prescriptions, which became rampant, and later led to widespread heroin use. By 2015, the number of overdoses due to heroin peaked. By 2016, fentanyl was one of the most abused drugs.

Over the past several years, a growing number of drug overdose deaths have been attributed to illicit fentanyl, a highly addictive drug. Deaths from fentanyl climbed even higher amid the stress brought on by the coronavirus pandemic, research shows.

Republican and Democratic lawmakers have taken different approaches to address the problem.

In April, President Joe Biden announced that, as part of his "National Drug Control Policy" his administration will "save lives by disrupting the trafficking of illicit fentanyl and its precursors into American communities".

Dr Rahul Gupta, director of the White House's Office of National Drug Control Policy, said in a statement that improving access to naloxone to reverse overdoses had also helped to keep the number of overdoses steady.

On May 25,the US House of Representatives passed the Republican-led legislation "Halt All Lethal Trafficking of Fentanyl Act". It aims to permanently schedule fentanyl-related substances as schedule 1 drugs, enabling tougher penalties like prison sentences for fentanyl abuse.

The bill has the support of the president. But critics say it harkens back to the failed 1980s policy of the "war on drugs".

Liz Komar, sentencing reform counsel for the Sentencing Project, a research group that works to address racism in the criminal justice system, said in a statement: "Fifty years after the beginning of mass incarceration, the evidence is clear: the war on drugs has harmed communities.

"Harsh punishments don't save lives or make us safer. We urge Congress to remember the lessons of the 1980s and 1990s – mandatory minimums are not the answer to the overdose crisis."

In New York, officials from the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene are trying a different approach to stop drug overdoses. On June 5, it unveiled the city's first free public health vending machine in Brooklyn.

The machine is stocked with naloxone, a drug that can reduce or reverse overdoses. It also has fentanyl test strips, maxi pads and safe sex kits. Users must enter their New York City zip code to get the supplies. The machine, cost $11,000 and is funded by the city.

Dr Ashwin Vasan, the city's health commissioner, said in a statement: "We are in the midst of an overdose crisis in our city, which is taking a fellow New Yorker from us every three hours and is a major cause of falling life expectancy. Public health vending machines are an innovative way to meet people where they are and to put life-saving tools like naloxone in their hands."

New York City had more than 1,370 confirmed overdose deaths in the first half of 2022, according to figures from city health officials. In 2021, overdoses reached a record high of 2,668. In 2020, there were 2,103.

Following national trends, at least 84 percent of the city's overdose deaths in 2021 were due, in part, to an opioid. Fentanyl was involved in 80 percent. Vasan added that Xylazine, also known as "Tranq" or the "zombie drug" has been causing fresh havoc.

Four other vending machines are set to be unveiled this year in other New York City boroughs with high overdose rates.

Similar public vending health machines are already in use in Clark County, Las Vegas and Cincinnati, Ohio, and in parts of Europe, Canada and Australia.

The city is aiming to reduce the number of drug overdose deaths by 15 percent by 2025. The pledge was released in March as part of Mayor Eric Adams's "Care, Community, Action plan." One of its key measures is to increase access to free naloxone.

Agencies contributed to this report.

White woman who fatally shot black neighbor arrested

OCALA, Florida — A woman accused of fatally shooting her neighbor in Florida last week in a violent culmination of what the sheriff described as a 2.5-year feud was arrested on Tuesday, the Marion County Sheriff's Office said.

Susan Louise Lorincz, a 58-year-old white woman, was arrested on charges of manslaughter with a firearm, culpable negligence, battery and two counts of assault in the death of Ajike Owens, a 35-year-old black mother of four, Sheriff Billy Woods said in a statement.

Authorities came under pressure to arrest and charge Lorincz who fired through her front door and killed Owens during the Friday night shooting, in a case that has put Florida's divisive stand-your-ground law back into the spotlight.

About three dozens of mostly black protesters had gathered outside the Marion County Judicial Center to demand the shooter's arrest in the country's latest flashpoint over race and gun violence.

However, Woods said this was not a stand-your-ground case, but "simply a killing". When interviewed, Lorincz claimed that she acted in self-defense and that Owens had been trying to break down her door before discharging her firearm.

She also claimed that Owens had come after her in the past and had previously attacked her. Through their investigation, including obtaining the statements of eyewitnesses, detectives were able to establish that Lorincz's actions were not justifiable under Florida law, a statement from the sheriff's office said.

The shooting case has put the controversial "stand-your-ground" law back into the spotlight as this law is cited more frequently when a white shooter kills a black victim.

The sheriff's office has not confirmed whether there were slurs uttered or said whether race was a factor in the shooting.

"We've seen this again and again across this country," said Angela Ferrell-Zabala, executive director of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, adding that "it's really because of lax gun laws and a culture of shoot first".

Ferrell-Zabala said stand-your-ground cases, which she refers to as "shoot first laws" are deemed justifiable five times more frequently when a white shooter kills a black victim.

In 2017, Florida lawmakers updated the state's self-defense statute to shift the burden of proof from a person claiming self-defense to prosecutors. That means authorities have to rule out self-defense before bringing charges.

In fact, stand-your-ground and "castle doctrine" cases — which allow residents to defend themselves either by law or court precedent when threatened — have sparked outrage amid a spate of shootings across the country.

In April, 84-year-old Andrew Lester, a white man, shot and injured 16-year-old Ralph Yarl, a black teenager who rang his doorbell in Kansas City after mistakenly showing up at the wrong house to pick up his younger siblings.

Also on Tuesday, a man armed with four handguns killed two people and wounded five others when he fired into a crowd outside a high school graduation ceremony in Richmond, Virginia, police said.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

CHINA DAILY USA

NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,
New York, NY 10036
Telephone: 212-537-8888
Fax: 212-537-8898
editor@chinadailyusa.com
readers@chinadailyusa.com
Subscription: 212-537-8899
Advertising: 212-537-8916
Follow us on:
twitter.com/chinadaily
facebook.com/chinadaily
usa.chinadaily.com.cn
These materials are distributed by China Daily Distribution Corp. on behalf of China Daily Beijing, China. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.

WASHINGTON
National Press Bldg, Suite 1108
529 14th Street NW
Washington, DC 20045
Tel: 202-662-7249
Fax: 202-662-7247

SAN FRANCISCO
235 Montgomery Street, Suite 900, San Francisco, CA 94104
Tel: 415-348-8288
Fax: 415-348-8388

SEATTLE
800 Fifth Ave, Suite 4100
Seattle, WA 98104
Tel:206-922-2868

HOUSTON
1001 South Dairy Ashford Suite 100
Houston, TX 77077
Tel: 713-595-7660

CANADA | TORONTO
4711 Yonge Street, 10th Floor
Toronto, Ontario, M2N 6K8
Tel: 416-481-5706

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.656



Smoke billows upwards from a planned ignition by firefighters tackling the Donnie Creek Complex wildfire south of Fort Nelson, British Columbia, Canada on Saturday. REUTERS

Wildfires burn from Ottawa to Toronto

By RENA LI in Toronto
renali@chinadailyusa.com

Burning smoke has choked the entire Canadian region of Ottawa to Toronto as Canada deals with one of its worst wildfire seasons on record that is sending haze and smoke throughout the US Northeast.

As of Wednesday, 414 wildfires were burning in Canada with 239 out of control, keeping 20,183 Canadians out of their homes, according to Emergency Preparedness Minister Bill Blair. So far this year, 2,293 wildfires have torched 3.8 million hectares of land.

Environment Canada has issued special air quality advisories for large areas of Ontario and Quebec, warning of high levels of pollution from wildfires burning across both provinces.

It forecasts that western Quebec's poor air quality may persist for a few more days, while eastern Ontario's may improve a bit Thursday before deteriorating again Friday.

According to Quebec's forest fire prevention agency, more than 150 forest fires were burning in the province on Tuesday, including more than 110 deemed out of control.

Quebec's fire authority said it can't bring all the fires burning in the province under control and only between 20 to 30 fires at a time can be battled until reinforcement arrives.

Armed forces and firefighters from outside the province started arriving last Saturday to help local firefighters. About 100 soldiers are on the ground and 550 more firefighters are on the way.

French President Emmanuel Macron tweeted Sunday that France will send 100 firefighters as reinforcements to help combat the fires burning throughout Quebec.

In addition, it was reported that five wildfires were burning in Nova Scotia on Tuesday, 64 wildfires were burning in Alberta and 83 wildfires were burning in British Columbia as of Wednesday morning.

UK PM set to pitch for stronger US ties

By XING YI in London
xingyi@chinadailyusa.com

The United Kingdom's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak brings with him for discussion with US President Joe Biden a range of issues that will reportedly include the management of artificial intelligence, the new NATO secretary-general and bilateral ties when he flies to Washington on Wednesday.

The Telegraph newspaper said Sunak will use his trip to Washington to encourage Biden to back UK Defense Secretary Ben Wallace to take over the top job of NATO.

The term of the current head of the military alliance, Jens Stoltenberg, was meant to expire last year but was extended to September because of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Sunak will meet Biden on Thursday for a White House summit, pledging support for Ukraine.

Sunak is also expected to talk about the management of AI when he meets Biden in the White House on Thursday, the Financial Times newspaper reported.

Because the world is concerned about losing control of the fast development of AI, Sunak said the UK could "play a leadership role" in the sector, and he said he has discussed opportunities for global collaboration around the safe development of AI with the CEOs of Google and OpenAI.

Insiders in Downing Street told FT that "the prime minister is very alive to the need for international alignment on approach to AI", and suggested Britain could be a host for any new international regulatory body.

Sunak is expected to also meet US business leaders and members of Congress, arguing that the existing ties between the two countries mean they are better placed to take on the new challenges together. He will arrive in Washington on Wednesday.

"Just as interoperability between our militaries has given us a battlefield advantage over our adversaries, greater economic interoperability will give us a crucial edge in the decades ahead," Sunak said in a statement.

Economic issues

Economic cooperation will also likely be high on the agenda of Sunak's visit, and White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said the two heads will discuss efforts to continue strengthening their economic relationship and also review developments in Northern Ireland as part of their shared commitment to preserving the gains of the Good Friday Agreement.

But a free-trade agreement, or FTA, between the US and the UK, which had been promoted as one of the prizes for the UK leaving the European Union, will not be on the table, according to the FT.

"We are not seeking to pursue a free-trade deal with the US," a spokesperson for Number 10 said last week. "It's worth remembering the trade relationship, as it currently stands, is worth 279 billion pounds ($346 billion) already. We have achieved all of that without an FTA."

Former BBC presenter Nicholas Owen said on GB News: "All British prime ministers get seduced by the White House ... We are always told that so much will come out of it. Warm words will be said, but so little ever seems to come out."

Sunak's government has also been under pressure to respond after Biden launched $369 billion of subsidies to drive the development of electric vehicles and other clean technologies, a policy that prompted Brussels to set out its own industrial plan, Reuters reported.

Sunak is pushing for US relief to UK carmakers, via greater access to critical minerals used in electric batteries, after Biden's Inflation Reduction Act offered vast subsidies to US companies.

The upcoming meeting between Sunak and Biden will be their fourth this year. The two met during the AUKUS defense summit in San Diego, United States, in March; on the 20th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement in Belfast in April; and at the G7 Summit in Hiroshima, Japan, last month.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM







From left: The forum on the development of Tibet is held on May 23 in Beijing. LI XIN / XINHUA Delegates listen to a speech delivered by Wang Junzheng, Party secretary of Tibet during the event. LI XIN / XINHUA Foreign guests pose for a picture with local students in Lhasa. DEKYI DROLMA / FOR CHINA DAILY

Forum highlights resounding success of Tibet autonomous region's development

Area's astounding growth over decades heralded by both local and international attendees



This photo taken in May shows the Lhalu wetland in Lhasa, with the Potala Palace as the backdrop. Southwest China's Tibet autonomous region has impressed people from home and abroad with its pristine ecological environment and colorful ethnic culture. JIANG FAN / XINHUA

Hailing from home and abroad, participants attending a forum on the development of Tibet held in late May lauded the achievements made in all fronts in the Tibet autonomous region in Southwest China.

Officially called the 2023 Forum on the Development of Xizang, China, the event opened on May 23 in Beijing and focused on Tibet's new chapter in high-quality development and human rights protection. Xizang is the name of Tibet in Chinese.

The forum also acted as a means to pool together wisdom for the continued development of the autonomous region.

The one-day event, jointly hosted by the State Council Information Office and the regional government of Tibet, brought together more than 150 officials and experts in various fields and representatives of enterprises and media organizations from home and abroad.

There were several subforums for attendees to discuss issues relating to Tibet's whole-process people's democracy, high-quality development, culture and ecological civilization.

After more than 70 years of development, a new modern socialist Tibet featuring political and social stability, economic prosperity, ethnic unity, religious harmony, consolidation of border defenses and its people living and working in peace and contentment is now presented to the world, said Wang Junzheng, secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Regional Committee of the Communist Party of China, at the opening ceremony.

"People of various ethnic groups in Tibet have enjoyed a greater sense of accomplishment, happiness and security, and moderately prosperous lives along with the rest of the Chinese people," Wang said.

Achievements praised

Australian Sinologist Colin Macherras, a recipient of the Chinese Government Friendship Award, lauded Tibet's development over the past decades, citing his experience gained during visits to Tibet.

He said that Tibet has eliminated absolute poverty, and its infrastructure and living standards have improved dramatically.

The achievements of poverty alleviation in the Tibet autonomous region have been widely praised at the forum.

Tibet used to be the only provincial-level contiguous poverty-stricken region in China. The region had accomplished the historic feat of eradicating absolute poverty by the end of 2019, with 628,000 people lifted out of poverty. The regional GDP reached 213.3 billion yuan ($30.05 billion) in 2022, representing a giant leap from the 1959 figure of a mere 174 million yuan, according to official data.

"I have devoted my life to contributing to telling the story of China's poverty alleviation, traveling through every province, and I understand well that the achievements in Tibet are among the hardest won," Erik Robert Nilsson, an American journalist of China Daily, said at the event.

Nilsson has been to Tibet three times since 2016, and is the writer of the book *Closer to Heaven: A Global Nomad's Journey Through China's Poverty Alleviation*.

Prior to the forum, foreign participants were also invited to tour the cities of Lhasa and Nyingchi in Tibet, visiting places including villages, schools and communities.

Describing the achievements in Tibet as a feat that "almost nobody in the world could achieve in only a few decades", Guibe Guillaume, a French employee of China Petroleum & Chemical Corp, said he is impressed by the high-quality development of infrastructure during his first trip in the region.

"At an altitude of 5,200 meters, I could get my emails and chat on my mobile phone," Guillaume said, adding that roads are modern, safe and comfortable to drive on and speed radars were even installed at the entrances to villages to protect people and domestic animals.

Practical experience

Maria Gustava, Mozambique's ambassador to China, said that the practical experience of Tibet in poverty alleviation and rural development proved that effective and holistic planning is needed to realize poverty reduction.

