

School targeted

UN chief condemns attack in Uganda that killed at least 41

WORLD, PAGE 6



Sea salt field in Hebei welcomes seasonal harvest

CHINA, PAGE 5



Lasting legacy

From humble origins, art legend left impressive array of works

LIFE, PAGE 14

CHINA DAILY

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Bridging cultures



Visitors watch a Chinese lion dance performance at the 8th Nairobi International Cultural Festival in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, on Saturday. The one-day cultural festival featured music, dancing, cuisine, artworks and clothing from countries that, in addition to China, included Botswana, Costa Rica, India, the Philippines and Serbia. XIE SONGXIN / CHINA DAILY

WORLD WATCH

By Gu Bin

Is Canada meddling in development bank's affairs?

Bob Pickard, a Canadian national and former officer of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, claimed recently that he found the bank to be "dominated by Communist Party hacks", and so he decided to resign and "high-tailed it out of (China) as soon as possible".

Pickard based his claims on the mere fact that there are many Communist Party of China members in the bank, according to his own public comments. It only proves how ignorant he is of China and how politically motivated his remarks were.

The bank's headquarters is in China, so it is natural that many of the bank's employees should be Chinese, and natural as well that they should be Party members, for, as Pickard should know, the CPC has nearly 100 million members.

Pickard, if not ignorant, was imprudent about where he picked up a salary when he joined the bank merely 15 months ago.

"Mr Pickard's recent public comments and characterization of the bank are baseless and disappointing," the AIIB said, adding that it had "supported and empowered him" during his tenure.

This unhappy gentleman seems experienced and should be responsible, but instead he has behaved irresponsibly and unprofessionally with his betrayal of his employer.

One has to wonder why he decided to join the bank in the first place. And, unless he were fleeing with internal documents of the bank, he should not have worried about being detained, as he so publicly claimed to fear.

It is notable that without missing a beat, Chrystia Freeland, Canada's deputy prime minister and minister of finance, who is also Canada's representative on the bank's board of governors, immediately vowed a probe into Pickard's allegations and threatened to take action against the bank, if it judged them to be founded.

See Bank, page 3

Cross-Strait efforts key to peace, stability, national rejuvenation

By ZHANG YI in Xiamen, Fujian and HU MEIDONG in Fuzhou

Inside

Editorial, page 11

People from Taiwan have said that the congratulatory letter from Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chinese president, has boosted their confidence in the integrated and peaceful development of the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.

In the congratulatory letter sent on Saturday to the 15th Straits Forum, Xi called for joint efforts of compatriots across the Strait to promote Chinese culture and forge closer bonds. The forum opened in Xiamen, Fujian province, on Friday.

Calling the forum an important platform for people on both sides of the Strait to broadly engage in exchanges and promote cooperation, Xi expressed in the letter his hope that the forum will constantly inject vitality into people-to-people exchanges and integrated development across the Strait.

"We will continue to respect, care for and deliver benefits to the Taiwan compatriots, promote cross-Strait economic and cultural exchanges and cooperation, and advance cross-Strait integrated development in various fields," Xi said.

He called on people from both

sides of the Strait to work together to keep pace with the trends of history, safeguard the overall interests of the Chinese nation and contribute to the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations and the cause of national reunification.

Wang Huning, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, read out the letter from Xi at the forum's main conference, which was held on Saturday.

Wang said the letter fully embodies the deep concern and care for Taiwan compatriots. The mainland will continue to promote cross-Strait economic and cultural exchanges and cooperation, deepen the integrated development of various fields across the Strait, and create benefits for Taiwan compatriots, Wang added.

He called on people on both sides of the Strait to strive for national rejuvenation and share the opportunities brought by Chinese modernization.

Wang said that the peaceful

development of cross-Strait relations is the right path for safeguarding cross-Strait peace and stability and promoting common development.

He said people across the Strait must resolutely oppose separatist activities seeking "Taiwan independence" and external interference.

Only by upholding the 1992 Consensus and opposing "Taiwan independence" can cross-Strait relations return to the right path of peaceful development, Wang said.

Hsia Li-yan, vice-chairman of the Chinese Kuomintang, the island's main opposition party, said that the KMT is committed to the political foundation of upholding the 1992 Consensus and opposing "Taiwan independence", and will promote cross-Strait economic and cultural exchanges and cooperation while working for cross-Strait peace and stability.

"We all advocate more communication between the two sides, which is a trend, so I am happy to attend the forum in Xiamen this year," he said.

The 15th Straits Forum was jointly held by the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, the Fujian provincial government and more than 80 institutions and organizations from across the Strait.

See Forum, page 3

LIBRARIES NOW OFFER STUDENTS FAR MORE THAN BOOKS

Range of improvements prove beneficial for studies

By YU RAN in Shanghai For China Daily



Libraries in China have transitioned from their traditional role of book repositories to offer users — especially young people — space for quiet introspection and self-improvement.

In recent years, numerous refinements have been made to libraries nationwide, and they

now boast well-equipped facilities and rich collections of books.

A study of 2,100 young respondents conducted last year by China Youth Daily's Social Survey Center in partnership with the survey platform Wenjuan.com

found that 92.5 percent of participants expressed a strong desire for learning. And nearly 63 percent of the respondents said they favor doing their studies in a library.

At the start of this year, the Guangdong University of Finance and Economics' library in Guangzhou became a popular choice due to its "daydreaming zones".

See Libraries, page 2

China, US to keep exchanges at a high level

Talks between Qin, Blinken called candid, in-depth and constructive

By ZHANG YUNBI zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

China and the United States agreed on Sunday to jointly implement the important consensus reached at the meeting between President Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden in Bali, Indonesia, in November, and "effectively control differences and promote dialogue, exchanges and cooperation".

The agreement was reached at the talks between State Councilor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang and visiting US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Analysts said the meeting on Sunday was the latest positive move for repairing the relationship between the world's two largest economies. The ties have remarkable bilateral and global implications, and mutual respect remains the key to managing their differences, they said.

Blinken arrived in Beijing on Sunday morning for his first visit to China as secretary of state. The visit will last from Sunday to Monday.

"The two sides had candid, in-depth and constructive talks at length on the overall bilateral ties and important issues," the Foreign Ministry said in a release.

The two sides also exchanged views on major international and regional issues of common concern.

Qin's meeting with Blinken on Sunday was the first of its kind between the two in their current capacities.

At the talks, Beijing and Washington agreed to maintain high-level exchanges.

Blinken invited Qin to visit the US, and Qin expressed his willingness to visit the US "at a mutually convenient time".

The two sides agreed to encourage the expansion of cultural and education exchanges between the two countries and to actively discuss an increase in passenger flights between the nations.

They both will welcome more students, scholars and businesspeople to visit one another, and will provide support and convenience.

Observers noted that earlier this year, the ties were strained by matters including Washington's hyping of a Chinese unmanned civilian airship that strayed into US airspace.

Speaking to Blinken on Sunday, Qin noted that "currently, China-US relations are at the lowest point since the establishment of the diplomatic relations", which is not in line with the fundamental interests of

the two peoples and the common expectations of the international community.

China's policy toward the US has always maintained continuity and stability, and it follows the fundamental principle of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation as proposed by President Xi, Qin said, adding that this should also be honored, secured and pursued by both sides.

China "is committed to building stable, predictable and constructive China-US relations", he said, adding that the US is expected to hold an objective and rational view of China, work toward the same goal with China, secure the political foundation of China-US ties, and deal with accidents calmly, professionally and rationally.

The two sides should fully implement the consensus of the meeting between Xi and Biden in Bali, and "work to stabilize and steer the relations back to the right track", he said.

At the talks, Qin made clear China's solemn position on the nation's core interests and major concerns, such as the Taiwan question, and he put forward clear requirements.

Qin pointed out that the Taiwan question is "at the core of China's core interests", and as for China-US relations, it is both the most important major issue and the most prominent risk.

He said China urges the US to faithfully abide by the one-China principle and the three landmark joint communiqués, and implement in a substantial manner its commitment to not support "Taiwan independence".

On Sunday, the two sides also agreed to continue advancing consultations on the guiding principles of China-US relations. In addition, they agreed to continue advancing consultation of the China-US joint working group to resolve specific issues in China-US relations.

Su Xiaohui, deputy director of the Department of American Studies at the China Institute of International Studies, said: "The international community expects a stable China-US relationship. It will also serve China's interests if the two sides could sit at the table and talk so as to further stabilize their relations."

As for Beijing, the China-US official communication "should be based on improving their relations and securing China's national interests", she said.

"It remains to be seen if Washington will break away from its two-faced approach of saying one thing while doing another," she added.



State Councilor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang and United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken shake hands at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing on Sunday. LEAH MILLIS / REUTERS

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PAGE TWO



Left: A reader visits a library in Fushan district, Yantai, Shandong province. SUN WENTAN / FOR CHINA DAILY **Center:** Students study at night at a library in Wuhan, Hubei province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY **Right:** Residents of Haikou, Hainan province, crowd the provincial library. SU BIKUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Libraries: More comfort, reading areas provided

From page 1

These six zones, which are next to the study and reading areas, boast outdoor leisure tables and chairs, as well as numerous plants.

The zones are chosen by many students for studying, preparations for exams, and relaxation. Their main purpose is to provide students with a place to relax and to stimulate inspiration after they finish studying for the day.

Shi Yunxuan, 33, who has worked at Longgang District Library in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, for two years, said: "Libraries are now more comfortable and the new reading areas offer more seats. Due to this conducive learning atmosphere, users believe that studying in the library is a more efficient way to learn."

In addition, library users are now better motivated to pursue their study or career plans, Shi said.

"The library, a sanctuary of knowledge, welcomes all visitors without prejudice. It is a haven where people, irrespective of their social standing, are free to seek respite from busy city life. In a bustling city, the library emerges as a transformative space, offering a platform for personal growth and the pursuit of higher aspirations," she added.

Shi noticed during her daily work that the library now attracts a diverse range of young people seeking a beneficial study environment.

It accommodates adults preparing for certification exams, government job examinations, and postgraduate entrance tests, as well as students who visit to complete assignments and revise. The former group typically spends an entire day at the library, breaking only for lunch in the dining area, before resuming studies. The latter group usually stays for one to two hours after school to complete homework, browse the shelves to select books, before returning home in time for dinner.

Demanding jobs

Liu Gege, a third-year student studying pharmaceutical analysis at Guangdong Medical University, has been a regular visitor to the institution's library since her first year. She studies amid the peaceful atmosphere and has read a large number of books.

"I don't know why, but sometimes I feel restless and lost at home, just wanting to lie in bed and browse my phone. Time passes quickly, making me more anxious, but when I go to the library, I know I'm there to study," Liu said. "I want a quiet environment for my studies, and the library allows me to better immerse myself in my work."

She usually visits the library three to four times a week for three to five hours.

Liu studies, improves her vocabulary, reviews recent work and study progress, and plans her short-term and long-term goals. A lifestyle blogger, she sometimes takes photos of herself studying there, sharing them on the Xiaohongshu lifestyle platform and encouraging her followers to work hard together.

"I believe that regardless of development in society, the most important thing is to have a clear sense of direction. No matter what we do, books are essentials that offer guidance, provide emo-

tional value, and offer learning techniques," Liu said.

A report in March released by the Mashang Consumer Research Institute on young people's consumption intentions this year found that housing comprises the biggest proportion of their spending, accounting for 23.21 percent, followed closely by work and study expenses, at nearly 17 percent.

The institute, which is based in Chongqing, said the statistics show that young people are more willing than others to invest in self-improvement.

Liu said: "Many job positions and educational requirements are becoming increasingly demanding, and it's clear that having professional knowledge alone is not sufficient. Other aspects, such as social skills, emotional control and personal cognition, are not covered in the classroom, so going to the library to read books is an important way to acquire such knowledge."

She said she will continue visiting libraries for self-improvement, achieving goals and broadening her perspective by conscientiously organizing her work and studies, as she doesn't want to lose her passion for life while she is still young.

The main reason people visit libraries is changing with the times.

Shi, the library worker in Shenzhen, said: "In the past, people went to a library primarily to borrow books and access information. Now, libraries have gained popularity among a growing number of young people who want to improve themselves. The peaceful environment allows them to concentrate on their studies, and those studying alongside them provide a sense of companionship and motivation."

By the end of 2021, China had 3,215 public libraries, which recorded 103 million readers.

Tang Zixuan, 20, a sophomore student at a Beijing university, said the library is the only place where she can immerse herself fully in her studies.



Students study at a teaching college library in Hengyang, Hunan province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The library, a sanctuary of knowledge, welcomes all visitors without prejudice. It is a haven where people, irrespective of their social standing, are free to seek respite from busy city life."

Shi Yunxuan, a 33-year-old who has worked at Longgang District Library in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, for two years

"At home, I feel relaxed, but only in the library can I find the perfect environment for work and study, which helps me maintain self-discipline. Being in such a setting motivates me," said Tang, who has been a regular library visitor for the past two to three years.

Since high school, she has visited a library during the winter and summer vacations for homework and studying. In her first year at university, she even stayed in the library for an entire day reading books, taking a nap at noon, and studying for a time in the afternoon.

Tang recently started to prepare for job applications after she graduates, and has taken part in

various competitions to gain experience of domestic and international graduate programs. As a result, she devotes most of her time in the library to studying.

"People who go to the library, specifically to the study rooms, have a strong sense of purpose. They are preparing for exams, postgraduate entrance tests, or completing assignments," Tang said.

"I feel a little guilty if I slack off in the library. If I have an extended period of free time, I might do nothing for an entire afternoon, which only increases my anxiety. I rely on external pressure for self-discipline."

Last year, the China Youth Internet Users' Social Mentality

Survey Report showed that 77 percent of a sample group reported experiencing study or work-related anxiety.

It also found that among a sample group on Sina Weibo, over 56 percent of young internet users strongly opposed the concept of "lying flat", a metaphor for disengaging from work and ambition.

The report was jointly released by Fudan University's Development Research Institute, the Center for Communication and State Governance Research, Fudan University's Global Media and Communication Studies Institute, the Bilibili Public Policy Research Institute, and Shanghai Information Security and Social Management Innovation Laboratory.

Tang said: "I feel as though I am facing overwhelming pressure, which is too demanding. I cannot truly enjoy my leisure time because I constantly feel the need to be doing things. I'm afraid of falling behind due to the increased external competition, peer pressure and a fast-paced lifestyle. Everything is so intense, so how can I find time to relax?"

She believes that the library is the only place where she can find peace while advancing her studies.

Time of confusion

Libraries are also being visited by young people who are temporarily unemployed, but have not told their families they are out of work.

Most of their parents are from the post-'50s and post-'60s generation, who have been employed and also laid off during their youth, leading to a lack of security. For them, stability is the most important factor, and unemployment resulted in a significant change to their lives.

Gu Jun, a sociology professor at Shanghai University, said: "This generation views the age of 30 as a time for working hard and pursuing goals. However, many young people nowadays reach 30

without having found the right direction for their personal growth and aspirations. For them, turning 30 can be a time of confusion and uncertainty."

However, these young people have some time to do the things they want to do and to step back from a busy high-pressure life, before settling down, Gu added.

Zhong Fei, a 32-year-old from Shanghai who graduated from a leading university in the United States after studying computer science, has visited a library on her own every day since the department at the financial company where she used to work was disbanded last year.

"My family doesn't know that I'm unemployed, so visiting the library is a way to hide this from them. I decided not to tell them I am out of work, because I don't want them to worry about me, as this would only add to my stress," Zhong said.

She visits Pudong Library every weekday and plans to continue doing so until she finds a job.

Zhong typically arrives at the library at about 9 am and leaves between 6 pm and 7 pm. During her visits, she submits job applications, updates her resume, reads a range of books, and prepares for interviews. She is also preparing to pursue a certificate in psychological counseling.

"The library provides a quiet environment that helps me avoid distractions. It means I can focus on my tasks, and it also helps me maintain a sense of routine," she said.

She has met many other young people at the library who are also searching for jobs or redefining their life plans. They all appear to be a little confused as they strive to find their self-worth. They also tell others they are at work, rather than admit they are unemployed.

Zhong said: "I believe this situation is likely to continue, because work itself has now become increasingly diverse. Once individuals are freed from the constraints of basic subsistence, many want the freedom to choose their own career paths. Rapid changes in the economic environment further exacerbate their instability, and I think this is an inevitable outcome of social development."

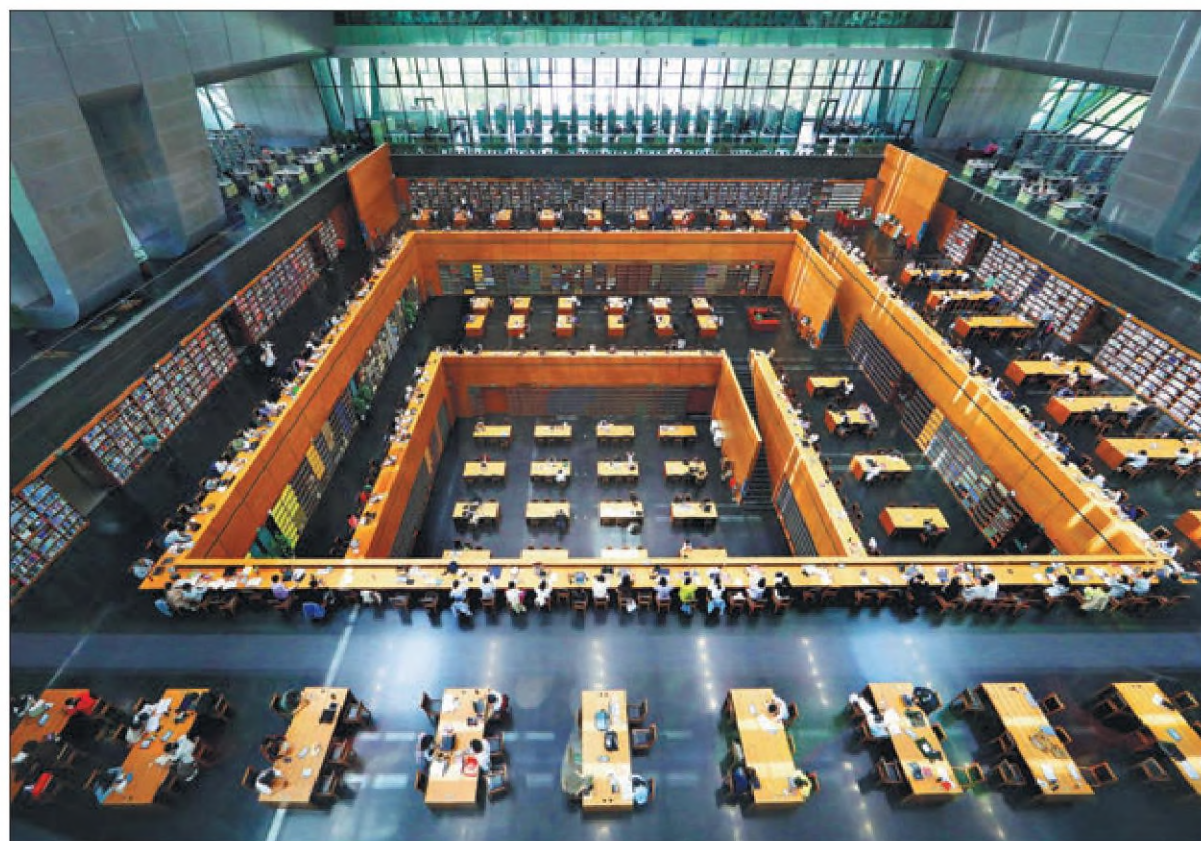
She visits Pudong Library and the Shanghai Library's Pudong branch, which are both usually crowded on weekdays.

The study by China Youth Daily's Social Survey Center also found that nearly 95 percent of the young respondents believe that establishing more public study spaces will enrich their cultural lives.

Just over 70 percent suggested a reasonable allocation of public study space to cater to diverse needs, while nearly 42 percent said they found it hard to locate such spaces.

Zhong said: "Nowadays, these spaces are in high demand, but there is a low supply. I believe the government should increase its support in this area to promote greater social diversity and effectively alleviate anxiety and tension in society."

"For me, the library is a place to pause, reflect on life and work, and better plan and develop my career. Learning is an important way of keeping abreast of social advances, so even if things become busier in the future, I will try to visit the library regularly to organize, recharge and learn."



