

Spicy calling card

Sichuan's diverse signature cuisine continues to win international acclaim

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Climate diplomacy spurs unity

Country's efforts in tackling challenges earn worldwide praise

By ZHANG YUNBI zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

Senior officials and observers from around the world have been impressed by China's enterprising diplomatic efforts in recent months in engaging wealthy nations as well as the most vulnerable countries in tackling the increasingly challenging global problem of climate change.

The climate-themed diplomacy, led by President Xi Jinping, illustrates the evolving Chinese solution

and the fair, responsible approach sought by Beijing for dealing with the growing deficit of global governance, they said.

With July having been the hottest month ever recorded, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on July 27 that "the level of fossil fuel profits and climate inaction is unacceptable", and "leaders must lead" with dramatic, immediate climate action to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5 C above preindustrial levels.

At bilateral meetings with visiting foreign leaders and at some major international events last month, Xi said that China understands the severe challenges facing vulnerable nations such as Pacific

Island countries, and he vowed further action to ensure that global unity and efforts focusing on climate change do not lose steam.

Speaking with Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare on July 10, Xi said that China "stands ready to strengthen exchanges and cooperation with island countries in meteorological services, disaster prevention and reduction, clean energy and other fields".

In a meeting on July 28 with Mohamed Irfaan Ali, president of the Caribbean country of Guyana, Xi also touched on dealing with climate change.

Xi called on countries to "join hands to tackle global challenges

such as climate change", when delivering a toast at the welcoming banquet of the opening ceremony of the ongoing Chengdu FISU World University Games.

In addition, the past month witnessed senior Chinese officials' dialogues with dignitaries of leading economies and major sources of carbon emissions in the world — such as the United States and the European Union, observers noted.

In July, US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry visited China.

Premier Li Qiang told Kerry that all parties should "abide by the principle of common but

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Evacuation stepped up in northeastern areas

By LIU MINGTAI in Changchun and ZHANG XIAOMIN

Massive evacuation efforts are underway in Northeast China to relocate tens of thousands of people affected by heavy rainfall and flooding, triggered by the residual impact of Typhoon Doksuri.

Floodwaters have damaged houses, bridges, dams, water management facilities and communication and power infrastructure, and inundated agricultural fields in Heilongjiang and Jilin provinces, which received downpours between Aug 1 and Saturday, and are still recording light rainfall, local authorities said.

Shulan, a city in Jilin province, is among the hardest-hit places in the region. As of Sunday night, 14 people, including Shulan's vice-mayor Luo Xudong and two other officials, had died in rain-related incidents.

On Monday, video clips of Luo and the other officials responding to the flood crisis circulated widely on social media. In the videos, the vice mayor is heard issuing evacuation instructions and urging residents not to take any risks.

"Despite knowing there was a 100 percent chance of a flash flood, he bravely and selflessly rushed to the front line. He is an exemplary civil servant," said a user on Sina Weibo.

Jing Junhai, secretary of the Jilin Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China, sent his condolences on Monday and praised the dedication of the deceased officials to their duties as Party members. He emphasized the need for all departments and authorities to effectively coordinate emergency forces and resources, implement comprehensive measures and minimize casualties.

As of Monday, 79,745 people in Jilin had been evacuated, according to the provincial flood control and drought relief headquarters.

The Northern Theater Command of the People's Liberation Army dispatched an emergency team of 1,000 personnel to Shulan, along with over 100 vehicles, engineering machinery and unmanned search and rescue equipment.

The water levels of major rivers and reservoirs in Shulan have started to recede and remained at a safe operating level, according to the local flood control headquarters. Meanwhile, more than 50,000 people have been displaced in Wuchang, a county-level city administered by Heilongjiang's provincial capital Harbin. Waterlogging has damaged crops in Wuchang, which is among China's well-known rice producing areas, and in Shangzhi, another county-level city administered by Harbin.

During a meeting held on Sunday on flood control and disaster relief, Xu Qin, Party secretary of Heilongjiang, emphasized that safe evacuation of residents is their priority. He instructed officials to ensure that no one is left behind and stressed the importance of providing temporary shelters, food and medical supplies at relocation sites.

As of 8 am on Monday, 12 rivers in Heilongjiang were flowing above their respective danger levels and five large reservoirs were operating beyond their flood control limits. The province, which has reported economic losses, is bracing for another spell of heavy rainfall as Typhoon Khanun approaches.

Tian Xuefei in Harbin contributed to this story.

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Deadly derailment



Railway workers repair tracks on Monday next to damaged carriages a day after a passenger train derailed in Nawabshah, Pakistan. The accident killed at least 34 people. ASIF HASSAN / AFP See story, page 5

China-proposed blueprint for Global South a beacon of hope

In a world marked by dynamic geopolitical shifts and economic transformations, the Global South, comprising emerging markets and developing nations, has emerged as a significant player.

China's four-point proposal, raised during a recent meeting in South Africa, highlights the potential of the developing world to foster peace and common development.

At the 13th Meeting of BRICS National Security Advisers and High Representatives on National Security in Johannesburg on July 25, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said all countries need to work together in four areas: to eliminate conflicts and jointly build peace; reinvigorate vitality and promote development; be open and inclusive for common progress; and achieve unity and cooperation.

Cultivation of peace is paramount to all. With an unwavering commitment to a balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture, this proposal seeks to address the legitimate security

WORLD WATCH By Saud Faisal Malik

concerns of each nation while emphasizing the primary need for political solutions to simmering hot spots.

Embracing a comprehensive and cooperative security concept, the Global South stands poised to create a community of security that transcends borders, reflecting the very essence of the Global South's defining political feature: independence. By steering away from confrontations and strife, the nations of the Global South can pave the way for collective development and prosperity.

The second tenet of the proposal shines a spotlight on development promotion and revitalization. In this pursuit, the Global South is called on to place development at the core of the international agenda, laying the foundation for a resolute commitment to progress

toward realizing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. By consolidating international consensus on development promotion and safeguarding the development rights of developing nations, the Global South can spark a renaissance of the global development partnership.

Bridging the chasm of economic disparities, this concerted effort will foster new growth drivers, relieving poverty and empowering emerging markets and developing countries.

Moreover, Wang, who is also director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, underscored the importance of developed nations honoring their aid commitments and shouldering liability for carbon footprints, ensuring that the rewards of development reach the farthest parts of the globe.

Inclusivity, the third principle of China's blueprint, resonates deeply with the Global South's collective vision for progress. This trans-

formative concept hinges on cherishing common human values and embracing the rich tapestry of civilizations. It celebrates the diversity of political systems and development paths, rejecting the shackles of ideological confrontation that impede shared growth.

In this spirit of cooperation, the Global South fosters governance exchanges and mutual learning, recognizing that unity and inclusiveness are essential for advancing the progress of humanity. This principled approach embodies the very essence of fairness and justice that is at the heart of the Global South's shared proposition.

Solidarity and cooperation form the bedrock of the Global South's strength in a spirit of unity. Guided by the principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, the Global South rejects the trappings of hegemony and power politics. This rejection, in turn, fosters an environment conducive to fruitful cooperation.

Supporting the UN's active role in global affairs further cements the Global South's commitment to collective responsibility. China, as a member of the Global South, stands resolute in its determination to work hand in hand with fellow emerging markets and developing

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Residents of the flood-hit city of Hailin, Heilongjiang province, charge their mobile devices on Sunday at an emergency telecommunication facility. Essential services in the city, including telecommunications, had been disrupted due to recent flooding. ZHANG TAO / XINHUA

RESCUERS OVERCOME OBSTACLES AS FLOODWATERS TAKE TOLL

Residents brought to safety in stricken areas of Hebei province

By WANG JING in Zhuozhou, Hebei wangjing7@chinadaily.com.cn



A heavy traffic jam formed as vehicles lined up for more than 500 meters waiting to leave the highway at the southern entrance to Zhuozhou, Hebei province.

Many of the vehicles were transporting rescue team members, while some pickup trucks towed inflatable dinghies and motorboats.

The rescue vehicles, arriving from different parts of the country, bore license plates from Shanghai, and Sichuan, Shandong and Shaanxi provinces, among others. The drivers of private cars yielded to these vehicles.

I was driving toward flood-hit Zhuozhou on Wednesday morning, having been assigned the task of reporting on the thousands of peo-

ple trapped in floodwaters. I set the Zhuozhou city government headquarters as the destination on my phone's navigation system, while colleagues kept me updated with real-time information about the floods. They also told me that the southern entrance to the city was the only one still open to vehicles.

After leaving the highway, I drove through villages still submerged in floodwaters due to the heavy rain. The water was not too deep, but traffic lights along the way were not functioning.

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Liu Liu, a villager from Diaowo, Zhuozhou, Hebei province, carries her 6-month-old baby with the help of a rescue team on Wednesday. She climbed onto the motorboat from the rooftop of a room in her courtyard. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

Floods: Teams show masterly efficiency

From page 1

Zhuozhou is a county-level city administered by Baoding, with the Taihang Mountains running from northwest to southeast. The North Juma River flows through the north of the city, with six rivers, including the Yongding, the Xiaoqing and the Baigou converging in the area.

Xinhua News Agency reported that as of 10 am on Aug 1, 133,913 people had been affected by the flooding in Zhuozhou, with the affected area covering 225.38 square kilometers.

When I arrived at Runhe Street, Diaowo town, the road was severely flooded, and some drivers were turning back. I parked my car by the roadside, noticing that while SUVs could pass through the water, cars could not.

Sending a vehicle location to myself on my phone, I decided to proceed on foot.

As I continued walking, the water became deeper. Several backhoes, or excavating machines, were being used to ferry stranded people. Those on these vehicles held onto the excavator buckets tightly, afraid that sudden jolts might send them falling into the muddy water.

Nearby, a group of people stood in front of a store selling daily necessities, with some of the shelves already empty. I asked a middle-aged man in the store who was tidying up the shelves, "Boss, do you have any plastic slippers?" He replied: "We've sold out. The last pair of women's slippers were just bought by an old man."