Tibet's, as well as China's, success in alleviating rural poverty through leveraging technology-led farming methods constitutes a source of inspiration and valuable guidance for developing countries like Mozambique in their efforts to fight against poverty and promote sustainable development, Gustava said.

At the forum, Abdilahi Ismail Abdilahi, who is from Somalia and works as a foreign language teacher at Beijing Foreign Studies University, called on African countries to learn from Tibet's development in agriculture, green energy, transportation, infrastructure construction, ecotourism, natural environment management, education and foreign trade.

Hendy Yuniarto, a lecturer from the School of Asian Studies at the BFSU, said that sustainable tourism has played a crucial role in eradicating poverty in Tibet.

Turning Tibet from a poor and backward serfdom society to a socialist society, the Chinese central government has provided the autonomous region with various resources in the process, including many preferential policies and tax reductions. All of these policies helped to lift the region out of poverty, and also laid a solid foundation for the development of tourism, Yuniarto said.

Vikash Singh, a lecturer at the BFSU, shared his experiences in Tibet with attendees of the forum, noting he visited two schools in Tibet and found that the education level of the two schools was very high. Students there have access to diverse subjects, including painting, dancing and singing, while teaching facilities are also very modern. All of them are vital to nurturing talent, which can eventually boost the region's development, he said.

The modernization of education and transportation, and the digital economy such as e-payment, have also benefited residents in Tibet, he added.

People's democracy

Roland Boer, a visiting professor at the School of Philosophy of Renmin University of China, underscored the pivotal role of the whole-process people's democracy in Tibet's development.

Tibet has witnessed remarkable advancements in multiple fields, including human rights, economy, culture and social development, environmental protection and infrastructure construction, based on the implementation of the rule of law and the whole-process people's democracy, said the professor from Australia.

The day the forum opened also marked the 72nd anniversary of the peaceful liberation of Tibet. On May 23, 1951, a 17-article agreement was signed by the central government and the local government of Tibet.

In March 1959, a democratic reform was launched in Tibet and the feudal serfdom was finally abolished. In September 1965, the first session of the first People's Congress of Tibet was convened, proclaiming the founding of the Tibet autonomous region.

With regional ethnic autonomy established and through the socialist transformation of agriculture and animal husbandry, Tibet embarked on the road of socialism.

Wu Qingjun, vice-president of the Academy of Social Sciences of the Tibet autonomous region, highlighted the establishment and development of the system of regional ethnic autonomy in Tibet, which has provided important institutional guarantees for the whole-process people's democracy in the region, while the implementation of the whole-process people's democracy has enriched the system of regional ethnic autonomy.

"The system of regional ethnic autonomy has effectively safeguarded and protected the democratic rights of people in the region in political, economic, cultural, social and ecological aspects, and given full play to people's democracy throughout the entire process," Wu added.

The system of people's congress, as a basic political system of China, serves as the main channel through which the people exercise their democratic rights.

Tibet has 24 deputies to the 14th National People's Congress in 2023, of whom 16 are Tibetan and other ethnic groups. Among the 42,153 deputies to the local people's congresses at all four administrative levels in Tibet, 89.2 percent are from the Tibetan and other ethnic groups.

XINHUA-CHINA DAILY

Eye-opening visits by global delegates refute Western media's bias

There is a tendency that some Western media outlets present Tibet, an autonomous region in Southwest China, with distorted accounts, because of their biased and incomplete coverage of local issues like human rights, religious freedom, ethnic culture and ecological environment.

However, there is also increasing criticism of this tendency in the international community, especially when more and more people toured the autonomous region and gained a totally different picture of Tibet.

On May 23, the 2023 Forum on the Development of Xizang, China was held in Beijing, bringing together more than 150 delegates from home and abroad to share their insights into Tibet and contribute their suggestions to the region's development.

Prior to the event, many of the delegates paid a visit to Tibet in a period spanning May 16-21. Their personal experiences in the region gave them a different but more complete and objective picture, they said.

Abdilahi Ismail Abdilahi from the African country of Somalia is a foreign language teacher at Beijing Foreign Studies University. He said that Tibet is very different from how he has imagined it.

He added that he didn't expect to see advanced highways and high-speed trains there. He said he was shocked to see how modern the regional capital of Lhasa is and that life there is not so different from Beijing.

He noted that Tibet's preservation of the local ethnic culture left a deep impression on him.

"The Chinese government has attached great importance to protecting Tibet's culture," Ismail said.

Colin Macherras, an Australian Sinologist, refuted the biased outlook on Tibet among the Western media.

"Many Western reports have talked of the so-called 'suppression of Tibetan religion, language, lifestyle, architecture and arts'.

"In 1996, the Dalai Lama, in the British Houses of Parliament in London, went so far as to claim that China was practicing 'cultural genocide' in Tibet. He and others have made this claim many times since then."

He said he believes that claim to be nonsense.

"During my visits to Tibet, I have witnessed many aspects of surviving traditional culture. These include the Tibetan language, clothing, architecture and arts. It seems to me that Tibetan Buddhism and other forms of traditional religion are well and truly alive and flourishing," said Mackerras, who is a professor emeritus at Griffith University in Queensland, Australia.

He noted that Tibet has made great achievements in improving the quality of life for its residents, which is evidenced in the fact that the average life expectancy in the region rose from 35.5 years prior to the peaceful liberation in 1951, to 72.19 years at present.

Guibe Guillaume from France is an employee of China Petroleum & Chemical Corp.

He said: "Tibet's development path will continue to receive criticism from people who have never been to the region and live thousands of kilometers away, or those who make a living from making up fake stories. Tibetan people and those who contribute to the region's development should just ignore them. Instead, they should feel proud of their achievements.

"Imagine a serf's reaction if he or she could see their descendants today. You've achieved altogether a major achievement that almost nobody in the world could achieve in only a few decades. You've put a feudal and largely sub-developed region on the track of modernity and prosperity."



Foreign delegates visit Jokhang Temple, a renowned Buddhist monastery in Lhasa. DEKYI DROLMA / FOR CHINA DAILY

XINHUA-CHINA DAILY

ADVERTORIAL

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

BUSINESS

JOIN THE CONVERSATION; FOLLOW US ON TWITTER · CHINA DAILY

HIGHER GROUND

China Southern flies high on eased curbs

By ZHU WENQIAN
zhuwenqian@chinadaily.com.cn



Passengers get ready to board China Southern Airlines' first flight from Beijing Daxing International Airport to London's Heathrow Airport on Wednesday. TAO RAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

China Southern Airlines launched its first flight from Beijing Daxing International Airport to London's Heathrow Airport on Wednesday, amid a resumption in international air travel following China's optimization of COVID-19 response measures and the lifting of restrictions including quarantine-free arrivals.

Guangzhou, Guangdong province-based China Southern, one of the largest domestic airlines in terms of fleet size, said it plans to develop Beijing Daxing into a comprehensive hub and launch more flights from the terminal to Europe and the United States.

Currently, the State-owned carrier operates nine international routes from Beijing Daxing. By 2025, China Southern aims to put into use more than 200 aircraft at Beijing Daxing, it said.

In its inaugural flight from Beijing Daxing to London, an Airbus A350 widebody aircraft, carried more than 240 passengers. The daily route is expected to inject new vitality into Sino-UK relations and cooperation, promote in-depth exchanges between the two countries, and potentially satisfy flyers' demand to transfer from London to other cities in Europe and Africa, the carrier said.

"Now, China Southern operates over 120 international flights in total daily, involving some 80 routes. China's total operation of international flights have resumed to 35-40 percent of the pre-pandemic level," said Xiao Yong, deputy director general of the commercial steering committee at China Southern Airlines.

The airline said it plans to launch more international flights that connect China, Thailand and Singapore, one of the most popular destinations for Chinese tourists. In addition, the number of flights to Central Asia has resumed to about 60 percent of pre-pandemic level, and flights to Africa have almost rebounded to pre-pandemic numbers.

The pace of resumption of flights that connect China with Europe and the United States has been relatively slow due to several factors such as air rights, visa issuance and airport support capability, China Southern said.

Currently, Beijing Daxing International Airport operates more than 800 flights daily, and transports some 100,000 passengers daily.

"By the end of May, Beijing Daxing transported an accumulated 300,000 passengers for international flights. The airport will further raise its international influence and competence and build itself into a world-class air transport hub," said Li Yongbing, an official at Beijing Daxing International Airport.

Meanwhile, British Airways' first flight from London to Beijing in more than three years since the flight was halted due to the pandemic departed from Heathrow Airport on Saturday and touched down at Daxing Airport the following morning. The flight will operate four times a week between Beijing and London.

British Airways and its joint business partner China Southern both operate from Beijing Daxing, giving customers greater connectivity between the United Kingdom and China.

"The restart of one of our most important routes after more than three years is a long-awaited moment. Following the successful resumption of flights between Shanghai and London in April, we are excited to be back in Beijing too, facilitating international student and business travel once again," said Louise Street, British Airways' director of worldwide airports.

This week, the International Air Transport Association announced an expected strengthening of airline industry profitability in an upgrade of its outlook for 2023.

Airline industry net profits are expected to reach $9.8 billion this year, more than double the previous forecast of $4.7 billion in December 2022.

Airbnb: Wanderlust back on tourism recovery

By FAN FEIFEI
fanfeifei@chinadaily.com.cn

Outbound travel this summer among Chinese tourists looks promising with an appetite for exploration, a diverse range of destinations being considered and a desire for more immersive travel experiences, said US-based lodging and short-term vacation rental provider Airbnb.

Airbnb has seen a continued and steady recovery across the entire Asia-Pacific region, with a 48 percent increase year-on-year in nights and experiences booked in the first quarter, compared with the same period last year.

China has played a significant role in driving this growth, said Nathan Blecharczyk, Airbnb's co-founder and chief strategy officer, and chairman of Airbnb China, adding that "China's outbound travel has been and we believe will continue to be a cornerstone of growth in the Asia-Pacific region."

China's outbound tourism sector has shown signs of a strong recovery since the beginning of the year. Blecharczyk said he is bullish on the prospects of outbound tourism in the Chinese market.

Data from Airbnb showed that the number of Chinese users searching for early summer outbound stays between July 1 and July 15 surged nearly sixfold compared with a year prior.

"Chinese travelers are venturing further and exploring many diverse destinations. Southeast Asian countries, such as Thailand and Indonesia, remain dominant destinations," he said, adding there is a significant increase in interest in the mid-to-long haul destinations.

Japan, South Korea, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, New Zealand and Australia are favored by Chinese travelers this summer, the


Nathan Blecharczyk

senior executive said. In addition, Chinese tourists increasingly consider destinations such as Malaysia and the Philippines in Southeast Asia.

Chinese travelers are seeking more in-depth and immersive experiences as approximately half of the summer searches are for medium to long-term stays, spanning seven days or longer. On average, a Chinese traveler has searched to stay in more than one country during this summer, which shows people's desire to explore multiple locations during their travels, Airbnb said.

It is noteworthy that Generation Z travelers — those born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s — prioritize affordable yet authentic travel experiences. Approximately half of the room searchers are between the ages of 18 to 29 in China.

Moreover, the number of families traveling with kids has grown nearly four times compared to spring this year. "Some of our most popular family-preferred categories on Airbnb are amazing pools, beaches and beachfronts, national parks as well as lakes," Blecharczyk said.

The World Tourism Organization expects international arrivals will likely reach 80 percent to 95 percent of the pre-COVID levels in 2023, compared with 63 percent in 2022, despite lingering global headwinds.

Dai Bin, president of the China Tourism Academy, said China's outbound trip segment is expected to see a robust recovery this year, and inject strong impetus into the prosperity of the country's tourism sector.

Recent A-shr dip overdone, profits beckon

Benchmark Shanghai Composite Index still 5.8 percent lower than in early May

By SHI JING in Shanghai
shijing@chinadaily.com.cn

The recent downward trend in the A-share market points to opportunities for investors given the relatively lower valuation of listed companies — a consensus reached by both domestic and international financial experts.

Although the benchmark Shanghai Composite Index edged up 0.08 percent to close at 3197.76 on Wednesday, it was still 5.8 percent lower than the peak of 3395 hit in early May. The SCI has been hovering around the 3200 level since mid May.

The Shenzhen Component Index, which slid 0.6 percent to close at 10708.82 on Wednesday, has fallen 11.9 percent from its high of 12158 earlier this year.

Despite the market volatility, Chinese private equity firms have increased their positions over the past month. Data from PE market tracker Simuwang showed that its monitored PEs have invested 79.65 percent of their capital in stocks in May, the highest monthly level so far this year.

Analysts from PE firm StaRock Investment wrote in a report that both investor sentiment and A-share indexes may have also approached a near-term nadir.

Qin Peijing, chief strategist from CITIC Securities, said that the A-share market has likely touched bottom, which should provide guidance on the relative level of volatility to be expected in the second half of the year. The market has reacted overly pessimistic of late, which is mainly due to the slower-than-expected economic growth on a monthly basis. But overall recovery will be more noticeable in the third quarter due to the accumulative effect of stimulus policies and China's endogenous recovery power.

Chu Jie, portfolio manager from Guoyuan Securities, said that there will be some back and forth during China's economic recovery. Changes in the European and US markets will weigh on China's external demand. Consumption habits of Chinese people indicate a prolonged recovery at the consumption end, which could be translated into higher probability of A-share market volatility over the following months, he said.

But compared to other investment options, the A-share market has demonstrated higher return potential at present. Market adjustments will indicate investment opportunities, said Chu.

Foreign institutions have already taken action. Public data show that overseas investors have poured more than 170 billion yuan ($24 billion) into the A-share market so far this year via the northbound leg of the stock connect program linking the Shanghai, Shenzhen and Hong Kong bourses.

JPMorgan China A-share Opportunities A, the largest actively managed China-equity fund, increased its holdings in consumption counters such as Chinese liquor maker Luzhou Laojiao and Kweichow Moutai by 32.64 percent and 2.43 percent, respectively, in April. Likewise, Aberdeen China A Share Sustainable Equity Fund increased its exposure to China Duty Free Group by 14.41 percent and to Kweichow Moutai by 6.49 percent in April.

Experts from UBS Global Wealth Management's Chief Investment Office wrote in a report that the average profitability of A-share companies will rise to 14 percent this year, which will serve as a major support for A-share market performance. The current market slide is too much for a market promising rising corporate profitability, they said.

Consumption will be another supportive factor for the A-share market. Zhou Wenqun, equity portfolio manager at Fidelity International, said the current slowdown in consumption recovery is mainly due to inventory issues and will be short-lived. Consumption companies have displayed their investment value and investors should seize the proper timing to dive in.

Lu Wenjie, BlackRock China's investment strategist, said the recovery in restaurants, transportation and tourism — sectors closely related to offline consumption — has been quite noticeable, although recovery in durable consumer goods such as cars and home appliances is weaker than market expectations.