An aerial view of the main reading room at the National Library in Beijing. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

TOP NEWS

Shopping gala helps accelerate economy's drive

June 18 festival, Father's Day show vital role of consumption in advancing a strong recovery

By FAN FEIFEI
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Chinese consumers' passion for online shopping was visible once again during this year's June 18 shopping carnival, which industry experts said played a vital role in promoting the recovery of consumption and shoring up the economy.

Highlighting that consumption has become a major driving force for China's economic growth, they called for more supportive measures to boost spending on new energy vehicles and other big-ticket items as well as to stabilize employment. New consumption growth points also need to be cultivated by leveraging digital technologies to attract more shoppers, they added.

E-commerce giant JD, which initiated the midyear promotional event, said 30 percent of domestic brands saw turnover surge 100 percent year-on-year in the first 10 minutes of the final promotion, which kicked off at 8 pm on Saturday. Sales of mobile phones such as iPhone, Xiaomi, Honor and Oppo skyrocketed 100 percent year-on-year during the brief period.

Consumers showed strong interest in a new generation of products featuring innovative technologies. Transaction volume of 4K projectors and augmented reality devices jumped 200 percent and 150 percent, respectively, on a yearly basis, JD said.

Many shoppers also bought gifts via online marketplaces to celebrate Father's Day, which fell on Sunday. According to online retailer Vipshop, sales of men's coats witnessed a 40 percent year-on-year increase in the first 10 hours of its final promotional campaign, while turnover of belts and shavers rose 33 percent and 31 percent, respectively, year-on-year.

Outdoor sporting goods, nutri-

tion and healthcare products, household appliances and skin care products also witnessed strong growth during the shopping extravaganza that now spans around three weeks.

Consumption plays a crucial part in bolstering economic development, and the June 18 shopping festival is pivotal to stimulating consumers' purchasing appetite and promoting the recovery of the economy, said Wang Yun, a researcher at the Academy of Macroeconomic Research, which is affiliated with the National Development and Reform Commission, the country's top economic regulator.

"China's consumer market has maintained growth momentum, with the overall growth rate expected to reach more than 7 percent this year," Wang said.

Greater efforts should be made to boost the sales of new energy vehicles in rural areas, accelerate the building of NEV charging infrastructure and provide more support for the recovery of services-based consumption segments, including tourism and culture, Wang added.

China's retail sales — a significant indicator of consumption strength — grew 12.7 percent year-on-year in May, compared with 18.4 percent in April, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed. In the January-May period, the country's retail sales increased 9.3 percent year-on-year to 18.76 trillion yuan (\$2.6 trillion), according to the bureau.

More stimulus policies are needed to stabilize and expand employment, improve household incomes, boost people's ability and willingness to spend, and propel the country's economic growth, said Pan Helin, co-director of the Digital Economy and Financial Innovation Research Center at Zhejiang University's International Business School.

membership among bank officials is an issue that is distinct from the allegation that the CPC controls the bank.

Freeland has threatened to "immediately halt all government led activity at the bank". If that is the case, Canada will fail to fulfill its obligations to the bank. The bank could respond by moving to suspend Canada's membership. Canada could be kicked out of the bank after a one-year suspension. Freeland added that the investigation would be expeditious and said, "I am not ruling out any outcome following its completion" — which could indicate a voluntary withdrawal by Canada.

Loss of membership, be it compulsory or voluntary, does not serve either Canada's or the AIIB's interests, or the countries that the bank is providing assistance to.

The author is an associate professor at Beijing Foreign Studies University and a China Forum expert. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Bank: Canada almost blindly following US

From page 1

The Canadian government has become an almost blind follower of Washington's China policy. With a new president of the bank due to be elected in 2025, is Canada emulating and acting as the hatchet man for Washington, which accused Kristalina Georgieva, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, of bias in favor of China in 2021?

In the bank's charter, its 106 members, including Canada, agree that they will respect the bank's international character and "refrain from any attempt to influence" or intervene in the bank's affairs. Yet that is what Canada appears to be doing. To be clear, the identification of CPC

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Cruise controls



Activists of the Stop Cruises movement ride inflatable rafts and hold signs demanding better pollution monitoring during a demonstration against cruise ships as the MSC World Europa leaves Marseille's harbor in southern France on Saturday. Marseille is one of Europe's busiest cruise ports, and activists say that shipping activities at the port contribute to air and sea pollution. NICOLAS TUCAT / AFP

Saudi ambassador lauds China's role in regional peace

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong
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A "harmonization plan" between the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative and Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 framework has ensured bilateral trade remains robust, and it has opened up opportunities for people-to-people exchanges, according to a Saudi diplomat.

The bilateral comprehensive strategic partnership "contributes to enhancing the chances of successful cooperation between Saudi Arabia and China for the benefit of the two countries and their peoples", said Abdulrahman bin Ahmed Al-Harbi, Saudi Arabia's ambassador to China, during an exclusive interview with China Daily.

China has remained Saudi Arabia's top trading partner, with bilateral trade hitting \$116 billion in 2022, up 34 percent year-on-year. In the first quarter of 2023, bilateral trade surpassed \$27 billion, up 9.7 percent compared with the same period last year, according to data provided by Saudi Arabia.

"Saudi-Chinese relations are characterized by great distinction, which reflects positively on the strengthening of cooperation between the two countries, and is in line with the development witnessed by the world and the changes of the times," Al-Harbi said.

Chinese President Xi Jinping made a state visit to Saudi Arabia in December, while Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud visited China in 2019. A number of agreements were signed during these visits, Al-Harbi said.

In 2019, the two countries signed some 35 deals worth more than \$28

billion, while in 2022, more than 40 agreements worth over \$58 billion were signed. Some cooperation agreements were also signed last year in sectors targeted by both sides, the ambassador said. These included sectors such as renewable energy, petrochemicals, information technology and infrastructure.

Al-Harbi said that Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 strategic framework has adopted various economic reforms to raise the percentage of foreign direct investment contribution to GDP and improve the business environment, making it one of the most attractive FDI destinations.

The reforms include simplifying administrative and regulatory procedures; improving infrastructure, technology and other regulations aimed at overcoming challenges for investment; and creating promising investment opportunities to advance economic development in the country, according to the diplomat.

Saudi Arabia works in cooperation with many partners in the public and private sectors in the two countries to create investment opportunities and attract investments, he said, adding that his country "provides a supportive infrastructure, and an attractive, stimulating and safe investment environment".

"Currently, there are many Chinese companies and factories ... operating in various sectors and fields. We commend their role and always welcome them. Chinese companies have a long and honora-



Abdulrahman bin Ahmed Al-Harbi

ble track record due to their active presence in the Saudi market and through the implementation of numerous mega projects in various fields," Al-Harbi said.

He noted that Chinese companies enjoy a growing market because of their expertise and advanced technologies in

the manufacturing process.

Since he took office in July, the ambassador has visited several provinces, autonomous regions and the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions of China, as well as top businesses.

Al-Harbi was in the Hong Kong and Macao SARs between May 30 and June 2. In the HKSAR, he met with chief executive John Lee Ka-chiu and Legislative Council President Andrew Leung in the presence of Saudi Consul General to the Hong Kong and Macao SARs Hamad Mohammed Al-Jebreen. They discussed opportunities ranging from developing trade relations to promoting industrial cooperation. The ambassador also met with Liu Guangyuan, commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the HKSAR.

In the Macao SAR, Al-Harbi exchanged views with Chief Executive Ho Iat-seng on ways to enhance cooperation between the two sides in various fields. He also reviewed future cooperation opportunities in a meeting with Liu Xianfa, commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Macao SAR.

"I strongly believe that Chinese corporations are willing to contin-

ue their investment ... as their investment contributions add value to the Saudi economy. Undoubtedly, opportunities (in Saudi Arabia) ... are promising and numerous in various fields," Al-Harbi said.

The Saudi government established four new special economic zones with favorable taxation policies on April 14 — King Abdullah Economic City SEZ, Jazan SEZ, Ras Al Khair SEZ and Cloud Computing SEZ. Chinese companies are already operating in these special economic zones.

The ambassador praised the "exceptional capabilities that the two countries have", as well as noting the unique advantages that Saudi Arabia possesses, which are being "harnessed to build a more diversified and sustainable economy".

Apart from being a strategic geographical location linking three continents, Saudi Arabia also has energy resources and skilled young people, while it is the largest economy in the Middle East, he said. The country recorded the highest annual GDP growth of 8.7 percent among the G20 countries in 2022.

Aside from economic advancements, Al-Harbi also praised China's contributions to restoring stability in the region.

He said that President Xi's initiative and China's sponsorship of the talks between Saudi Arabia and Iran contributed to strengthening peace in the region. The two countries agreed to reopen their diplomatic missions, which contributed to maintaining stability and enhancing the chances of development plans being successful in the region, he said.

Forum: Fujian at forefront of integrated development

From page 1

Attended by around 5,000 people from various sectors of Taiwan, the forum is the biggest grassroots-level exchange event across the Strait held after the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was announced at the forum that the mainland has formulated a document on supporting Fujian to explore a new road for cross-Strait integrated development and build a demonstration zone for such development.

Shen Chieh, 33, from Taiwan, who has been living on the mainland for about 20 years, said he has adapted to local conditions and become part of such integration. He works as a lawyer in Beijing and has married a local resident, and they have children.

Shen, who attended the forum, said he was greatly encouraged by Xi's letter, as it shows that the mainland attaches great importance to cross-Strait exchanges.

“(Xi) expressed a deep hope for the peaceful development of the two sides of the Taiwan Strait and showed great goodwill to Taiwan through the letter.”

Lei Chien, chairwoman of the National Women's League in Taiwan, who attended the 15th Straits Forum

A series of beneficial policies rolled out by the mainland have attracted young people from Taiwan to seek opportunities on the mainland due to slower salary growth in Taiwan, he said.

Lei Chien, chairwoman of the National Women's League in Taiwan, who attended the forum, said the letter from Xi sends a signal that the trend of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation is unstoppable.

"He expressed a deep hope for the peaceful development of the two sides of the Taiwan Strait and showed great goodwill to Taiwan through the letter," said Lei, who is a former member of the "legislative authority" on the island.

Although the ruling Democratic Progressive Party authorities in Taiwan and some countries often hype up a potential war across the Strait, it can be seen from the letter and the Straits Forum that more people are working for peaceful development, she said.

"Most important, the mainland has firmly grasped the direction of peaceful development across the Strait," she added.

Zhu Songling, a professor at Beijing Union University's Institute of

Taiwan Studies, said the event helps defuse the tense situation and atmosphere between the two sides of the Strait that the ruling Democratic Progressive Party authorities have been hyping up.

He said that as the island's leadership election is expected in January, the DPP is very fearful of cross-Strait exchanges, so it has been obstructing exchanges and cooperation, especially on such a large scale as the forum.

Even so, there are many political parties and groups on the island that want to exchange and cooperate with the mainland, as they know that communication and cooperation are the fundamental channel to resolve differences, Zhu said.

"Therefore, they dare to break through the obstruction of the DPP and boldly cross the Strait to the mainland, as a result of the public opinion and the trend of the times," he said.

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CHINA

Probe confirms rat head found in canteen food, overturning previous rule

By JIANG CHENGLONG
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A provincial investigative task force in Jiangxi on Saturday overturned an earlier investigation by local authorities, confirming that the object found by a college student in a canteen meal was in fact the head of a rat, rather than the duck neck reported by the initial local-level probe.

On June 1, a student from Jiangxi Industry Polytechnic College in Nanchang uploaded a video to social media, showing a strange object in his meal at the college's canteen, which he suspected to be a mouse head.

The video, showing a black object appearing to be the skull of a mouse, soon sparked heated discussions online.

The college said in a statement on June 3 that the object in the video was not a rat's head, but rather a duck neck.

"After investigation, the content of the video does not match the facts," the school said in its statement. "The student in question invited classmates to identify the object at the time of the incident, and confirmed it as a duck neck, a normal ingredient."

The school stated that the student had given a written statement on the scene clarifying the video's content, adding that the market supervision bureau in the high-tech development zone of Nanchang had also sent law enforcement officers to the school to conduct an investigation.

In a June 3 report by Jiangxi Radio and Television Station, Jiang Xixue, the director of the market supervision bureau's Changdong branch, said that law enforcement personnel "repeatedly compared the object and confirmed that it was indeed a duck neck".

However, this conclusion did not quell the anger online, as many believed that the local market supervision bureau and the school were lying because the object in the video looked very different from a duck neck.

According to Xinhua News Agency, on June 10, Jiangxi province established a joint investigation team composed of provincial departments, including education, public security and the market supervision administration, to investigate the incident.

In the Saturday statement released by the Jiangxi provincial government's information office on its official Sina Weibo account, the team determined that the object was not a duck neck, after reviewing the canteen kitchen's video, purchasing list, and interviewing canteen staff, the student and witnesses.

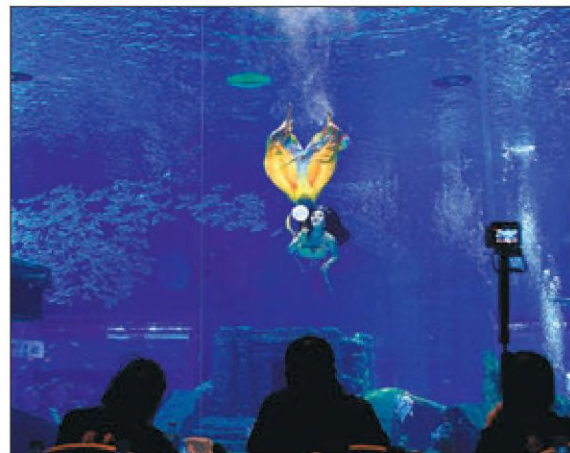
The statement said the object was confirmed to be the head of a rodent, after identification by animal experts of the photos and videos taken by the student.

The provincial investigation team said on Saturday that the local market supervision department and the college "did not conduct an investigation carefully" and issued an incorrect conclusion.

It said that the college canteen's food license has been revoked and the company which operates the canteen and its legal representative had been given the maximum penalty, in accordance with the Food Safety Law and related regulations.

The provincial investigation team said that for the next phase, people from the college and the market supervision bureau's Changdong branch who are responsible will be strictly punished in accordance with the law.

Make like a mermaid



A contestant takes part in a mermaid competition in Kunming, Yunnan province, on Saturday. About 70 contestants participated in the event, in which they had to display their skill at dancing and swimming underwater. LIU RANYANG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Qingdao forum promotes commercial cooperation among SCO member states

By XIE CHUANJIAO
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Business is thriving and cultural exchange is flourishing within the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, which was established as a regional peace and security body in 2001.

Over the years, the SCO has evolved into a robust facilitator, boosting economic and trade ties among its member states and countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative.

As the organization marked its 22nd anniversary on Thursday, the SCO Industrial and Supply Chains Forum kicked off in Jiaozhou, a county-level city in Qingdao, Shandong province. Officials and experts pledged to intensify efforts to enhance cooperation to stabilize industrial and supply chains using digi-

talized and intelligent technology, as well as promote resilient investment.

During the opening ceremony, Nurlan Yermekbayev, SCO deputy secretary-general, emphasized the pivotal role stabilizing industrial and supply chains plays for SCO member states and the global community as a whole.

"We need to strengthen cooperation with companies and commercial associations from SCO member states, with a particular emphasis on business projects and startup initiatives," he said.

Ling Ji, vice-commerce minister and deputy China International Trade Representative, stated that China would work with the relevant parties to align economic development strategies, enhance the resilience of regional industrial and supply chains, and advocate for more open, inclusive, balanced and

Raining cats and frogs



A balloon vendor dressed in a frog costume crosses a road during a heavy downpour in Chongqing on Sunday. Heavy rainfall hit the municipality over the weekend, with more than 100 millimeters recorded. CUI LI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Number of flights gradually increasing

Recovery of intl routes steady as domestic market already hits pre-pandemic levels

By LUO WANGSHU
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China's Civil Aviation Authority will continue in its efforts to promote the steady and orderly resumption of international flights with the approach of the first summer season since optimized COVID-19 management measures took effect, an official from the Civil Aviation Administration of China said on Friday.

From June 5 to 11, the number of international inbound and outbound passenger flights stood at 5,822 and linked 61 countries, said Li Yong, deputy director of the administration's safety office.

Li made the remarks at a news conference in Beijing.

"The number of international passenger flights is expected to increase to more than 6,000 every week during the summer travel season," he said, adding that the administration will continue to review applications by Chinese and foreign airlines looking to operate flights in a timely manner to ensure the safe, smooth and orderly recovery of global air travel into and out of China.

Since COVID-19 management was upgraded in January, the number of international flights entering and leaving China has grown steadily.

In April, 58 countries resumed

international flights to China, about 80 percent of the number offering services before the pandemic.

At the beginning of April, there were about 4,000 weekly international flights, more than four times the volume between Jan 2 and Jan 8, the week before the new policy came into effect.

The figure is still about 26 percent of the number of flights before the pandemic, according to Liang Nan, director of the transport department of the CAAC.

She also noted in January that if the market recovers, the number of international flights to and from China by the end of the year should reach about 80 percent of pre-pandemic levels, with about 7,300 flights per week.

In April, regular scheduled flights began operating between Xi'an, capital of Shaanxi province, and Astana, capital of Kazakhstan. And this month, direct flights between Beijing and London are being resumed.

Not only will international flights be increased during the summer season, China anticipates strong demand for domestic travel this summer as well, with people going on vacation and visiting relatives and friends, Li said.

Combining domestic and international flights, an estimated 1.95 million passengers are expected to

fly every day, with the number of flights reaching 16,500, about the same figure as before the pandemic, Li said, adding that the administration has made preparations for the summer season.

Crowds can once again be seen at airports, with passengers lining up to pass through security checks.

"I am very happy to see the airport crowded again, unlike how quiet it was during the pandemic," said Feng Liwei, who works at the operation control center at Beijing Capital International Airport.

According to Li, the administration has recently issued a notice to encourage the addition of flights on popular domestic routes, flight optimization, and to encourage airlines to expand services to smaller cities to meet travel needs during the peak season.

It is estimated that an average of 13,600 domestic passenger flights will operate every day, carrying 1.83 million passengers, an increase of 11 percent and 7 percent respectively compared to 2019, he said.

As China's civil aviation market continues to recover, the sector handled 51.7 million passenger trips last month, about 94.8 percent of the volume during the same period in 2019. The figure represents a 2.8-percent growth on April.

The scale of domestic passenger trips has increased by 2.6 percent compared to the same period in 2019, according to the administration.

mutually beneficial economic globalization.

The forum was witness to the unveiling of the SCO Comprehensive Service Platform 2.0. Built upon the standard framework of the China International Trade Single Window, this upgraded version focuses on meeting the real needs of SCO countries, such as import and export processes, local currency settlement, barter and the reciprocal recognition of supervision, according to Zhang Dong, deputy director of the administrative committee of the China-SCO Local Economic and Trade Cooperation Demonstration Area, also known as SCODA.

Zhang, who is also the deputy head of the Eurasia department at the Ministry of Commerce, elaborated on the platform's expanded functions, which include SCO cross-border payment and settlement, new forms of cross-border barter, aviation logistics, used-car exports, and taxpayer information verification services, with scope and application scenarios continuing to expand.

Additionally, telegraphic transfers, primarily for overseas wire transactions, will be available on

the platform, benefiting 54 countries and regions, including SCO members, Zhang added.

Energy cooperation was also a key topic of discussion during the two-day forum. The crucial role played by the Qingdao International Energy Exchange in safeguarding the energy sector's industry and supply chains in the global market was highlighted.

The Qingdao International Energy Exchange, jointly established by the SCODA administrative committee and the Shandong Port Group, was officially launched in mid-February.

Huo Gaoyuan, chairman of the Shandong Port Group, emphasized the conglomerate's commitment to energy cooperation among SCO members, stating that it would leverage its role as a hub to establish a highly efficient logistics channel and provide top-notch supply chain services.

The comprehensive service platform and the promotion of energy cooperation reflect SCODA's unwavering efforts to explore and deepen subnational cooperation among SCO members and countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative since 2018.

The SCODA headquarters,

located in Jiaozhou, houses the Qingdao SCODA Pearl International Expo Center, which hosted the 2023 SCO International Investment and Trade Expo, the largest exhibition since the SCO was founded 22 years ago.

As a parallel event to the chains forum, which concluded on Sunday, the four-day, 44,000-square-meter expo attracted 330 companies and institutions from 34 countries and regions, which showcased some 10,000 imported products.