After stopping a truck to cross a waterlogged section of road, I proceeded along Fanyang East Road, a major thoroughfare in Zhuozhou.

Many people walking toward me were carrying their luggage. Their feet and suitcase bottoms were covered in mud. Their clothes clung to their bodies, soaked either with sweat or rainwater.

Sweating profusely

The weather was oppressively hot and humid, and I was sweating constantly. It felt as though I was in a giant sauna.

Walking against the flow of people, I noticed that those heading in the same direction as myself were mainly members of rescue teams.

Holding my camera, I stood out among the crowds walking in the opposite direction.

The water reached up to the knees. At road intersections and in alleyways, the water flowed rapidly, making it difficult for people to remain on their feet.

At the intersection of Fanyang



Evacuated residents rest at the Zhuozhou Vocational Education Center in Zhuozhou. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

East Road and Tengfei Road — a major junction in the city — I saw rescue team members in various colored uniforms shuttling between motorboats, bringing those affected by the floods to an embankment made of sandbags.

The embankment, about half a meter high, separated two areas. On one side there was muddy water, and on the other an asphalt road. Those rescued stepped onto the road, clearly relieved to have finally reached safety.

Some motorboats could not reach shallow water near an embankment, stopping about 10 meters away. Rescue teams were quick to assist, wading through knee-high water, pushing and pulling the boats closer to a human wall formed by colleagues on the embankment.

Rescuers in the human wall helped people — some of them carrying children, others their belongings — off the boats, taking them to a safe area.

This T-shaped intersection became a temporary dock, busy and chaotic, but with an overall sense of order prevailing as priority was given to rescuing those affected by the floods.

A tourist boat ferried 12 people recently rescued to the temporary dock before returning to continue the search in deeper



A rescue boat navigates alleyways in Diaowo, Zhuozhou, on Wednesday. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

waters. I followed the boat as the search progressed.

A skilled helmsman in the stern of the boat said: "We brought the vessel here last night, towing it on a trailer from the Baiyangdian Scenic Area. We've already rescued more than 80 flood victims."

A rescuer in the bows of the vessel used an iron pole to push away debris that occasionally floated toward us. As we continued along Tengfei Road, the water was more than 2 meters deep.

When the vessel approached

overhead traffic lights, the man standing in the bows crouched down for the boat to pass through. Large trucks lined both sides of the road, submerged in the water. One, with the words Zhongtong Express on its side, was partially submerged.

The water was murky, with plastic bags and bottles floating on the surface. The sight line was level with the rooftops of shops, and cars parked at the roadside were completely submerged. Speedboats brushed against the car roofs.



On the opposite side, motorboats loaded with flood victims continued to approach. Those on the boats gestured with clenched fists, indicating that our boat should slow down a little to avoid splashing them.

The man in the bows raised a thumb in acknowledgment, while applauding rescue team members in one of the boats opposite us.

Village mission

The boat team leader said: "We will go to Diaowo village again to check. There are four villages in Diaowo, and many people must be trapped there."

Poplar trees on both sides of the country road leading to Diaowo were no longer visible, with floodwater reaching the top of courtyard walls in the village.

Inside houses, everything was submerged. Through the win-

dows, furniture could be glimpsed floating in the water.

A large pig and several chickens were floating on pieces of wood, while a group of villagers standing on rooftops waved for us to come closer.

The boat navigated alleyways in Diaowo, occasionally bumping into utility poles. The entire village was flooded and there was no cellphone signal. It felt like a remote island.

Liu Liu, a villager from Diaowo, carried her 6-month-old baby with the help of the rescue team. She climbed onto the motorboat from the rooftop of a room in her courtyard, accompanied by her father and sister-in-law.

"I only brought a few pieces of baby clothing with me — many other things are soaked and cannot be used," Liu said.

She told her baby: "Don't be afraid. It will be all right soon." The infant's crying sounded especially loud, breaking the silence together with the sound of the motorboat engine.

The vessel made its way through the village, but due to limited access, it was not suitable for rescue operations. Several rescue team members riding water motorcycles passed by.

The helmsman said, "You guys ride your motorcycles to pick up people in the village, and we'll wait on the main road to provide support."

The boat leader then teamed up with Blue Sky Rescue team members riding the water motorcycles — significantly improving the speed and efficiency of the operation.

One Blue Sky Rescue team member said: "Let's quickly make two more trips to bring people to safety while there is still light. We don't want them to be stuck in the village overnight. It will be unsafe without electricity if the water rises again."

The sky gradually began to darken, while a thin mist rose from the water surface, reducing visibility and making the rescue operation increasingly difficult.

With no phone signal in the village, I was unable to send my report back to Beijing, so I decided to turn back, following a speedboat.

As we approached the temporary dock, I saw a large group of rescue team members anxiously waiting in the distance.

Upon returning to safety, I immediately felt at ease. Alongside me, a young man carried his pet cat in a backpack as he disembarked from the speedboat.

Glad to be alive while having experienced the aftermath of nature's fury, I could sense the compassion and care of humans amid the relentless floodwaters.

TOP NEWS

Watermelon testers eagerly sought as online sales soar

By LI LEI
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Once the fruit of choice in royal households, watermelons nowadays can be found in even the most humble homes in China.

The fruit's popularity has soared over the years, and online grocer Meituan reported that sales of watermelons on the platform had increased sixfold from 2020 to 2022, triggering increasingly high demand for watermelon quality testers like Malaysian expat Lee Jun Kang.

Lee, 32, is extremely busy in the summer months. Just by holding the fruit near his ear and knocking on the rind with his knuckles, Lee says he can tell by the sound if the fruit is ripe enough to be eaten or not.

Lee, who works for a rural cooperative set up by a group of watermelon farmers on the outskirts of Beijing, puts thousands of watermelons through the "knock test" daily, before the fruits are shipped to warehouses in downtown Beijing from where Meituan sources its supplies.

"August is a hot season for watermelon sales, and I check more than 10,000 fruits each day," he said. "When my knuckles grow numb, I just switch to the other hand."

Data from Meituan showed that watermelon sales peak in the hottest months of July and August, when more than 100,000 watermelons are delivered through the platform each day. The miniature varieties of the fruit accounted for 38.4 percent of total sales on Meituan last year, about 10 percent higher than in 2020.

Endearing habit

The practice of knocking on watermelons to determine their ripeness can be found across cultures. In China, it is considered an endearing national habit. Savvy buyers tap on the fruit before buying, to ensure their money is well-spent. The perfect fruit should neither be underripe nor overripe. Some buyers knock on the fruit despite not knowing what the hollow sound means just to negotiate a better deal from the seller.

As fruit sales have moved to online platforms in a big way, those who make a living by checking the quality of the fruits with their knuckles are much in demand.

Lee is one among a growing group of watermelon knockers who work with farmers in Panggezhuang, a sprawling production base in Beijing's southern Daxing district. Their task is to conduct knock tests on behalf of e-buyers and ensure that the fruits selected to be sold online are uniform in size and quality.

Lee, who was once an award-winning car racer, now describes himself as a "goalkeeper for watermelons".

He quit car racing about four years ago due to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. He learned about melon-knocking as an emerging profession through a friend and decided to become an apprentice in

Panggezhuang, where he was tutored by an experienced farmer.

After a year's trial and error, Lee worked independently as a quality checker.

"It is a highly empirical task. During the apprenticeship, I often cracked open melons to confirm my judgment. There are just no shortcuts," he said.

'Fruit of the people'

Liu Wanlin, a retiree in Xining, Qinghai province, describes watermelon as the "fruit of the people".

"It is not like the tropical fruits such as mango and durian, which are expensive," she said.

Liu grew up in a rural part of the arid Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, which does not produce watermelons on a meaningful scale. She said "freedom of melons", a phrase meaning having as many watermelons as one wishes without worrying about the cost, is only a recent reality in her province, where the fruit is mostly shipped in from Gansu and Shaanxi provinces, as well as the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

"I never tasted watermelons as a child. Now the fruit is the commonest treat in rural families in Qinghai," she said.

Song Shaozhe, who works with a hot pot chain in Wuhan, Hubei province, said iced watermelon is the top choice for many restaurants as the after-meal fruit, partly because of its relatively low cost.

"Melons are super sweet, and the dish is hot. They are a perfect match," he said.

Farming techniques such as greenhouses and cold-resistant new varieties have made it possible for the Chinese people to savor watermelons around the year.

Mass growing and consumption of watermelons in China date back to the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279). Before that, the fruit was consumed mainly by royal families as an exotic treat.

As the fruit made way into the diet of the ordinary people, watermelons became a constant theme in ancient Chinese poems, from those by Southern Song Dynasty poets Fan Chengda and Wen Tianxiang to Ji Xiaolan of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

After the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, generations have devoted themselves to watermelon breeding, churning out new varieties that have allowed the large-scale planting of the fruit, which slashed its price and improved its taste.

More than 50 new varieties popped up between 2016 and 2020.

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, China is the world's largest producer and consumer of watermelons. The per capita consumption of the fruit in the country is about 50 kilograms a year, said the FAO.

An industry report by Huaxia Industrial Economy Research Institute said watermelon output in China reached 63.24 million metric tons last year.

Colorful Asian Games



Students show their paintings of the mascots of the Hangzhou Asian Games — Congcong, Lianlian and Chenchen — at a school in Samut Sakhon, Thailand, on Friday. The games are scheduled to be held from Sept 23 to Oct 8 in Hangzhou, East China's Zhejiang province. WANG TENG/XINHUA

Experts: Interest rate cuts needed to boost demand

Move expected to bolster market confidence, encourage consumption

By ZHOU LANXU
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China may need to comprehensively reduce interest rates in the near future, ranging from lending rates for homebuyers and private companies to deposit interest rates, as boosting domestic demand has become a top policy priority, experts said on Monday.

Other key steps to address the prominent challenge of insufficient domestic demand would include the relaxation of administrative restrictions in the housing market and ramped-up fiscal support for infrastructure construction, they said.