But the recovery logic is clear. As people's confidence in incomes and consumption returns, specific sectors and companies within the retail sector in particular have demonstrated investment value, he said.

Huawei launches self-developed cloud database in tech success

By MA SI
masi@chinadaily.com.cn

Huawei Technologies Co on Wednesday unveiled the latest version of its self-developed cloud database GaussDB, marking another breakthrough for the company in crucial technology despite Washington's prolonged restrictions, experts said.

The Shenzhen, Guangdong province-based firm's latest innovation represents an organized collection of information that can be searched, sorted and updated, and it is of growing importance to the efficient management and use of data, which has now become a crucial production element and can create enhanced value.

Zhang Ping'an, CEO of Huawei Cloud, said at the company's global finance conference in Shanghai on Wednesday: "If we compare the entire software industry system to a towering tree, the database is at the core foundation of the tree. It gives birth to and supports almost all software ecosystems, thereby enabling the smooth operation of all the core business systems across various industries in digital China."

Therefore, the database is known as the root technology of the software industry, and its high-quality development is of utmost importance for its growth and strength, Zhang said.

Huawei said GaussDB is the only database in China that is 100 percent independently researched and developed, with software and hardware operating synergistically.

Zhang said the research and development of the GaussDB database began as early as 2001 and that it has already been used within the company's internal IT systems and several core business networks.

Several major lenders such as Postal Savings Bank of China and China Merchants Bank have successfully adopted GaussDB for the core systems of their operations.

"Many Asian banks are already testing and using GaussDB, and customers in South America are also showing an interest," Zhang added.

The senior executive also called on software developers in China to partner with Huawei to leverage their domestic market experience to expand globally and provide reliable digital services to global businesses and government agencies.

Huawei's participation in the database market also provides new choices in a market that has long been dominated by US companies such as Oracle and IBM, and it is setting a positive example for the whole cloud data storage industry in China, as the cloud and AI sectors grow rapidly and generate tremendous demand for data processing and management, experts said.

Xiang Ligang, director-general of the Information Consumption Alliance, said domestic companies are expected to gain a bigger share in the global database market amid growing geopolitical uncertainties, and such a trend is already being seen in the financial and telecommunications sectors.

Domestic database firms received at least 51 bids in China in 2022, according to data compiled by Modb.pro, a Chinese online community for data professionals. The largest bid amount was awarded to a consortium consisting of ZTE, OceanBase and another two companies who won a bid from China Mobile amounting to 146 million yuan ($20.5 million).



Huawei Technologies Co showcases the latest version of its self-developed cloud database GaussDB in Shanghai on Wednesday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Meng Wanzhou, rotating chairwoman and chief financial officer of Huawei, also said on Wednesday that the company is committed to continuing investment in "root" technology research, improving product resilience and achieving high-performance, security and reliability so as to better facilitate digital transformation of the financial sector.

Neil Shah, vice-president of research at global industry consultancy Counterpoint Research, said earlier that: "Huawei is well-positioned to scale its cloud business outside the telecom world into enterprise. It's already gaining traction in China and it can scale in other markets outside China, such as India, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Africa."

Briefly

Changsha to host China-Africa trade expo

Representatives from 50 African countries and eight international organizations have registered to attend the third China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo, to be held from June 29 to July 2 in Changsha, the capital of Central China's Hunan province. Themed "Common Development for a Shared Future", the event will feature more than 40 activities of various kinds, covering green infrastructure, Customs and quarantine, medicine and health, agricultural and food products, industrial parks, vocational education and other topics, according to Hunan's provincial department of commerce.

PBOC adds liquidity via reverse repos

China's central bank continued to inject funds into the financial system through open market operations on Wednesday. The People's Bank of China said it conducted 2 billion yuan ($281 million) of seven-day reverse repos at an interest rate of 2 percent.

XINHUA — CHINA DAILY

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

BUSINESS

HSR runs at full throttle in Yangtze city cluster

By ZHUANG QIANGE
zhuangqiange@chinadaily.com.cn



Employees work at a tunnel on Hangzhou-Deqing Intercity Railway in Zhejiang province in April. The project is being partly built by the China Railway 24th Bureau Group Corp. XIE SHANGGUO / FOR CHINA DAILY

A high-speed rail rush is fueling the rise of the Yangtze River Delta region as China's economic heartland, which is home to more than one-sixth of the country's population and the source of 24 percent of its GDP last year.

According to China Railway Shanghai Group Co Ltd, a unit of national rail operator China State Railway Group Co Ltd that operates in the delta, railway construction in the region is gathering pace this summer, with more than 20 major railway projects under construction.

New line investment in the delta region topped 108.9 billion yuan ($15.3 billion) last year alone, with the annual figure exceeding 80 billion yuan for the seventh consecutive year, the group said.

Such efforts have made the regional rail network the busiest nationwide. According to the group, the total operating railway in the region reached 13,750 kilometers, with the high-speed network taking up nearly half at 6,704.4 km, one-sixth of the nation's total.

Steel track construction will only gather more speed amid the nation's overall efforts in seeking high-quality development. According to the regional railway development plan, over 16,700 km of high-speed rail will link the region together by the end of 2025.

On May 31, construction workers of the China Railway 24th Bureau Group Corp (CR24), a State-owned contractor, completed the casting of the first simple beam for the Hangzhou-Deqing Intercity Railway in Zhejiang province, marking the start of construction on the upper structures of bridges on the railway.

"Smooth pouring of the first beam always means a lot to the project, as it sets a major standard for the rest of the construction process," said Liu Jianwei, a project manager with CR24.

"The team formulated specific plans for each step, such as foundation treatment, scaffolding and bottom mold laying, and contingency plans for various emergencies. On-site technicians came through training with a clear understanding of the operating procedures and close supervision of each construction link in accordance with operating protocols," Liu added.

With a design speed of 120 kilometers per hour, the 25.9-km intercity railway lies between Hangzhou's Yuhang district and Huzhou's Deqing county, with a total of nine stations.

"Demand in the region is larger than the current service capacity of the local railway, hence the extension of the rail network. The Hangzhou-Deqing Intercity Railway will be a faster rail choice for passengers traveling in between, facilitating the integrated development of the region where the provincial capital is located," he said.

Shanghai, as the main engine driving the development of the delta region, is also ramping up efforts in its urban rail transport network, as the Shanghai Rail Transit Link Airport Express, a rail project linking major transportation hubs in the metropolis, began laying the rails last week.

Shouldering the construction of the first bid of the 68.6 km project, CR24, a China Railway Construction Corp unit, said in its latest progress report that based on the solid rail base foundation accomplished despite many challenges in previous processes, such as a limited construction site in the downtown area and those related to COVID-19 prevention, the team will leverage various simulation and modeling solutions for more efficient track laying in the following processes.

The welding of 100-meter fixed-length special rails is carried out simultaneously and is expected to be delivered to the site by December. Installation of the rails will be a major leap toward the operation in 2024, the builder said.

The Airport Express starts from the Hongqiao transportation hub, passes through Pudong International Airport and extends to Shanghai East Railway Station. Upon completion, the commute time between the two airports, which is around 90 minutes when taking the city's metro, will be shortened to less than 40 minutes.

"City clusters will play a pivotal role in driving China's modernization progress, shaping the landscape of China's future economic space. The development of these clusters relies heavily on the various infrastructure bases they have. Better networks of different infrastructure projects, including high-speed rails and urban highways, will facilitate the chains of logistics and industries and cross-sector cooperation, thus paving the way for smooth development, evidenced by the prosperity seen in the Yangtze River Delta region," said Xu Lin, chairman of the China-US Green Fund, at a forum attended by many Chinese think tanks.

Investors eye localization for better returns

Global investment players reexamine biz strategies amid US-China tension

By CHENG YU
chengyu@chinadaily.com.cn

Global investors are reexamining their business layouts amid the economic tension between the United States and China, and will likely bank on more localized strategies for better investment returns in the coming years, industry experts said.

They made the comments after leading US venture capital firm Sequoia Capital announced plans on Tuesday to have its businesses in China and those in Indian and Southeast Asian markets shouldered by two independent companies.

According to a statement to China Daily provided by the VC firm, which is known for its early backing of many leading Chinese internet companies like Alibaba Group Holding, JD and ByteDance, it will brand its Chinese arm as Hongshan, China's equivalent of Sequoia.

Its brand covering Indian and Southeast Asian businesses will be named Peak XV Partners, while the US and European units will remain Sequoia Capital.

The split will be completed by March 31, 2024, said the statement signed by Roelof Botha, a Sequoia managing partner; Neil Shen, head of China; and Shailendra Singh, chief of Indian and Southeast Asian businesses.

In an interview with Forbes, the three executives cited conflict between the funds' respective startup portfolios and brand confusion as factors while acknowledging but attempting to downplay the frostier geopolitical environment.

Wang Peng, a researcher at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, said: "The globalization of investment has been going on for decades. However, due to changing geopolitical situations, especially between the world's two largest economies, leading global investment firms, including VCs and private equity firms, began to rethink their layout to better mitigate potential risks."

Wang said that it is especially the case as some US politicians vowed to restrict US capital from flowing into China. They aim to leverage political power to suppress the latter's rising prowess in technology and other emerging fields.

For instance, Paul Rosen, a senior US Treasury official, said at a recent hearing that outbound investment review will be narrowed, especially in sectors like advanced semiconductors, artificial intelligence and quantum computing.

A global investment firm's senior investor, who declined to be named, said his company reexamined the position of the China market last year and part of its staff was relocated from China to other markets earlier this year.

The investment firm is also in touch with limited partners in markets other than the US, such as those in the Middle East, for more possibilities, he said.

Shenzhen fair spotlights cultural industry and hi-tech applications

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The 19th China (Shenzhen) International Cultural Industries Fair, running Wednesday to Sunday, provides a platform for domestic cultural industry companies to interact with their foreign counterparts on exchanges, investment and project cooperation while highlighting the industry's merging trend in technological applications.

With its main venue at the Shenzhen World Exhibition & Convention Center in Bao'an of Shenzhen, Guangdong province, about 3,596 exhibitors are taking part in the fair, including more than 300 from 50 foreign countries and regions. The fair also includes 64 branch venues in all districts of the city and two virtual platforms — its official website and "wenbohui+", a software application on WeChat.

The six major exhibition halls at the main venue, encompassing a total of 120,000 square meters, are devoted to digital technology, cultural industries, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, cultural consumption, the Belt and Road Initiative and intangible cultural heritage, including arts, crafts and design.

The online element of the fair uses panoramic shooting technology to display cultural products and projects on the cloud platform synchronously and sets convenient stages for exchanges among cultural enterprises, customers and investors.

On the sidelines, exhibitors are engaging in supporting activities such as conferences, symposiums, forums, contract signing ceremonies and creative competitions, as well as releasing new policies, reports and regulations.

According to Zeng Xianglai, chief of the Shenzhen bureau of culture and tourism, this year's fair is focused more on brokering concrete transactions and cooperation through promotion of investment, unveiling new products and technologies, and boosting cultural consumption — especially via e-commerce platforms.

Zeng said the fair adheres to the national culture digitization strategy and the strategy of leading major cultural industry projects, and the debut of the Digital China exhibition area highlights national cultural industry market players, major platforms and the latest technological breakthroughs. As well, the exhibition has increased its number of participating cultural enterprises related to the application of new technologies such as 5G, big data, cloud computing and artificial intelligence, demonstrating the industry's diverse potential.







Clockwise from top: A set of soft clay work shows how to eat Zibo barbecue at the 19th China (Shenzhen) International Cultural Industries Fair. CHEN HONG / CHINA DAILY A group of performers pose for photos at the fair. WEN ZI / FOR CHINA DAILY A futuristic tiger shaped biomimetic robot is exhibited at the fair. CHEN HONG / CHINA DAILY

According to Liu Wenbin, deputy director of the publicity department of the Shenzhen Committee of the Communist Party of China, the fair actively promotes international cultural exchanges and trade by including special exhibition areas for Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and other regions, as well as import trade exhibitions aimed at expanding and strengthening cultural trade by focusing on supply and demand.

Since the first fair was held in Shenzhen in 2004, when about 700 exhibitors from a handful of countries and regions took part, the annual event has showcased achievements in the development of the cultural industry and promoted innovation at the national level while driving rapid development of the cultural industry in the city.

The added value of Shenzhen's cultural industry in 2022 is expected to reach 260 billion yuan ($36.57 billion), accounting for 8 percent of the city's GDP, an increase from 81.4 billion yuan in 2013, when it accounted for 5.3 percent of the city's GDP. The number of cultural enterprises in Shenzhen now exceeds 100,000, creating more than 1 million jobs.

Enterprises related to the cultural industry in Shenzhen have been the most direct beneficiaries of the annual event over the past 19 years. The city's creative design, animation and e-games, digital culture and other industries have drawn tangible benefits from the fair, and a number of nationally renowned cultural enterprises have emerged in the city. Shenzhen currently has 71 cultural industrial parks at or above the municipal level, with a total operating revenue of more than 150 billion yuan ($21.5 billion).

> "Shenzhen should actively cultivate new industry and business models, promote the cultural industry's merging with technology, creation, finance, tourism and data, and expedite digitization."
>
> **Yang Jian,** deputy head of Shenzhen Academy of Social Sciences

In a recent interview with local media, Yang Jian, deputy head of Shenzhen Academy of Social Sciences, urged the city to take advantage of the fair to improve its competitiveness in the cultural industry and accelerate its high-quality development.

Yang said: "Shenzhen should actively cultivate new industry and business models, promote the cultural industry's merging with technology, creation, finance, tourism and data, and expedite digitization."

In particular, Yang believes Shenzhen should continue to promote the development of creative design, expand the modern fashion industry cluster and integrate high-end creative design resources at home and abroad to enhance the city's capacity to accommodate creative design innovation.

Yang also suggested Shenzhen should pay special attention to strengthening the internationalization of its cultural industry by encouraging more cultural enterprises to expand their international profile by taking part in global competitions and utilizing global resources.

ADVERTORIAL

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

BUSINESSFOCUS

Companies reel in young anglers

As fishing becomes trendy, market booms for gear, excursions, videos, even apparel

By LIU YUKUN
liuyukun@chinadaily.com.cn



Fishing enthusiasts participate in an event in Jinhua, Zhejiang province, in March. SHI BUFA / FOR CHINA DAILY

Young anglers are hooked and taking the fishing world by storm.

Thanks to them, gone are the days when fishing was considered the pastime of middle-aged and older people.

From urban rivers to remote lakes, younger fishing enthusiasts are packing up their gear, hitting the water and making the sport that's been around for centuries their own.

During the five-day May Day holiday, many young anglers spent their time by the water, casting a line in a local river or renting a seat on a boat for a deep-sea excursion. But it's not just about the real thing. Many young people, even those who are not fishers themselves, are flocking to short video platforms to watch other people fish, a trend that some call "cloud fishing".