The SCO Mansion, which is located in the SCODA HQ, is expected to be completed by the end of this month. Built by the China Railway Construction Engineering Group, it is designed to serve big occasions such as national leaders' summits, as well as high-level forums and expos.

SCODA has emerged as a vital hub for trade and business among SCO countries, enhancing institutional and physical connectivity across the region and promoting high-level opening-up and high-quality development, said Zhang Xinzhu, a member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Qingdao Committee and secretary of SCODA's Party working committee.

Intelligent farming may help with aging issue

By LI LEI in Beijing
and LIU KUN in Wuhan

As China comes to terms with its fast-aging society, agricultural companies are turning to smart farming technologies to facilitate a transition away from conventional, labor-intensive farming practices in order to feed its 1.4 billion people.

Hubei Qianjiang Binong Smart Agriculture Co is one of them, and Wang Fengming, dressed in a skirt and high heels, is among China's next-generation farmers.

She monitors large tracts of wheat fields in Qianjiang, Hubei province, via a giant screen, which displays information such as soil moisture and occurrences of pests and diseases.

The data helps the project manager at Binong spot problems and intervene in time.

Wang has been heading the food production project for a year and has successfully raised grain output to above 9 metric tons per hectare, thanks to the smart farming know-how.

Wang is among half a dozen Binong employees who took part in a news conference earlier this month to demonstrate the company's latest products.

The event was held in a control room close to a sprawling field of wheat, which was ready for harvest.

Sitting in front of the screen, Ni Mingli, an agrotechnician on the team, clicked the mouse, and in no time, the unmanned tractor roared to life. It plowed a 2.6-hectare field in just one hour, twice the speed of a tractor driven by a human.



A farm manager passes a screen showing statistics about smart fields in Qianjiang, Hubei province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The machine's trajectory was almost a straight line, which is hard for a human driver to accomplish.

"Giving directions to farming machines is just part of the system's functions," said Wu Yuxin, who was involved in the system's design.

He said his team has collected data on topography, roads, waterways and the spread of crop species, which are the foundation for automating the farming process. The system also monitors crop growth and weather, among other things.

Wang Yu, another team member, explained at the event how technology can revolutionize farming.

Born and raised in the countryside, he is well aware that conventional farming is laborious.

However, drones, multispectral imaging and biological control techniques, among other technologies, have reduced manual labor, bolstered precision in applying fertilizers and pesticides, and eased pollution, Wang said.

"I believe the use of modern farming technologies can help solve problems facing existing conventional farming," he said.

The company said it has forged partnerships with China Agricultural University and the Chinese Academy of Sciences to build centers and run internships for their students.

China has 120 million hectares of farmland. However, the aging population, and the exodus of young people from rural regions are posing a challenge to food production.

China had 280 million people over 60 at the end of last year, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

A recent research study conducted by a group of China Agricultural University scholars found that about one-third of the residents in the countryside were 60 or above, twice the level in urban regions.

More than 90 percent of younger inhabitants had left for urban jobs, with many saving up for owning an apartment in cities.

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CHINA

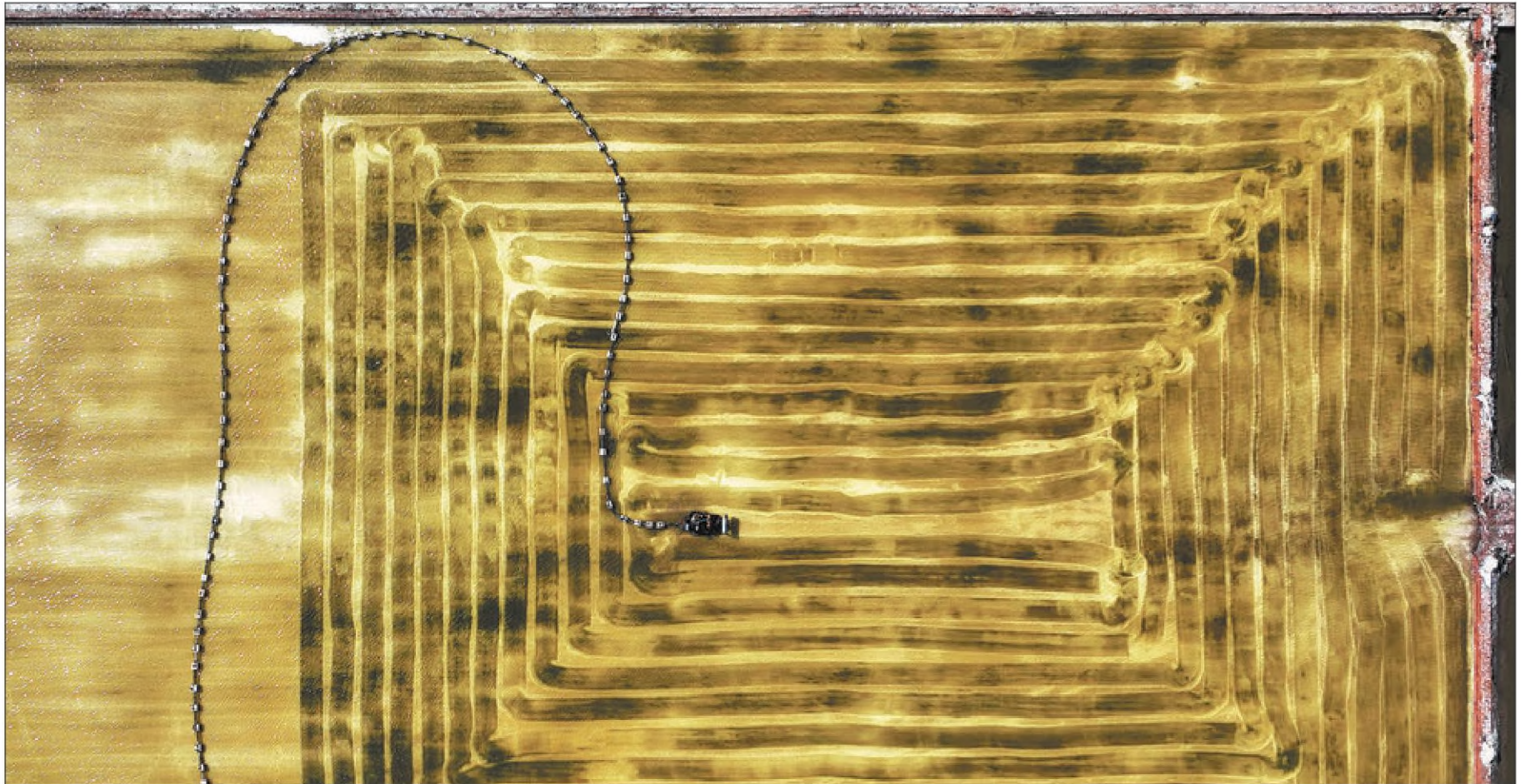


An employee of the Nanbao Salt Field works in a salt pan in the Cao-feidian district of Tangshan city, Hebei province, on May 9. JI CHUNTIAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

HEBEI'S SEASONED HARVEST



Workers load salt onto a barge at the Nanbao Salt Field on May 9. JI CHUNTIAN / FOR CHINA DAILY



An aerial photo shows a machine harvesting salt in the field on May 14. YANG SHIYAO / XINHUA



A worker drives a machine in a salt pan on May 9. JI CHUNTIAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Province's sprawling expanse of seawater pans produces more salt than anywhere else in China

By CHINA DAILY

Located in the Cao-feidian district of Tangshan city, Hebei province, the Nanbao Salt Field is one of the largest sea salt producing areas in Asia.

This time of year is spring harvest at the site, and the 23,300 hectares of salt fields bustle with activity as workers operate harvesting machines, dry salt on the sunning grounds and then ship it away by barge.

The Nanbao Salt Field was set up in 1956, and its 3,000-odd salt fields cover an area of some 300 square

kilometers. The site generates annual sales revenues of approximately 350 million yuan (\$48.83 million).

Every spring, sun and wind cause the fields, which resemble large, shallow pans of water, to slowly evaporate. Differences in the salt concentration in each pan result in a multitude of different colors, creating a unique and beautiful landscape along the coast of the Bohai Sea.

In recent years, Cao-feidian has leveraged the advantages of the Nanbao Salt Field to promote a salt chemical industry and a circular economy, which is bringing increasingly significant economic benefits.



A worker dries salt on a sunning ground on May 9. JI CHUNTIAN / FOR CHINA DAILY



From left: Two workers hold the conveyer belt that loads salt onto a barge on May 9. A worker shovels salt onto a barge on May 9. PHOTOS BY JI CHUNTIAN / FOR CHINA DAILY



WORLD



Families of the victims of the school attack gather at the Bwera General Hospital Mortuary in Kasese, Uganda, on Sunday. A total of 41 people were killed in the attack. STUART TIBAWESWA / AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

UN chief condemns school attack in Uganda

UNITED NATIONS — United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Saturday strongly condemned an attack on a secondary school in western Uganda reportedly perpetrated by the Allied Democratic Forces group, a spokesman said.

The ADF rebels attacked the Lhubirira Secondary School in Mpondwe, Kasese district, on the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo on Friday night, killing at least 41 people, mostly students, Ugandan authorities said on Saturday. At least eight students remained in critical condition. Six students were abducted by the rebels.

Sylvester Mapozi, the town

council mayor of Mpondwe-Lhubirira, where the attack occurred, said 39 students were killed at the school. "Within the community, as they (attackers) were going back, they also murdered two people, a female and a male. This is bringing up the number to 41."

Those responsible for this appalling attack must be brought to justice, said Farhan Haq, Guterres' deputy spokesman, in a statement.

The secretary-general extended his heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and the government and people of Uganda, and called for the immediate release of those abducted, the statement said.

Guterres reiterated the importance of collective efforts, including through enhanced regional partnerships, to tackle cross-border insecurity between the DR Congo and Uganda and restore durable peace in the area.

The ADF is a Ugandan rebel group holed up in the jungles of eastern DR Congo. It is a branch of the Islamic State in Central Africa.

The rebel group is blamed for causing havoc in villages in eastern DR Congo. The Ugandan military and their Congolese counterparts launched joint operations against the rebel group in November 2021.

XINHUA-AGENCIES

Japan urged to halt release of toxic water

Impact of Fukushima nuclear plant discharge plan seen as catastrophic

By XU WEIWEI in Hong Kong and KARL WILSON in Sydney

Environmental and social experts from across Asia have called on Japan to refrain from contaminating the sea with radioactive wastewater after it began test running the equipment to discharge toxic water from a crippled nuclear power plant into the Pacific.

The nuclear-contaminated wastewater from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant will contain traces of tritium, a radioactive isotope, and possibly other radioactive traces such as carbon-14, scientists said.

"Nobody wants to dump (radioactive substances) into the ocean," said David Krofcheck, senior lecturer in the faculty of science at the University of Auckland in New Zealand.

"We need to be aware of the difference between tritium and carbon-14, on one hand, and the radioactive fission products which tend to remain in the human body," he said, adding that tritium could still enter the food chain throughout its build-up in underwater plants.

"This organically bound tritium still decays with a half-life of 12.3 years, and it stays in the human body for about 10 days, the biological half-life, before excretion."

Instead of pumping the wastewater into the sea, Japan can dispose of it safely, Krofcheck said, offering an alternative for managing the Fukushima water: to hold it on site in an ever "growing number of water tanks".

"If the water is properly filtered to leave only tritium and carbon-14, the natural decay of tritium can be used to reduce its radioactivity."

"Since the radioactive half-life of tritium is 12.3 years, holding the water in tanks for seven half-lives would reduce the tritium content to less than 1 percent of its current value."

This option still leaves the carbon-14 that would still roughly have the same radioactivity because of its 5,730-year half-life, he said.

The potential impact of releasing treated radioactive water from the Fukushima plant into the ocean remains a subject of contention and concern among stakeholders, said Anjal Prakash, clinical associate professor (research) and research director of the Bharti Institute of Public Policy at the Indian School of Business in Hyderabad.

"The ocean release decision itself has sparked opposition, leading to ongoing debates on alternative water management strategies. The decision-making process weighs safety, public perception, regulations and potential impacts on industries and trade."

While the Japanese government and the Tokyo Electric Power Company, operator of the crippled plant, say there is minimal risk, differing opinions persist, Prakash said, add-

ing that factors such as ocean currents, distance, dilution and treatment efficacy will determine the impact on neighboring areas, including South Asia, Pacific Island countries, Australia, New Zealand and the rest of the world.

Long-term effects and bioaccumulation concerns remain, he said. "Evaluating the precise impact is complex, necessitating considerations of various factors and ongoing scientific research."

Despite continuing opposition from domestic experts, civic groups and fishery organizations, Japan has been rushing to dump the nuclear-contaminated water into the ocean, which has also spurred protests from neighboring countries and communities within the Pacific Islands.

Firm opposition

In April the Fijian government reaffirmed its opposition to Japan's plan to discharge nuclear-contaminated wastewater into the Pacific Ocean.

Fiji's Deputy Prime Minister Manoa Kamikamica said earlier that the Pacific Ocean should not be seen as an easy and convenient dumping ground for unwanted and dangerous materials and waste that larger countries produce but do not want to use in their own ecosystem, local media reported.

"The social and economic impact of this irresponsible behavior is catastrophic, particularly on our vulnerable communities," he said.

Environmental groups have argued that the move sets a bad precedent and poses a serious danger to Pacific communities that depend on the ocean for their livelihoods.

"We have enough man-made disasters," Peter Bosip, head of the Centre for Environmental Law and Community Rights in Papua New Guinea, told Radio New Zealand last Tuesday.

The PNG Prime Minister James Marape, said a day earlier that

Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and the previous prime minister Yoshihide Suga have both "assured me that Japan would never allow the discharge of the water until and unless safety has been confirmed by scientific evidence".

Many people are asking why, if the wastewater treated by Japan's Advanced Liquid Processing System is so safe, Japanese are not using such water for alternative purposes, in manufacturing and agriculture for instance.

According to a report issued by Tokyo Electric Power Company on June 5, the radioactive elements in the marine fish caught in the harbor of the Fukushima plant far exceed safety levels for human consumption. In particular, the content of cesium-137, a radioactive element and a common byproduct in nuclear reactors, is said to be 180 times that of the standard maximum stipulated in Japan's food safety law.

Kalinga Seneviratne, a visiting lecturer at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji, said: "The contamination will affect the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (adopted in 1986) areas as well when it eventually flows there. Also, since fish stocks are migratory, contaminated fish could be caught within the treaty area."

If Japan wants to protect a rules-based order, as it says it does, the government should subscribe to the principles of these rules and respect the wishes of the people in the Pacific who argue that the treaty is there to stop something such as this from happening, Seneviratne said.

After being hit by a magnitude-9.0 earthquake and an ensuing tsunami on March 11, 2011, the Fukushima plant suffered core meltdowns that released radiation, resulting in a level-7 nuclear accident, the highest on the International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

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A South Korean expert analyzes Japan's plan for discharging nuclear-contaminated wastewater from the Fukushima plant, in Seoul on Friday. YONHAP NEWS AGENCY

Swiss look set to back new climate law

GENEVA — The Swiss, feeling the impact of global warming on their rapidly melting glaciers, on Sunday backed a new climate bill aimed at steering the country toward carbon neutrality by 2050, according to early estimates.

Initial projections from pollster gfs.bern institute showed that 58 percent of Swiss voters had said "yes" in the referendum on the new law, which would require Switzerland to slash its dependence on imported oil and gas, scaling up the development and use of greener and more homegrown alternatives.

Voters also appeared to have overwhelmingly backed adopting a global minimum tax rate of 15 percent for multinational corporations, with 79 percent voting in favor, according to the projections published shortly after polls closed at noon.

Recent opinion polls had indicated strong but slipping support for the climate bill, amid an anxiety-infused campaign around electricity shortages and economic ruin driven by the right-wing Swiss People's Party, or SVP.

The proposed Federal Act on Cli-

mate Protection Targets, Innovation and Strengthening Energy Security is needed to ensure energy security, supporters said.

It will also help address the ravages of climate change, highlighted by the dramatic melting of glaciers in the Swiss Alps, which lost one-third of their ice volume between 2001 and 2022, they said.

Switzerland imports about 75 percent of its energy, with all the oil and natural gas consumed coming from abroad.

Friendly alternatives

Climate activists had initially wanted to push for a total ban on all oil and gas consumption in Switzerland by 2050.

However, the government balked at the so-called Glacier Initiative, drawing up a counterproposal that scrapped the idea of a ban but included other elements.

The text promises financial support of 2 billion Swiss francs (\$2.2 billion) over 10 years to promote the replacement of gas or oil heating systems with climate-friendly alternatives, as well as aid to push busi-

nesses toward green innovation.

Nearly all of Switzerland's major parties support the bill, except the SVP, the country's largest party, which triggered the referendum against what it dismisses as the "electricity-wasting law".

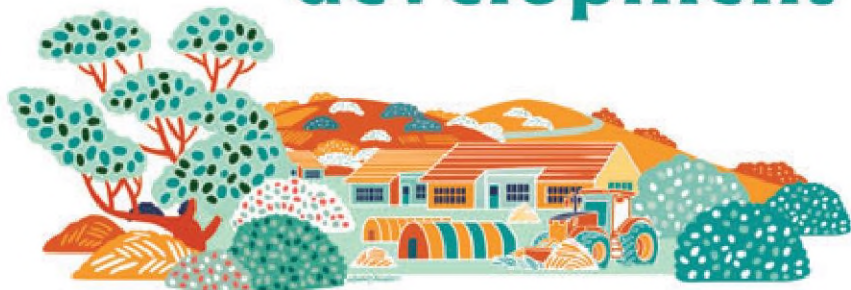
The SVP says the bill's goal of achieving climate neutrality in a little more than 25 years would effectively mean a fossil fuel ban, which it says would threaten energy access and send household electricity bills soaring.

SVP leader Marco Chiesa last month criticized the "utopian" vision behind the bill, saying it would drive up energy costs by \$448 billion, while having basically "no impact" on the global climate.

In April, the World Meteorological Organization said the melting of the Alpine glaciers would have an economic impact in both the short term — such as natural disasters and a loss of tourism revenue — and in the longer term, as they are key water supply sources to rivers and hydroelectric power plants.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Reducing food waste can help achieve sustainable development



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WORLD

Waiting migrants kept away from border

SAN JOSE — The opening of US migrant processing centers in Colombia, Costa Rica and Guatemala ensures that more than ever these countries will become waiting rooms for asylum-seekers wanting US visas.

The "Safe Mobility" initiative introduced by Washington in Central America — the main corridor for tens of thousands hoping to reach the United States without visas — attempts to expand legal pathways for asylum-seekers while keeping them in countries farther from the US border.

The new program started on May 11 with the end of Title 42, which had allowed US authorities to return migrants across the border and deny them the right to seek asylum under rules put in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Migrants must now seek a virtual appointment on the movilidasegura.org website, which is supported by the UN Refugee Agency and the International Organization for Migration.

New regional processing centers in Colombia and Guatemala will interview migrants for legal pathways to the US, Canada and Spain.

In Costa Rica, Safe Mobility offices will facilitate ways for Nicaraguans and Venezuelans to migrate legally as long as they were in the country before June 12.

US officials consider the new program a success.

A State Department official, speaking on background, said it expands lawful ways for migrants to obtain visas "instead of making the dangerous journey to try to enter irregularly".

The flow of US-bound migrants from South America, mostly Venezuela and Ecuador, has increased through the Darien, the perilous jungle isthmus between Colombia and Panama.

A recent UN statement said more than 100,000 people have crossed through the Darien so far in 2023, a six-fold increase from the same period last year.

US officials believe the new processing centers will make it easier for migrants to determine if they have a legal pathway to the US and not have to put their lives in the hands of smugglers.

University of Costa Rica academic Carlos Sandoval told Agence France-Presse this initiative responds to a strategy of moving immigration controls southward to implement "more border controls before the physical border".

"Mexico is the first border," Sandoval said. But US officials have sought to place border controls "in Guatemala as well, and now it is coming to the south".

In March alone, more than 160,000 people tried to cross into the US from Mexico, according to the State Department.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Racing ahead



Participants compete during the Toronto International Dragon Boat Race Festival in Toronto, Canada, on Saturday. This annual two-day event began on Saturday with hundreds of competitors from around the world taking part. ZOU ZHENG / XINHUA

EU actions against tech firms slammed

Bloc move to pressure member states seen as violating principle of free trade

By CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels
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The China Chamber of Commerce to the EU, or CCCEU, voiced deep concerns over the European Commission's recent actions to pressure its member states to avoid using 5G equipment made by Huawei and ZTE.