As easing mortgage burden boosts consumer spending, and buoyed infrastructure investment offsets subdued real estate development, the country's domestic demand is set to recover further, especially in the fourth quarter of the year, keeping the annual economic growth target well achievable, they added.

"Lowering interest rates at an early

date would help ease the debt burden of enterprises and households, boost their financing demand and, more important, deliver a crystal-clear policy signal of stabilizing economic growth," said Jacqueline Rong, chief China economist at BNP Paribas.

She said that the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, is likely to promote a modest reduction in both the policy and market-based benchmark rates — the medium-term lending facility rate and loan prime rates — by the end of the year while encouraging commercial banks to reduce the interest rates on outstanding mortgages.

Repricing outstanding mortgages could effectively boost consumer spending, Rong said. BNP Paribas estimated that Chinese households would save roughly 165 billion yuan (\$22.9 billion) in annual mortgage payments, equivalent to 0.6 percent of their total income, if all outstanding mortgages are repriced to the rates offered by newly added mortgages.

Rong's comment follows the central bank sending successive policy signals aimed at easing the financial burden of market entities. A PBOC work conference stressed last week the need to promote a reduction in corporate and household financing costs and encourage banks to adjust interest rates on existing mortgages in an orderly manner.

Zou Lan, head of the central bank's monetary policy department, said on Friday that the bank will also utilize market-based adjustment mechanism for deposit rates to help banks reasonably contain their liability costs, which experts said pointed to the possibility of further deposit rate cuts.

As commercial banks reduce their lending rates, their profit margin will be further squeezed, making it essential to cut the deposit interest rates, said Lou Feipeng, a researcher at Postal Savings Bank of China.

Wu Chaoming, deputy director of the Chasing International Economic Institute, said moderate easing of

the monetary policy would help reduce enterprises' cost burden, but more efforts are still needed to fully address insufficient demand.

"The fundamental reason for insufficient demand is inadequate confidence and deteriorating expectations, which have caused individuals and private enterprises to act conservatively," Wu said. There is room for a wide range of cities, including first-tier ones, to further relax housing market restrictions to bolster homebuying demand, he added.

Authorities at different levels have rolled out a raft of measures to stabilize the housing market, encourage consumption and bolster the development of private enterprises after a high-level meeting in July called for efforts to actively expand domestic demand.

The positive policy signals have helped boost market expectations and lead to nascent signs of improving domestic demand, experts said. The official purchasing managers index for the manufacturing sector rose from 49 in June to 49.3 in July.

Wang Tao, chief China economist at UBS Investment Bank, said local governments are expected to further facilitate the demand recovery by speeding up the issuance of special bonds and underpinning infrastructure investment. Some of the 2024 quota of local government special bonds may be brought forward in the fourth quarter, Wang said.

Climate: Road of sustainable development urged

From page 1

differentiated responsibilities in addressing climate change," developed countries should take the lead in reducing emissions and fulfill their financial commitments, and developing countries should make contributions within their capacity.

Also in Beijing, Vice-Premier Ding Xuexiang and European Commission Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans co-chaired the fourth EU-China High-Level Dialogue on Environment and Climate on July 4 and reached extensive common understandings.

The dialogue with the EU "sent a positive signal of China and the EU working together on climate change, biodiversity loss and other global challenges," said Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning.

Leila Benali, Morocco's minister of energy transition and sustainable development, said China has rich experience and achievements in energy transformation and sustainable development.

Morocco looks forward to deepening exchanges and cooperation with China in relevant fields and jointly taking the road of green, low-carbon and sustainable development, she told Chinese Ambassador to Morocco Li Changlin last month.

Wang Wen, executive dean of Renmin University of China's Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, said China's climate change-oriented green economy is developing at a rapid speed and "is one of the few major countries that are faithfully committed to realizing the climate change Paris agreement".

"For example, China's total out-

put of hydropower accounts for 29 percent of the global total output. And over the past few years, there has been growing awareness among the Chinese public about the great significance and implication of tackling climate change and seeking green development," he said.

Chinese diplomats have continued reaching out to foreign parties to advance the bilateral and multilateral agenda on tackling climate change.

On Friday, Foreign Minister Wang Yi told United Arab Emirates Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan by phone that Beijing supports Dubai in hosting the 28th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, or COP 28, and is willing to strengthen strategic cooperation with the UAE in the international arena.

Projects and cooperative programs for energy saving and improving the climate have played a key part in major visions proposed by Beijing, including the Belt and Road Initiative and the Global Development Initiative, and have drawn widespread acclaim from countries around the globe, observers noted.

Wang Yiwei, a professor at Renmin University of China's School of International Studies and director of the university's Institute of International Affairs, said the China-proposed programs "possess both high standards and great feasibility", helping introduce environmentally friendly projects to developing countries such as Kenya.

Furthermore, "by technological upgrade and renovation, Chinese investors transformed some steel factories in Europe to make sure they meet standards of both the EU and China, while securing jobs for local workers and furthering tax contribution to local authorities", he said.

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Collaboration: China's proposal helps seize opportunities in complex world

From page 1

nations. Together, they will strive to breathe life into the China-proposed Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative and Global Civilization Initiative, and thus construct a community with a shared future for mankind.

China's four-point proposal exemplifies astute statesmanship, visionary foresight and a deep understanding of the challenges facing our interconnected world. However, it faces challenges concerning ideological differences,

power dynamics and the complexity of global governance reforms.

Point one, ending conflicts and promoting peace, underscores the importance of a balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture. This involves respecting each country's legitimate security concerns and advocating political solutions to address hot spot issues. By adhering to a comprehensive and cooperative security concept, the Global South can pave the way for a community of security for all nations. This point aligns with the Global South's defining political

feature of independence, as peaceful resolution is essential for collective development and prosperity.

Point two, positioning development at the core of the international agenda, is a crucial step in the Global South's journey of progress. By consolidating international consensus on development promotion and safeguarding the rights of developing countries, the Global South, which faces an immediate dilemma of preserving ecology while eradicating poverty and achieving prosperity, can strengthen the global development partnership to accom-

plish its historical mission of development and revitalization.

Point three, promoting openness and inclusiveness, means standing up against unilateralism and me-first strategies and respecting the diversity of civilizations. This approach is in sharp contrast to ideological confrontations and friend-or-foe diplomatic exercises that divide and damage the planet. By nurturing governance exchanges and mutual learning, the Global South can contribute to humanity's collective progress, reflecting the proposition of fairness and justice

among its members.

Point four, solidarity, is a key aspect of strengthening Global South ties, as many countries face pressure to take sides. Upholding the principles of consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits while rejecting hegemony and power politics, the Global South can foster a more equitable and collaborative international order. Supporting the United Nations' active role in global affairs reinforces the Global South's commitment to collective responsibility. China's four-point proposal for

strengthening Global South cooperation offers a beacon of hope for overcoming challenges and seizing opportunities in an increasingly interconnected but more complex world.

Given the diversity of interests and power dynamics among countries, the Global South needs thoughtful collaboration on, dedicated execution of and genuine commitment to the proposed principles, which will determine its success in revitalizing the world and realizing the vision of a shared future for mankind.

The author is CEO of Observer Diplomat magazine, based in Islamabad, Pakistan. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

WORLD

Editor's note: More than a century after its sinking, the Titanic still boasts enduring international appeal. Following latest 3D scans of the shipwreck, China Daily delves into why its story remains enticing.

Fascination with *Titanic* continues

Seabed images of wreckage give new insight, fuel fresh surge of interest

By JULIAN SHEA in London
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The recent loss of the submersible taking passengers to the wreckage of the RMS *Titanic*, 3.8 kilometers below the waves and about 640 km off the southeast coast of the Canadian island of Newfoundland, was for many people a major reminder of the fascination the world continues to have with one of the most talked-about events of the 20th century.

The 1997 film *Titanic*, which won multiple awards telling the tale of two fictional passengers on the ill-fated ship that sank on April 15, 1912, with the loss of about 1,500 lives, inspired a whole new generation to take an interest in the ship and its story.

The last survivor of the sinking, Millvina Dean, died in 2009, aged 97. She was also the youngest survivor, aged just nine weeks then, and was not even aware that she had been on board until the age of 8.

There were eight Chinese sailors in the *Titanic's* crew and six had survived, with Chinese cities enthusiastic recipients of the many related exhibits and artifact exhibitions that continue to tour the world.

Shanghai in 2013, Guangzhou in 2017, Wuhan in 2018 and Hong Kong this year have all hosted major *Titanic* exhibits.

In 2013, Australian tycoon Clive Palmer announced plans to construct a replica of the ship, originally built in Belfast in Northern Ireland, at the CSC Jinling Shipyard in Nanjing, though the project never came to fruition.

Fortunately, recently released high-resolution images of the wreckage on the floor of the Atlantic Ocean have offered new insight into the current state of the remains of the ship and fueled a fresh surge of interest.

Last summer, a mission by deep-sea mapping company Magellan and documentary filmmakers Atlantic Productions resulted in a unique 3D representation of the whole wreck in such detail that even serial numbers on propeller blades were visible.

Remote-controlled submersibles spent more than 200 hours taking at least 700,000 images from every angle to come up with a remarkable record.

"Previously, footage has only allowed you to see one small area of the wreck at a time," said 3D capture specialist Gerhard Seiffert.

"This model will allow people to zoom out and to look at the entire thing for the first time ... This is the *Titanic* as no one had ever seen it before."

Although the *Titanic* set off on its disastrous voyage from the port of Southampton, on the southern coast of England, its birthplace was the Harland & Wolff shipyard in Belfast, whose two towering yellow cranes are still the most distinctive feature on the city's skyline.

Proud of connection

Belfast remains hugely proud of its connection to the *Titanic*, with the city's most high-profile waterfront residential and business regeneration area known as Titanic Quarter. Since 2012 it has been home to the Titanic Belfast visitor experience, one of Northern Ireland's most visited attractions.