Fishing has become the latest trend for millennials and Generation Z — mostly those from their teens to their 30s — to unwind and connect with nature. Although middle-aged people still make up a major share of anglers, fishing is gaining popularity among younger people who consider it a trendy and creative pursuit, according to the China Angling Association.

Fishing enthusiasts under 18 account for 12 percent and those between 18 and 24 make up 10 percent of the total 140 million fishers, the association said.

The number of anglers under 26 has increased fourfold in the past four years, according to a recent report by e-commerce platform JD's sports sector. As enthusiasts of a highly flexible sport, fishers can experience the joy of catching fish in a small river near their homes with an investment of just a hundred yuan ($14) or so. Those who have the means can rent a yacht for a hefty fee, grab a marine fishing rod and head to the ocean to "catch a big one".

"Young people are more willing than elders to spend big money on the hobby, which has given rise to a billion-dollar business covering everything from fishing tackle to apparel," said Wang Yu, owner of a Tianjin fishing tackle store.

"An increasing number of young fishing enthusiasts are turning to fishing with lures, which often involves lightweight tackle and is considered more eco-friendly than traditional fishing. Lure fishing involves artificial bait, which frees people from the trouble of using natural bait," Wang said.

The fishing rods used in lure fishing are typically lightweight and flexible. Lure fishing usually requires the angler to constantly move the bait and use various techniques such as twitching or quick retrieval to simulate the movements of natural fish and attract fish to bite.

"Lure fishing, a new addition to our business in 2019, now accounts for over 60 percent of our total sales thanks to young anglers' passion," Wang said, adding that it's not so unusual to see someone in their 20s or 30s spend millions of yuan on equipment for lure fishing.

> "China's fishing industry is experiencing a surge in popularity, with young people taking up an increasing share."
>
> **Huo Taixiang,** marketing director of Daiwa's China branch in Guangdong province



An angler displays his catch during a fishing competition in Zhoushan, Zhejiang province, in May. CHEN YONGJIAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

"The majority of lure fishing enthusiasts are between the ages of 25 and 45. We have formed partnerships with five or six fishing locations in Tianjin and sponsored multiple lure fishing competitions to better tap the growing market. The fishing industry is constantly evolving, with changes in fishing styles and techniques and frequent product updates," he said.

Wang's 500-square-meter tackle store, Lanwood Fishing Agent, is divided into two floors, with the first floor dedicated to freshwater gear and the second stocked with saltwater gear. The store sells many kinds of products made by nearly 40 brands, with a focus on Japanese brands.

"Our family has been selling fishing gear for over 30 years, starting from a small storefront of just 18 square meters. We also have a 1,000-square-meter warehouse. We have grown along with the significant growth and diversification of the fishing industry over the years," Wang said.

With an estimated 140 million people taking part in fishing annually, the industry is becoming a lucrative market for manufacturers of rods, reels, baits, hooks, floats and commercial fish ponds.

There are 13,000 fishing-related companies in China, with new registrations increasing year-over-year during the past decade, according to Qichacha, a corporate information-sharing platform.

That growth has been particularly strong since 2019. In 2021, new registrations reached 2,555, a yearly increase of 124.5 percent and a 10-year record high. Last year, the number of new businesses surged 75.2 percent year-on-year.

With equipment manufacturing and commercial fishing ponds growing, the industry is booming. Retail sales of fishing equipment are expected to reach 57.88 billion yuan by 2025, according to data analysis company IT Time. China has become the world's largest producer and exporter of fishing equipment.

Younger anglers will also continue to contribute to new growth, the company said.

"China's fishing industry is experiencing a surge in popularity, with young people taking up an increasing share. In some recent fishing competitions, about 80 percent of participants were young people between 20 and 30 years old," said Huo Taixiang, marketing director of Daiwa's China branch in Guangdong province. Daiwa is a Japanese fishing tackle brand.

"Many lure fishing enthusiasts release the fish after they catch them, which is seen as more eco-friendly and cooler by younger generations. Many also dress in stylish apparel, set up tents in scenic areas and post their photos on social media, attracting more participants," Huo said.

Livestreaming and short videos have helped to popularize fishing among younger viewers. According to short-video platform Douyin, fishing has become the top leisure activity on the platform, with content viewed over 79.9 billion times as of early May.

Short-video site Kuaishou said fishing livestreams are tops in views between 6 am and 5 pm.

Most of Daiwa's best-selling products in China are entry-level gear priced at a few hundred yuan for beginners or high-end gear costing over 10,000 yuan for experienced anglers looking to upgrade, Huo said.

Daiwa's products are sold mainly through distributors in China, with only 20 percent sold directly by the company, primarily online.

Daiwa said it recently launched a new line of gear aimed at lure fishers in China called the Fire Lizard series, with an iconic red color. The line includes reels, rods, clothing and bags. A complete set of gear is priced in the range of 2,000 to 3,000 yuan.

The company also offers a wide range of other gear in China, with prices ranging from a few hundred to over 10,000 yuan. Huo said that higher-priced products typically are of higher quality and made of better materials, such as high-end carbon fiber for fishing rods, which are more sensitive and responsive.

"Daiwa will continue to release more products for the Chinese market. We are preparing a campaign that combines fishing with camping, which is to be introduced in July," Huo said.

Leisurely pastime's trendiness in virtual world becoming the rage

By LIU YUKUN

The fishing world has expanded beyond the activity itself.

From fishing-themed livestreaming to camping, fishing has sparked diverse and lucrative offshoots that have captivated enthusiasts and entrepreneurs alike.

With the rise of short-video platforms and livestreaming services, people can immerse themselves in the art of fishing without wetting their toes.

On short-video platform Douyin, videos with the fishing hashtag have received 189.84 billion displays as of early June. On lifestyle-sharing platform Xiaohongshu, fishing-related posts reached more than 1.35 million by early June.

"I find it particularly relaxing to watch fishing-themed livestreaming or some of the best catches," said Li Ming, a 32-year-old Beijing resident. "Whenever I see them reeling in fish one after another, it gives me a sense of excitement. I even want to try casting a few lines myself."

Li said he accidentally came across fishing videos on Douyin one Saturday afternoon. Within an hour, he was captivated by the leisurely and slow-paced nature of the activity. "My mood started to fluctuate with the catches made by fishermen. It feels addictive. Now, I watch it every day."

Deng Gang, a coach at the China Angling Association, runs a Douyin account that posts videos about highlights in his fishing life.

The account has over 35.4 million fans and a top-ranked video gained nearly 3.19 million likes from netizens.

More than 6.75 million people watched Deng's livestreaming section, depicting him fishing at a pond, on Monday.

Many of Deng's videos show him going to fishing ponds that charge a fee, negotiating prices with owners without revealing his true identity and using his exceptional skills to catch fish that are worth far more than what he pays.

In the comments section below the videos, viewers say they are entertained by watching Deng pretending to be a beginner, surprising them with his fishing skills, and making the pond owners regret the deal.

Fishing influencers like Deng are not only showcasing their skills but also recommending relevant products on their home page on Douyin, in virtual carts on their homepages.

Deng's store, for instance, has a total of 101 products for sale, ranging from fishing rods to bait and more. The bestselling item is a fishing line set worth 6.8 yuan (95 US cents), with sales reaching nearly 1 million units. According to a recent report by Beijing News, sales revenue from his livestreamed product promotions in 30 days is estimated to be around 2.95 million yuan.

"For beginners who are not familiar with fishing equipment brands, endorsement from influencers in the industry is an important reference. Some of the influencers choose a brand to work with, and some even have their own brands," said Li.

Influencers and celebrities are not the only ones benefiting from the rising popularity of fishing on social media platforms. Regular fishing aficionados are also making money from it.

On Xiaohongshu, posts relevant to fishing attire exceeded 10,000 as of early June, attracting numerous people to share their views on the latest fashion. Hot posts include how to dress to maximize sun protection, cute couple dresses, and the most cost-effective outfits. Over 50,000 items under the column "fishing apparel" were for sale on Xiaohongshu across various accounts.

"Fishing, once a simple pastime, has evolved into a way of life, intertwining with camping, barbecuing, fashion and traveling. This trend has sparked numerous opportunities," said Huo Taixiang, marketing director of Japanese fishing tackle brand Daiwa's China branch in Guangdong province.

Huo said the company will launch a campaign next month that combines fishing with camping, two of the most popular outdoor activities.

The brand will also launch a series of new products such as tents, foldable carts and chairs, roll-up tables and titanium cups, featuring ultralight and foldable designs. Huo said the goal is to provide customers with a lightweight, hassle-free and chilled-out camping and fishing experience.



A man enjoys sea fishing in Yantai, Shandong province, in July. TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY

With the booming popularity of fishing, accommodation providers at fishing hot spots have also intensified their efforts.

According to data from Tujia, a property rental platform and homestay operator, the number of properties on the platform with tags or descriptions containing the term "fishing" has increased by 1.5 times as of mid-May, compared to the end of 2019. In the first five months of this year, bookings for fishing-related vacation rentals witnessed a growth of 3.1 times compared to the whole year of 2019.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

COMMENT

Editorials

US' hegemonic thinking laid bare by its bid to claim moral high ground

Repeatedly stressing its openness to dialogue with Beijing on any subject conducive to easing tensions, Washington is seemingly adopting a more conciliatory approach to relations. But that change must be taken with a pinch of salt. Washington is simply trying to climb onto the moral high ground leaving Beijing to blame for the deteriorating relations that Washington bears the responsibility for souring.

To consolidate this position, the Joe Biden administration is also portraying the United States as being the victim of China's aggressive behavior.

As the latest manifestation of this, it has pointed an accusing finger at the People's Liberation Army. Decrying the maneuvers of a PLA fighter jet and a battleship as "unprofessional", "dangerous" and "irresponsible" for responding to the US Air Force conducting close-shore surveillance and the US Navy conducting a so-called freedom of navigation operation on China's doorstep.

"There was absolutely no need for the PLA to act as aggressively as they did," White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said at a news conference on Monday, warning that "it won't be long before somebody gets hurt."

But no matter how far Washington goes in a bid to portray the US as the party being wronged, it cannot hoodwink the rest of the world. It is clear to all that it is the Biden administration and the security establishment in Washington that are pushing things to the brink of calamity.

Washington used both the G7 Summit in Hiroshima, Japan, last month, and the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore last week as stages to put on an anti-China show. However, its performances only served to highlight the depths of its duplicity.

In Hiroshima, it tried to make a collective response to China's "economic coercion" a key summit agenda, and thereafter a common challenge to the world; in Singapore, it depicted China's efforts to defend its sovereignty as "threats" to regional peace and stability. While the real threats to those, which stem from the US' actions to contain China, it portrayed as endeavors to safeguard peace and order.

It is the Biden administration that has taken the initiative to discard the US' long-term "strategic ambiguity" over the Taiwan question to support "Taiwan independence". Its scheme of using Taiwan as a geopolitical tool to provoke Beijing into a hasty act being clear to all.

Would the US tolerate a country supporting efforts to secede any part of its territory, send warplanes and battleships to regularly carry out close-shore surveillance and exercise "freedom of navigation" operations in its waters, or collude with almost all its neighbors to form an operational radius of action covering all its major cities?

Kirby was correct in saying that "it won't be long before somebody gets hurt". But that warning should be heeded by the White House, as it is not Beijing and the PLA that are being aggressive.

TikTok witch-hunt nothing but political posturing

In the United States, TikTok has been demonized. According to the hawks in Washington, since its parent company ByteDance is headquartered in Beijing, the popular social media platform must be sharing the data of US users with the Chinese government. In the minds of these ideologically biased US politicians, TikTok is nothing but a tool for the Communist Party of China to spy on the millions of Americans who use it every day and manipulate them. It therefore must be banned in the US.

All this despite there being no evidence that the Chinese authorities have accessed the information of US citizens on the app, and despite TikTok proposing a $1.5 billion restructuring project for its US user data to be stored with US software company Oracle in Texas — that is, "American data stored on American soil, by an American company, overseen by American personnel", as TikTok CEO Shouzi Chew put it.

The witch-hunt now being conducted against TikTok by US politicians cannot but remind people of the McCarthy era. The absurdity of the attack on the app could not have been revealed in a more explicit way than by the recent remarks of US District Court Judge Holly Brady, who lambasted an Indiana attorney general's lawsuit against TikTok for being "political posturing" and nothing more than "hyperbolic allegations", while ruling that the federal court will not take jurisdiction of the state's civil complaint against TikTok.

The Indiana lawsuit, which was filed in December, makes arguments similar to those who allege Beijing could use the video-sharing platform to push pro-China misinformation to the public. A county judge had already ruled against the state attorney general.

In a ruling on May 23, Brady wrote that the attorney general's one-sentence thesis statement was "stretched into a work longer than Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*", and "more than 90 percent of the (lawsuit) was devoted to irrelevant posturing". "The federal intrigue interjected by Indiana may interest its intended audience ... but it is irrelevant to the determination of this case."

Many in the US have already expressed worry that the crackdown against TikTok may infringe upon the First Amendment rights of US citizens when they post and consume content on the platform. In a letter sent to the US Congress before a hearing in March, more than a dozen free speech advocacy groups argued that a potential ban on TikTok would have "serious ramifications for free expression". Such "an ill-advised" move "would impair free speech and set a troubling precedent that could curtail free expression worldwide".

Hopefully such sensible words, as well as the federal judge's remarks, will help bring an end to the farce that is being staged by anti-China zealots.

Business community more in touch with reality

For a long time, some Western politicians, most vocally in the United States, have been trying to sever the ties between their countries and China. But for all the noise these blowhards make about alleged security threats and the imperativeness of decoupling China from the global economy, their sound and fury signifies nothing more than appeals to certain segments of the public.

The reality of the shared interests between the world's two largest economies and the benefits both sides enjoy from their trade and economic relations are distorted into a simulacrum in which China is the sole beneficiary as a result of its underhand practices — a world turned upside down as the steel-capped boot is on the US foot not that of China. It is Washington, not Beijing, that is lashing out with a flurry of tariff and export restriction blows. But while these anti-Beijing town criers reveal their prejudices or calculatedness with their strident calls for "decoupling", or the seemingly more nuanced "de-risking", there are other voices, voices of reason, that can still be heard amid the anti-China clamor.

German pharmacy group Merck CEO Belen Garijo's words about de-coupling not being "feasible", for instance. "It will take 20 years to decouple, and for what?" she said recently. Global Counsel co-founder and chairman Peter Mandelson, too, has said that most business people do not want to see "this conflict between the US and China. They much prefer a managed competition between these great powers." Mandelson, speaking after his trip to China at the beginning of this month, stressed that this is not only his view, but the view of all international businesspeople he spoke with during his trip, including US ones. And he is only one of the Western visitors to China over the past several weeks who have expressed their objection to "decoupling".