The CCCEU statement on Saturday came two days after the European Union published its second progress report on the implementation of the EU Toolbox on 5G Cybersecurity by urging more member states to enact restrictions on the so-called "high-risk suppliers" Huawei and ZTE.

European Commissioner for Internal Market Thierry Breton lamented on Thursday that only 10 of all 27 member states have restricted or excluded "high-risk" vendors.

"This is too slow, and it poses a major security risk and exposes the union's collective security since it creates a major dependency for the EU and serious vulnerabilities."

Breton said the European Commission considered the decisions taken by certain member states to restrict or exclude completely Huawei and ZTE from their 5G networks as justified and in line with the toolbox.

"The commission will imple-

ment the 5G toolbox principles to its own procurement of telecom services, to avoid exposure to Huawei and ZTE," he said.

He alleged that "Huawei and ZTE represent in fact materially higher risks than other 5G suppliers" but gave no evidence.

The CCCEU said the European Commission's actions to publicly pressure member states to avoid using 5G equipment from Huawei and ZTE contravene WTO rules.

"Publicly singling out Chinese enterprises as 'high-risk vendors' without legal basis is against the principles of free trade," said the chamber, which represents Chinese business entities across the EU.

Serious concern

"It is of paramount importance to emphasize that the discriminatory 'high-risk vendors' assessment shall not be applied to any vendor without justified procedure and an adequate hearing," the chamber said.

The chamber described it as a matter of serious concern for the Chinese investors and for their local business partners in Europe.

"The CCCEU expresses serious worries on behalf of all our members about the worsening business environment in Europe," the statement said.

The EU has been under great

pressure from the United States since the Donald Trump administration to ban Huawei 5G from EU networks.

In Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin criticized the EU's actions.

"The European Commission keeps alleging that Chinese telecom firms such as Huawei and ZTE pose a security risk, but has yet to demonstrate any evidence," he told a daily briefing on Friday.

"This is a typical presumption of guilt. We firmly oppose it."

Wang said that since Huawei and ZTE started operations in Europe many years ago, they have not only done no harm to European countries' security, but they have contributed substantially to the growth of Europe's telecom sector and generated considerable socioeconomic benefits.

He also criticized the EU for violating the spirit of rule of law and the principle of market economy, free trade and fair competition.

"We strongly urge the EU to comply with international trade rules, not to make everything political or about security, and not to suppress foreign firms in the name of security."

"Openness, inclusiveness, and fairness are eagerly needed now, and we should all assume our social responsibilities and honor our commitments to make consumers less burdened and investors more confident," the CCCEU said in its statement.

Study: Violent deaths jumped among US teenagers in 2021

By MINLU ZHANG in New York
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In 2021, suicide and homicide rates for children and young adults age 10 to 24 in the US were the highest in decades, government researchers said Thursday.

A study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) showed that suicide and homicide were the second and third leading causes of death for that age group, both causing about 11 deaths for every 100,000 people.

The homicide rate for the age group in 2021 was the highest since 1997, and the suicide rate was the highest on record, dating to 1968.

The suicide and homicide rates followed accidental deaths, which include motor vehicle crashes, falls, drownings and overdoses, according to The Associated Press.

The CDC study examined homicide and suicide rates among 10-to-24-year-olds from 2001 to 2021 and found the suicide rate increased 62 percent from 2007 through 2021.

The homicide rate, while remaining relatively stable from 2001 to 2006, experienced a nearly 30 percent decline from 2006 to 2014, but had an increase of 60 percent in the past seven years, CDC data shows.

Factors contributing to the increases in homicide and suicide included higher rates of depression, limited availability of mental health services and the number of guns in US homes.

The increases are alarming and "reflect a mental health crisis among young people and a need for a number of policy changes", Dr Steven Woolf, a Virginia Commonwealth University researcher, told the AP. Woolf studies US death trends and wasn't involved in the CDC report.

The American Academy of Pediatrics said the increase in American teenage suicide reflects a growing mental health crisis. "This crisis has deeper roots that extend beyond the effects of COVID-19 and the ongoing pursuit of racial justice, requiring immediate attention and intervention," the academy said.

Suicide and homicide death rates were significantly higher for older teenagers and youth between 10-14 years old, the study found.

In 2021, the suicide rate for teenagers age 10 to 14 was approximately 2.9 deaths per 100,000, whereas the suicide rate for those age 20 to 24 was 19.4 per 100,000, a 63 percent increase over the past two decades.

The homicide rate for individuals age 10 to 14 was about 1.4 deaths per 100,000 in 2021, whereas older teenagers in their 20s had a rate of approximately 18 per 100,000.

Homicide deaths became more common than suicide deaths among 15-to-19-year-olds, while suicide was more common in the younger and older age groups, AP found.

Other CDC data released earlier this year also found a relatively higher suicide rate rose among people of color.

From 2018 to 2021, the suicide rate among black people increased by 19.2 percent, while Hispanic individuals had a 6.8 percent increase. White individuals showed an overall decline in rate compared with 2018, according to data released in February by the CDC.

Common factors contributing to the trends include limited access to mental health services and providers, as well as insurance plans with inadequate coverage for mental health.

Recent findings on the rising homicide rate also reveal an increase in gun-related injuries among individuals age 1 to 19. They surpassed vehicle crashes as the leading cause of death among that age group in 2020, according to a recent paper published in the New England Journal of Medicine, which analyzed CDC data.

Between 2019 and 2021, the number of children and teens killed by gunfire in the US increased by 50 percent, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of CDC data.

The rise in gun-related deaths among American youth is part of a larger trend of increased firearm deaths across all age groups. In 2021, the total number of gun deaths among Americans of all ages reached a record high of 48,830, the highest yearly total on record and up 23 percent from the 39,707 recorded in 2019, before the pandemic, according to Pew.

Agencies contributed to this story.

African leaders meet Putin in latest mediation effort

MOSCOW/KYIV — Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday met with a group of leaders of African countries who traveled to Russia in their latest mediation efforts at ending the conflict between Kyiv and Moscow.

Seven African leaders — the presidents of Comoros, Senegal, South Africa and Zambia, as well as Egypt's prime minister and top envoys from the Republic of Congo and Uganda — visited Ukraine a day earlier to try to help end the nearly 16-month-old conflict.

The African leaders then traveled to St. Petersburg on Saturday to meet Putin.

The mission to Ukraine, the first of its kind by African leaders, comes in the wake of other peace initiatives and carries particular importance for Africa, which relies on food and fertilizer deliveries from Russia and Ukraine. The conflict has impeded exports from one of the world's most important breadbaskets.

"This conflict is affecting Africa negatively," South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said at a news conference alongside Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and four other African leaders after their closed-door talks on Friday.

Ramaphosa and others acknowledged the intensity of the conflict but insisted all conflicts must come to an end and emphasized their willingness to help expedite that.

"The road to peace is very hard," he said, adding that "there is a need to bring this conflict to an end sooner rather than later".

Ramaphosa listed 10 principles,

which included de-escalation, security guarantees for all countries, unimpeded grain exports through the Black Sea and sending prisoners and children back to their countries of origin.

'Difficult to implement'

"Any initiative is very difficult to implement," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was quoted as saying by the state-run agency RIA Novosti.

"But President Putin has shown interest in considering it," Peskov said after the leaders held a meeting behind closed doors.

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said the plan was "not formulated on paper".

Putin had praised the delegation's "balanced" approach and said he was "open to a constructive dialogue with all those who want to implement peace based on the principles of justice and respect for the parties' legitimate interests".

The African peace mission comes as Ukraine launches a counteroffensive to dislodge the Russian forces from occupied areas, using Western-supplied weapons in attacks on several sections of the more than 1,000-kilometer front line.

On Sunday, Ukrainian said its forces destroyed a "significant" ammunition depot near the port city of Henchek in the southern region of Kherson.

The information could not be independently verified, and there was no immediate comment from Russia on the alleged attack.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Iran, Saudi Arabia take further steps to bolster relations

TEHERAN — Iran and Saudi Arabia took a further step on Saturday in the restoration of diplomatic ties as Riyadh's top diplomat made a landmark visit to Teheran, semi-official Tasnim News Agency reported.

Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud held talks with his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian focusing on regional security.

He later met Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi, and was due to hand him an invitation "to visit the kingdom soon".

The two countries agreed in March to mend ties and reopen their respective embassies, in a Chinese-brokered deal that has shifted regional relations.

On June 6, Iran reopened its embassy and consulate in Saudi Arabia and the kingdom is expected to reopen its diplomatic mission in Teheran "soon", Faisal said.

"I would like to point out the importance of cooperation between our two countries concerning regional security, especially the security of maritime navigation and waterways," Faisal



Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian (right) and his Saudi counterpart Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud leave after their joint news briefing in Teheran on Saturday. VAHID SALEMI / AP

said at a joint news conference with Amir-Abdollahian.

The Iranian foreign minister told reporters they had discussed ways of bolstering cooperation in the fields of security, economy, tourism and transportation.

Amir-Abdollahian stressed Iran's view that "regional security will be ensured by regional actors only" without external interference.

"We voiced our concern about the continuation of war in Sudan and discussed some regional and international topics of interest," Amir-Abdollahian said.

Mutual respect

"Our relations are based on a clear foundation of full and mutual respect for independence, sovereignty and non-interference in

internal affairs," Prince Faisal added.

He later met Raisi and they "reviewed bilateral relations and ways to enhance and develop them in various fields", the Saudi foreign ministry said.

Raisi, in a statement from his office, said there were "no obstacles" to developing ties with Muslim countries, stressing that "regional problems and troubles can be dealt with" through cooperation and dialogue "without foreign interference".

He welcomed the resumption of ties between the two "important and influential" countries of the Muslim world, saying that dialogue and interaction between Teheran and Riyadh benefit the two nations and are necessary in line with good neighborliness.

Faisal was the first Saudi foreign minister to visit Iran since 2006.

Saudi Arabia cut diplomatic ties with Iran in 2016 in response to attacks on Saudi diplomatic missions in Iran after the kingdom executed a Shiite cleric.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

BUSINESS

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Digital thrust will inject impetus to growth

Experts call for deeper integration with real economy to spur high-level development

By FAN FEIFEI
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Chinese home appliance giant Haier Group's production base in Tianjin has hit upon a novel idea.

It is offering consumers a chance to customize a washing machine remotely, just by using their mobile phones. Customers get to choose the functions, appearance and design of a washing machine without having to enter a physical store. Once they place an order, intelligent equipment at Haier's interconnected factory automatically reads the information and starts production, tailor-made for each client.

It is using cutting-edge digital technologies, including 5G, artificial intelligence and big data, to improve the workshop's productivity and cut energy consumption by more than 30 percent.

Haier's digitalization push is an example of how Chinese manufacturing companies are embracing the digital economy, mainly represented by new-generation information technologies, and serving as a key engine to drive economic growth.

China's emphasis on developing the digital economy and bolstering the transformation and upgrade of its traditional industries will provide fresh impetus to the country's high-quality development and enhance its core competitiveness on the global stage, officials, experts and business leaders have said.

They have called for greater efforts to push ahead with the construction of digital infrastructure, accelerate the building of basic systems for data and strengthen international exchanges and cooperation in the digital economy domain, as part of a broader push to promote in-depth integration of the digital and real economies.

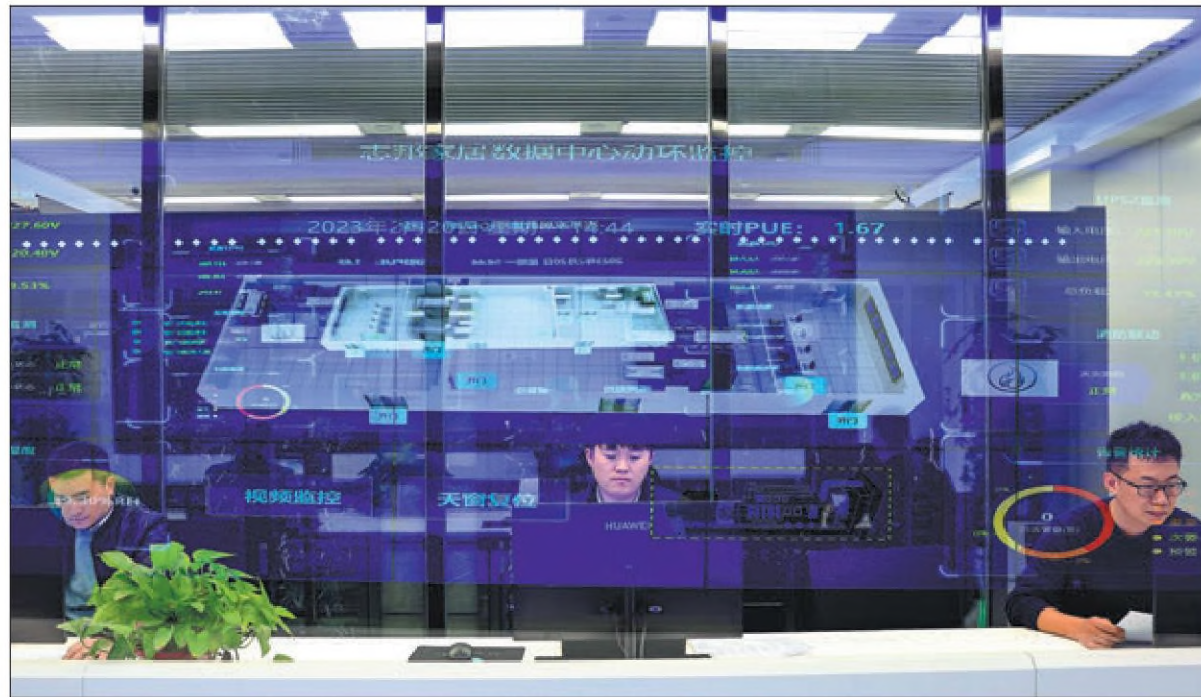
China will ratchet up resources to achieve breakthroughs in core technologies in key fields, accelerate its performance in emerging industries, including AI, advanced computing and 6G, and step up the establishment of a national unified data registration and data asset evaluation service platform, said Wang Jiangping, vice-minister of industry and information technology, during the China International Big Data Industry Expo 2023 held last month in Guiyang, Guizhou province.

The country had built more than 2.64 million 5G base stations by the end of March, and the number of 5G mobile phone users had reached 620 million, the ministry said.

Emerging sectors, such as data centers, cloud computing and the internet of things, saw revenues rise more than 32 percent year-on-year last year, and the value of the country's core AI industries had exceeded 500 billion yuan (\$70.2 billion), the ministry said.

Solid steps

According to a plan jointly released by the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council, or China's Cabinet, in February, the nation will take solid steps to build digital



Employees from a home furnishing company monitor the operating data of intelligent equipment in each production area in Hefei, Anhui province, on Feb 20. ZHAO MING / FOR CHINA DAILY



Left: A staffer demonstrates a metaverse digital avatar during the 2023 Exhibition of ZGC Forum (China Beijing International High-Tech Expo) in Beijing on May 26. CHEN XIAOPENG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Right: A worker inspects equipment at the National Supercomputer Center in Chengdu, Sichuan province, on Feb 14. LIU KUN / XINHUA

infrastructure and data resource systems and deepen the integration of digital technologies with the economy, politics, culture, society and ecology.

As per the plan, important progress will be made in the construction of a digital China by 2025, with effective interconnectivity in digital infrastructure, a significantly improved digital economy and major breakthroughs in digital technological innovation.

"Innovative digital technologies like 5G, AI, cloud computing, big data and the IoT are finding a wide range of applications across various industries, such as manufacturing and agriculture, and speeding up their integration with the real economy," said Pan Helin, co-director of the Digital Economy and Financial Innovation Research Center at Zhejiang University's International Business School.

Pan said facilitating the development of a digital economy is vital to cultivate new growth drivers, speed up the digital and intelligent upgrades of enterprises and propel the country's economic recovery.

In the face of increasingly fierce competition, he added, enhanced efforts are needed to double down

on indigenous innovation to make breakthroughs in core technologies in key fields and expand the industrial application scenarios of leading technologies, in order to gain a competitive edge on the global stage.

"Digital technologies have played an increasingly vital role in enhancing operational efficiency, cutting costs and improving core competitiveness of traditional industries," said Xiang Ligang, director-general of the Information Consumption Alliance, a telecom industry association.

Xiang said the in-depth integration of digital technologies with the real economy will further enhance the resilience of China's industrial and supply chains and foster new growth drivers amid pressure on the economy.

In December, the country unveiled 20 key measures to build basic systems for data and fully unleash the value of data resources. The basic systems will involve the establishment of a data property rights system, a circulation and trading system, a revenue distribution system and a security governance system.

Moreover, China is establishing a

national data bureau, which will coordinate the integration, sharing, development and application of data resources.

"The sharing, circulation, trading and application of data, regarded as a new production factor, will be key to promoting the country's digital development," said Chen Zuoning, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering.

China's digital economy touched 50.2 trillion yuan in 2022, second worldwide and accounting for 41.5 percent of the country's GDP, according to a report released by the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology.

The high-quality development of the digital economy necessitates a higher requirement for computing power, Zhang Yong, chairman and CEO of Chinese tech heavyweight Alibaba Group, said in an earlier interview. "The in-depth integration of a new round of AI with the real economy will bring fundamental changes to various industries," he said.

The industrialization of digital technologies and digital transformation of industries is a vibrant manifestation of the integration of the digital economy with the real

economy, he added.

Alibaba Group is making use of digital technologies to help small and medium-sized enterprises and speed up industrial transformation to empower the real economy, he said.

The application of AI technology is reshaping the industrial landscape and will be a transformative force that revolutionizes development over the next 40 years, said Robin Li, co-founder and CEO of Chinese tech giant Baidu Inc.

Li said the goal of the intelligent transformation of industries and society through AI is to fulfill people's needs — making technology meaningful only if it serves humanity by creating more value and contributing to society.

Local push

Meanwhile, local governments are intensifying efforts to promote the development of the digital economy, in accordance with the country's aim to raise the proportion of the added value of core digital economy industries in its GDP to 10 percent in 2025, from 7.8 percent in 2020, as per China's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25).

Zhejiang province is taking solid

The sharing, circulation, trading and application of data, regarded as a new production factor, will be key to promoting the country's digital development."

Chen Zuoning, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering

steps to boost the in-depth integration of internet, big data and AI with the real economy, and promote digital transformation of manufacturing, agriculture and services sectors, according to a document released by the National Development and Reform Commission, the country's top economic regulator, in March.

It said the province ranked first in the country last year in the proportion of its added value of the digital economy in its GDP, and overall digitalization.

In 2022, the added value of the digital economy-related core industries in Zhejiang reached 897.7 billion yuan, accounting for 11.6 percent of its GDP.

Shanghai has also mapped out a plan to promote digital transformation and build an international digital city with global influence. It will improve the output of its core industries in the digital economy to 18 percent of the city's GDP in the next five years, up from 15 percent last year.

The city will ramp up efforts to construct digital industrial clusters in the fields of integrated circuits and AI, and aim to become a world-leading metropolis with digital infrastructure and a forerunner of the digital economy.

The capital Beijing is also taking measures to boost the application of digital technologies in various industries. The city's digital economy has continued to expand over the past five years, and the added value of the digital economy accounted for around 42 percent of the city's GDP in 2022.

Zhou Hongyi, founder of cybersecurity company 360 Security Group, emphasized the significance of pushing forward the digital transformation of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, as they face mounting pressure from a shortage of capital, talent and technology.

Against the backdrop of potential risks from decoupling, more coordinated efforts are required to resolve bottlenecks and increase investments in basic research and strategic forward-looking technologies, said Chen Duan, director of the Digital Economy Integration Innovation Development Center at the Central University of Finance and Economics.

"We should expedite the translation and application of key scientific and technological breakthroughs, and support leading high-tech companies, which play a critical part in technological innovation, to pour more capital into state-of-the-art technologies to better serve the country's development strategy," Chen said.

Industrial internet to boost productivity, cut costs

REPORTER'S LOG

By Fan Feifei

One of my friends from Taiyuan, capital of Shanxi province, sent a unique birthday gift to her father recently.

The custom-built air conditioner had the calligraphy aficionado's favorite phrase — "Tian Dao Chou Qin", or "God Rewards the Diligent" — embossed in Chinese, with the AC also sporting his preferred color and style.