It draws visitors from around the world, with the availability of audio guides in Chinese reflecting its far-reaching appeal.

Claire Bacon is the communications manager at Titanic Belfast. She told China Daily the *Titanic* was a huge presence in Belfast's past and a major part of its present.

"*Titanic* is one of the most recognizable names in the world, but a lot of people didn't realize it was built here, so we've brought the story back home and tell it in a way and in a place nowhere else could," she said. "You can stand on the exact spot where it was built."

In a city with such a blighted reputation because of violence and division caused by the Troubles in Northern Ireland (1968-98), Titanic Belfast has proved to be a hugely popular and unifying innovation.

"Since 2012, we've had 7 million visitors, and, in the first 10 years, we



The SS *Nomadic*, a tender to RMS *Titanic* and the last surviving White Star Line boat, is displayed at Titanic Belfast, a visitor attraction near the *Titanic's* birthplace in Belfast, Northern Ireland. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Titanic Belfast shows what the ship looked like inside.



Visitors look at the slipway where the *Titanic* rested before its launch at Titanic Belfast.

contributed 430 million pounds (\$550 million) of spend back into the local economy, so it's a huge part of city life," Bacon said.

The self-guided tour, available in a variety of languages, allows visitors to learn about the city's maritime heritage and the construction and launch of the ship from the slipway outside the exhibit's door as well as the voyage and sinking.

Visitors can enjoy a new \$5.7-million gallery called *Pursuit of Dreams*, which looks at the dreams of the builders, the passengers and the dream of Robert Ballard, who found the wreck in 1985.

Artifacts on display include the violin of bandmaster Wallace Hartley, a life jacket and one of the last six surviving deck chairs. Visitors also have a chance to go on the last surviving White Star Line boat, SS *Nomadic*, the small tender used to ferry first-class passengers to and from the ship, which Bacon said is the closest anyone can get to going on the *Titanic*.

"The city has always been very

proud of its shipbuilding heritage, and when it was being built here, *Titanic* was a huge deal, so we celebrate that heritage and the innovation that it took to build the ship," she said.

Having written three books and been involved in numerous documentaries about the *Titanic*, Tim Maltin is one of the world's leading authorities on the ship. He has been captivated by it since seeing the film *A Night to Remember* as a child and because his uncle was taught at school by a *Titanic* survivor.

He told China Daily its enduring international appeal was because of the universality of the experience.

"The *Titanic* was a microcosm for humanity — people from all over the world, rich and poor, together in that one place, a creation that was the best that humanity could come up with, suddenly struck down by the awesome power of nature," he said.

"All nationalities were on board — there were people from Africa, from Turkey, China, Japan, obviously Europe and North America, and all

of those people, whether they survived or died, left a story in the towns and communities they came from. When I do talks about it, wherever I go in the world, more often than not there will be someone there in the audience with a personal connection to the ship."

The supposedly unsinkable *Titanic* sank two years before the outbreak of World War I, as what were regarded as years of certainty and unstoppable progress of human endeavor came to a juddering halt.

"The sinking was similar to the themes of the tragedies of ancient Greece, which looked at the smallness of humanity in the vastness of the universe," Maltin said.

"We no longer have those stories in our lives, but we do have a story about a supposedly unsinkable ship, containing a cross-section of society, confidently setting out over the horizon and being struck down by the power of nature. Even in the 21st century, this allows us to question our place in the universe."

As if to underline the power of



Visitors stand outside Titanic Belfast.



Visitors mimic a well-known scene of the 1997 film *Titanic* at Titanic Belfast in Northern Ireland.



Tim Maltin works on ship logs at the Devon Record Office in Exeter, England.

nature over the arrogance of humankind, freak atmospheric conditions compounded the tragedy by obscuring the iceberg until it was too late and causing the confusion that meant another passing ship, the *California*, could have come to the aid of survivors but did not.

Bizarrely, a novel called *Futility*, published in 1898 by British writer Morgan Robertson, told the fictional tale of a supposedly unsinkable boat called the *Titan*, which sank crossing the Atlantic 14 years before the real-life incident, which was the first major event of the telegraph age, and that became the first global news story.

Shattering reminder

"For years, life had been about progress and the advances of technology, a straight line graph of the upward curve of man's superiority, but the sinking of the *Titanic*, and the way the news spread, shattered that and reminded people that we live in a chaotic world, shortly before everything was turned on its head by WWI," Maltin said.

Every so often, a new film or incident, such as the recent submersible tragedy, brings the story to the attention of a new generation, and more than a century after its dramatic death, breathes new life into the ship.

Something else that stirred up interest is the latest photo scans, which Maltin said is "like taking the

water away ... it's so dark down there, the best thing you can do is taking loads of photos and stitch them together, and this is the ultimate photo stitch."

"It's the best record we have of the exterior of the wreck."

The only way for people to see the wreck of the *Titanic* more clearly would be for it to be raised — and Maltin said this is not beyond the bounds of credibility.

"I would leave the stern as a memorial, as that's where most people died, but I think raising the bow is very feasible. It's strong enough and there is technology used for moving oil rigs, which could be deployed. I would love to see it on the slipway in Belfast where she was built," he said.

"Raising her would probably cost less than the budget of the next blockbuster film about the sinking, and it would be a wonder of the world, the biggest tourist attraction imaginable.

"In some ways, the sinking of the *Titanic* was the making of it — its sister ship, the *Olympic*, only lasted until the mid-1930s before it was scrapped, but by dying on its maiden voyage, the *Titanic* became immortal. And if they could lift the stern up, can you imagine it being put on a barge and taken to arrive in New York, more than 100 years late? It would be the news story of the millennium."

WORLD

UK barge
branded a
'potential
deathtrap'By JULIAN SHEA in London
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The first of nearly 500 male asylum-seekers aged 18 to 65 were due to be housed on a barge off the southern coast of England on Monday, the BBC reported.

The floating accommodation block, called the Bibby Stockholm, has been docked off the coast of the southern county of Dorset for almost three weeks. It had lain empty over safety concerns.

The craft has previously been used to house oil and gas workers, as well as asylum-seekers in other countries, but its capacity was only 222, which has now been more than doubled to 500 through the introduction of bunk beds and conversion of communal rooms.

The proposed move has been heavily criticized by human rights campaigners, local politicians, and the Fire Brigades Union.

The union's assistant general secretary Ben Selby told The Guardian newspaper that "as the only professional voice, firefighters believe the Bibby Stockholm to be a potential deathtrap".

Carralyn Parkes, the mayor of Portland, where the vessel will be docked, has also expressed concerns, accusing the Home Office of being "inconsistent and opaque in their decision-making" and trying to rush things through.

"The Bibby Stockholm is not a suitable place to house asylum-seekers ... human beings belong in communities," she added.

An open letter signed by a group of charities called the vessel "entirely inappropriate" for the purpose for which the government wants to use it.

'Cruel and inhumane'

"Containing people who have been through traumatizing experiences, especially on a floating vessel, is cruel and inhumane," the letter said.

"Those who will be contained on the barge are not criminals; they are seeking protection in the UK... yet people will be held in detention-like conditions with severe restrictions on freedom of movement."

A Home Office representative said the vessel would "comply with all appropriate regulations, including all relevant health and safety standards with protocols in place to respond to any health risks."

Employers and landlords dealing with illegal migrants will also face tougher sentences under new regulations announced this week.

In a tripling of the previous maximum amounts, employers could face fines of up to 45,000 pounds (\$57,296) per worker for the first breach of the rules, and 60,000 pounds for subsequent breaches.

The increases for landlords will be even bigger, from 1,000 pounds up to 10,000 pounds, with repeat offender penalties rising from 3,000 pounds to 20,000 pounds.

Nick Thomas-Symonds, a shadow minister for the opposition Labour Party, said the latest measures would have no impact on the number of people attempting to cross the English Channel.

"(The government) has 173,000 people now who are in the backlog in our asylum system," he told Sky News.

Navigating traffic



Pedestrians and rickshaw riders waded through a waterlogged street in Chattogram, Bangladesh, on Sunday. Days of torrential rain lashed the seaport city about 240 kilometers southeast of Bangladesh's capital Dhaka, inundating low-lying areas and disrupting transportation. XINHUA

US soccer team caught
up in anthem controversyBy HENG WEILI in New York
hengweili@chinadailyusa.com

As the US women's national soccer team made its earliest exit ever from the FIFA World Cup, many Americans actually were rooting for that result.

That is because numerous members of the team — which was ranked No. 1 in the world and has won four World Cups, including the last two — refused to sing the national anthem or place their hands on their hearts before games. Some Americans also considered this year's team arrogant and entitled.

Like many news events in America, this one was naturally politicized. President Joe Biden and former president Donald Trump both weighed in, with widely different takes.

"@USWNT, you've made your country proud," Biden tweeted. "Congratulations on an incredible run. This team is something special and I'm looking forward to seeing how you continue to inspire Americans with your grit and determination — on and off the field."

Biden's tweet got 8,000 responses, but many were questioning whether the team had a good run, because the US was favored to win the tournament, and whether the team made Americans proud because of their response to the anthem.

Trump, on his Truth Social website, posted a harsher assessment: "The 'shocking and totally unexpected' loss by the U.S. Women's Soccer Team to Sweden is fully emblematic of what is happening to our once great Nation under Crooked Joe Biden."

"Many of our players were openly hostile to America — No other country behaved in such a manner, or even close," he continued. "WOKE EQUALS FAILURE." Nice shot Megan."

He was referring to veteran star player Megan Rapinoe, 38, who missed a penalty kick by a wide margin in her last game for the national team. Rapinoe has been a lightning rod for many on the right. She is gay and supports the participation of trans athletes in women's sports.



This #USWNT is polarizing. Politics, causes, stances, & behavior have made this team unlikeable to a portion of America."

Alexei Lalas, soccer analyst and commentator

Rapinoe also is known for being a leader in the fight to secure the same pay for women on the national team as the men's team receives.