Most of those calling for "decoupling" are populist politicians while those advocating maintaining good relations with China include both moderate politicians and businesspeople. It is the latter group that has a better handle on the real world. They know the absurdity of pretending the world's second largest economy doesn't exist or deny the role it plays as a major driver of the global economy.

The US government, perhaps having realized this, now avoids using the word "decoupling" in relations with China. But in deeds it's still pressuring its semiconductor companies to cut supplies to Chinese business counterparts, a move that hurts the US high-tech industry by blocking its access to its largest market. Its own chip companies have already made clear their objections to the move.

On May 30, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning extended China's welcome to businesses and reaffirmed the country's determination to push forward reforms for high-level opening-up and the improvement of its market-oriented, internationalized business environment under the rule of law.

The need for decoupling is apocryphal among Western politicians whose world view is shaped by the geopolitics of the previous century rather than the actualities of today.

CHINA DAILY WORLDWIDE

Contact us at:

China Daily
15 Huixin Dongjie Chaoyang District, Beijing 100029
News: +86 (0) 10 6491-8366
editor@chinadaily.com.cn
Advertisement: +86 (0) 10 6491-8631
ads@chinadaily.com.cn
Subscription: +86-400-699-0203
subscription.chinadaily.com.cn
App: www.chinadaily.com.cn/mobile/daily.html

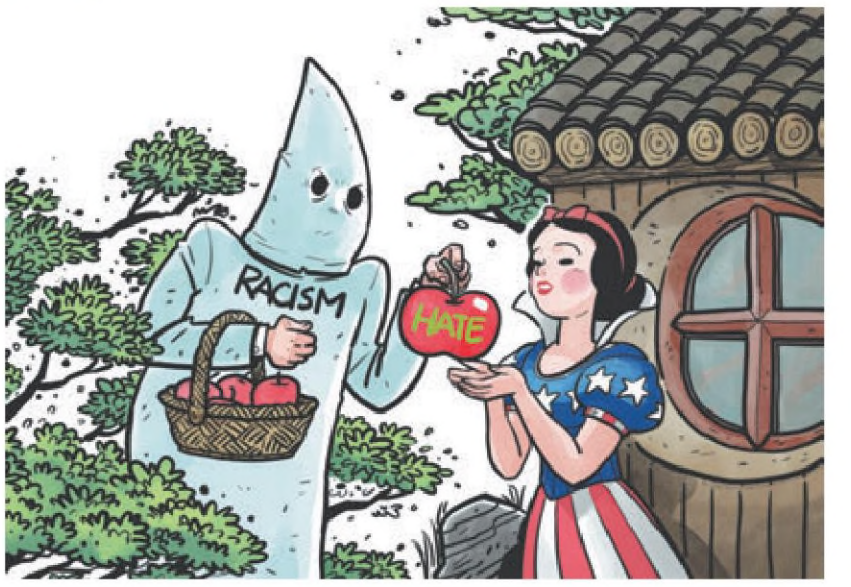
China Daily UK
90 Cannon St, London EC4N 6HA, UK
+44 (0) 207 398 8270
editor@chinadailyuk.com

China Daily Asia Pacific
China Daily Hong Kong
Unit 1818, Hing Wai Centre, 7 Tin Wan Praya Road, Aberdeen, Hong Kong
+852 2518 5111
editor@chinadailyhk.com
editor@chinadailyasia.com

China Daily USA
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036
+1 212 537 8888
editor@chinadailyusa.com

China Daily Africa
P.O. Box 27281- 00100, Nairobi, Kenya
+254(0)20 242 8589 (Nairobi)
editor@chinadailyafrica.com
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

BRI cooperation win-win for both Latin America and China

The enthusiasm for participating in China's Belt and Road Initiative has been growing in Latin America, the most recent example being the visit to China by Argentine Economy Minister Sergio Massa, who signed a cooperation plan to jointly promote the construction of the initiative on behalf of Argentina.

This is another outcome of China-Argentina cooperation following Argentina joining the Belt and Road Initiative in February last year. The ninth forum between China and Latin American and Caribbean countries on infrastructure cooperation concluded almost concurrently in Macao, in which participants had in-depth exchanges on a series of topics, including how to jointly promote the high-quality development of the Belt and Road Initiative, the vast infrastructure and cooperation network that connects China and the rest of the world.

According to latest statistics, the Belt and Road Initiative has extended to 21 Latin American countries. This initiative is gaining popularity in Latin America because it has brought real benefits to both Chinese and Latin American people. China has remained Latin America's second largest trading partner for 10 consecutive years, with bilateral trade volume reaching $485.79 billion in 2022. The ever-increasing trade volume has made Latin America share the dividends of China's economic growth.

As many Belt and Road cooperation projects are located in remote areas of Latin American countries, their implementation has promoted local development and employment, and improved people's livelihood. The initiative has injected new momentum into the development of Latin American countries. Through Belt and Road cooperation, China's advantages in technology and experience have promoted high-quality cooperation with Latin American countries in the green economy, digital economy, high technology and other areas, injecting new impetus into their transformation and development.

As the world enters a period of turbulence and global economic growth is slowing significantly, developing countries are encountering growing difficulties. Against this backdrop, Latin American countries have realized that replicating the Western experience has not worked well for them. Instead, China's Belt and Road Initiative has provided them with a good solution to their development problems.

The Belt and Road Initiative is neither mandatory nor does it have any political strings attached. China is now accelerating its modernization drive with high-quality development, which will provide more opportunities for countries around the world. Taking a "free ride" on high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, China-Latin America cooperation will further deepen and create more dividends for the two peoples.

— CHINA MEDIA GROUP

AR-15s in Taiwan a clown's dream

Asked to comment on US Republican presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy's recent suggestion that every family on the Taiwan island be given an AR-15 to "defend" the island, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin urged the United States on Tuesday not to treat the island's inhabitants like cannon fodder.

In the age of social networking, it is highly unlikely Ramaswamy would be unaware of how many lives get snuffed out in mass shootings in the US every year. He now wants to send that menace to the island to endanger the lives of 23 million people there.

The US military-industrial complex will make huge profits by selling AR-15s to the island's inhabitants, while the guns would cause mayhem on the Chinese island if trigger-happy individuals run amok. By the way, that's just how the US functions: Send all dangers out while raking in the profits.

However, there is zero percent chance of Ramaswamy and his US arms dealers' dream becoming a reality. Taiwan is an inalienable part of the Chinese territory and the central government will never allow any evil US plan to harm its 23 million inhabitants. Even officials on the island, who generally tend to obey US orders, have dismissed Ramaswamy's idea.

Ramaswamy made the crazy suggestion because it is the election season in the US and he needs to muddy the water and incite more irrational minds in order to get more votes. But by uttering these words he has only made a clown of himself. He might have gained a lot of attention being at the center of things, but he is just a laughing stock for audiences.

Such clowns can never be heroes.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Middle East wants future in its own hands

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is on a visit to Saudi Arabia from Tuesday to Thursday. The United States used to be the largest purchaser of Saudi Arabia's crude oil. However, that is no longer the case. China is now the largest importer of Saudi Arabia's oil.

Blinken hopes to be able to drive a wedge between Riyadh and Beijing during his visit. However, his hosts gave a cold shoulder to that appeal even before the top US diplomat departed for the Middle East country.

After the United States' strategic withdrawal from the region, its influence has gradually declined.

The Organization for the Petroleum Exporting Countries, with Saudi Arabia as leader, and Russia and other oil-producing countries held a meeting not long ago, announcing to continue to maintain their oil production cuts, so as to maintain the stability of the oil market. Now the "Opec+" group firmly controls the pricing power of the world oil market. Something makes Washington uneasy, as it tries to bring down energy prices to reduce Moscow's revenue and tame inflation at home.

The Joe Biden administration tried to respond to the "Opec+" production-reduction plan by releasing strategic reserves of oil last year. But that was ineffective. During his visit to Riyadh last year, US President Joe Biden personally requested Saudi Arabia increase oil production. But that request was brushed aside.

Recently, Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates and Oman have announced the establishment of a joint navy to maintain the safety of navigation in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, which is a new move showing the Middle East is getting rid of its reliance on the US for security.

China not only supports peace in the region, but also actively promotes the common development of regional countries. It is helping them to transform their growth model from the oil economy to a green and digital economy. It is not Beijing that should be held accountable for the cooling relations between Washington and the region, but the havoc the US has caused to local people, as well as its ill intention of continuing to use the region as a geopolitical tool.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

COMMENT

Wenjin Long and Shenggen Fan

Non-grain land conversion needs rethink

The "non-grainization" of cultivable land generally refers to the act of growing vegetables, fruits and other non-food crops on farmlands. The proportion of cultivable land used to grow non-food crops to the total sown area of crops can be used as a yardstick for measuring "non-grainization" of cultivable land.

Using this yardstick, we can say the area used to grow non-grain crops in China has increased slightly in recent years. The proportion of the area used for grain production (cereals, beans, tubers) in the total sown area declined from 71 percent in 2015 to 69.7 percent in 2021, and the proportion of area used to grow cereals (rice, wheat, corn) in the total sown area for crops declined from 61 percent in 2015 to 59 percent in 2021.

However, the trend of per capita grain production is basically in line with the non-food conversion of cultivable land. And while China's per capita grain production reached 479 kilograms in 2015, only in 2021 did the amount surpass the 2015 level to reach 483 kg.

Concerned over the "non-grainization" of cultivable land, the central government has issued a series of policies. But despite playing a key role in protecting cultivable land and consolidating grain production, the policies have had some negative effects such as reducing the income of agricultural entities (farmers included) and curtailing the diversification of agricultural production, harming the interests of farmers and local governments to a certain extent.

Hence, a rethink on the policies is urgently needed.

The relatively low returns on grain production is the fundamental reason for the "non-grainization" of cultivable land, and the contradiction between the rising cost of and low income on grain production is difficult to reconcile. Besides, the continuous shift of laborers from agriculture to non-agricultural sectors has led to a rise in agricultural labor cost, and the prices of products such as seeds, fertilizers and farm machinery have also increased. Data show that without subsidies, the average net profit of growing rice, wheat or corn is often negative.

In addition, the size and topography of farms influence farmers' planting decisions. For example, in plain areas that are suitable for mechanical farming, farmers will increase mechanized farming for grain crops. And since mountain and hill slopes are not suitable for large-scale mechanical farming, farmers in such places will cultivate more cash crops. This fragmentation of cultivable land often leads to "non-grain conversion".

At the same time, food security has become even more important. Traditionally, safeguarding food security meant ensuring smooth grain supply. But with China's population set to decline, and given the rise in the aging population and change in people's dietary habits, the demand for grains too will decline steadily. Growth, therefore, will mainly come from feed grains, supplemented by the industrial use of grains.

Today, food security is no longer just a matter of grain security, but a more broadly defined food security which includes securing the supply of fruits, vegetables and meat. Correspondingly, the management of non-grain cultivable land should go beyond the traditional "grain-based" security to include nutrition and health security, environmental sustainability and common prosperity by using a big food approach.

First, the priority of cultivable land use should be to ensure regular supply of vegetables, fruits, meat, aquatic products and other types of foods while securing the supply of staples, and better meeting the increasingly diversified food consumption needs of the people through production diversification.

Basic farmlands and high-standard farmlands should be used to increase grain production, especially rice, wheat and corn production. Also, large-scale mechanization, irrigation and connectivity should be promoted, so farmers can earn a decent income by growing grains.

But no matter what type of crop farmers produce, cultivable land should not be used for other purposes nor should soil properties be changed, while measures should be taken to ensure cultivable land can be used to grow food grains in times of emergency.

Second, both domestic and foreign resources should be used in an all-round way using multiple channels to increase the diversity and resilience of food supply. It is also necessary to promote diverse dietary habits among the people for both health and environmental reasons by, for instance, helping lower the demand for red meat and thereby feed grains, and correspondingly reduce import dependence.

To better protect the ecological environment, food production should be boosted by not only increasing cultivable land resources but also using all land resources, including grasslands, forests, water bodies and alternative protein resources. There is also a need to make rational use of the global market and reduce the gap between domestic food supply and demand through diversified and moderate imports. From the perspective of comparative advantage and trade, importing land-intensive food is more beneficial to China than importing labor-intensive non-food products.

And third, more policies should be implemented to increase the income of people engaged in agriculture and encourage all kinds of entities to help increase food production. And new policy priorities should include supporting professional farmers, developing moderate-scale operations, upgrading agricultural technology and extending the value chains.

Wenjin Long is a lecturer at, and Shenggen Fan is the dean of, the Academy of Global Food Economics and Policy, China Agricultural University.

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



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

Ding Hongwei

Chip export restrictions harmful for Japanese economy

Japan's new export restrictions on 23 types of chipmaking equipment starting from July shows it is ready to become a pawn in the United States' geopolitical game of curbing the sale of key high-tech equipment to China on the pretext of safeguarding economic security.

Due to the restrictions, companies making those 23 equipment will need special permission from the Japanese government to export them to a country not on a list of 42 "friendly" markets. In effect, Japan has declared a de facto embargo on the export of semiconductors to China.

Japan is dancing to the tune of the US. It has also been parroting Washington's economic security rhetoric since enacting a far-reaching economic security law in May 2022 in an attempt to strengthen the Japan-US alliance and reshape supply chains in Asia and beyond by helping implement Washington's so-called "Indo-Pacific" Economic Framework for Prosperity.

The US has been putting pressure on Japan and the Netherlands to form a "semiconductor alliance" to curb China's cutting-edge chip development after announcing export restrictions against China in October 2022.

Tokyo agreed to serve Washington's "cause" at the recent G7 summit in Hiroshima, Japan, and resort to protectionism in the name of safeguarding economic security in a bid to cooperate with other countries to boost its semiconductor manufacturing sector, while furthering the US-led de-globalization process. But Japan's move goes against the interests of domestic chipmaking enterprises, which play a very important role in key supply chains, especially in the fields of materials and manufacturing equipment, which respectively account for more than 50 percent and about 30 percent of the global total.

China is the largest export destination for Japanese semiconductor equipment manufacturers. In 2022, such equipment exports from Japan to China was worth 820 billion yen ($5.85 billion), accounting for more than 30 percent of Japan's total chipmaking equipment exports, and almost double the amount of US exports of such materials to China, according to data from the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

From the global perspective, Japan's export restrictions will force its chipmaking enterprises to adjust their long-term marketing strategies, creating huge uncertainties for their development. Not to mention that they will suffer colossal losses if they lose the Chinese market.

China-Japan trade cooperation serves as the ballast for their overall bilateral relations. China has been Japan's top trading partner since 2007, with Japanese exports to China making up more than one-fifth of Japan's total shipments in value terms and over 30,000 Japanese companies currently operating in China.

According to Japan External Trade Organization's 2022 report, the ratio of return on Japan's outward foreign direct investment in China in 2021 was as high as 15.1 percent, much more than those in North America, Europe and Southeast Asia. In fact, China's economic development has become an important driver of Japan's trade and economic growth.