I am really excited that consumers can now be product designers,

supervisors in the manufacturing process and beneficiaries of intelligent technology. Gone are the days when she was just a passive buyer with no say in any of the features of a product.

The industrial internet, a new type of manufacturing automation that combines advanced machines, internet-connected sensors and big data analysis, is driving this revolutionary approach to the production of customized products.

This is expected to boost productivity and reduce costs in industrial production.

China's industrial internet sector has developed rapidly in recent years.

According to the Ministry of

Industry and Information Technology, the country has nurtured over 240 industrial internet platforms that have strong regional and industry influence, with more than 81 million units of industrial equipment connected to the platforms, which have served 250,000 enterprises covering over 40 key industries.

The revenue of China's core industries related to industrial internet reached more than 1.2 trillion yuan (\$168.4 billion) in 2022, up 15.5 percent year-on-year, said the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology.

The ministry said in a work plan released last year that it will promote the application of superfast

5G wireless technology in the industrial internet and support initial public offerings of eligible industrial internet companies.

It will further propel the application of 5G plus industrial internet in the consumption sector, as well as accelerate innovation of key technologies to advance the digital transformation of enterprises, as per the plan.

China's largest home appliance maker Haier Group has built an industrial internet platform, COSMOPlat, which allows companies to customize products quickly and at scale by collecting and analyzing data from consumers, suppliers and factories with internet-connected sensors, while boosting pro-

ductivity and cutting costs.

China's accelerated push to boost the development of the industrial internet will inject new vitality into the country's industrial economy, enhance the competitiveness of manufacturing on the global stage and empower high-quality development of the digital economy.

"The application of digital technologies has been expanded from the consumption to the production field. In particular, new industrial forms such as the industrial internet are taking shape, which has become a new engine driving the growth of the digital economy and has shown remarkable development potential," said Liu Xiangdong, a researcher with the China Center for Interna-

tional Economic Exchanges.

Liu said the booming industrial internet will see surging demand for accuracy in data acquisition, transmission speed, storage space, computing capacities and intelligent application. This will, therefore, drive the development of big data and cloud computing infrastructure and foster a batch of industrial internet companies with global competitiveness.

The industrial internet should be established on the basis of traditional industries and information and communication technology, said Ni Guangnan, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering.

Greater efforts must go into facilitating the development of the industrial internet, which will boost the long-term international competitiveness of China's manufacturing industry, Ni said.

BUSINESS



An employee checks equipment at the computing power center of the national key laboratory of public big data at Guizhou University in Guiyang, Guizhou province, on May 23. LIU XU / XINHUA

Computing power offers new chances for tech firms

As companies roll out innovations, more data development potential is unleashed

By FAN FEIFEI
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China's computing power industry will usher in new development opportunities, as major Chinese tech companies have rolled out ChatGPT-like artificial intelligence chatbots, which necessitate higher requirements for computing capacity in the process of large language model training.

Computing power, which serves as a core productive force in the digital economy era, has become an important engine driving China's economic growth and unleashing the potential of data as a factor of production, experts said.

Zhang Yong, chairman and CEO of Alibaba Group and CEO of Alibaba Cloud Intelligence, said cloud computing serves as the best way to promote the large-scale application of AI. The group is committed to making computing and AI services more accessible and inclusive for enterprises and developers, he said.

Alibaba unveiled its AI large language model Tongyi Qianwen in April, joining the chatbot race and positioning itself as a potential rival to ChatGPT, an AI chatbot launched by US-based AI research company OpenAI.

Baidu AI Cloud, the cloud computing unit of Baidu Inc, China's largest online search engine firm, said the innovative integration of cloud computing with AI will lower the threshold for enterprises to acquire and use AI technology. Baidu rolled out its large language model and ChatGPT-like product dubbed Ernie Bot in March.

Zou Debao, deputy general manager of the AI industry research

institute from market research firm CCID Consulting, said AI model training has huge demand for computing power, and with the increase of training intensity and computing complexity, the requirements for computational accuracy are also gradually rising.

China's total computing power scale now ranks second in the world, said the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology. By the end of 2021, superlarge and large data centers in use exceeded 450 nationwide, while intelligent computing centers surpassed 20, the ministry said.

The market scale of China's computing power segment exceeded 1.5 trillion yuan (\$210.6 billion) in 2021, with revenue from cloud computing surpassing 300 billion yuan and internet data center services over 150 billion yuan, said the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, a government think tank.

Last year, China launched a mega-project involving the construction of eight national computing hubs and 10 national data center clusters, indicating that its strategy to channel more computing resources from the country's eastern regions to its less-developed yet resource-rich western regions is in full swing.

Experts said building a national computing power network will enable the less-developed regions to handle and store data transmitted from the economically advanced areas, optimize resource allocation and enhance the efficient use of resources. That, in turn, will resolve excessive data surges and imbalances in regional computing capacity.

"Most of China's computing infrastructure is distributed in the east-

ern regions at present, while the western regions have the potential to foster the development of data centers and meet the needs of data computing in the eastern regions," said Yu Xiaohui, head of the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology.

Yu said the implementation of the east-data-west-computing project is conducive to optimizing the allocation of national computing power, utilizing green energy in the western regions, improving the energy efficiency of data centers and nurturing emerging digital industries.

Southwest China's Guizhou province has become a front-runner in China's big data industry since it was approved to host the country's first comprehensive big data pilot area in 2016. According to the Big Data Development Administration of Guizhou, the annual turnover of data circulation and transactions in the province will surpass 10 billion yuan by 2025.

Tech companies from home and abroad, such as Apple Inc, Huawei Technologies Co, Tencent Holdings Ltd and Alibaba Group Holding Ltd, have established their cloud computing and big data centers as well as regional headquarters in the province due to its cooler climate and ample power resources.

"With the rapid development and the commercial application of 5G, the internet of things, AI and the industrial internet, demand for data processing is increasing, which has driven the construction of data centers," said Xiang Ligang, director-general of the Information Consumption Alliance, a telecom industry association.

Chinese high-tech companies should utilize innovative technologies to improve data centers' operational efficiency and cut power and energy consumption, Xiang said.

China's know-how helps African countries' green urbanization

NAIROBI — During the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi, "green buses" providing shuttle services to delegates were eye-catching.

The buses were in keeping with the theme, "A sustainable urban future through inclusive and effective multilateralism: Achieving sustainable development goals in times of global crises" of the session that ran from June 5 through June 9.

One of the firms offering the shuttle services is Kenya's startup BasiGo, which is the first company to launch electric buses in the country, using parts designed by Chinese automaker BYD.

"China is a global leader in electric mobility, inspiring African countries like Kenya in their quest for a dramatic shift to less carbon-intensive modes of transportation," said Moses Nderitu, chief revenue officer of BasiGo, adding that Chinese companies are open to sharing the latest technology with their partners.

Over the years, China has been sharing its experience in sustainable urban development with Africa and other developing regions, and contributing Chinese wisdom and solutions to improving the environment for people in African countries.

Green mobility

In January, the first phase of a China-built electric-powered light rail project in Nigeria's port city of Lagos was officially open for service.

Built by the China Civil Engineering Construction Corp, the completed tracks of the Lagos Light Rail Mass Transit Blue Line project span 13 kilometers in the first phase and cover five stations.

As a symbolic project of the Belt and Road Initiative, the Blue Line is the first electrified railroad and cross-sea light rail project in West Africa.

Former Nigerian president Muhammadu Buhari described the project as "historic", noting that

it will reduce traffic congestion and air pollution, as well as improve the lives of locals.

Many African countries are currently experiencing a rapid wave of urbanization and are thus plagued by "urban ailments" such as traffic congestion and air pollution.

With the upgrading of the public transport systems, low-carbon travel has gradually become the first choice of locals.

In Kenya, the Chinese-built Nairobi Expressway has helped reduce carbon emissions by cutting travel time from the south to the west of the capital from two hours during peak time to 20 minutes.

Some 50,000 vehicles use the 27-km road daily, and as of April this year, over 12.5 million vehicles had traveled on it since its launch in July last year, said Steve Zhao, CEO of Moja Expressway Co, which manages the modern thoroughfare.

Renewable energy

In Zambia, President Hakainde Hichilema commissioned a Chinese-built hydropower plant in March, following the operation of the plant's fifth generator.

The five generators at the Kafue Gorge Lower Hydropower Station, constructed by Chinese firm Sino-hydro Corporation Ltd, have added 750 megawatts to the country's national grid.

Hichilema said the completion of the project is not only good for the country's energy sector, but also for the economy as a whole, as energy is a critical driver of the nation.

Africa is grappling with the effects of climate change, therefore, developing green energy is an inevitable choice for the continent to achieve sustainable development.

Although Africa is rich in renewable energy resources such as hydro, solar and wind power, their exploitation is currently low.

China is helping Africa tap these resources. For instance, in De Aar, a town in the northern Cape province of South Africa, Chinese company

Longyuan Power has partnered with local firms to establish a wind power project that has been in operation since 2017, with an installed capacity of nearly 245 megawatts.

In Kenya, official figures show that the installed capacity of solar power is more than 100 MW, while the China-financed Garissa Solar Power Station accounts for 50 MW. Located in northern Kenya's Garissa county, it is the largest grid-connected solar power plant in East and Central Africa.

Sustainable environment

In just 11 months, a Chinese company has transformed a wasteland in Ethiopia into a green park that now hosts one of the most functional and largest urban comprehensive plazas in Africa.

Dubbed Friendship Park, it is an important part of the first phase of the China-aided Addis Ababa riverside green development project.

The project integrates landscape, architecture, municipal administration, roads, water conservancy and a garden, and is undertaken by China First Highway Engineering Co Ltd.

Wei Qiangyu, general manager at the CFHEC Ethiopia office, said the riverside green development project introduces the Chinese concept of "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets" to Ethiopia, gaining popularity by managing the urban environment and developing tourism to drive the economy, thus embarking on a path of green and sustainable development.

In Equatorial Guinea, the Malabo Urban Sewage Treatment Project is the largest municipal engineering project invested in by the government and constructed by China Gezhouba Group Co.

Since completion of the project in 2018, the quality of the effluent from the water plant has reached discharge standards.

"Before the sewage treatment project was built, dirty water was everywhere. Now our drinking water is clean and safe to drink. We have a lot fewer cases of typhoid fever, malaria and other diseases," said Celestino Ncogo Ndong Oyana, a resident of Malabo, the capital.

Maimunah Mohd Sharif, executive director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, said China has been a pacesetter in urban regeneration in the recent past, inspiring the Global South, where cities are growing rapidly.

Sharif hopes that Beijing will continue facilitating the flow of technology and know-how to Africa's city planners, engineers and local investors to promote sustainable urban development on the continent.



People check out an electric bus during a low-carbon e-mobility showcase activity in Nairobi, Kenya, on June 7. HAN XU / XINHUA

XINHUA

The Belt and Road Initiative

The Belt and Road Initiative, reflecting common ideals and the pursuit of fairer, more connected human societies, endeavors to seek new models of international cooperation and inject a new sense of positivity into efforts aimed at promoting world peace and development.



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BUSINESSINSIGHT

Green roadmap key to new development paradigm

EAGLE EYE

By Xu Zhong

The inadequacy of China's growth momentum has emerged as a pressing issue along with economic downturns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, as the country transitions from old to new growth drivers.

In light of the economic pressures, nurturing fresh growth drivers and identifying a new direction for development have become paramount. A green transition may have a significant role to play.

Embracing a green and low-carbon roadmap is key to achieving high-quality development — one that is innovative, coordinated, green, open and inclusive.

On the one hand, a green transition would act as a catalyst for continuous optimization and upgrade of the country's industrial structure. As the government applies relevant policies and regulations and companies adopt sustainable practices, China's economy will shift toward a path that values comprehensive low-carbon efforts, leading to long-term viability and resilience.

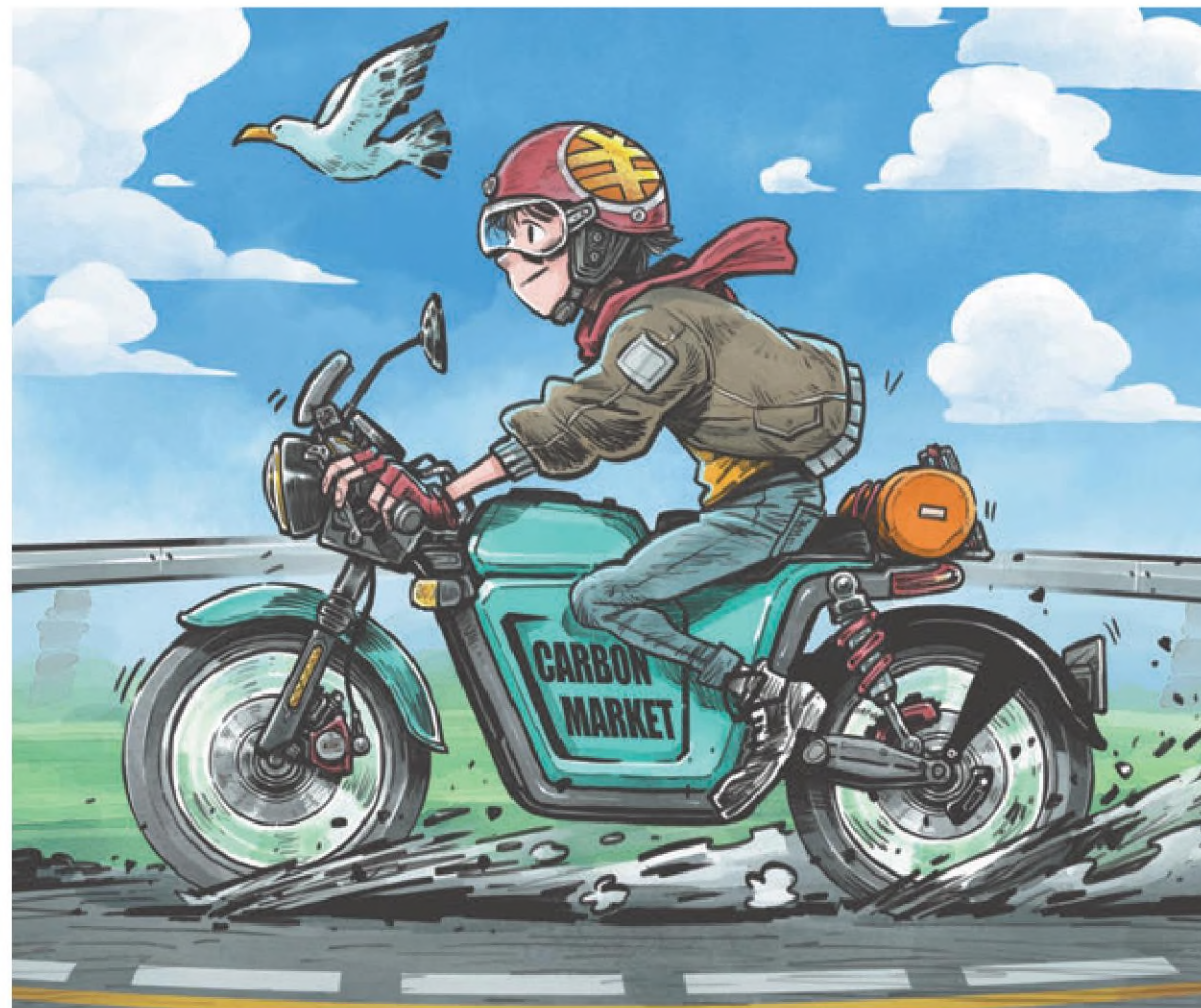
On the other hand, a focus on low-carbon development also drives a range of domestic demand. Initiatives such as urban and rural ecological construction, investments in scientific and technological innovation, and industrial upgrading will contribute to enhancing overall economic vitality and creating new growth opportunities.

By prioritizing low-carbon strategies, China will not only be able to navigate a path toward high-quality development and achieve economic transformation, but also unleash its enormous sustainable growth potential.

Effective market

It is crucial to fully acknowledge and comprehend the pivotal role played by a well-functioning carbon market in China's endeavor to achieve low-carbon transformation.

Among various emission reduction mechanisms, the carbon market is widely regarded as the most optimal. By utilizing market-based mechanisms to establish effective carbon price signals, it can effectively guide all relevant stakeholders to engage in the low-carbon transformation process in



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an orderly and highly efficient manner.

Compared to carbon taxes, which are determined by the government, carbon market prices, derived from market negotiations, are considered more efficient in price formation.

Moreover, carbon taxes do not provide positive incentives for the development and adoption of cutting-edge low-carbon technologies, which gives the carbon market a primary role in the green transformation process.

Although China has established the national Emissions Trading Scheme, its new carbon trading market is still facing a string of gaps and needs further enhancements to ensure efficient resource allocation.

For instance, carbon prices have been hovering at relatively modest levels — around 50 yuan (\$7) to 60 yuan per metric ton with only minor fluctuations. Data from the World Bank, however, show that carbon prices should go from \$40 to \$80 per ton in order to achieve the goal of controlling temperature rises within 2 C.

The trading volume is also insufficient. During the compliance period of the ETS, nearly 80 percent of transactions occurred in the final month, with a total trading volume of less than 200 million tons — less than 1/40 of the annual trading volume in the European Union carbon market.

Last, carbon prices have not yet gained widespread influence. Effective carbon pricing can pro-

vide investors with valuable price signals for asset allocation and risk management. However, the current carbon market primarily functions as a tool for quota allocation, with its role in financial pricing and risk management yet to be fully realized.

There is an urgent need to establish an efficient carbon market that can truly accelerate China's low-carbon transformation efforts.

Required improvements

The ETS' effectiveness in incentivizing emission reduction and mobilizing low-carbon investments has been hindered by a series of mechanism issues, resulting in suboptimal outcomes. To address these challenges and fulfill its intended role, the carbon

trading market is expected to be optimized in the following aspects.

First, establishing a clear carbon emissions cap is imperative. Effective carbon pricing relies on a well-defined cap, as demonstrated by theoretical analysis and international experiences. China should, therefore, come up with a ceiling quota for a specific future period based on past emissions volume and overall reduction targets.

Second, phase out the allocation of free quota. Allocation methods directly influence the scarcity of resources, which serves as the initial stage in price formation. It is necessary to ensure the gradual reduction of free quota, coupled with an increase in auctioned quota.

Third, it is essential to expand the coverage of the ETS to include industries beyond the power sector. The current situation, where high-emission sectors such as steel, chemicals, papermaking and aviation are left out calls for optimization in the near future.

Fourth, a mechanism to maintain price stability should be established. This mechanism is expected to foster expectations of stable and increasing carbon prices, encourage emission reductions, stabilize pricing within the industrial chain, and prevent production disruptions as well as aid in inflation management. A fixed carbon emissions cap will result in a higher level of price volatility. Therefore, it is important to take proactive measures by establishing a price stabilizing mechanism.

Fifth, the development of the carbon market should allow various entities, such as financial institutions, to participate in as soon as possible. The involvement of financial institutions is crucial for effective price discovery, expectation guidance and risk management. Additionally, leveraging the existing financial infrastructure could facilitate trading, custody and settlement in the national carbon market, and boost the development of carbon derivatives.

Sixth, efforts to promote market-oriented reform in energy pricing must be strengthened. The current electricity pricing system is not entirely market-driven, and this poses challenges in transmitting carbon price signals at the electricity price level.

Last, China should attach due importance to the development of the China Certified Emission Reduction scheme, in line with the current global development trends. CCER refers to emission reduction activities conducted by companies voluntarily that are certified by the Chinese government. These activities encompass renewable power generation, carbon credit and carbon removal projects, and are expected to expand further. Currently, enterprises can use CCER credits to offset up to 5 percent of their required carbon emissions allowance, though the reasonableness of this limit still warrants further discussion.

The writer is vice-president and deputy secretary general of the National Association of Financial Market Institutional Investors. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Sustainable growth, legal reforms key to Chinese-style modernization

MAIN STREET

By Wu Xiaoqi

In China, an important goal today and going forward is to achieve Chinese-style modernization. There are two crucial points to be stressed during the process of achieving Chinese-style modernization.

First, it is important to maintain sustainable economic growth. In order to achieve modernization, China must first become a developed, high-income and prosperous country. We must then consider what kind of institutions, mechanisms, policies and talent can promote sustainable economic growth.

I believe that adhering to the path of developing a socialist market economy with Chinese characteristics and making an unwavering commitment to China's reform and opening-up policies are important institutional foundations for maintaining sustainable economic growth. At the same time, we should also promote technological progress and foster talent.