In 2016, Rapinoe garnered widespread attention for kneeling during the national anthem at an international soccer match, in solidarity with former NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick, who began sitting on the bench that year during the national anthem as a player for the San Francisco 49ers, to protest racial injustice and police brutality.

After the 2016 match, Rapinoe stated: "It was a little nod to Kaepernick and everything that he's standing for right now. ... Being a gay American, I know what it means to look at the flag and not have it protect all of your liberties. It was something small that I could do and something that I plan to keep doing in the future and hopefully spark some meaningful conversation around it."

In 2019, Rapinoe said she considered herself a "walking protest against the Trump administration" and would not be "going to the f— — White House" if her team won the World Cup that year, which it did.

In 2022, Biden awarded Rapinoe the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Alexi Lalas, who formerly played on the 1994 US men's soccer team and has been a soccer commentator for 15 years, first with ESPN and now Fox, stirred controversy with this tweet: "Don't kill the messenger. This #USWNT is polarizing. Politics, causes, stances, & behavior

have made this team unlikeable to a portion of America. This team has built its brand and has derived its power from being the best/winning. If that goes away, they risk becoming irrelevant."

Megyn Kelly, who coincidentally moderated the first GOP presidential debate in 2015 in which she famously opened with a question to Trump about his treatment of women, said: "They couldn't be bothered to actually place their hand on their heart as the national anthem played, as they stood out there representing you and me and the country and our military and people who have given their lives for the country that they represent. It was too much of an effort to place their hand over their heart, or God forbid, sing."

Twitter poster "Jimmy" wrote: "Watching the radical right-wing extremists celebrate the women's soccer team loss with 'Go Woke' and a fake outrage about the National Anthem shows again how truly unpatriotic they are."

"Sarty" tweeted: "You don't have to sing the national anthem to prove anything. It's not written into the constitution. Your faux patriotism and knee-jerk outrage are just silly and some of the comments were downright hateful."

Rapinoe, Sophia Smith and Kelley O'Hara missed penalty kicks before Lina Hurtig scored to clinch the shootout 5-4 as Sweden knocked the US out of the competition after a 0-0 draw in regulation and extra time Sunday in Melbourne, Australia.

"I mean, this is like a sick joke. For me personally, this is like dark comedy that I missed a penalty," Rapinoe said tearfully. "This is the balance to take a beautiful side of the game. I think it can be cruel."

US goalkeeper Alyssa Naeher unsuccessfully argued that she had saved Hurtig's attempt, but it was ruled over the goal line by a millimeter by VAR (video assistant referee). Abba's *Dancing Queen* rang out in the stadium as the Swedes celebrated, and the US players sobbed.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Rescue efforts underway
after Pakistan train crash

ISLAMABAD — Investigators scoured the wreckage on Monday of a weekend train derailment that killed at least 34 people, the latest deadly crash to hit Pakistan's antiquated railway network.

More than 1,000 passengers were aboard the Hazara Express when it came off the tracks in a flat, rural part of Sindh Province near Nawabshah, around 250 kilometers by rail from the southern port city of Karachi.

It was winding its way north on a 33-hour journey to Havelian in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province when disaster struck near Sarhari around lunchtime.

Muhammad Afzal Kolachi, a spokesman for Pakistan Railways, told Agence France-Presse on Monday the death toll had risen to 34.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif expressed deep grief and sorrow over the incident, and directed the authorities to provide the best medical treatment to the injured people.

Railway minister Khawaja Saad Rafique said on Sunday that no faults had been reported on the stretch of line where the accident happened, but some residents said it had been affected by the monsoon floods that engulfed a third of the country last summer.

"The track is in a bad condition due to last year's floods," said Ali Dost, a 52-year-old local police officer.

Rafique promised a full investigation.

Rescue teams, the Pakistan Army and Pakistan Railways personnel

rushed to the site and undertook relief activities. Local volunteers also helped rescue the stranded passengers.

"The down track has been cleared and the work is ongoing on the up track," said Shah Nawaz Mashori, a 24-year-old teacher who had volunteered at the site.

"I was sitting in my shop ... Suddenly, there was a huge bang," said Azmat Ali, 25, who has a store near the crash site.

"We started running and when we arrived ... we pulled out bodies and injured people from the wreckage."

Hospitals in the area declared an emergency as they struggled to deal with dozens of passengers brought in with severe injuries.

After the train derailment, train operations were suspended, affecting the routine of many trains, with railway authorities saying it may take up to 18 hours to restore operations.

Sunday's crash is the latest to hit the network in recent years.

Two trains collided near Daharki in Sindh in June 2021, killing at least 65 people and injuring about 150 others. In that incident, an express derailed onto the opposite track, and a second passenger train plowed into the wreckage a minute later.

At least 75 passengers were burnt to death in a fire aboard the Tezgam express train in October 2019, while a two-train collision at Ghotki killed more than 100 people in 2005.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

Globe felt record
heat last monthBy MAYZHOU in Houston
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July was the hottest month on record, with the hottest three-week period ever recorded, the three hottest days on record, and the highest-ever ocean temperatures for this time of year, according to the World Meteorological Organization.

July 6 was the hottest day ever recorded in human history with a global average temperature of 63.01 F. In South America, where the season is winter, multiple countries saw record high temperatures, and in Chile, the mercury reached 102 F.

"Unbelievable temperatures up to 38.9C in the Chilean Andine areas in mid-winter! Much more than what Southern Europe just had in mid-summer at the same elevation: This event is rewriting all climatic books," tweeted Extreme Temperatures Around the World.

"Chile's winter is disappearing," Raúl Cordero, a climate expert from the University of Santiago told The Guardian. "It's not surprising that temperature records are being set all over the world. Climate change ensures these records are broken more and more frequently."

Some parts of Paraguay, Bolivia and Brazil also have been experiencing summer temperatures in winter with temperatures ranging between 98 F to 102 F.

"Brutal winter heat in Northern Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia and Southern Brazil with temperatures up to 39C. For dozens (of) stations these are records for the first half of August. For at least 5 more days there won't be any relief and we can't rule out some 40Cs [104F]," Extreme Temperatures Around the World said in another tweet.

In arctic Bely Island of Russia, the temperature reached 79 F. In Florida, the ocean temperature hit 101 F in late July at a depth of 5 feet. It's believed that many reefs around the Florida Keys are now completely bleached or dead, which took only two weeks to happen.

In Phoenix, Arizona, the temperature broke records with more than 30 consecutive days of daily high temperatures exceeding 110 F.

"For vast parts of North America, Asia, Africa and Europe — it is a cruel summer. For the entire planet, it is a disaster. And for scientists, it is unequivocal — humans are to blame. All this is entirely consistent with predictions and repeated warnings. The only surprise is the speed of the change," said United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres at a news event.

The extreme heat has kept many

people indoors. Such behavioral change is making a big dent on the economy.

According to a recent study by the Adrienne Arsht-Rockefeller Foundation Resilience Center, excessive heat is estimated to cost \$100 billion a year in reduced productivity alone. That does not factor in issues like the heat's effects on tourism, infrastructure, healthcare costs and energy costs.

The cost will increase as climate change accelerates, said the study. It projects that the annual productivity loss will reach approximately \$200 billion by 2030 and \$500 billion by 2050.

Agriculture is most vulnerable to climate change. The center found that extreme heat from last corn yields led to a drop of \$720 million in annual revenue, which is projected to reach \$1.7 billion annually by 2030.

Cattle die in extreme heat also. In June, Kansas state officials said that they were aware of at least 2,000 cattle deaths due to the heat. Iowa and Nebraska also have reported large numbers of cattle deaths in July.

Texas, Mississippi and Alabama will face the biggest heat-related economic losses in the coming decades due to their types of industries and temperatures, said the study.

A recent analysis by Gusto, a payroll processing company, showed that in Texas, outdoor-dependent small and medium sized businesses have experienced a 20 percent drop in the average employee's weekly working hours as of July 15.

In Arizona, the drop was 10 percent. Texas could potentially lose \$9.5 billion GDP from heat this year.

The heat is taking a toll on people too. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) tracker showed that in the week ending July 22, regions of California, Nevada and Arizona saw more than 1,258 emergency visits associated with heat-related illness out of 100,000 emergency visits. Regions of Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana saw more than 900 such emergency visits out of 100,000.

Heat is also killing people. According to the medical examiner of Maricopa County, which includes the cities of Phoenix, Mesa and Scottsdale, 39 people have been confirmed to have died of heat complications as of Aug 1, with another 312 heat deaths waiting to be confirmed due to an administrative backlog.

Low-income people are most vulnerable to heat because they are more likely unable to pay for electricity and/or own an air conditioning (AC) unit. They tend to live in denser areas with less green space and experience higher average temperatures, numerous studies suggest.

Inflation worries may delay post-Brexit trade rules

By JONATHAN POWELL in London
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The United Kingdom government is set to declare another postponement of post-Brexit border controls on animal and plant products imported from the European Union, amid concerns that the new measures could exacerbate the country's stubborn inflation.

This will be the fifth suspension of plans to enforce these controls, although full checks on British exports to the EU have been in place since January 2021.

The Financial Times was the first to report last week that concerns over potential inflationary effects

from additional regulations have prompted the postponement of the new checks on fresh food products coming from the EU.

According to a government insider cited by the FT, the "driving force" for the new delay is "the need to bear down on inflation".

In June, the annual inflation rate in the UK reached 7.9 percent, the highest among G7 countries, with food inflation registering 17.3 percent.

The delayed implementation of the fresh import regime at Britain's ports, which had been scheduled to begin its first stages in October this year, would also provide businesses and border authorities with extra time to put the necessary

arrangements in place, said the FT. Responding to the report on Thursday, a government official told the Politico news website that "we've been reflecting on the feedback we've had from stakeholders" and that "we're conscious that businesses need time to prepare for checks to be introduced".

Updated details expected. Ministers are expected to reveal updated details on the proposed plans, known as the Border Target Operating Model, soon.