Japan's efficient industry chains have strengthened the country's supply chains globally and helped globalize its companies. This makes China an ideal destination for Japanese enterprises to invest in and sell their products, as China's production base and consumption market are huge.

Also, the global industry chains, especially Japan's industry chains, still rely highly on China. So if Japanese companies lose the Chinese market and Japan follows the US in decoupling from China, Japan's economy will suffer.

Japan's export restrictions on chipmaking equipment will deal a heavy blow to its semiconductor industry and reduce its global competitiveness due to the sluggish demand in Japan's market.

Besides, the fact that the Japanese government is striving to attract foreign investment and encourage companies to shift production back home to boost the semiconductor industry will increase production costs, blunt the enterprises' global competitive edge and leave them to suffer due to Japan's shrinking market. Also, the de-Sinicization of the industry chains will create daunting challenges for enterprises based in Japan and other countries.

China and Japan have complementary advantages in chipmaking equipment, design and back-end manufacturing. Their collaboration benefits not only the two sides, but also the global semiconductor industry and helps stabilize the international market. Since the Japanese chipmaking enterprises' need has changed from "made in China" to "sold in China", they do not want to decouple from China and lose the Chinese market.

Paradoxically, instead of debilitating China's high-tech sector, the export restrictions announced by the US and Japan will boost China's domestic semiconductor industry, although it will take time for China to overcome the challenges. To boost its semiconductor industry, therefore, China should use its advantages in the industry chains, promote R&D and deepen cooperation with other countries.

Moreover, some Japanese enterprises may change their investment strategies due to the export restrictions. As a matter of fact, some Japanese companies are trying to establish a mechanism to purchase, produce and sell products in China.

Although the attempts of the US and Japan to accelerate de-globalization is a big challenge for China's semiconductor industry, their efforts cannot hinder the country's long-term development. Instead, it will strengthen China's determination to develop its own products.

The Japanese government should heed the voice of its chipmaking industry, cherish the fruits of Sino-Japanese economic cooperation and realize that deeper cooperation on supply chains can boost mutually-beneficial development.

The author is a professor at the Beijing Foreign Studies University.

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

Liu Qiang

US' provocative moves will not solve its problems

The United States has been putting immense pressure on China by imposing economic restrictions and increasing military presence in and around the South China Sea, East China Sea, and the Taiwan Strait, sending regional security into a vicious spiral.

First, the US has been trying all means possible to contain China. The US knows that a stable peripheral security environment is necessary for a country's development. That's why it has been stirring up more and more troubles in the Asia-Pacific region by taking overt and covert measures against China and forming security alliances with some countries in the region with the aim of curbing China's rise.

China has major strategic interests in the East China Sea, South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait including safeguarding its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Using the East and South China Seas issues and the Taiwan question, the US is trying to destabilize the region in order to force China to exhaust its resources to deal with the US-created troubles.

Second, the strategic pressure in the three territorial waters of China may stress out the country. Yet geo-advantages will help China overcome the stress unlike what the US expects to see.

True, the use of resources to counter the US will increase the burden on China. But China has worked out a long-term plan to prevent the US from manipulating countries in the region and ensure Washington's geopolitical strategy in the region doesn't succeed.

Also, China's growing national strength has made it more confident of safeguarding its national interests. In contrast, the US will have to keep spending increasing amounts of money, which at present it cannot afford to, to further its nefarious design of forming anti-China cliques in the region to contain China. Besides, the impacts of the US strategy will wane with the passage of time.

For the sake of regional and global stability and development, the US should eschew its geopolitical strategy in the Asia-Pacific.

Third, some US politicians are playing a dangerous game by pushing for "a war between China and the US" by calling for increased US activities in China's waters. But despite the US' multiple miscalculations deteriorating China-US ties, bilateral strategic stability has been maintained, with the two sides showing a certain amount of restraint.

China-US relations have reached a crossroad. In this delicate situation, the bellicose statements of some US politicians, including some senior military officials, and their call for military build-up in the region before 2025 reflect their hostility toward China.

If the US escalates its military activities in the region, China will be forced to respond in a bid to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity and development interests. Since the US knows China will take decisive measures to safeguard its national interests, Washington's belligerent strategies will not do any good to any country, including the US and its allies.

For the sake of regional and global stability and development, the US should eschew its geopolitical strategy in the Asia-Pacific. By embroiling other countries in its geopolitical game to maintain its global hegemony, the US will cause itself unimaginable harm. And countries and regions falling into the US trap risk suffering self-inflicted damage. That is the reason why US President Joe Biden said the US seeks to vigorously compete with China, not seek conflict.

If the White House is aware of the global disaster a Sino-US conflict would be, it should seek common ground while shelving differences, and hold negotiations to resolve disputes with China instead of taking aggressive actions.

It is normal for countries to compete with each other, but they should avoid confrontation. However, the US' efforts to turn China's territorial waters into a zone of contention have hindered communication between the two sides.

China follows the peaceful development principle, because it is beneficial to the Chinese people's well-being, and promotes co-development with other countries. China will continue to make contributions to global economic growth, and avoid the "Thucydides trap" unless the US forces it into a conflict. Therefore, the US would do better to stop treating China as a geopolitical rival, because China doesn't seek hegemony.

The US' provocative strategies such as increased military presence in China's waters will not help resolve the differences and disputes between the two sides. Instead, they will further deteriorate bilateral relations, possibly leading to a grave crisis. In short, China and the US need to hold talks to resolve their disputes, seek common ground while shelving differences, and establish effective crisis management mechanisms to prevent miscalculations from triggering a conflict.

The author is the director of the academic council and a senior research fellow at the Shanghai Center for RimPac Strategic and International Studies.

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

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

GLOBAL VIEWS

WU HUAIZHONG

Up to no good

The strengthening of the US-Japan-ROK security triangle will have severe negative impacts on the situation in East Asia



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

Since March this year, Japan and the Republic of Korea have taken a series of diplomatic actions in an attempt to improve their bilateral ties. Fraught with historical and present disputes, bilateral relations between these two key countries in East Asia have an impact on regional geopolitics. Unfortunately, at least for the time being, the impact is mostly negative, with no contribution to peace and stability in the region.

The leaders of Japan and the ROK have both highlighted or suggested that the world and East Asia are standing at a historical crossroads, regarding China, Russia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as posing challenges or threats to the security of Japan and the ROK. As a result, the main driving force for the "mending" of Japan-ROK ties is for the two countries to "align" and "re-calibrate" their regional security policies.

Usually, improving relations between neighboring countries has positive implications for regional peace and stability. However, the Japanese and ROK governments are pushing for reconciliation by hyping external security threats and even making imaginary enemies, at the expense of triggering tensions with neighboring countries and undermining regional cooperation and integration.

With this approach, Japan and the ROK will undoubtedly find more common ground, which not only provides an excuse for both countries to markedly expand their military capabilities, but also facilitates shifts in their respective security strategies and military policies. In fact, ROK President Yoon Suk-yeol has repeatedly mentioned "preemptive strikes" as one of the means to deter the DPRK, which is quite similar to the so-called enemy base attack capability that Japan is aiming to develop.

Going with this trend, the United States-Japan-ROK "security triangle" will lead to radical changes in the security and strategic landscape in Northeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific region, and a further imbalance in the regional security order, as geopolitical and strategic competition intensifies. The region will be exposed to the risk of being divided into two blocs, which is what the US, Japan and the ROK are working on — splitting the region into a US-Japan-ROK camp on one side, versus China, Russia and the DPRK on the other.

The restructuring of the US-Japan-ROK security relations and stronger measures against China have resulted in severe collateral damage: economic factors, such as supply and industrial chains, are being taken into geopolitical and military security considerations, inevitably suppressing and jeopardizing the China-Japan-ROK economic triangle and regional cooperation.

A stronger US-Japan-ROK security triangle will have severe negative impacts on the regional situation in three major aspects.

First, it will increase tension and instability on the Korean Peninsula. Japan, the ROK and the US have confirmed close cooperation and coordinated policies against the DPRK, which will escalate tensions and have adverse effects on the regional strategic balance.

Looking at the joint statements issued by the three countries' leaders, foreign ministers and defense ministers in recent years, it is evident that the three countries have almost formed a unified stance toward the DPRK. Japan and the ROK have actively responded and participated in large-scale joint military exercises with the US aimed at deterring the DPRK.

Second, Japan, the ROK and the US tend to align and rely on each other in their China policies. The recent joint statements by the defense ministers and foreign ministers of the three countries have repeatedly mentioned the importance of "peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait".

As Japan and the ROK rebuild their ties, there has been a rise in the theory of linked security between the Taiwan Strait and the Korean Peninsula, as well as the call for Japan, the ROK and the US to strengthen their collective deterrent power. Yoon Seok-yeol has openly made inappropriate remarks regarding the Taiwan question, which touches upon China's core interests, while Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida advocated issuing a statement on Taiwan at the G7 Hiroshima Summit and the Japan-US-ROK trilateral summit.

Third, Japan, the ROK and the US have shown their shared intention to extend their trilateral security cooperation to broader regions such as the "Indo-Pacific" and Eurasia. The three countries have started to engage and cooperate with NATO and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue that brings together the US, Japan, India and Australia.

Both Kishida and Yoon have become the first leaders of Japan and the ROK to attend NATO summits. Japan is actively trying to bring the ROK into the Quad, further enhancing the mechanism's strategic leverage against China. During their meeting, Kishida and Yoon extended a welcome for each other's "Indo-Pacific" visions and agreed to cooperate in building a free and open "Indo-Pacific" region. All these activities are likely to lead to substantial progress in the construction of a US-led alliance, including the Quad and NATO, aimed at containing Russia and countering China.

The author is the deputy director and a researcher of the Institute of Japanese Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

YU HAISHAN

EU's carbon tariff and its implications for China

China's carbon market needs to grow to offset some long-term impacts of the EU's CBAM



YANG MEINI / FOR CHINA DAILY

After nearly two years of negotiations involving many parties, the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) finally completed its legislative process in May. Under the political agreement, the CBAM will come into force in its transitional phase on Oct 1, 2023; the obligation to purchase CBAM certificates will begin on Jan 1, 2026. The carbon tariff's impacts on other countries and regions, including China, loom large.

As a matter of fact, throughout the legislative process, the CBAM has always been in the global spotlight and controversy abounds over its mechanism.

The European Union insists on promoting the carbon border adjustment mechanism for two reasons.

To start with, the EU promotes the mechanism as it is in line with its climate ambitions. In 2019, the European Commission unveiled the European Green Deal, raising the EU's ambition for reducing greenhouse gas emissions to at least 55 percent below the 1990 levels by 2030 and pledging to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 — an economy with net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. Since then, the European Commission has started to formulate detailed reform measures on emission reductions. In 2021, the European Commission presented the "Fit for 55" package, which includes a formal proposal for the CBAM.

Second, the CBAM works side-by-side with the reform of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme and seeks to reduce the risk of "carbon leakage" in a more targeted manner. The EU is a global leader in climate action, but as it is continuously raising its climate ambitions, the difference between its climate policy and that of other countries and regions is increasing. It is considered that the enlarged differences in levels of climate ambition could lead to a risk of "carbon leakage", which occurs when EU companies move carbon-intensive production to countries and regions with less stringent climate policies to maintain their cost competitiveness.

An important part of the EU ETS reform included in the "Fit for 55" package is to gradually phase out free allowances under the EU ETS. The phase-out could raise the carbon price in relevant industries and result in "carbon leakage" as EU manufacturers relocate their production elsewhere due to higher carbon prices in the EU.

By confirming that a price has been paid for the embedded carbon emissions generated in the production of certain goods imported into the EU, the CBAM will ensure the carbon price of imports is equivalent to the carbon price of domestic production. Therefore, the CBAM will be gradually phased in as free allowances in the EU ETS are phased out and prevent "carbon leakage" in a more targeted manner.

That said, whether carbon tariff schemes like the CBAM can effectively address "carbon leakage" is a complicated issue. For instance, the carbon tariff could lead to trade diversion or even trade retaliation, which could undermine its role in preventing "carbon leakage".

The CBAM will have limited impacts on China in the short run; however, its long-term impacts shall not be underestimated.

Currently, the CBAM regulation applies to a specified list of goods imported into the EU within the following six carbon-intensive sectors: cement, iron and steel, aluminium, fertilizers, electricity and chemicals (hydrogen), mainly targeting the direct emissions in the production process. The sectors of cement, electricity and fertilizers also have to include the indirect emissions.

Currently, in accordance with the list of goods with Combined Nomenclature codes set out in the CBAM, cement, fertilizers and hydrogen account for a very small proportion of China-EU trade; iron and steel and aluminium together represent less than 2 percent of China's total exports to the EU. Therefore, in the short run, the CBAM has limited impacts on China.

However, in the long run, the CBAM is set to extend the scope of its covered products. The CBAM text specifically says it will gradually include more and more goods which are also covered by the EU ETS, indirect emissions under certain circumstances, and the downstream products. By then, its impacts on Chinese exports to the EU will substantially increase.

Take the iron and steel sector as an example. Although China's iron and steel exports to the EU currently account for a small proportion, China's exports of mechanical equipment, auto and other products that use iron and steel as a raw material account for a very large proportion. If the CBAM broadens the scope to the iron and steel sector's downstream products, the carbon tax could be extremely high for the entire supply chain. The tax volume could be even larger if indirect emissions are also included.

It's worth noting that, according to the CBAM regulation, the EU importer may claim a reduction in the number of CBAM certificates with solid evidence that a carbon price has been effectively paid in the country of origin for the declared emissions embedded in the imported goods. That is to say, Chinese exporters could use China's domestic carbon price to ease the pressure brought by the CBAM and more actively take part in the domestic carbon market. This can potentially push China's carbon market to grow. The premise is that the EU recognizes China's carbon price, which is set to be a significant part of the bilateral dialogue in the years to come.

Since its launch in July 2021, China's national carbon market has made marked progress and substantially raised companies' awareness of emissions reductions. However, more reform measures need to be put in place to make it play a bigger role in stimulating emissions reductions by businesses. For instance, currently, Chinese companies can hardly have a clear anticipation of the carbon price due to the unclear pricing mechanism in the carbon market, making it difficult for them to make decisions on low-carbon investment. Furthermore, there is a wide price gap between China and the EU's carbon markets. A weak carbon price does little to encourage Chinese companies to cut emissions and puts Chinese exporters at a disadvantaged position under the CBAM and other similar schemes.

The carbon price in China's national carbon market has been largely hovering around 55 yuan ($7.72) per ton of CO2 since the start of the year, far below the average price in the EU's carbon market (around 80 euros, or $85.71, per ton of CO2). Due to the relatively low carbon price and the free allowances handed out by the government, the cost of CO2 emissions has not been fully reflected in China's carbon prices. Thus, emissions reductions are not effectively factored in companies' investment and operational decisions, as they lack the motivation to do so.