Second, Chinese-style modernization must include the modernization of the Chinese legal system. A market economy and a sound legal system are two fundamental pillars for achieving Chinese-style modernization.

The current reality is that China's economy is undergoing a structural transformation and iterative upgrading of industries. It is hard

for resource-based enterprises and traditional manufacturing industries to become dominant industries in the process of achieving Chinese-style modernization. The most important driving force behind China's modernization is promoting industrial upgrading and iteration through technological progress and innovation.

However, the transition from new technologies to new industries does not happen naturally and requires business incubation through financial means. The reason is that the transformation from new technologies to new industries is full of uncertainties and represents a significant leap. The risks arising from the uncertainties exceed risk tolerance limits of individual capital and even those of entrepreneurs. Therefore, the society as a whole and the financial system should continuously innovate and develop new financial models that can incubate high-tech enterprises.

For this reason, innovation is the most important task for China's financial sector. We need to properly handle the relationship between financial innovation and financial regulation, and firmly guard the bottom line of avoiding systemic financial risks while promoting financial reform, development and opening-up. Striking a balance in this dynamic relationship is absolutely essential.

In the new era we are currently in, the role of technology is becoming increasingly important. It is wrong to assume that new technology will naturally transform into higher productivity or transition into new industries or

products without risks. The transformation process involves business incubation and risk diversification, and this process relies on the role of finance. Without financial innovation, traditional finance cannot accomplish these functional changes.

Many key technological advancements often lead to new industrial revolutions, which spawn changes in the financial sector and related reforms, with calls for financial innovation. Since the first industrial revolution in the mid-1700s, the human society has undergone three industrial revolutions and is now in a critical period of the fourth industrial revolution.

Through studying the history of industrial revolutions spanning over 200 years, we have discovered that finance has also undergone tremendous changes during these epochal transformations. The changes in finance drive economic growth and propel the human society toward higher civilization. The adjustment of China's economic structure and the upgrading of industries constitute the most important tasks we face in the foreseeable future and form an essential foundation for sustaining economic growth.

Therefore, finance must fully meet the needs of the real economy. Here, the "real economy" encompasses the economic structural adjustments brought about by technological advances, while "finance" primarily refers to modern finance, which can meet the financial demands of traditional industries and also play a

role in the incubation and promotion of new industries.

The mission of finance is not to replicate history but to create the future. Finance can only find the direction of reform and innovation by focusing on the future. Financial innovation does not necessarily increase risks because changes in the landscape of the financial sector will eliminate traditional financial risk and lead to adjustments in risk structures.

We should not hinder financial innovation just because the new landscape of the financial industry comes with certain new risks. On the contrary, financial innovation will bring new and more diversified financial functions, which can cover the additional risks they bring and, to some extent, mitigate traditional financial risks. Therefore, we need to have a scientific, comprehensive and systematic understanding of financial innovation.

We should not try to bring China's financial practices back to a single form of business in the financial sector because such a strategy will be unable to keep up with the pace of the times and lacks competitiveness and vitality. This kind of financing may appear to get risks under control but in fact, it is not the case.

At the core of China's financial sector reform is the need to promote risk flow, which enables risk allocation. The flow of risk depends on the flow of assets, and only assets with liquidity can be allocated. Financial marketization creates predictable mechanisms, and financing without predictable mechanisms is counterproductive.

We need to understand the precise meaning of making finance serve the real economy and where the focus lies. Modern finance primarily serves industries and companies that will be competitive in the future. At the same time, finance must also meet diverse financial needs, including wealth management.

The Chinese society is currently in the process of moving toward modernization. Generally speaking, the basic criterion for a country to be considered developed is to have an annual per capita GDP of at least \$25,000. China aims to become a moderately developed economy by 2035 and a great modern socialist country in the future.

During the process of continuously improving income levels, people pay much attention to wealth management. We should not expect that as income levels rise, people will continue to convert their surplus income into bank deposits. The returns obtained from bank deposits are not investment returns because they do not include a risk premium. They are just compensation for deferred consumption.

We must create a wealth management market that matches returns with risks for increasingly prosperous individuals. This is an important task of China's financial reform campaign. Therefore, developing capital markets is a strategic goal of China's financial reform, not just a stopgap measure. We need to ensure that the value of existing wealth can be preserved and increased, especially by continuously reducing the

proportion of real estate in stock assets in the future.

In a normal society, a first home purchase meets people's basic housing needs, and a second home may satisfy greater leisure needs, which is reasonable. From the perspective of wealth management, owning more than two real estate properties as investment may not be rational.

If household assets are primarily allocated to real estate, it indicates that finance is backward in the country. Residents in a modernized country do not have 65 percent of their assets invested in real estate. If the proportion remains the same in the future, it can only suggest that the financial system is lagging behind and has not created diversified financial assets that match returns with risks. Therefore, it is necessary to promote structural reforms in China's financial sector.

The driving force behind financial development comes from technological progress. Without technological advancement and the emergence of new industries, existing assets will struggle to grow.

The future allocation of Chinese people's existing assets should be in the capital market, and equity assets in the market should have growth potential.

The writer is a professor of finance and former vice-president of Renmin University of China. The article has been compiled from his speech at a recent forum. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

COMMENT

Editorials

Ball is still in the US court to get relations on more positive track

The wide attention the meeting between State Councilor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Beijing on Sunday has attracted from around the world speaks volumes of the common expectation of countries that the first visit of the top diplomat of the Joe Biden administration on Sunday and Monday will help thaw the frosty Sino-US relations.

Neither the United States allies nor those being pressured to make a Beijing-or-Washington choice by the Biden administration want to see the rivalry between the world's two largest economies spiral into conflict. Nor do Washington and Beijing for that matter, as the messages from both sides ahead of Blinken's visit indicate. Yet, given the current state of relations between the two countries, a tight lid has been kept on the expectations for any concrete outcomes from the talks.

Not only is there an increasingly longer list of disputes between the two sides, as a result of the Biden administration's actions, but also the necessary conditions to prevent new disputes from being fermented by the US and added to the list, not to mention resolve the existing ones, have yet to be established.

President Biden indicated on Saturday that he hopes Blinken's trip will lay the groundwork for a meeting with his Chinese counterpart later in the year, but as long as the US sees China as its No. 1 challenge, viewing Beijing as an ideological foe, if not a threat to its hegemony, there is little prospect of a rap-

prochement, but only further entrenchment of the rivalry, even if such a meeting is arranged.

That being said, if the Biden administration intends to use the long-delayed trip of its top diplomat to peddle its "de-risking", "competition and cooperation", "guardrails" and "rules-based order" — all rhetorical veneers integral to its China containment strategy that is coercive, suppressive and bullying by its nature — none of the three objectives Blinken mentioned before departing for Beijing is likely to be realized: reopening communication channels, advancing US interests on specific concerns and exploring potential cooperation.

As for the "concerns" Blinken touched upon — the Taiwan question and the South China Sea in particular — the whole world can see which side is coming halfway around the globe to create trouble on which side's doorstep. And which side is using Taiwan as a piece on its geopolitical chessboard.

In short, it is the US that is blocking the channels for communication and cooperation with its actions. It is the US that is speculating on "concerns" that it has manufactured itself. It is the US that is trying to command the moral high ground to isolate China from the rest of the international community.

But while Blinken will have his work cut out to win back Beijing's trust, his trip need not be fruitless as he can gain a first-hand appreciation of Beijing's resolve to defend its core interests as well as its sincerity in seeking to check the deterioration in the bilateral relations. The ball is still in the US court.

Strait Forum counters Western narratives

In mainstream Western narratives and those of the pro-independence forces in Taiwan, the two sides of the Taiwan Strait are on the brink of war.

They have fabricated the lie that as the Chinese mainland, which has been placed in a bully's role in those narratives, constantly upgrades preparedness for "a war of aggression" to reunify the island with the motherland, Taiwan must be armed to its teeth for self-defense, with substantial Western support.

An armed conflict between the two sides of the Strait that would inevitably drag in some of the world's strongest militaries is imminent in the words of their fearmongering.

The 15th Straits Forum, which opened on Saturday in Xiamen, Fujian province, sent a very different message, displaying a common aspiration on both sides of the Taiwan Strait for peace and development.

As the largest gathering for non-governmental exchanges across the Strait held since the pandemic control measures were lifted on the mainland, the event was a thermometer of public enthusiasm for constructive cross-Strait engagement. That more than 5,000 people from Taiwan were invited as guests alone revealed the mainland organizers' sincerity.

In a congratulatory letter read out by Wang Huijing, chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Chinese President Xi Jinping expounded what Wang said was the "ultimate truth" that "Compatriots on both sides of the Strait will do well only when the country and nation do well". While declaring a continuous dedication to cross-Strait economic and cul-

tural exchanges and cooperation, integrated development in all areas, and delivering benefits to people on the island, Wang extended an invitation to all compatriots there to share the extensive opportunities arising from "Chinese-style modernization".

Wang reiterated the mainland side's persistent emphasis on "placing hopes on the people of Taiwan", pledging to make every effort to do and do well whatever is conducive to increasing good feelings, as well as deepening mutual understanding and identification across the Strait. Echoing Wang's remark that only by adhering to the "1992 Consensus" and opposing "Taiwan independence" can cross-Strait relations return to the correct track of peaceful development, Hsia Li-yan, vice-chairman of the Kuomintang, said that is what his party is determined to do.

A "Cross-Strait People's Declaration" jointly compiled by kinship organizations from both sides of the Strait was released at the gathering, vowing to forge tighter people-to-people links across the Strait to serve the purpose of peaceful reunification.

And under the peace-oriented principles both leaders highlighted, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council have jointly issued a document on supporting Fujian to "Explore New Ways of Integrated Development on Both Sides of the Strait" and to build a corresponding pilot zone.

The narrative of an impending war is part of the collusive games Washington and the pro-independence forces on the island are playing. Beijing insists on reunification, and apparently it prefers the peaceful realization of that goal more than anyone else.

Mudslinging won't contribute to human rights

There are different approaches to the protection and development of human rights, and Western countries are not in a position to act as judges on human rights elsewhere.

In a congratulatory letter to the Forum on Global Human Rights Governance, which was held last week in Beijing, Chinese President Xi Jinping said that China advocates safeguarding human rights through security and promotes human rights through development and cooperation.

China's understanding of human rights comes from what it has been doing in its endeavors to improve Chinese people's well-being in the past decades. Development has improved people's livelihoods, and should of course be a major concern when it comes to human rights as it is the foundation for people to enjoy other rights.

That explains why China has proposed the Global Development Initiative. Besides making all out efforts to improve the lives of Chinese people, China has been doing whatever it can with its Belt and Road Initiative and other cooperation programs with various countries to make development increasingly inclusive to the benefit of people of different countries.

China could not have achieved what it has without a peaceful environment. The country knows how important peace is for development and thus for the protection and development of human rights. That explains why the country has long advocated peaceful coexistence between countries,

and dialogue and negotiation as the primary recourse for settling disputes between countries. That also explains why China has put forward the Global Security Initiative for global governance.

When people's lives are devastated by conflict, human rights can hardly be an issue of great concern for a government. So eliminating security risks is the prerequisite for the development of human rights.

It is shameful for the United States to act as a judge on human rights, pointing an accusing finger at the human rights in other countries when there are so many problems in US society and US people are living under the shadow of gun violence.

China believes that cooperation is essential to the development and governance of human rights. Cooperation is a prerequisite for mutual respect and treating each other as equals. Exchanges and mutual learning between different civilizations pave the way for understanding between different peoples.

Only with such understanding will it be possible for a global consensus to be built on issues of common concern, which will help joint global endeavors to respond to common challenges. That is why China has put forward the Global Civilization Initiative.

Instead of mudslinging and taking confrontational approaches, understanding based on exchanges is needed when it comes to the global governance of human rights. Consensus based on understanding helps solve problems, and mudslinging only creates turmoil instead.

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Technology leaders' visits vote of confidence in China

The frequent visits of global technology leaders to China reflect the unpopularity of the United States' "decoupling" efforts. These efforts have not achieved the expected results. Instead, the US has harmed its own interests, undermined the international economic and trade order, and damaged the interests of companies worldwide.

From the perspective of the business environment, China is steadfastly advancing its reform and opening-up policy, while its massive consumer market is providing vast development opportunities for both domestic and foreign companies. According to a survey on China's business environment in the first quarter of 2023, conducted by the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, 97 percent of foreign-funded enterprises expressed satisfaction with the foreign investment policies that have been introduced by the Chinese government since the fourth quar-

ter of last year. Over 70 percent of the surveyed companies also said that they would maintain their current business layout in China or further localize their industry chains in China.

China has a mature, complete, and efficient industrial production system, and its manufacturing industry has been the world's largest for 13 consecutive years. China possesses the world's largest pool of scientific and technological human resources, with the number of engineers accounting for about one-fourth of the global total. The annual output of engineers in China is equivalent to the combined total of the United States, Europe, Japan, and India. China has a strong capacity for innovation-driven development, with the contribution rate of scientific and technological progress exceeding 60 percent. In 2022, China ranked first in the number of international patent applications filed under the Patent

Cooperation Treaty, accounting for over one-fourth of the global total.

Whether it is in terms of the business environment, consumer market, or supportive policies, China is an irreplaceable and indispensable place for win-win cooperation for multinational technology companies.

China's development is inseparable from the world's, and the world's development is related to China's. A more open China will play a more significant role in the global economy. The frequent visits of the leaders of tech giants to China are evidently not impulsive actions by individuals but a vote of confidence and support from numerous multinational companies based on careful observation and investment practices in the Chinese economy. Mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation are expected to drive global technological innovation and promote the development of the world economy.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

Washington must bite the bullet on gun control

A 32-year-old father in Cleveland, Ohio, killed his three sons, ordering them to stand in a row and then shooting them with a rifle. The three young boys were aged 7, 4, and 3. It is a tragedy.

Although the case is different from the mass shootings that happen in public places where the gunman shoots people indiscriminately, the tragedies share one thing in common, namely that the killer held a gun. Had the US effectively implemented stricter gun controls, the deaths could have been lowered, minimized, or even prevented.

With the world economy strugg-

ling and US society facing increasingly bigger problems such as political radicalization, widening social gaps as well as racial hatred, conflicts among people might happen more easily than in the past period of prosperity. Some might argue that guns are neutral, and it is the people holding the guns that kill others, but easy access to guns makes things worse by making these problems more acute by transforming them into bloodshed.

More absurdly, it is poor people at the bottom of society that face the biggest risk. Rich people live in well-protected neighborhoods with well-paid guards, and mass shoot-

ings tend to happen in public spaces with large crowds of people or to poor families when pressures reach boiling point.

With social problems on the rise, guns are especially risky and make things worse. As the social problems US faces, ranging from conflicts among different classes, races, and interest groups, are hard to resolve, US lawmakers should control guns first so that conflicts and crimes bred by these social problems will be less fatal and bloody than they are right now.

Time for action on gun control to prevent more such tragedies.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Gradual rationalization of the real estate market

The National Bureau of Statistics announced that based on the situation in May, the overall real estate market is stable, but it is still facing multiple factors that have affected real estate development and construction, resulting in a relatively sluggish market that is slowly recovering.

As the economy continues to improve, stable policies in the real estate market are showing results, and market expectations are improving, indicating a gradual stabilization of the real estate market.

The uniqueness of the real estate market lies in its dual role as a major driving force behind economic growth and its susceptibility to macroeconomic expectations. Therefore, it becomes a key factor influencing macroeconomic growth.

The real estate market should not be used as a short-term means to stimulate the economy by creating a buying frenzy and driving

inventory reduction. This is because in many major cities, housing prices are already high compared to local incomes. A buying frenzy would distort supply and demand in the short term, leading to pulsating price increases, which is unfavorable for the healthy and sustainable development of the real estate market.

Additionally, with population growth slowing down and urbanization rates continuously increasing, relatively stable demand does not support further price increases. Therefore, the real estate market must maintain stable and healthy operations and avoid drastic fluctuations.

The government needs to use countercyclical adjustments to stabilize and promote macroeconomic growth, improve market expectations, and prevent negative expectations caused by the downward trend in employment and income, which may cause poten-

tial homebuyers to postpone their purchasing decisions. We should also promote orderly urban renewal. Currently, many old and dilapidated neighborhoods still exist in most cities, with poor living conditions, and they are the main drivers of replacement demand. However, urban renewal should avoid hasty and uncoordinated approaches.

We should encourage the release of improvement and rigid housing demand, remove unreasonable restrictive policies, and prevent speculative investment. In larger cities, innovative financing methods should be explored to increase the supply of public rental housing and address housing issues for new residents. At the same time, we should continue to promote the urbanization of migrant workers and provide comprehensive social security services such as education and healthcare.

— 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS HERALD

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COMMENT



China and the World Roundtable | China-EU Relations

Editor's note: China and the European Union share extensive common interests and a solid foundation for cooperation. As two big markets, China and the EU should play a constructive role in injecting stabilizing factors into a turbulent world. Three experts share their views on the issue with China Daily.

Wang Yiwei

China policy key to EU's strategic autonomy

To decouple, or not to decouple, with China, that is the question for the European Union and the United States. The EU has decided to not decouple, but instead to pursue a policy of "de-risking" from China. To achieve this, they say, the EU will focus on five factors.

To begin with, the EU will address its economic vulnerabilities and reduce its strategic dependency on China which, the EU officials claim, does not mean completely stopping trade with China. The key is to achieve diversification of raw materials and value chains, according to EU officials. Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation Liesje Schreinemacher responded to the United States urging the EU to increase restrictions on trade with China by saying the EU will ensure economic security powers remained in the hands of national governments.

Europe has been taking measures to boost its industrial competitiveness and strengthen its economic resilience, especially in areas such as healthcare, digital technology and clean energy technology, while deepening cooperation with like-minded partners. This includes reducing dependency on China for rare earths, batteries, pharmaceutical raw materials, and other key resources.

Second, Europe has been rebalancing its trade relations. China is an important trading partner, and Sino-EU trade has been beneficial to both sides. However, from the EU's perspective, the EU's trade deficit with China has doubled over the

past decade, reaching nearly €400 billion (\$433.32 billion) in 2022. In the EU's eyes, this imbalance has been caused partly due to China's "non-market practices" including "implicit subsidies", "discrimination" in public tenders, and "market distortions". Therefore, it is necessary to address these distortions and rectify such practices, the EU officials said.

Third, the EU, in order to better protect the bloc's security interests, will hold discussions on how to strengthen control on exports and overseas investments, especially in sensitive high-tech areas.

Fourth, the EU has decided to strengthen relations with its partners on core diplomatic policies and security challenges, and continue to urge China to not "support Russia's war efforts". The bloc also reiterated its commitment to peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, and vowed to oppose any unilateral attempts to change the status quo, particularly through the use of force.

And fifth, the EU will deepen cooperation with other economies and promote the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment as an alternative to the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative.

However, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has said that even if Italy does not participate in the Belt and Road Initiative,



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ative, it can still maintain good relations with China.

And Schreinemacher recently warned that complete "decoupling" from China would make it impossible for the EU to achieve its planned green transition. She emphasized that China has made huge investments in green technology and research, and trade ties between the Netherlands and China are strong. She also said the two sides need each other to pursue green economic transformation.

Indeed, the biggest risk for Europe is its excessive reliance on the US for security (which outweighs its economic reliance on China), to the extent that an independent investigation into the Nord Stream 2 pipeline explosion cannot be conducted, and European media dare not speak or publish the truth. So why focus on China instead of the US, the real source of risk?

Under the guise of "de-risking", the EU is actually trying to "de-Sinicize" its econ-

omy and society and indirectly decouple from China, which will ultimately blunt Europe's competitiveness. This is something the EU needs to think carefully about, because unlike China and the US, it cannot rely on the bloc's market alone for its economic development and green transformation. Europe is also at a disadvantage when it comes to competing for the Chinese or the global market.

Hence, the EU should not allow the US to mislead it into pursuing "de-risking". The EU's policy toward China as a partner, competitor and rival is contradictory. It shows the bloc has not devised a clear strategy toward China and lacks strategic vision.

China-EU relations have become a litmus test for Europe's strategic autonomy. A Europe with independent foreign and economic policies can become a strong pillar of a multipolar world. In fact, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz asserted at the recent Global Solution Summit that a multipolar world is already a reality. It is hoped the EU will understand this and work out its own, independent policy toward China.