The postponement, revealed ahead of an announcement from the Bank of England last week that interest rates would rise for the

14th consecutive time, has been welcomed by industry representatives, reported The Guardian newspaper.

"The government has made the right decision to postpone. UK food retailers, hospitality businesses, and consumers were in line for major disruption because many EU food-producing businesses supplying to the UK are not ready for the new requirements," said Shane Brennan, chief executive of the Cold Chain Federation.

The new border checks arrangement, initially slated to start in July last year, was first delayed due to concerns that it might exacerbate the cost-of-living crisis.

BUSINESS

FIND US ON FACEBOOK AND JOIN THE CONVERSATION · CHINA DAILY

Shanxi pioneers green coal in N. China

By LIU YUKUN in Beijing and SUN RUISENG in Taiyuan

Coal-rich Shanxi province's action plan for zero-carbon coal-mining is pioneering green and low-carbon transformation across North China, and will popularize technologies like carbon capture, utilization and storage — CCUS — and promote industrial growth, experts said.

Shanxi said it aims to select around five coal mines for use of technologies such as energy conservation, carbon reduction, zero-carbon power supply, gas utilization and ecological carbon sinks, to achieve net-zero carbon dioxide emissions.

These sites are projected to reduce CO2 emissions per metric ton of raw coal by over 20 percent compared to 2020 levels, and achieve net-zero emissions by 2030.

Wu Lixin, chief expert of the Coal Industry Planning Institute, which is part of China Coal Technology and Engineering Group, said: "This roadmap offers a green and low-carbon transformation plan for the traditional high-carbon industries, offering methods for calculating relevant indicators, such as total CO2 emissions and their intensity. It serves as a reference for low-carbon transformation for areas that are rich in traditional resources."

678.38 million tons

coal output in Shanxi province during January-June this year

Wu said the action plan would drive the energy industry toward clean and efficient utilization, across coal mining, coal-fired power generation, steel, nonferrous metals and coal chemical industries.

"It would also promote the development of CCUS technologies, and raise standards and norms for green exploration of coal and minerals, coal mine construction, development, utilization and processing equipment."

Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University, noted the action plan signifies Shanxi's commitment to low-carbon transformation. "Aside from CCUS, there are numerous technologies that achieve zero-carbon emissions in coal mining processes, such as utilizing clean energy sources like wind and solar to power mining operations, or offsetting emissions through carbon sink and carbon trading."

A study published by the journal of Advanced Engineering Sciences said carbon emissions resulting from coal development and utilization are a major contributor to China's overall carbon emissions, accounting for around 60 percent to 70 percent of the national total in 2021.

As a traditional coal-producer, Shanxi's first-half output reached 678.38 million tons, or about 29.5 percent of the nation's output, according to the provincial bureau of statistics.

In recent years, Shanxi has accelerated its efforts to integrate the coal industry's development with carbon reduction technologies. By the end of June, Shanxi had established 46 intelligent coal mines, with advanced coal production capacity accounting for over 80 percent.

The province's energy consumption intensity has cumulatively decreased by over 13 percent since 2019, according to the provincial energy administration.

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Visitors try out Huawei mobile phones at an expo in Shanghai in June. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Huawei smartphones on 'comeback trail'

Handsets with enhanced AI capabilities seen challenging other competitors

By MA SI masi@chinadaily.com.cn

Huawei Technologies Co is plotting a strong comeback into the smartphone industry. Its new devices boast enhanced artificial intelligence capabilities powered by large language models or LLMs and are likely to have access to reported upcoming 5G chips made by domestic partners.

Yu Chengdong, CEO of Huawei's device business group, said the company's smartphones are "on the comeback trail".

Market watchers said Huawei seems intent on garnering a greater share of the smartphone market in China.

Huawei's comeback, they said, will likely inject greater vitality into the smartphone market that has seen declines for a string of quarters now, and could challenge relatively new brands such as Honor.

In the second quarter of this year, Huawei's share of the domestic smartphone market jumped to 13 percent from 7.3 percent a year ago. What is noteworthy is that Huawei's rise came amid a lingering market-wide decline.

More importantly, Huawei, whose smartphone business has been cramped by US government restrictions since 2019, took the second spot in the high-end sector in the second quarter, Yu said at Huawei's developer conference in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, on Friday.

Huawei wound its way back into

the top five smartphone brands in the second quarter, ranking along Xiaomi in the fifth spot in terms of shipments, said International Data Corp, a market research provider.

IDC attributed Huawei's growth to the resumption of normal product launches after partially resolving component shortages.

Meanwhile, at the developer conference, Huawei showcased enhanced in-handset AI capabilities powered by its self-developed LLM. The key technology behind ChatGPT, an AI chatbot developed by US-based AI research company OpenAI, is its LLM.

Jia Yongli, president of AI and smart full-scenario business department at Huawei's device group, said Celia, the company's voice-activated assistant, has become super smart, thanks to Huawei's own LLM.

For instance, Celia can quickly translate a 3,000-word English news report into Chinese, write a summary and provide relevant data so that readers can better understand it. Celia demonstrated its proficiency at the company's conference.

Trained by Huawei's LLM, Celia can not only understand user instructions but assist users in creating videos and copywriting, and in providing personalized suggestions and recommendations, Jia said.

But, like what other companies have already discovered, two aspects — computing power and cost — pose the biggest challenge in integrating LLMs into smartphones.

Lu Yanxia, research director at IDC China, said the success of LLMs depends highly on the support of computing power. LLMs typically require training with trillions of words, which is still a huge challenge for smartphones.

But with domestic mobile phone manufacturers, including Huawei, investing in the field, the application of LLMs in smartphones may create new opportunities, Lu said.

Using its own advances in chip design tools along with chipmaking, Huawei is reportedly seeking to procure 5G chips domestically from Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corp by the end of this year. If the plan pans out, the Chinese smartphone industry would be in for big change, experts said.

Huawei and SMIC did not comment on such reports, but some market watchers believe the reports to be true. "SMIC has already offered such chipmaking technology to other Chinese clients," one industry source who sought anonymity told China Daily.

Xu Zhijun, rotating chairman of Huawei, said in June the company has developed electronic design automation or EDA tools for chips above 14 nanometers by partnering with domestic companies and will complete comprehensive verification this year.

Success on that front could deal a big blow to Honor Device Co, which was spun off from Huawei more than two years ago. Honor is seen as a substitute for Huawei amid US government restrictions. But now, with Huawei on the comeback trail, Honor phones may lose their luster in the eyes of consumers, experts said.

HIGHER GROUND

New fiscal measures to boost private firms

By CHENG YU chengyu@chinadaily.com.cn

China's State Taxation Administration launched 28 measures to facilitate tax payments for small and medium-sized enterprises and self-employed individuals on Sunday, as part of the country's accelerated efforts to drive development of the private sector.

The new measures mainly include extending the duration of certain tax exemptions, cutting red tape on tax payments as well as optimizing cross-border tax services.

For instance, taxpayers who did not benefit from extra tax deductions on research and development costs during the July tax period can still enjoy such benefits through August and September. More efforts will also be made by the tax authority to cooperate with related departments to build up cases on R&D project tax payments, so that eligible SMEs can better understand policies.

"Such measures will help taxpayers fully save on operating costs through R&D tax deductions. They will furthermore stimulate their vitality and drive their innovation capability, all of which will be strong drivers of the development of the country's private sector," said Li Xuhong, head of fiscal taxation policy and application at the Beijing National Accounting Institute.

"The new measures directly address some common questions and issues faced by private enterprises regarding tax payments and related policies, and help them better enjoy policy benefits," Li said.

She added that the most recent

measures are a continuation of preferential policies for private enterprises, which are mostly SMEs and self-employed individuals. The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology said that in China, private companies, most of which are smaller businesses, contribute nearly 50 percent of the nation's tax revenue and produce 60 percent of its GDP.

Prior to the 28 measures launched on Sunday, the STA had already launched four batches of 81 supportive measures on taxes. In the first half, tax and fee cuts — and tax refunds and deferrals for private taxpayers — hit 704.9 billion yuan (\$97.89 billion), accounting for 76 percent of the total.

Notably, on Sunday, six targeted measures were launched to promote cross-border tax services, including simplifying tax declaration procedures, promoting non-declaration of information, such as export tax rebate invoices, as well as promoting cooperation with tax authorities from economies participating in the Belt and Road Initiative.

Fan Yong, dean of the School of Public Finance and Taxation of the Central University of Finance and Economics, said that such measures will further improve convenience for private enterprises in handling export tax rebates and offer a better tax environment for the private economy.

"The tax system and tax-related cross-border service capabilities have become important guarantees to facilitate overseas investment by Chinese enterprises. Thus, such measures will greatly drive development of the country's private companies on the global stage," Fan said.

Briefly

E-commerce logistics index edges up in July

China's e-commerce logistics index, an indicator of logistics operations in the sector, stood at 110.9 points in July, up 0.3 point from a month earlier, according to the latest data released by the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing. Specifically, the satisfaction rate subindex stood at 101.2 in July, up 1.5 points from June, while the logistics timeliness subindex continued to grow for seven straight months in July, up by 0.3 point compared to June. The subindex tracking logistics volume in July stood at 121.8 points, a slight decrease of 0.8 point from June. The decrease in July was due to the exit of e-commerce sales promotion activities rolled out in June, a statement from the organization said.

Lottery ticket sales surge 50.4% in H1

China's lottery ticket sales surged 50.4 percent year-on-year to about 273.9 billion yuan (\$38.35 billion) in the first half, said the Ministry of Finance. Sales of lottery tickets to support the welfare system stood at approximately 89.82 billion yuan during the period, an increase of 20 percent. Lottery tickets sold to support the sports industry surged 71.7 percent to 184.08 billion yuan, mainly driven by sports events and lottery games promotion. In June alone, sales of lottery tickets in China reached 48.73 billion yuan, up 52.4 percent year-on-year. Under lottery management rules, funds raised from ticket sales are used for administrative expenses and public welfare projects, as well as to fund prizes.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Saudi Arabia taps Chinese tourists for growth amid wanderlust

By ZHU WENQIAN zhuwenqian@chinadaily.com.cn

Saudi Arabia, which launched its first direct flight to Beijing last week, said it hopes to welcome more than 4 million Chinese tourists by 2030 amid significant growth in its tourism sector.