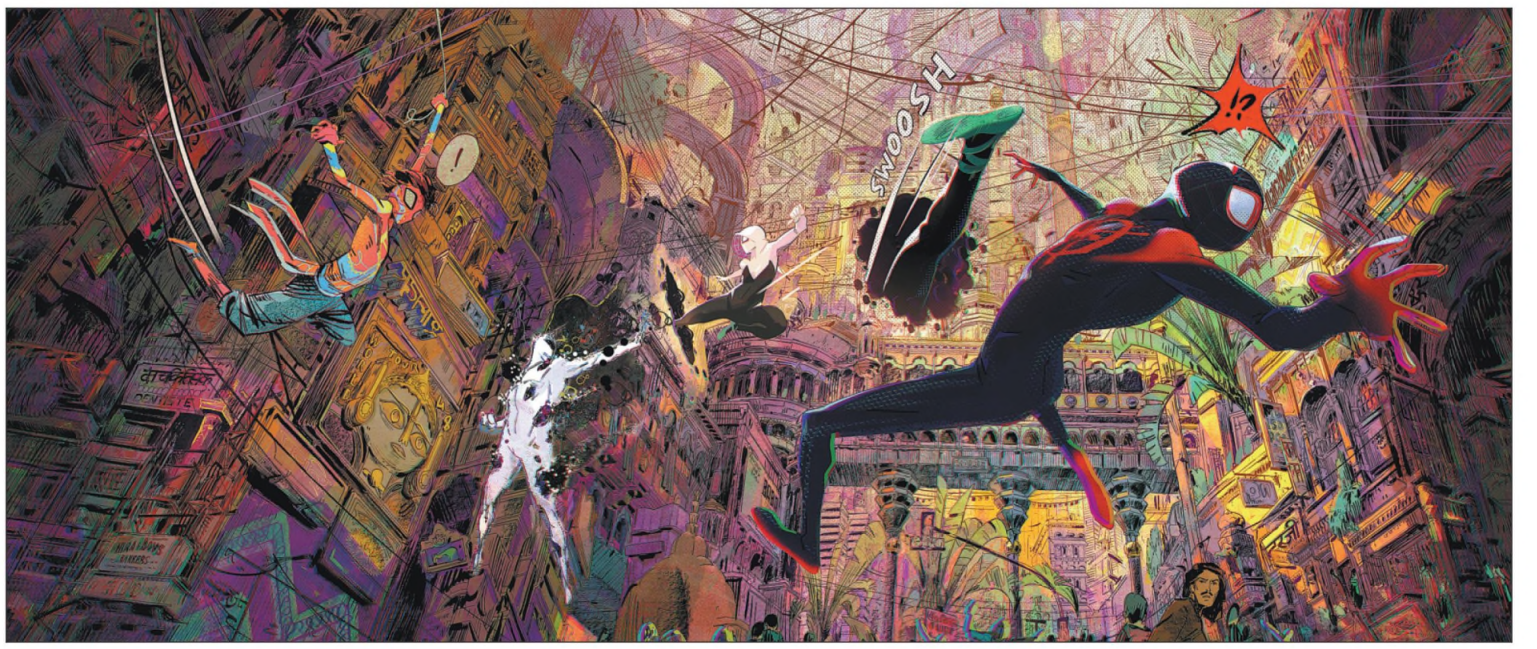
Learning from the reform measures of the EU ETS, China's carbon market can put forth a specific phase-out plan for free allowances, which can provide companies with a long-term visibility and predictability to make their decisions on low-carbon investment. In the meantime, auctioning of the allowances instead of grandfathering helps discover an efficient carbon price in the market, and hence to better motivate companies to reduce emissions.

The author is a lecturer at the China-UK Low Carbon College at Shanghai Jiaotong University. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

LIFE



Swinging back into action

Across the Spider-Verse gathers a clutter of Spider-Men and Women for a thrilling sequel that its cast and crew hope will be a summer box-office smash, **Xu Fan** reports.

Since making his comic book debut in 1962, Spider-Man has become an icon of pop culture, racking up numerous appearances in books, cartoon series and movies. Now, the world's most famous web-slinger is swinging back into Chinese theaters with the new movie, *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse*.

A sequel to 2018's *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*, winner of the best animated feature at the 91st Academy Awards in 2019, *Across the Spider-Verse* was simultaneously released in China and North America on Friday.

Following an accident in the first movie, where he is bitten by a radioactive spider giving him superhuman powers, Miles Morales — a teenager living with his parents in New York — is still struggling to keep his superhero identity a secret from his family. While facing a new crossroads in life as a graduating senior who's attempting to apply for a physics major at Princeton University, Morales finds comfort in reuniting with Gwen Stacy, a young woman from a parallel universe who is also gifted with spider-administered super powers.

Known as Ghost Spider, Stacy is struggling with a similar problem to Morales. She, too, is trying to hide her superhero identity from her father. With Stacy's help, Morales gains entry into the headquarters of a secret society where many people and creatures gather, all sharing the same experience as the duo — being bitten by a weird spider and becoming the superpowered wall crawler in their respective universes.

The gathering of around 280 variations of the comic book icon has become one of the biggest highlights of the movie. They include an Indian Spider-Man, Spider-Punk who carries an electric guitar, and a pregnant Spider-Woman riding a motorcycle.

Jointly directed by Justin K. Thompson, Kemp Powers and Joaquim Dos Santos, the 140-minute animated movie features Shameik Moore reprising his role as the teenage protagonist, Morales, with Hailee Steinfeld voicing Stacy and Jake Johnson voicing Peter B. Parker, the Spider-Man who trains Morales how to use his powers in the first movie.

Alongside Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, two of the three scriptwriters, the eight major cast and crew members shared behind-the-scenes stories of the new movie with China Daily during online interviews held over two days in late May.

Director Powers, a native of New York, says that he has been a big fan of Spider-Man since childhood. He explains that all the fights depicted in the comic books made him feel like Spider-Man is a neighbor responsible for protecting his own community.

However, the new movie has greatly expanded the superhero's range of activities. Powers says they made this breakthrough because they wanted "everyone in the world to feel like they could see Spider-Man in their own community when they leave the movie theater".

Recalling that he studied Chinese cities on the internet, Powers says he has discovered that Pudong district in Shanghai has many skyscrapers, adding that he is looking forward to featuring a Spider-Man from China in future projects, since they have already created so many versions of the web-slinger from different worlds.

In an interesting twist, Parker's Amazing Spider-Man — a jaded, slovenly character in the first film, aside from serving as a mentor to Morales, becomes a father in the new movie. He appears wearing pink pajamas over his iconic Spider-Man suit and is more preoccupied with taking care of his mischievous baby than superhero work.

For American actor Johnson, who again lends his voice to Parker, it has been a long journey to bring to life this version of superhero, who is struggling with a midlife crisis.

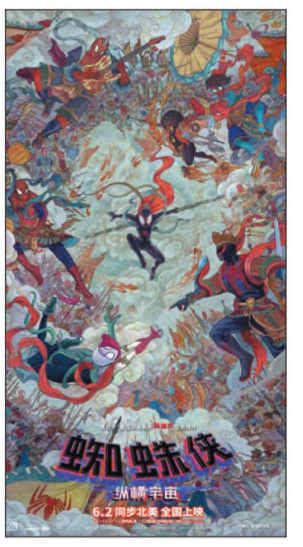
"We had been working on this movie for about three years. The animators had been working hard, making cuts and changes constantly. When they made changes, they wanted new options for the voice acting. That's why we were brought in early on, even when there were just scratch drawings — really rough versions of the animation. As the animation got closer to the final version, we came back and kept recording to make everything work together," says Johnson.

"It's like a dance between the characters, the story and the animation. I think they want to make sure everything works in sync," he adds.

For director Thompson, who had also served as the production designer of the first Spider-Verse movie, the new film gave them an opportunity to pay homage to some of the most brilliant comic book artists who had adopted their unique art styles to tell the Spider-Man stories.

In the movie, such homages could be seen in the hometown of an Indian Spider-Man, who lives in a fictional community, which looks like a kaleidoscopic hybrid of Manhattan in New York and Mumbai, and Spider-Punk, whose world is easily reminiscent of 1970s London.





Top and above: Currently the country's new box-office champion, *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse* features a host of characters, who are all Spider-Persons from different universes.
Below: A poster for the new movie. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"The first movie was experimental and broke so much new ground, taking many risks. As an artist and filmmaker, being given the chance to take those same kinds of risks and go even further than before is exciting," says Thompson.

For the director, Stacy's world — which is expected to remind audiences of Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood in the 1990s — was one of the most difficult to bring to life.

"The decision to open the film in a dynamic watercolor world (Stacy's universe) that changes based on her mood required a lot of experimentation. It was one of the first things we started working on for the film, and also one of the last things we finished in terms of the visuals for the entire movie. It took the entire production process to get it to a place where we felt it was just right," adds Thompson.

The voice stars also faced challenges with the many action scenes in the movie, such as conveying the feeling of having gone through intense physical activity while the heroes swing from building to building.

"It's not easy to do just by standing in a booth without the opportunity to physically act out what these characters are doing on-screen. I mean, I can't swing from buildings while fighting crime, but I have a method that I practice differently every time," says Steinfeld, who voices Stacy and her Ghost Spider alter ego.

The 26-year-old American actress adds that sometimes she would run around in a circle or do a couple of push-ups or jumps to get out of breath and portray exhaustion or frustration accurately.

Although, over the course of six decades, there have been numerous iterations of Spider-Man's story, the movie writers believe that the new tale has enabled them to satisfy their aspirations for innovation.

"I grew up in comic book shops," says Lord. "So, for me, what I love about comics is that you can really see the hand of an individual artist or writer reinterpreting these stories. The comics I liked the most were the ones that had the most personality and individuality in their artistic expression. They weren't beholden to trying to imitate an earlier version, but rather allowed a new version to flourish.

"That's the central metaphor of this new movie — can a new version of Spider-Man, Miles Morales, be allowed to flourish? Can the differences between his story and everybody else's story also be allowed to thrive?" he continues.

Consecutively topping China's single-day box office for five days, the new Spider-Man story has seemingly flourished, heating up the competition for summer blockbusters in the country, the world's second-largest movie market.

On its opening Friday, this movie surpassed two highly anticipated Japanese animated movies: a remastered version of Hayao Miyazaki's 1986 classic *Castle in the Sky*, and *Doraemon: Nobita's Sky Utopia*, the 42nd installment of the long-running franchise. As of Wednesday, it had already grossed 160 million yuan ($22.5 million).

Contact the writer at xufan@chinadaily.com.cn

Documentary shows high hopes of mountain culture

By **XING WEN**
xingwen@chinadaily.com.cn





Screenshots of the documentary series, *Amid Lucid Waters and Lush Mountains*, which tells the stories of rural vitalization through the perspective of eight ethnic groups across China. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The final episode of the documentary series, *Amid Lucid Waters and Lush Mountains*, which tells the stories of rural vitalization within eight ethnic groups, aired on the video-sharing platform Mango TV on Tuesday.

The eight episodes respectively illuminate the experiences of individuals belonging to the Yao, Dongxiang, Naxi, Tu, Qiang, Dai, Oroqen and Uygur ethnic communities.

Each of the episodes shows the determination with which these individuals are striving to overcome challenges and obstacles to contribute to the development of their homeland.

In one episode, the tale of Haba village, located at the foot of the Haba Snow Mountain, in Yunnan province's Dechen Tibet autonomous prefecture, is narrated.

Rising 5,396 meters, the majestic snowcapped mountain is a popular peak for mountaineers. And Haba village is where a group of Naxi people reside.

In recent years, the locals have capitalized on the village's location to develop a tourism industry centered around mountaineering. To ensure the safety of climbers, the Naxi people from Haba village have formed a team of skilled rescuers, tirelessly committed to safeguarding climbers.

The documentary highlights the efforts of one rescuer, Li Shujun, who has wholeheartedly devoted himself to the cause of the high-altitude mountain rescue team.

Having participated in hundreds of rescue missions, Li and his team members demonstrate their professional expertise as they safeguard climbers undertaking the challenging journey to summit.

Today, Haba village has fostered a unique mountaineering culture, and its tourism industry thrives with renewed vitality.

The documentary series tells the stories of individuals from diverse walks of life. Other episodes focus on a Yao woman who is actively involved in developing an industry chain centered on the traditional medicinal bathing of her ethnic group; a Tu wildlife conservationist who works tirelessly to protect the Tibetan antelope in the Hoh Xil depopulated zone of Qinghai province; and a Qiang man who has leveraged an e-commerce model to sell his hometown's specialties.

Sun Lu, co-director of the documentary, reveals that the preparation for this documentary spanned an entire year, involving 10 research teams that extensively traversed 11 provinces and regions nationwide.

They connected with more than 10 ethnic groups, conducted interviews with over 300 people and finally picked 22 individual stories, representing a diverse range of characters hailing from eight distinct ethnic groups.

According to Sun, during the filming process, the production unit encountered many challenges including high-altitude hypoxia, physical exhaustion, the discomfort of rheumatism, mosquito bites and harsh sandstorms.

"Along this journey, there were hardships, but what prevailed were the touching moments," he says.

"As we approached the villages of the ethnic groups, we were always greeted with warm smiles and invitations from the villagers of different ethnicities. The radiant happiness etched on their faces was borne out of a life enriched by prosperity.

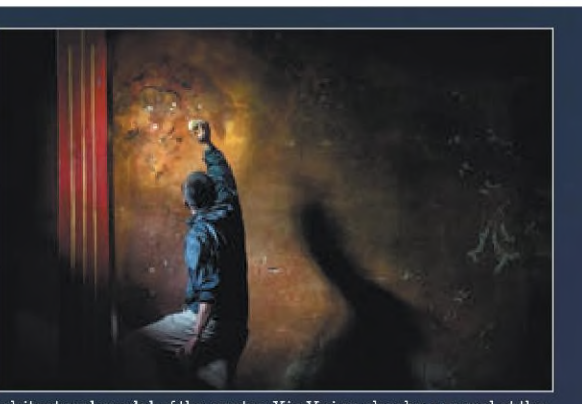
"This deeply felt happiness is the essence of rural vitalization — an authentic portrayal that cannot be concealed," Sun adds.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

LIFE





From left: The Jebum-gang Lha-khang temple in Lhasa, Tibet autonomous region, has been transformed into a modern art center; an architectural model of the center; Xia Yujun checks a mural at the center. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Himalayan temple restorer scales new heights

Architect Xia Yujun works at crossroads of modern engineering, history and religious culture, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

Xia Yujun still remembers the first time he laid eyes on the Jebum-gang Lha-khang temple in 2016.

"Pushing open the heavy door, one was greeted by a primitive and rustic atmosphere. The dimness inside the hall added a touch of mystery to the architecture itself," the man in his 30s recalls.

"It has a history of approximately 200 years and has murals from the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911)," he adds.

The ancient building's circular construction, ancient Tibetan pillars and verandas, and layers of weathered centuries-old murals were among the highlights that hit him between the eyes.