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

Klaus F. Zimmermann

Decoupling move harmful for both

With China becoming a major global economic and political player, its economic ties with Europe have strengthened. The EU is now the second-largest trading partner of China, and China is the largest trade partner of the EU, with 9 percent of the EU's goods exports destined for China and more than 20 percent of its goods imports coming from China.

This is the result of deepening mutual economic dependency as a strategic objective to not only promote peace, and mutual progress and prosperity but also to secure these goals in the long run. But in view of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the long-term securing of these goals through economic integration no longer seems assured. Many voices are therefore calling for a diversification of EU-China ties, if not a total disentanglement of mutual dependency.

The EU and its major member states such as Germany are now reflecting on how to adjust and develop their China policy. But this is not completely new. These countries have reflected on such issues in the past too, for instance, when China launched the Belt and Road Initiative, a massive, ambitious infrastructure improvement project, in 2013. Plus, the EU has already referred to China as a "systemic rival" in 2019.

The drastic shift in China-US relations from "Chimerica", a kind of symbiotic embrace as suggested by observers, to a situation of strong mutual rejection, is not helpful to EU-China ties either. And given that the EU and the United

States are and will remain close partners, European strategic independence has its limits.

However, the EU's economic decoupling with China could threaten the stability and friendly trade environment needed for long-term cooperation and collaboration on more general issues of global welfare. In a world of rising tensions and growing mistrust, exchanges among political, business and academic leaders have become even more important for promoting mutual understanding, leading to effective dialogue and cooperation. Because

mutually respectful dialogue can help narrow the communication gaps and misperceptions, and build mutual trust.

As June 5 marked the 300th birth anniversary of Scottish economist and philosopher Adam Smith, the world should reflect on his contributions to the concept of the division of labor. In his *The Wealth of Nations*, he argues that division of labor is a driver of economic growth. This is crucial for international relations, too, as the international division of labor allows countries to specialize in certain sectors and still enjoy a wide range of goods and services.

China is important for the EU also because of its crucial role in addressing global and regional challenges, including but not limited to climate change, energy transformation, human migration, population aging, food security, pandemics, and weapons and nuclear proliferation. Solutions to the big upcoming crises are public goods, which can be enjoyed everywhere.

EU-China relations could still benefit from a deepening of partnerships among EU and Chinese companies, and increased interactions between academics and civil society organizations from the two sides.

Yet many EU countries are still concerned about the lack of market access in China and consequently large trade imbalances, possible "intellectual property theft" and "illegal technology transfers", cybersecurity and "non-transparent" regulatory and legal systems.

Germany, the economic heavyweight in the EU, could play a leading role in this regard, by helping stabilize China-EU ties. It is in the country's own interest to do so, given its significant trade orientation.

But it can do this only on the basis of a balanced strategy that combines intensified cooperation with China with a policy aimed at "de-risking" some aspects of bilateral economic and political ties. There is a need for all to understand this mutually beneficial approach, because it includes efforts to secure the critical infrastructure and important raw materials of a country.

Since diplomacy and dialogue remain the most important elements to stabilize and develop China-EU ties, the two sides should arrange for frequent visits and exchanges by political leaders, in order to set the direction for the development of Sino-EU ties. There is also a need to organize debates and support for such an endeavor in the European media.

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



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Ann Buel

Sino-European ties should be free of US pressure

Although relations between China and the European Union are undergoing changes, they will continue due to the undeniable economic power of China and its importance to the economic success of the EU, which is facing technical and/or real economic recession.

The entire eurozone has already witnessed a slowdown in growth, much observed in the Czech Republic and Lithuania, also in Germany and other eurozone countries, which was in technical recession for two quarters in a row. The technical recession could turn into a real one or lead to economic stagnation and spread across the EU and the United States.

The main reason behind this is the industry-related crisis due to the failure of export operations owing to the lack of purchasing power in the domestic and international markets.

To overcome this situation, but also under pressure from the US, the EU is set to take some challenging decisions and hold a series of meetings to define its policy toward China. At a key EU leaders' summit on June 29-30, EU-China relations will be high on the agenda.



The author is a former official of the European Commission.

That EU-China relations will continue was, in a way, confirmed by what European Council President Charles Michel recently said that it is in the EU's interest to maintain "stable and constructive" cooperation with China. Michel also called on China to use its "influence" over its neighbor Russia to end the Ukraine crisis.

Josep Borrell, the EU's high representative for foreign affairs, in a recent commentary, hinted at how the EU could adjust its three-part policy toward China ("partner, competitor and systemic rival"). And while Borrell came closer than before to acknowledging China's aspiration to "build a new world order", the prescriptions he provided are woefully tepid, especially on human rights. He called for "robust engagement" between the EU and Beijing, though,

"De-risking" is the latest term to enter the China-related policy lexicon of the EU. But it appears to largely mean, for some leaders at least, protecting EU economic players' interests. Perhaps the most vivid example was given by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who sought to "de-risk" ties with China by ensuring dozens of German business executives accompanied him to Beijing during his November 2022 visit to Beijing, an approach adopted by French President Emmanuel Macron in April.

According to analysts, the EU should explain how it will recalibrate its human rights policy toward China.

After all, human rights, hyped up in recent times by Washington and Brussels, are a global issue, with breaches in the US and the EU. The recent promises made by the US administration, especially State Secretary Antony Blinken's claim that "America is back", and are engaged in helping resolve issues such as climate change, Iran's nuclear ambitions and human rights, have not been met.

There is evidence of greater silence on human rights violations in the EU, predominantly in Lithuania and in EU organizations, primarily the European

Commission, after complaints to the US State Department didn't evoke the promise of improving the situation but, in contrast, the denial of Fulbright scholarships on political grounds; perpetration of discrimination in the job market, leading to economic violence; even stealing of personal funds sent by the United Nations through fake invoices; and US State Department's support to offenders rather than the victims.

It is worth remembering what some European officials have said: if you have nothing else to accuse China of, go for human rights even if it is not always real. Western countries, especially the US, should first set their own house in order before criticizing China. Otherwise, they would be manipulating the universal value of human rights.

Human rights cannot be the denominator of future China-EU relations. Sino-EU ties should be based not on polarization, but on mutual interest and respect, on multilateralism and economic exchanges, and should be free from unlawful US interference and pressures.

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

GLOBAL VIEWS

GERT GROBLER

The new scramble for Africa

Rising economic cooperation between the continent and China in a changing world is a sign of their rejection of unilateralism and hegemonic practices

The African Development Bank has indicated recently that economic growth in Africa is estimated to slow to 3.8 percent in 2023 from 4.1 percent in 2022 due to subdued investment and falling exports.

African economies, however, remain resilient in the face of dampened growth prospects and rising debt levels. Some African governments will therefore plan to sharpen their focus on macroeconomic stability, domestic revenue mobilization, debt reduction, enhanced trade and productive investments to reduce increasing economic challenges.

Over the past few years, Africa has increasingly become one of the stages for geo-economic competition among major economic blocs. Some analysts describe this phenomenon as a "new scramble for Africa" in reference to the first "scramble for Africa", which took place roughly between 1884 and 1914 and resulted in powerful European nations dividing, occupying and colonizing the continent.

The reason for this "renewed" interest in Africa can be ascribed to the fact that the continent is on the threshold of significant economic transformation and development. Africa is about to embark on an exciting process of industrialization, closing its infrastructure gap and unleashing the potential of its massive agricultural and resource wealth as well as digital industry. It is no wonder that an increasing number of countries are recognizing the continent's growing economic and demographic weight. It is forecast that the continent's population will increase to approximately 2.4 billion by 2050 and that consumer and business spending will rise to roughly \$16 trillion in the same year.

It is most encouraging to note that over the past few decades, the long-standing friendship and cooperation between Africa and China has grown exponentially, delivering fruitful outcomes across the board. China's trade with Africa has risen 20-fold over the past two decades, with China being Africa's largest trading partner over the past decade.

The next phase of closer Africa-China cooperation is taking place against the background of the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as a rapidly evolving political and economic international landscape, shifting global balances of power, with a great deal of uncertainty and many new chal-

lenges on multiple fronts, which will increasingly necessitate closer strategic coordination between Africa and China on a bilateral, as well as multilateral level, an approach both sides have already agreed to.

Despite many headwinds, trade between Africa and China jumped to a record level of \$282 billion in 2022 — an 11 percent increase year-on-year, bolstered by China's wider opening-up and Beijing's recent push to boost imports from Africa.

Chinese exports to Africa totaled \$164.49 billion last year, an increase of 11.2 percent year-on-year. Imports from the continent rose at a similar rate to reach \$117.51 billion in the same period. It was the second consecutive year of growth after the pandemic which had a devastating effect on trade in 2020.

As Africa is regarded as an investment destination with significant untapped potential and in order to continue expansion of two-way investment, China under took to invest a further \$60 billion in Africa by 2035, especially in support of African agriculture, manufacturing, infrastructure, environmental protection, the digital economy and the blue economy.

In terms of investment promotion, China will also encourage enterprises to invest no less than \$10 billion in Africa over the next three years, and will establish a platform for China-Africa private investment promotion.

The African side, which continues to face major economic and development challenges, has expectations for China-Africa cooperation to boost economic recovery and is eager to actively expand cooperation and value added exports to China. China has noted these African concerns and consequently announced a series of practical and results-based measures which would further facilitate trade.

As economic recovery of the continent is a top priority, the implementation phase of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement is of critical importance to Africa. The AfCFTA represents a

comprehensive plan which seeks to create a single, liberalized market for goods, services and capital in a 55-nation bloc of 1.3 billion people with a \$3 trillion combined GDP and which aims to enhance intra-regional trade, industrial and infrastructure development.

In supporting Africa to advance integrated cooperation, China has actively participated in the development of the AfCFTA and provided continued support toward the full implementation of this important initiative.

Given the polarized global landscape among others due to the Ukraine and other international crises and conflicts, as well as its negative economic impact globally, many African countries share China's constructive international approach which promotes coordinated multilateral and global responses and which will continue to inject growing momentum into world peace and development.

This commendable approach, which strongly resonates with a vast part of the international community, demonstrates the legitimate demand of Africa and China to defend its sovereignty, security and development interests. It represents a powerful response in rejecting unilateralism and hegemonic practices in the world. It is unfortunate that a counterproductive approach of "geopolitical contests" and "bloc confrontation" may inevitably divert from global economic and development priorities which are required to promote global peace and address the plight of the poor and marginalized in the world.

African countries value their comprehensive strategic and mutually beneficial partnership with China and the continent should continue to work with China in firmly supporting each other on core interests and major concerns, jointly safeguarding true multilateralism and the strengthening of an international system with the United Nations at its core and a world order based on international law.

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SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

ZHOU YUYUAN

Changing dynamics

Great power competition is shaping new issues in China-Africa cooperation as the global development paradigms are being transformed

In terms of economic growth, since the commodity prices collapsed globally around 2015, the growth momentum in Africa has begun to decline, and political, economic and development challenges have been accumulating. The shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ukraine crisis and the structural impact of the energy transition have further exacerbated this trend. In terms of political security, the increasing number of violent conflicts, the possible spread of extremism and terrorism and the rise of non-traditional security threats, such as food and energy scarcity, have made the continent face more severe political security challenges in recent years.

The global development transformation has intensified the strategic planning needs of African countries for future growth. Some African countries are striving to participate in the green development transformation process shaped by climate change. African nations also need the sharing of development and transformation concepts and experience as well as material assistance.

Addressing the development challenges of Africa has become an important driving force for China-Africa cooperation. The two sides jointly launched the Initiative on Partnership for Africa's Development and issued the Declaration on China-Africa Cooperation on Combating Climate Change and both are committed to building a fair and stable financing framework for international development. China and Africa also jointly call on developed countries and the international community to actively fulfill their commitments and contribute to alleviating the financial and debt problems of African and developing countries. China strongly supports African countries to play a greater role in global affairs and their proposals at the United Nations, backs them to play a bigger part in the UN Security Council reform, takes the lead in assisting the African Union to become a permanent member of the G20, supports increasing the share of African states in multilateral financial institutions, and is increasing the attention to African issues through multilateral platforms such as the G20 and BRICS.

Solving problems in China-Africa cooperation is an important issue for both sides. For the problems in trade, investment and financing cooperation between the two sides, China actively participates in seeking solutions through bilateral and multilateral channels. It supports Africa to expand its exports to China, has further expanded the range of products with zero tariff treat-

ment from the least developed countries that have established diplomatic relations with China, and has opened a "green channel" for African agricultural products to China through the China International Import Expo, China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo, and the construction of e-commerce centers. China has promised to invest no less than \$10 billion in Africa from 2022 to 2024, encourages domestic financial institutions to support Chinese enterprises in investing in African enterprises and projects through public-private partnerships, and assists Africa to implement 10 projects involving industrialization and employment promotion. It strengthens industrial docking and production capacity cooperation between the two sides, and drives Africa's industrial growth and diversified economic development by expanding the industry chain and enhancing the value chain. In response to the current difficulties in financing in Africa, China has committed to appropriately increasing the preferential loans, innovating financing models, implementing 10 infrastructure connectivity projects, supporting infrastructure construction, providing a \$10 billion credit line to African financial institutions, and focusing on supporting small- and medium-sized enterprises in Africa. To support the Horn of Africa in achieving long-term stability, peace and prosperity, China has proposed the Outlook on Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa. It supports African countries in addressing the triple challenges of security, development and governance. Africa has also been identified as a key partner for cooperation in implementing the China-proposed Global Security Initiative.

China-Africa cooperation is facing new opportunities for transformation and upgrading. First, the energy transformation, digital economy, green development, and new industrial revolution have enabled Africa to enter a new stage of economic transformation. Raising its status in the global industry chain and seizing the opportunity of the fourth technological revolution are becoming key expectations and national strategies for African countries. E-commerce, the 5G network, green economy, and new energy cooperation are turning into new growth points for bilateral cooperation. Cultivating these new growth points and enhancing China's role in Africa's development and transformation process are important new directions for their cooperation. Second, increasing

institutionalized connections with African society and people is an important area for further optimizing cooperation between the two sides. Compared to governments, public sectors and state-owned enterprises, the private sector in Africa is the "engine" of economic growth and the most important sector for promoting employment. Investment and policy support in Africa's private sector can bring a wide range of economic and social impacts. China-Africa cooperation should increase attention to the private sector and small- and medium-sized enterprises in Africa, and attach more importance to the unique role of African youth, women and social organizations.

Finally, the cooperation between China and Africa requires both sides to make new efforts in the era of great changes. In the face of the global development transformation, China and Africa need to enhance their ability to unite and cooperate in addressing common global challenges, sharpen their competence to shape, lead and expand new cooperation agendas, and more importantly, to improve their ability to solve problems, deepen cooperation, and innovate mechanisms. To this end, China and Africa should assume more proper roles in South-South cooperation, global governance and the international order, and continuously expand their common ground from a global perspective. They should adhere to the spirit of China-Africa friendly cooperation, firmly support each other, and strive to solve the key problems that hinder Africa's development. The two sides should improve their cooperation mechanism and strengthen the coordination and docking between the Forum on China Africa Cooperation, the Belt and Road Initiative, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilization Initiative and the cooperation mechanism between China and Africa. They should promote the formation of an open and inclusive global partnership for Africa's development through expanding and improving bilateral cooperation in new fields and building a more balanced structure of China-Africa ties.

The author is a senior research fellow and deputy director at the Center for West Asian and African Studies at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies. 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.



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

LIFE

OBITUARY: HUANG YONGYU

In a television interview in July, Huang Yongyu, the celebrated artist and writer, then in his 90s, said: "Death is not at all a dreadful thing that I would fear. And I don't feel like leaving anything (for people to remember), such as ashes, or (a shrine) to be paid for by devotion at the ancestral hall; there is no need for that."

Huang wrote a poem more than four decades ago, titled *If I Could Live to 100 Years Old*, in which he also mentioned about the end of life: "The day would come, and as if I were to embark upon a journey, I would bring a tiny small luggage, and put into my chest pocket a rose yet not open; like a veteran sailor to sail far away, (I) would not disturb others, and quietly, I close the door of where I've lived for long."

Huang, whose artistic output is well-received among the public, bid a farewell to the world in the quiet, distant manner he had envisaged. A family statement released on Wednesday announced his passing away a day earlier, at the age of 99; it also said no memorial services will be held, at his will. "I wish that my ashes will be returned to nature as fertilizer," said his last signed will in September 2021.

News outlets and social networking platforms have been flooded with reports and postings mourning his death, in evidence of the man's enormous popularity transcending time and space, age and social background.

Hailing from Changde, Hunan province, Huang lived with a striving, unyielding spirit that transformed him, a country boy with a humble background, into a legendary figure in art and literature in the second half of the 20th-century China. His oeuvre, encompassing paintings, woodcuts, literary compositions and designs, embodies humor, acumen and a magnanimous attitude, which made him a subject of respect and empathy among audiences.

Huang, a self-taught artist and former professor of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, witnessed the progress of Chinese art throughout the 20th century, and he himself took an active part in the course. He worked with, and befriended, influential personas in the circles of arts and culture. And the accomplishments came from his perseverance in self-learning and hard work.

Born to a family in destitution, Huang finished primary school and in his early teens, he left his hometown to seek a better living.

He wandered from place to place to take on different jobs to support himself: apprentice at ceramics factories, schoolteacher, prop designer at theater troupes and magazine illustrator.

Meanwhile, his interest in reading and painting formed in childhood developed into a will to establish a career as an artist and writer. Coping with life hardships and social instability, he honed skills in art and especially, achieved some fame as a woodcut artist.

"During wartime, when I heard guns and bombs, I immediately grabbed a backpack and ran for my life," Huang once recalled. "I carried these things around, as I moved from one place to another during the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) and throughout the decades afterward. I have never parted with them. They are like my bones, documenting part of my history."

One of his best known woodcuts, *Ashima*, which was inspired by an ethnic folktale during a trip in Yun-



Veteran of art leaves deep spiritual legacy

From humble origins, iconic painter left an impressive array of works, covering many fields, **Lin Qi** reports.

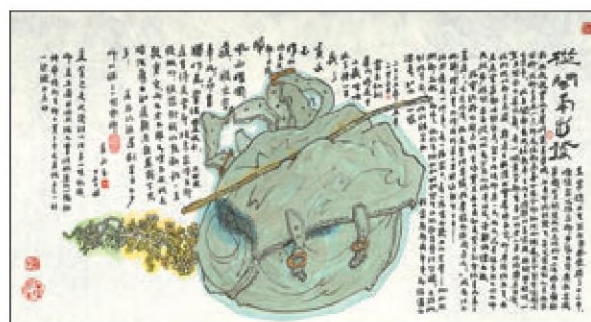


nan province in 1954, is now on show at the National Art Museum of China in Beijing.

Among those cultural luminaries who acknowledged Huang's talent, regardless of his background, was Xu Beihong, then the dean of CAFA, who landed Huang, then in Hong Kong, a teaching position at the academy's department of print art in the early 1950s. He taught there for decades, and later leveraged his endeavor in creation and education to be a vice-chairman of China Artists Association.

Settling in Beijing opened a new chapter in Huang's life. He marched into other territories of art: learning Chinese painting and oil painting. And he published essays to share his rich experiences and anecdotes of friends — mostly cultural figures — and his poems were often illustrated with his own drawings.

Huang's works have touched the softest spot in people's hearts primarily not on the technical side, but because of the vigor of life to erupt from the subjects he depicted, child-



Top: Huang Yongyu at his exhibition at the National Art Museum of China in Beijing in 2017.

JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY
Counter-clockwise from above: *My Country, My People*, at the capital's National Art Museum of China; *Traveling Afar*, part of the Powerlong Museum's collection in Shanghai. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY
Huang's last painting, *Starting From Minnan*, made earlier this year. PHOTO COURTESY OF BEIJING FINE ART ACADEMY
Huang's stamp marking the Year of the Rabbit this year and his design of a stamp celebrating the Year of the Monkey, issued in 2016. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

like innocence and honesty, and a witty perspective.

He revisited animals in his work to express his life philosophy. For example, he once drew a mouse and wrote on the painting: "I look ugly, (but) my mom likes me anyway."

While it was his design of the Golden Monkey stamp, issued in 1980 as the first of the rotation of zodiac stamps by China Post, that truly made him a household name. This Year of the Monkey stamp created by Huang has become a sought-after collectible on the art market.

Huang designed a set of two Year of the Rabbit stamps for this year, while one of them — featuring a laughing, blue rabbit done in a comic style — drew divided responses, as some said it didn't look eye-pleasing at all.