Saudi Arabia's national flag carrier Saudia, which launched the route to the national capital on Friday, will operate four weekly flights between Jeddah and Beijing. The inaugural return flight between the two cities saw a passenger load factor of 87 percent, and most of them were Chinese passengers, the carrier said.

Previously, Guangzhou in Guangdong province was the sole Chinese destination for Saudia.

Since April, Saudia has ramped up the flight frequency to Guangzhou to five times a week.

The carrier said it plans to resume round-trip daily flights to reach the operational frequency of the pre-COVID period.

The new direct flight service to the Chinese capital is expected to help foster exchanges across trade, business, tourism, education and



Passengers make preparations for boarding a Saudia flight at Beijing Daxing International Airport over the weekend. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

culture, industry players of the two countries said.

"China is a very important route for Saudia. The introduction of the new direct flights to and from Beijing not only boosts tourism, but also strengthens the overall eco-

nomical and cultural ties between the two nations," said Ibrahim Al-Omar, director-general of Saudia Group.

"Tourism is a pillar of Saudi Vision 2030, and China is ranked among the top global sources of

tourists. This new route will be another large step forward toward Saudi Arabia's ambitious economic diversification agenda and it can achieve much growth with more Chinese vacationers coming to the Kingdom," he said.

Alhasan Aldabbagh, president of the Asia Pacific markets at Saudi Tourism Authority, said the new direct flight service is an iconic achievement that underscores its dedication to China, a vital market for Saudi Arabia.

"Fueled by an ambitious tourism plan, which is underpinned by the Vision 2030 strategic framework, the direct flights to Beijing will help us welcome over 4 million Chinese visitors to Saudi Arabia by 2030," Aldabbagh said.

China's air travel market has boomed this summer on growing tourist demand.

Beijing Daxing International Airport has seen the number of its daily takeoffs and landings exceed 880, according to the airport.

"Currently, some 20 domestic carriers operate international flights to more than 30 global destinations. With the opening of more long-dis-

tance international air routes, the international flight market is on a steady recovery since China eased its COVID-related quarantine requirements," said Kong Yue, deputy general manager of the Daxing airport, which became operational in September 2019.

From March 2020 until its resumption earlier this year, the airport's international flights had been transferred to the Beijing Capital International Airport.

Meanwhile, as China deepens participation in the economic growth plans of the Gulf nations, more Chinese professionals, entrepreneurs and tourists are forecast to travel to the Middle East, industry insiders said.

Currently, direct flights connect a Chinese mainland city with Teheran in Iran, Riyadh in Saudi Arabia and Dubai and Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates.

In the past few months, Tuniu Corp, a Nanjing, Jiangsu province-based online travel agency, said it had received a large number of inquiries from Chinese consumers about traveling to countries in the Middle East.



CHENGDU FISU GAMES



Chengdu provides window into rapid growth

The Chengdu FISU World University Games have given foreigners a remarkable opportunity to witness China's development and prosperity, PwC's Asia Pacific chair has said.

Apart from being an exciting sports spectacle, the games are also exhibiting the nation's economic growth and giving it more global exposure, said Raymund Chao, chairman of PwC Asia Pacific and China.

"The influx of visitors from around the world creates a significant tourism boost for Chengdu," he said. As visitors explore the city and experience its unique culture, they contribute to the local economy, said Chao, whose company is an official supporter of the games.

Beyond economic gains, the senior executive of the global accounting and consultancy firm also stressed the intangible values associated with hosting the international event.

Chao said that by bringing together a large number of people from various countries, the games have helped foster cultural exchanges, mutual understanding and friendships that transcend borders.



"I believe in a rosy future for the sports industry in China, underlined by policy support and growing public enthusiasm."

Raymund Chao, chairman of PwC Asia Pacific and China

"When it comes to showcasing China to the world, what could be more powerful than letting foreigners from around the world see and experience the vibrancy of the city, the prosperity of China themselves?" he said.

Highlighting China's track record of hosting major global sports events, including the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, the Chengdu games and the upcoming Asian Games in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, Chao said these events demonstrate China's capabilities and strength on the international stage.

China has consistently demonstrated its ability to successfully organize and manage world-class sporting events, leaving a positive impression on the global community, he noted.

Data from China's National Bureau of Statistics showed that total revenues of the country's sports industry have increased from 952.6 billion yuan (\$133.8 billion) in 2012 to 3.1 trillion yuan in 2021, with an annual growth rate of over 14 percent.

Expressing his optimism about the outlook of the sports industry in China, Chao said that major sports events held in China would further boost the sector's development.

"I believe in a rosy future for the sports industry in China, underlined by policy support and growing public enthusiasm," Chao said.

Moreover, he underscored the significance of integrating high-tech solutions into sports activities, as technologies like artificial intelligence can improve event organization and maximize players' potential by analyzing vast amounts of data to provide strategic insights.

"Incorporating AI, for example, can help players position themselves correctly, enhance their training regimens and unleash their full potential during competitions," Chao said.

XINHUA



Going out with a blade of glory

Xiu Yuhao of China (left) competes against Aymerick Gally of France during the men's team epee final at the Chengdu FISU World University Games on Sunday. China had to settle for silver after a 45-35 loss. The Chengdu games end on Tuesday, with the closing ceremony taking place at Chengdu Open Air Music Park. Only one gold-medal event takes place on Tuesday — men's water polo. Throughout the games, participants from around the world have been keen to emphasize how much they enjoyed the event. FISU Secretary-General Eric Saintrond joined that chorus of praise, saying: "I am happy to see students taking to the streets of Chengdu to communicate with local people. They can see the real China, where the venues and the organization are perfect, and the people are warm."

QU HONGLUN/ CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Games legacy built to last

Organizers vow venues and facilities will continue to benefit local residents

By HUANG ZHILING in Chengdu
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After the Chengdu FISU World University Games end, its venues will be used for sports and public fitness, according to Cao Xuefeng, deputy director of the office of the executive committee of the Chengdu games.

The venues are the most obvious sports legacy left to Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province, following the games. The city had 49 designated venues for the events, 13 of which were newly built, while the rest were renovated.

Most of the renovated venues are located on the campuses of higher learning institutions and will be used for the development of collegiate-level sports, Cao said.

While preparing for the games, Chengdu promoted the opening of the venues to the public and holding sports events in them.

In 2022 alone, venues were opened to the public for free or at low cost for nearly 80,000 hours, serving more than 5.09 million people,

and more than 730 sporting events were held in them, Cao said.

These venues will continue to be used for sports and fitness, he added.

In the short term, Chengdu will focus on opening venues to benefit its residents and to meet their growing needs for sports and fitness to improve their health.

In the medium and long term, the Sichuan capital will explore ways to market the venues and strive to ensure sustainable, comprehensive utilization of the larger ones as it looks to build itself into a sporting events hub and promote fitness among the public, Cao said.

The athletes' village will also survive. During the games, it provided accommodation, catering, medical treatment, consultation, conference, leisure and business services for delegations from more than 110 countries and regions.

After the games end, all of the village's facilities will be transferred to the control of Chengdu University, where the village is located.

Gong Jia, a volunteer from the university, said she is proud that the



Dong'an Lake Sports Park is among the venues that will be open to the public after the World University Games close. XINHUA

village is located on her university campus.

The village consists of 380,000 square meters of new buildings and 180,000 sq m of renovated roads, landscapes and pipelines, all of which will be transformed into teaching and living spaces for faculty and students at the university, she said.

Its construction greatly improved the spatial foundation of Chengdu

University, said Su Bo, executive deputy head of the village and a lead official at the university.

The Chengdu games, which started on July 28 and end on Aug 8, was postponed twice due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chengdu is the third Chinese mainland city to host the biennial Summer University Games, following Beijing in 2001 and Shenzhen, Guangdong province, in 2011.

Referee reflective during third stint at FISU event

By LI YINGXUE in Chengdu
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Liu Jiang has played an integral role at all three FISU World University Games held on the Chinese mainland, showcasing his versatility in various positions during 2001's Beijing University Games, 2011's Shenzhen edition and this year's Chengdu event.

In Beijing, he was a linesman for the volleyball competitions, and during the Shenzhen games, he was honored with the role of chief referee. At the Chengdu edition, he has served as referee supervisor, underscoring his expertise and experience in officiating top-level sporting events.

"During the Chengdu games, my main task as the referee supervisor is to collaborate with the international referee committee and ensure the fairness and impartiality of the competitions. I will ensure that the referees adhere to the rules and guarantee that the athletes can showcase their abilities in a fair and competitive environment," Liu said.

During the opening ceremony of the games held at the Dong'an Lake Sports Park Stadium in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province, on July 28, Liu took an oath on behalf of the technical officials.

"Having the privilege to represent all technical officials and referees to take the oath at the opening ceremony is a symbol of the country's and organizing committee's trust and recognition. To me, it is the highest



Liu Jiang, referee supervisor for the volleyball competitions of the Chengdu games.

honor," the 53-year-old said.

Liu recalled that standing on that stage at the opening ceremony, seeing athletes from different nations and regions gathered together, and feeling the world's eyes focused on this momentous event, he couldn't help but feel a sense of pride and joy.

He revealed that to prepare for the oath-taking ceremony, he asked a British international commentator to help him refine his pronunciation when he officiated the finals of the Men's Volleyball Nations League in Poland at the end of last month.

After graduating from Beijing Sport University in the 1990s, Liu embarked on a career in teaching, focusing on volleyball instruction and training. In 1996, he achieved the status of a national-level volleyball referee.