The temple is tucked away in a bustling business street and residential area, 3,650 meters above sea level, in Lhasa, Southwest China's Tibet autonomous region. First built during the second half of the 19th century, it is the only mandalic building — a symbolic Buddhist symmetrical structure.

It was used as granary for decades, and it is now a popular place among visitors in pursuit of modern art, thanks to five years of efforts by Xia and his team.

The top two stories of the temple were derelict when Xia and his team started the restoration.

Many of the paintings of Buddhist figures were blurry and traces of fire from when the building was burned could be seen on some carved wooden decorations.

In 2015, the local government decided to bring in a group of architects, artists and scholars to restore the ancient building.

Xia says he got off to a rough beginning, since there was no precedent to refer to.

"I probably looked at around 30,000 old photos," Xia says about his efforts to piece together the original details of the temple's past.

"Only by clarifying everything, from the underlying logical relationships to historical heritage and spatial logic, can we have top-level design," he explains.

After the basics of the temple were restored, Xia's team conducted extensive investigations before adding some new functions to make it an art space, without altering the original structure or the spatial flow.

The goal was to bring it back to life, Xia says.

To transform Jebum-gang Lha-khang into a modern art space, significant improvements were needed, including to its electrical, waterproofing and security systems.

"The infrastructure required almost complete reconstruction," Xia says.

Polyurethane waterproofing materials were first used to seal the gaps in the roof and keep the summer storms from doing further damage to the building.

The work took three weeks, and a three-layer waterproofing system was applied on both the interior and exterior of the roof to ensure that the murals inside would not be affected for the next decade, Xia explains.

Then, old elm-wood flooring was installed using a joist structure, under which the necessary pipeline and electrical systems were embedded, paving the way for sound, lighting and electrical equipment essential to future exhibitions.

The lighting system also underwent significant renovations. The incandescent lights were replaced with special lamps for museum-grade illumination, reducing the harmful rays that could damage the murals. The resulting lighting atmosphere allows viewers to experience the tranquility of this sacred building.

"In this way, a sense of holiness and mystery gradually emerges throughout the entire space," Xia says.

Xia and his team have also created a modern corridor made up of 2,000 copper plates, with patterns crafted by local coppersmiths, to have people feel the fusion and collision of tradition and contemporary art from the moment they step into the art center.

Xiao Su from Sichuan province has visited the art center several times.

"It was all a mundane affair with the loud peddlers outside the walls, while there was a beautiful and stunning mural art world inside," Xiao says.

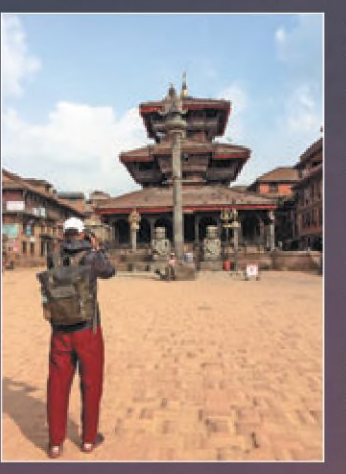
"I also love the art center because it has done a great job handling space, light, artworks and their relations with humans," she adds.

The museum has been open to the public for two years and has packed in visitors on a weekly basis, Xia says.

"Seeing it go from a decrepit ancient building into a popular site with so many people, I feel very accomplished," he adds.

Xia has been fascinated by ancient architecture since childhood. He grew up around the classic Chinese gardens and museums in Suzhou, Jiangsu province. His parents sent him to a local calligrapher's workshop to learn painting in his teenage years.





"My teacher would take me to various museums and take in the picturesque beauty of the ancient architectural wonders in the classic gardens, including the pavilions, towers and courtyards," Xia says about his initial encounter with ancient architecture.

After finishing a degree in architectural design at the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute in Chongqing in 2013, Xia furthered his studies of Himalayan regional architecture at the Birmingham City University in the United Kingdom, before going back to work in Shanghai after graduation in 2015.

He was approached to help restore ancient buildings in Tibet for his expertise in the field.

"I visited the Tibetan region multiple times in college, thanks to its geographical proximity," Xia says.

He still remembers the distinctive historical architecture he saw in Daocheng Yading, a popular tourist destination in the Garze Tibetan autonomous prefecture, Sichuan province, in 2014.

"There were many old buildings left there, all of which were constructed using local materials," he recalls.

"You can see irregular shapes in the stones and wood — not finely processed or in quantifiable shapes. I really appreciate the natural and non-standardized architectural feel, and they possess the most primitive impact," he says.

Xia says he was deeply impressed by the vitality of natural growth conveyed by those buildings.

"This feeling of ancient architecture is completely different from the traditional gardens in my hometown," he says.

Xia's master's thesis focused on ancient architecture in the Himalayas. During these travels, he also transcribed architectural design materials and manuscripts.

Fascination about Himalayan buildings and Tibetan culture had Xia embark on a new journey to Tibet in 2016.

"Ancient architecture in Tibet is not merely three-dimensional in the eyes of an architect. It's 5D and even 6D, because they have scent, sound, a sense of light and history," Xia says, adding that only when people delve into local clusters of ancient architecture can they truly communicate with these ancient buildings, including magnificent palaces and solemn temples.

"It's like exploring a mystery, so it's very interesting," he says.

He saw the Jebum-gang Lha-khang temple a perfect site to carry out his ambition of integrating Himalayan regional and modern constructions.

"It has been a center of energy for the ancient city of Lhasa and an important carrier of local Tibetan culture," Xia says.

Yet, he found many local residents knew little about the temple, including a local photographer he knows who used to study at the primary school about 50 meters away from it.

That was why Xia and his team decided from the start that the temple should be restored and made a window for both visitors and residents to better appreciate Tibetan culture and art.

Xia recently made a short film recording the ancient building renovation and put it online, with an aim of raising more public awareness of ancient buildings and their protection.

"There are still many idled historical buildings in the ancient cities of Tibet, and we want to find those of great value and help show them in the form of an art center or cultural museum," Xia says.

"This way, I hope young people can pay more attention to ancient building restoration in Tibet and more of them can join in the sector," he says.

In fact, ancient buildings like the temple in this bustling area are few and far between. More of them are hidden off the beaten track.

Therefore, Xia and his team have started to profile more than 1,000 ancient buildings in other parts of the region.

"There is a strong magnetic field here that attracts people who are interested, indicating that this place is connected to the world and always filled with a sense of freshness," Xia says.

Contact the writer at yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn

Above: Xia grew up around classic architecture in Suzhou, Jiangsu province; photographing buildings in Nepal, in 2015.
Left: A dagoba Xia encountered during an architectural study tour in Nepal.

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM

LIFE



Tale of intrigue and love in classic opera

Chinese-Italian production of *Tosca* three years in making, **Chen Nan** reports.

'She is passionate, devoted, feisty and jealous. She is a lot of different women," said Monica Zanettin, an Italian soprano.

She was describing the role she plays in *Tosca*, an opera in three acts by master Italian composer Giacomo Puccini. The role is that of Floria Tosca, a Roman opera star. It will be Zanettin's debut performance at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing.

From Tuesday to June 18, the opera will feature Chinese and Italian performers at the NCPA.

"Any woman can see herself in the role. And every soprano can bring a part or parts of herself to the role," she said recently at the performing arts center.

With a combination of love, lust and murder, Puccini's *Tosca*, which premiered in Rome in 1900, is one of the world's most loved and most performed operas.

It tells the story of opera singer Tosca, who is deeply in love with an artist, Mario Cavaradossi. The artist hides an escaped political prisoner named Angelotti. When they are arrested, Scarpia, the chief of police, wants to execute Cavaradossi and the escapee he has hidden.

Tosca makes a deal with Scarpia to give herself to him to save her lover. After Scarpia promises to conduct a fake execution, Tosca stabs him before he can claim his part of the deal. However, Cavaradossi is actually executed. Scarpia has intended to trick her all along. In despair, Tosca takes her own life.

Zanettin, who was born in Treviso, Italy, and now lives in Venice, has played the role of Tosca many times. "It's a tragedy but very romantic," she said, calling the role one of her favorites and "a dream role for every soprano".

"It's not just about the pursuit of voice but also about acting, since she is a very complicated woman," Zanettin said.

The opera is also a longtime favorite thanks to its stunning arias, such as *Vissi d'arte* (I Lived for Art), sung by Tosca at a heartbreaking moment when Scarpia, with Cavaradossi as his hostage, poses his ultimatum to her. Also impressive is *E lucevan le stelle* (And the Stars Were Shining), when Cavaradossi is told that he has an hour left to live and the only thing on his mind is Tosca, so he writes a letter to her and sings the aria.

Alessandra Panzavolta, the opera's director, said in a video greeting to Chinese opera aficionados that the presentation, lighting and props by set designer William Orlandi will help make the version of the classic opera more updated and recognizable than the usual presentations, which rely on historical scenes mirroring June 1800, shortly after the French Revolution.





> "Collaborations between multiple art institutions are very important and have become a new trend for Chinese artists. We share resources and make the best use of them."
>
> **Zhao Tiechun,**
> vice-president of the NCPA





From top: Italian soprano Monica Zanettin and baritone Ambrogio Maestri rehearse for the opera *Tosca* at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing on May 29; Zanettin and Maestri share a humorous moment at a news conference at the NCPA; Chinese tenor Han Peng, who plays the role of Cavaradossi in the opera, during rehearsal with Zanettin; conductor Xu Zhong speaks at the news conference.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Soprano Sun Xiuwei also will take to the stage to play the role of Tosca. In 2011, when the NCPA produced its own version of *Tosca*, she took on the role, Sun said, adding that she has played in 15 opera productions by the NCPA.

"Through working with Panzavolta, who is a female director, I have gained a detailed understanding about the role. Panzavolta brought a woman's perspective to the opera, which is much deeper and sensitive," Sun said. "The character herself is an opera singer, just like me, allowing me to get closer to her and be myself in some parts."

Baritone Ambrogio Maestri will play the role of Scarpia. He has portrayed that character many times, such as at the Metropolitan Opera in New York and at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan.

"I am very happy to be an Italian appearing in an Italian opera in China. Though I have performed at many theaters in Europe and the United States, this is the first time that I will perform at the NCPA," Maestri said.

Chinese tenors Han Peng and Wang Cong will also play the role of Cavaradossi and baritone Zhang Yang will also play Scarpia, making the production a joint effort between Italian and Chinese performers.

The China NCPA Orchestra and China NCPA Chorus will perform under the baton of conductor Xu Zhong, who is the director of Shanghai Opera House.

The presentation of *Tosca* has been a cooperative effort of the NCPA, Shanghai Opera House and Shaanxi Opera House, according to Zhao Tiechun, vice-president of the NCPA. The opera was streamed online in December 2022 by the NCPA as part of the celebration of the venue's 15th birthday and was viewed over 20 million times.

From Feb 24 to 26, the opera premiered at Shanghai Opera House, and in July, it will be presented at Shaanxi Opera House in Xi'an.

"Our collaborations with art institutions from home and abroad have never stopped, even during the COVID-19 pandemic. We started to prepare for *Tosca* over three years ago," Zhao said. "Collaborations between multiple art institutions are very important and have become a new trend for Chinese artists. We share resources and make the best use of them. It also benefits the audiences of different parts of the country."

Contact the writer at chennan@chinadaily.com.cn

Artist in wheelchair inspires others facing challenges

GUIYANG — Ling Runzhi, 41, who has used a wheelchair ever since she was 6, listens to an online class about modern Chinese landscape painting with rapt attention.

With a few deft strokes of her paintbrush, Ling skillfully brings to life a black-and-white work of art, adorned with delicate textures and captivating contrasts. Despite the loss of sensation in her lower body from congenital spina bifida, this talented artist refuses to let her physical limitations hinder her creativity.

Ling's art has not only helped her fulfill her own dreams but also offered a window to a broader world for others like her. Through her art, she helps them experience the beauty and wonders of the world on a broader scale.

"There was once a dark phase in my life. My parents were busy with farmwork and my sisters were at school, so I had to stay at home by myself. Constant loneliness and fear were my only companions," said Ling, who is from the village of Bianshan in Guiyang, capital of Guizhou province.

During that time, without access to a wheelchair, Ling resorted to sitting on a simple wooden upright chair at home. To maneuver, she would painstakingly edge the chair forward, which often resulted in her hands and legs getting scraped and bruised.

Guided by a supportive sister, Ling learned to read characters. Her sister also purchased a collection of ancient paintings by Chinese women, which helped inspire Ling. "I started to replicate the paintings myself. Books and the world of painting soon dispelled my gloom," she said.

In 2003, captivated by the intricate and exquisite patterns of embroidery, a signature craft in Guizhou, Ling began to explore the art of conveying traditional elements of Chinese landscape paintings through stitchwork.

With a keen eye for detail, Ling delved into the techniques of presenting elements such as flowers, birds, insects and fish in her needlework, adding a new dimension to her artistic repertoire.

She later went on to hone her skills by participating in several competitions for the handicapped in Guiyang, winning more than 40 awards. The growing recognition of Ling's art has not only bolstered her confidence but also brought a renewed sense of hope and joy to her life.

During her pursuit of a deeper understanding of modern Chinese landscape painting, Ling came to know Fang Guocheng, a painter from Heilongjiang province who is also paralyzed, in her case as the result of a car crash.

"Through meaningful online interactions, I established profound connections with more and more people who faced similar situations. As I freely shared my own learning and experience with these people, I embarked on a remarkable journey of mutual enrichment," she said.

Since then, Ling decided to create more painting and embroidery to capture the vibrancy and beauty of the world for people who find themselves challenged by adversity, particularly those who are paralyzed.

May 21 marked China's 33rd national day of assisting disabled persons. This year's goal is to improve social security programs and services for persons with disabilities and promote the all-around development of their undertakings.

"After my embroidery and paintings were exhibited in Guiyang, many people with disabilities became familiar with my personal experience, which inspired them to take up art and enrich their own lives through traditional handicrafts," Ling said.

Her care and concern for others and unwavering passion for artistic expression have instilled within her a new dream of setting up her own studio. Through this endeavor, Ling aspires to cultivate an increased interest in Chinese traditional culture and foster the inheritance of valuable cultural heritages.

Adorning Ling's window ledge is a flourishing planting of green copper coin grass, nurtured in a swanlike flowerpot meticulously carved by Ling herself from a humble plastic box. The grass serves as a reminder of the resilient and unwavering strength inherent in life.

"Every single plant and its growth represent power and hope in our life. As long as we live, we must strive to grow like plants, which will surely lead to favorable turns someday," Ling said.

XINHUA





Ling Runzhi (top), an embroidery artist and painter in the village of Bianshan in Guiyang, capital of Guizhou province, has won more than 40 awards for her artworks (above) in several competitions in the city. SCREENSHOTS FROM XINHUA VIDEO

Received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit 06/09/2023 6:41:09 PM