Be serious of the thing you want to do, and let your interest guide you and read all the interesting books in the world. If you miss me, well, take a look at the sky, and the clouds."

Huang Yongyu, artist

Huang was open-minded to the critical feedback, saying he was to make people happy only. He once said: "The mission of an artist is to continuously discover things that people don't notice, and show them to the audience, who will be surprised and say, 'how could I not notice that?' That is pretty much what art is for."

Huang enjoyed the feeling of indulging himself in the world of art and writing as much as creating an enriched lifestyle. He is a known collector of vintage and luxury cars. He built a "ten thousand lotuses garden" at his spacious villa in suburban Beijing. He loved lotus flowers so much that he made dozens of paintings of the plant, many of several meters in length and height. He kept an army of dogs and several cats at home.

The 75-year-long marriage between Huang and his beloved wife Zhang Meixi, who died in 2020 at the age of 98, has been talked about by people with great relish. Zhang came from a well-connected family, and tied the knot with Huang against her family's wishes. The couple collaborated in work: Huang made illustrations for the work of Zhang, a children's literature writer.

His last works included a solo show of poems and illustrations at the National Museum of Modern Chinese Literature in Beijing, in April last year, and an ink painting done earlier this year, titled *Starting from Minnan*, which shows a big used backpack, surrounded by his recollections of early years spent in southern Fujian province after leaving his hometown in Hunan. The painting was made especially for his woodcuts exhibition, which opened at a museum in Xiamen, Fujian, on June 10.

Huang once said: "Be serious of the thing you want to do, and let your interest guide you and read all the interesting books in the world."

"If you miss me, well, take a look at the sky, and the clouds."

Contact the writer at linqi@chinadaily.com.cn

What's on

Heritage in focus



From landmark sites to nature and human creativity, such as the Forbidden City and Temple of Heaven,

to time-honored arts and crafts, including local operas and techniques to restore artifacts, a photo exhibition at the China Millennium Monument zooms in on the variety of examples of cultural traditions in Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei province. It also puts into focus people's efforts to preserve these long-standing items and practices throughout generations. More than 300 snapshots, by professional and amateur photographers from across the country, draw people's attention to not only the famous cultural relics but also those kept at lesser-known museums and memorial halls, which deserve equal protection. The photos also update the audience with the latest developments in technologies applied in archaeology and conservation, including remote sensing, aerial photography and underwater archaeology. The exhibition, on through to Sunday, was opened at

this year's Cultural and Natural Heritage Day, on June 10, and is part of the ongoing event *Photo Beijing*. 9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 9A Fuxing Road, Haidian district, Beijing. 010-8418-7900.

Graduation show



The application of artificial intelligence is one highlight at this year's graduation work exhibition mounted by the Academy of Arts and Design, Tsinghua University. The exhibition at Tsinghua University Art Museum shows the creations of

the undergraduate students, many of which envision the further integration of AI into the various aspects of social life, including art education, design, livestreaming and the conservation of cultural heritage. Exploration with new materials and technology with a cross-disciplinary approach has been a focus of the teaching of the Academy of Arts and Design, to encourage students to gain new knowledge and experiences, and make their work address social changes and demands. The graduation show has been not only a treat to eyes and a stage of experimental ideas, but also a platform of possible solutions of issues such as sustainable development, underprivileged groups, rural vitalization and urban renewal, among others. The exhibition ends on Saturday. The academy has also launched an online portal to show the graduation works of

postgraduates and undergraduates. 9 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. Tsinghua University, Haidian district. 010-6278-1012.

Profound resonance

Echo of Water, an ongoing exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Yinchuan, the capital city of the Ningxia Hui autonomous region, examines the importance of water in Northwest China, and shows artists' imagination grounded in the long history and culture of the region. Northwest China has developed a unique cultural landscape to reflect a lifestyle that has been shaped by the Yellow River. The first part of the exhibition displays artworks that employ elements of local intangible heritage, such as paper-cutting and silhouette puppetry; and the second part shows digital art, photos and installations in which artists incor-



porate their observation of people's life along the second longest river in the country. It is a show to connect the past and future of the Yellow River, and to enrich and diversify a unique regional culture that has been thriving along the river. 10 am-5 pm, closed on Mondays. 12 Hele Road, Xingqing district, Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui autonomous region. 0951-842-6111.

CHINADAILY

LIFE

There's something about the soil in the eastern foothills of the Helan Mountains in the Ningxia Hui autonomous region. The fine silt is so dry that it retains the blazing heat that beats down on it for 3,000 hours each year. Its qualities have led the autonomous region to begin to eke out name for itself in the world of wine.

"The wine industry here is growing each year, and more and more people from outside China are coming to visit this region to find out about it," says Henry Ho, president of the Hong Kong Wine and Spirits Association. He was one of dozens of wine industry experts attending the third China (Ningxia) International Wine Culture and Tourism Expo held in early June.

June is the perfect time of year for Ningxia's over 200 winemakers to introduce and sell their latest vintages to both domestic and overseas markets before the busy harvest season begins, running from August to October.

The wine industry in Ningxia, born in the 1980s with the opening of the government-owned Xixia King winery, trod a slow development path. The central government granted the region its own geographical indication designation in 2003. Such indications are given to products with a specific location origin and qualities that are linked to that origin.

Since then, the Ningxia wine industry has risen to become China's eighth most valuable geographic indication brand, valued at 32 billion yuan (\$4.48 billion), producing 138 million bottles annually, exporting to more than 40 countries worldwide and winning numerous international awards and accolades, such as the Decanter World Wine Awards and Concours Mondial de Bruxelles.

One such winner of Decanter plaudits is Fei Tswei, which won a silver in 2020 for its vintage using a rich blend of cabernet sauvignon and marselan grapes, described as having a "black treacle nose", "aromas of dense rich black fruits" and being "peppery on the palate" with "assertive tannins".

Despite success in competitions globally, wines from Ningxia have yet to establish a firm seat at the table in terms of international markets, with traditional heavyweights from Europe, South America, the United States and Australia still dominating market share.

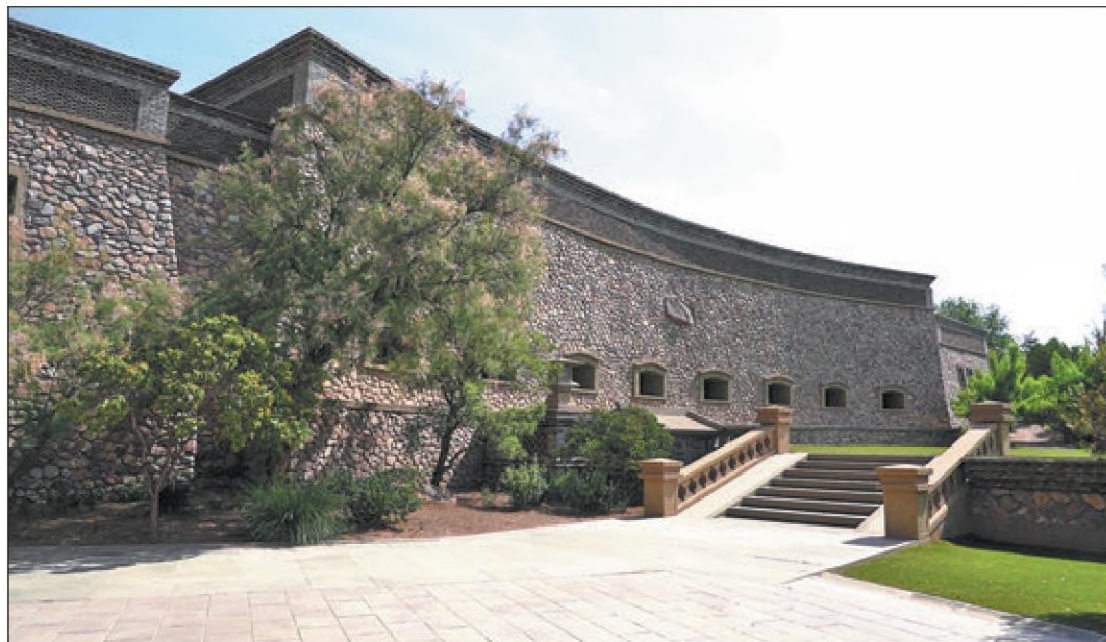
"We do well in Japan, Singapore, Asian markets and we are making efforts to get a better foothold in Europe, but actually, the United Kingdom seems the most promising for us," says Zhang Yanli, the passionate owner of Ningxia winemaker Fei Tswei. She's keen to tell the story of Chinese wine, especially the wine from Ningxia, and says the UK market, unlike other European countries, is more open to trying new things.

"Though they do make some amazing sparkling wines (in the UK), they don't have a wine industry like France or Italy, so they don't feel a sense of national loyalty, and also the British are very passionate and knowledgeable when it comes to wine," Zhang says.

The winemaker is particularly proud of her Ningxia wines being served at the British Museum in London earlier this year during the grand opening of the exhibition *China's Hidden Century*.

"This was a very special moment for us because we have the rich history and the story of China, and we have wine from China, which is part of that story," she says.

Another Ningxia winery that is embracing its cultural heritage is Lansai. The winery, run in part by Zeng



Ningxia wine making a splash

Vintners win international awards, gain at home, export to 40 countries, **Owen Fishwick** reports in Yinchuan.



Top: The fermentation vats at Ningxia's Chateau Yuanshi are housed in a building made using stones recovered from a nearby quarry.

Clockwise from upper left: China Daily reporter Owen Fishwick examines a bottle of wine at the third China (Ningxia) International Wine Culture and Tourism Expo held in early June; bottles of wine produced by Copower Jade Chateau feature handwritten Chinese script; Ningxia has become well-known for its cultivation of marselan wine grapes, but growers continue to expand varieties; barrels of wine are stored in cellars underground in order to ensure the humidity level is kept between 65 and 70 percent. PHOTOS BY FU XUEWEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Xiaojun, began building European-style buildings for its operations, but scrapped that plan after a 2013 European wine-tasting tour.

"It's very important that we celebrate our Chinese culture and create our own story, and that is what can make our brand stand out from others," says Zeng, as she gives a tour of her Chinese-inspired vineyard.

Gone are the mock chateaus or brash buildings with Bavarian flourishes, and instead the winery is complete with Chinese traditional courtyards, gray brickwork, arched roof-tiling and animal statues of the Chinese zodiac.

Lansai won a Decanter gold in 2020 for its Yu Moli cabernet sauvignon, described as having a "classic nose", "elegant aromas of roasted coffee and leather", "assertive and polished tannins" and a "lovely long finish".

"Chinese culture can be seen in all our branding. It connects with not just Chinese people, but can connect with other people in other markets, we hope," Zeng says.

A case in point, on one bottle of marselan — a French wine grape variety that has found a home in Ningxia for its ability to produce highly aromatic medium-bodied reds — a glorious Chinese dragon snakes its body around the glass. Zeng says the significance of the dragon is that the ridges along its spine resemble the 24 peaks running the length of the Helan Mountains and mirror the 24 Chinese lunar terms that have been so crucial to and ingrained in the nation's agricultural history.

Convincing Chinese consumers has been no easy task, but the efforts of Chinese winemakers have paid off. China has risen to become the eighth-biggest wine market in the world, with a growing number of Chinese consumers switching from foreign brands to local producers.

However, cracking traditional wine markets overseas is something that will take greater patience, effort and time, experts say. In the UK, several major retailers stock wine made in Ningxia, so there are signs at least that the world has sat up and taken notice.

The International Organisation of Vine and Wine, a powerful Dijon-based intergovernmental body that deals with the technical and scientific aspects of viticulture and winemaking, has thrown its support behind China's burgeoning winemaking industry.

The director general of the organization, Pau Roca, said in a speech at the opening ceremony of this year's international wine expo in Ningxia: "China has all the potential, research and new technologies to have its rightful share in shaping the global vine and wine tendencies and cannot continue to be isolated in this matter."

"As an example, Ningxia's success in becoming the first Chinese (winemaking) pilot zone is enhancing its performance and international recognition. To continue working toward that future, we now look forward to having China as a full member very soon, with all the rights and influence the nation deserves."

A few miles down the road from the Helan Mountains is Shuidonggou, one of the earliest Paleolithic excavation sites in China and often called the birthplace of China's prehistoric archaeology. Its sands and soil reveal the rich stories of China's ancient past, dating back over 30,000 years. The fine, gray sandy soil at the foot of the Helan Mountains may help add a new chapter.

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Library exhibits documents on Beijing's Central Axis

By CHENG YUEZHU
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An exhibition showcasing documents relevant to the history and transformation of Beijing's Central Axis recently opened at the Capital Library of China in Beijing. The exhibition runs until Aug 24.

Beijing's Central Axis refers to the core structure of the city, which runs 7.8 kilometers from south to north, encompassing a remarkable collection of historical and architectural sites.

The ideal ancient model for a Chinese capital was outlined in the *Rites of Zhou*, a Confucian text on bureaucracy and organizational theory that dates back over 2,200 years. The text's model became reality with the development of Beijing.

Mao Yajun, director of the library, said at the opening, "The Central Axis of Beijing encapsulates the essence of the city and its architecture and embodies the profound philosophical thoughts of China, as well as highlighting the cultural depth and confidence of Beijing as a national capital."

The exhibition unfolds from nine



Left: An exhibition involving literature concerning Beijing's Central Axis opens in the Capital Library of China in Beijing on June 6. **Right:** It displays more than 200 exhibits relevant to the history and culture of Beijing's Central Axis. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



perspectives about the sites, including history, architecture, lifestyle and nature.

More than 200 exhibits that are included cover a variety of documentation, from books, newspapers and journals to tablet rubbings, photographs, paintings and letters.

At the exhibition, visitors are able to engage in hands-on activities with expert guidance, such as creating rubbings from tablet inscriptions. They can also participate in quizzes for a chance to win prizes including envelopes, books or reader's cards.

During the course of this exhibi-

tion, 16 themed lectures will also be hosted, featuring experts and scholars who participated in the authorship of a book series on the Central Axis, as well as artists who have contributed their works to the exhibition.

Mao says the library has been leveraging its collections and resour-

ces, particularly those unique to Beijing, and delving into the history and culture of the Central Axis.

"In recent years, we have carried out a diverse range of activities, including three lecture series, which tell stories about the Central Axis from various perspectives. Exhibitions have centered on the heritage,

displaying both artifacts and literature, and have attracted tens of thousands of visitors," she adds.

"We also pay attention to the axis' current development, Beijing's urban construction and its rich connections with citizens' everyday lives. The library's animation platform has created an original cartoon series that allows children to explore that heritage online."

The exhibition is cohosted by the library and the culture and tourism bureau of Beijing's Dongcheng district, and has been organized by the Beijing Dongcheng District Library.

"Through this exhibition, we also hope to draw from the abundant professional resources from both libraries, present the sublimity of the Central Axis, and attract more people to pay attention to it and actively participate in the preservation of the historical city," says Tang Li, deputy director of Dongcheng district.

The exhibition offers free admission to all visitors. Books about the Central Axis of Beijing can be borrowed at self-service checkout machines.

CULTURE



From left: Students write under the supervision of their teacher during a lesson at Nyingchi No 2 Primary School in May. Students assemble on the track at the school to exercise. A teacher at Nyingchi No 2 Primary School explains concepts to students during a multimedia class. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Learning in harmony

Students reap rewards of shared, inclusive development in Tibet autonomous region, Alexis Hooi reports from Lhasa and Nyingchi.

Growing up in a traditional herder's family, Tibetan Penba Tashi always wanted to help those around him and contribute to society.

For the past three years, the 22-year-old has been studying and training as a medical major at Tibet University — steadily working toward his childhood dream of becoming a physician.

"I am the first in my family to attend university. It's thanks to the help and support from the Xizang government, its policies and subsidies for needy ethnic students like myself," he said, using the Chinese name of the Tibet autonomous region. "Studying and living with students of other ethnic groups also helps us understand and learn from each other."

The undergraduate also lauded the efforts of regional authorities that attach importance to Tibetan knowledge and other ethnic resources for multi-disciplinary education — the university library, for example, with its more than 800,000 books covering the ethnic Tibetan and Han languages, 2,400 traditional woodprints, 16,000 ancient works, 5,000 foreign language publications, and nearly 30 terabytes of digital data on such things as e-books, academic papers, and teaching materials provides an invaluable, comprehensive channel for enriching his medical studies and life, he said.

"Ethnic Tibetan and Han students here all help to complement each other's studies," Penba Tashi said. "I can explain some of the Tibetan customs, practices, and traditional medicinal knowledge, while my Han classmates help me with the details of language, like Mandarin."

His experience in the regional capital, Lhasa, reflects the rewards being reaped by residents, from the latest developments in the education sector, in line with the inclusive, shared, and sustainable growth pursued throughout the region and beyond.

In late May, President Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory letter to a major forum in Beijing on the development of Tibet, and urged the region to speed up high-quality development in the new era and ensure its residents live a better life.

"People's happiness is the ultimate human right, while development holds the key to delivering better lives to the people," Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, said in the letter to the opening of the 2023 Forum on the Development of Xizang, China.

The forum, the seventh since the first was held in Vienna, Austria, in 2007, was jointly hosted by the State Council Information Office and the regional government.

Tibet should continue its people-centered development philosophy and improve people's livelihoods as the goal of its economic and social development, said Li Shulei, a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and head of the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee.

"More fruits of modernization should be shared with the people of all ethnic groups in Tibet in a more equitable way, bringing a greater sense of gain, happiness, and security," Li said at the forum.



Top: A class is underway at Beijing Experimental High School, Lhasa, in May. Above: A teacher helps a student during a traditional ethnic Tibetan writing script class at Beijing Experimental High School.

tourism, and actively develop industries closely related to the work and daily life of the people, striving to protect and improve people's livelihoods," he said.

To that end, the central government has invested more than 224 billion yuan (\$31.5 billion) in regional education during the past seven decades, with at least 3,000 schools of different levels enrolling more than 790,000 students, who can enjoy 15 years of publicly funded compulsory education, according to a white paper on the sector.

At the Beijing Experimental High School, Lhasa, the government began investing 250 million yuan nine years ago, to build a new campus that has grown to cover 13.8 hectares, with 56 classes of lower and upper secondary education for more than 2,400 students, taught by 300 teachers.

Educational resources to aid the development of the school and meet the diverse needs of students include 167 teachers sent in four groups and management teams from Beijing, study tours, youth tutors, and more than 50 elective courses.

In 2016, the Education Ministry applied the school's model to other parts of the country.

Student Tsering Sangpo, 14, said the school provides him with an all-round education and ensures he can pursue his interests, which include sports, with a diverse group of schoolmates.

"I enjoy the classes here with friends from all parts of the community," he said. "I want to be a soccer player, working well with teammates with many opportunities to shine."

An educational philosophy of creating ample conditions for healthy and harmonious development is also making positive impacts on ethnic students at the Nyingchi No 2 Primary School.

Located in the center of the southeastern city, the school comprises 45 classrooms, four laboratories, 60 multimedia rooms, three sports fields, and a library with more than 35,000 books for about 2,000 students taught by nearly 150 staff.

More than half of the students are Tibetan ethnic group members, who are able to attend classes that include calligraphy, art, and language that help preserve and promote their heritage.

Promoting the qualities of "erudition, good teaching, dedication, and love for students among its staff, and the willingness to learn, think, ask questions, and put learning into practice among its students" has achieved remarkable results, according to school authorities, with students placing among the best performers in local examinations in past years.

The school has also won more than 100 national, regional, and municipal honors for its educational model and achievements.

Zhao Tangtao, 35, who has taught at the school for a decade, said its students get to learn from each other and share their various backgrounds as members of ethnic groups that include Tibetans and Han.

"I would use the word 'harmonious' to describe us," she said. "Our experiences and successes here reflect how we are living in harmony with one another."

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I would use the word 'harmonious' to describe us. Our experiences and successes here reflect how we are living in harmony with one another."

Zhao Tangtao, a teacher at Nyingchi No 2 Primary School

Wang Junzheng, the autonomous region's Party secretary, said at the forum that Tibet's high-quality development will follow the principle of seeking progress while maintaining stability and actively serving as well as integrating with the new development paradigm.

"We will attach great importance to cultivating and developing industries and the real economy, continuously optimize the business environment, vigorously promote the development of strategic emerging industries such as clean energy, the digital economy, general aviation, and cultural



From left: Visitors from home and abroad view library resources at Tibet University in May. The materials include traditional ethnic Tibetan manuscripts.