Through his extensive work as a referee, he has had the opportunity to participate in various competi-

tions, constantly exposing himself to the latest volleyball techniques and tactics.

Liu, who is also head of the School of Sports at Southwest Jiaotong University, has become one of the most experienced volleyball referees in China, having officiated at the Summer Olympic Games in Beijing, Rio de Janeiro and Tokyo.

He said that during the Shenzhen games in 2011, he dreamed of one day hosting the University Games competitions at Southwest Jiaotong.

That dream came true at the Chengdu games, as the university's Xipu Campus Gymnasium served as the venue for the volleyball finals, during which a total of 24 matches took place. The achievement filled Liu with immense pride and satisfaction.

"We have taken inspiration from international experiences in venue management. Many of the venues for this University Games have been prepared and managed following our model," he explained.

Liu said that hosting the games will boost the School of Sports' development, improve sports education and research standards and lead to the cultivation of more high-level sports professionals.

"Through the games' events, students will gain a deeper understanding of the sports industry and management, paving the way for their future careers. Moreover, the games have provided a platform for global exchanges and cooperation,

contributing to the college's internationalization efforts," he said.

Liu said he has noticed several commonalities among the three Summer University Games in China.

"First, each of these events served as an international sports spectacle, attracting exceptional athletes from across the globe to compete on a grand stage. Second, all three games prioritized fairness and competitive excellence, providing a remarkable platform for young athletes to display their skills and abilities," Liu said.

However, the Chengdu edition has placed greater emphasis on embodying regional characteristics and cultural heritage.

"Chengdu has infused more local elements into the event's venues and activities, promising a distinctive and unforgettable experience for both athletes and spectators alike," Liu said.

He also noted that hosting large-scale sports events not only elevates the profile and image of a city but also plays a pivotal role in driving its economic and cultural development.

"Chengdu, seizing the opportunity of this University Games, is likely to embark on creating more sports facilities and cultural venues. By doing so, it can foster a culture of fitness and widespread participation in sports, making a significant and positive impact on the city's overall advancement and the happiness of its inhabitants," Liu said.

What they say

Eric Saintrond, secretary-general of the International University Sports Federation



The Chengdu Universiade gives university students from all over the world a chance to communicate with the Chinese people and

let the world see the real China. There are a lot of cultural activities in the Universiade Village in which athletes can learn about Chinese culture. I can see the efforts the organizers are making.

Welton Juvenal Menezes, badminton player from Brazil



The facilities here are great, and the audiences are very enthusiastic. The pandas are very cute. Chengdu is a beautiful city,

and the food here is also great and unique.

Fernanda Gomes Celidonio, swimmer from Brazil



It is my first time in China, and it's a country that I never thought about visiting, and I'm absolutely in love with it. I think my favor-

ite part so far was meeting the pandas and going on that little trip. I think it's amazing how close everyone here makes us feel to this culture, and how much I've learned in the past two weeks.

Cara Patricia Feain-Ryan, winner of the 3,000m steeplechase from Australia



The event was very challenging. A lot of people ended up on the ground after the event. We helped lift each other up after

the race. It's great to get to meet people from other countries, even though your competitors are in the event. I think afterwards there's a really big sense of respect for what everyone has achieved.

Erbakan Necmettin Akyuz, wushu athlete from Turkey who speaks fluent Chinese



My Chinese name is Li Xiaolong like kung fu star Bruce Lee's Chinese name. I have memorized many lines from Bruce

Lee's movies. I imitated martial arts movements from those movies at home. I've read some Chinese martial arts books, and learned some Chinese instruments.

CHENGDU FISU GAMES

China serves up volleyball gold

Women's squad thrills home fans with impressive triumph over Japan in final

By WANG XIAOYU in Chengdu
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Roared on by the ear-splitting support of the home crowd, China's women's volleyball team stormed to glory at the World University Games on Sunday evening.

The host squad overcame a resilient Japan 29-27, 29-27, 25-22 at the Xipu Campus Gymnasium of Southwest Jiaotong University in Chengdu. Team China head coach Zhao Yong was delighted to see the team win so convincingly in the final after looking nervy early in the tournament.

"Our players are relatively young and had only played in a few international events previously, so it's natural that they appeared to be ill-prepared or encountered emotional upsets at the very beginning," said Zhao.

"But the rest of the games were on the right path, and I think they got into a rhythm by the third match of the group stage," he said. "They got better and better during the Chengdu games, and undoubtedly, the final was the best."

In an earlier game, Poland beat Brazil 3-1 for the bronze medal.

The final between Japan and China was intense from beginning to end. After the score was leveled at 21-21 by Japan during the first set, China had the set point four times before capping it off 29-27.

In the second set, Japan tied the score again at 22-22 to force the first timeout by China. The scores remained even from 23-all to 27-all before the Japanese lost it with a serving error and an ace from China.

Scores were again repeatedly tied for the third set, until China gradually extended its lead with point-scoring spikes and took the first match point with a smash before wrapping up the set 25-22.

"We were aiming for the gold during pregame training, and we made it!" said spiker Wu Mengjie, the top scorer on the Chinese side with 16 points. Fellow spiker Zhong Hui and opposite Zhou Yetong recorded 15 and 12 points, respectively.

Wu added that the players have learned a great deal from the games in Chengdu, including techniques, mental preparations and how to adjust to their environment.

"I believe we'll get better and better in the future," Wu said.



"I hope that through hosting high-level international events like the Chengdu games, more children will become interested in the sport and participate in it."

Zhao Yong, head coach of China's women's volleyball team

Zhou said the key to edging past their opponents was remaining calm whenever the score was tied.

"Instead of getting anxious, we were very patient to win points one by one," she said.

"The victory is the result of our joint efforts. We had prepared for a tough match and rigorously implemented the strategy devised by the coach. I am extremely happy to win the match and claim my first championship in a global sports event."

It was also the first time middle blocker Wang Wenhan won gold at an international competition.

"Honestly, I was not in my best shape before the final. But on the court, I strove to get myself excited and use my high emotions to bring out my best techniques," she said.

"I've learned a lot from the game,



Top: China's women's volleyball team celebrates on the podium after winning gold at the Chengdu FISU World University Games on Sunday. CAO YIMING / XINHUA

Above: Gao Yi of China spikes the ball during the final against Japan. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY

and definitely need to improve my blocking."

Opposite Miao Yiwen did not reveal her wish for a gold medal until after the final concluded because she was afraid that talking about it would jinx it.

"It is a dream come true for me tonight," she said. "But after this

victory, everything will return to zero. All I need to do is to train harder and keep improving myself."

More than an hour after the match on Sunday evening finished, some volleyball aficionados were reluctant to leave, with one of them holding a red banner reading: "Celebrating wins and shouldering losses

together. Forever support China's women's volleyball!"

Zhao, the coach, said that volleyball is now very popular in China.

"I hope that through hosting high-level international events like the Chengdu games, more children will become interested in the sport and participate in it," Zhao said.

Shuttler moved by opponent's kindness

By WANG XIAOYU in Chengdu
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One of the Chinese words that Brazilian badminton player Wellton Menezes has picked up during the Chengdu FISU World University Games is Tan — the family name of Tan Qiang, a Chinese opponent.

"What was his name again? I really want to memorize it," the 22-year-old asked volunteers and reporters on the sidelines of a match last week.

It was not only Tan's badminton skills on the court that impressed Menezes, but also the gesture of goodwill Tan made by giving him a brand-new pair of shoes.

On July 30, Tan beat Menezes with ease in a men's doubles match during the mixed team event. But the image of Menezes' worn-out shoes stuck with the Chinese shuttler.

"My first reaction was that even though his shoes were so old, he came all the way from Brazil to play badminton here. I was touched by his love for the sport," Tan said.

"Hopefully, he could feel the kindness and hospitality from Chinese people. In the meantime, I guess we can all learn from his spirit."

Tan Qiang, badminton player from China

Tan asked for Menezes's shoe size immediately after the match and switched a pair of his own new shoes with his Chinese teammate to get the right fit for Menezes.

"I wanted to give him a present, and hopefully, he could feel the kindness and hospitality from Chinese people. In the meantime, I guess we can all learn from his spirit," he said.

Menezes, who majors in physical training at Paulista University in Sao Paulo, said that gesture of kindness meant a lot to him.

"My shoes were fine when I first arrived in Chengdu, but for whatever reason, the sole fell off during the match," he said.

"I am very grateful for Tan's help. It's a great pair of shoes and I love it. After I go back to Brazil, I will also wear the shoes for training. I believe it will help boost my professional career."

Menezes was born in Niteroi, a city of about 550,000 people in the state of Rio de Janeiro. After a deadly mudslide in the city in 2010, a few local badminton coaches launched a social welfare project that first introduced Menezes to the shuttlecock when he was 9 years old.

He went on to compete in his first badminton match, and he later won a medal.

"The journey started from there," he said. "Now I am participating in the Chengdu games as a student-athlete. The whole experience is simply unbelievable."

Menezes also expressed his strong gratitude for his first badminton coach.

"He is the reason I fell in love with such a spectacular sport," he said.

When asked about his badminton idols, Menezes named China's Lin Dan and Malaysia's Lee Chong Wei, as well as Igor Coelho, the first Brazilian badminton player to compete in the Olympics.

Coelho's journey from a favela to an elite badminton court has motivated him to persevere and aim higher, Menezes said.

"I know I am not on the national team yet, I just train at the university club. But do I have an Olympic dream? For sure," he said.

Czechs beat Brazilians in basketball final to take home gold

By CUI JIA in Chengdu
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The Czech Republic defeated Brazil 69-67 to claim the men's basketball gold in a nerve-racking and spectacular final at the Chengdu FISU World University Games on Sunday in front of a packed crowd at the Fenghuangshan Sports Park Gymnasium.

It was a breakthrough for both Brazil, who won basketball bronze at the 2017 World University Games, and the Czech Republic to make it to the gold medal showdown. Patrick Samoura, captain of the Czech team, said earlier that nobody expected them to be in the final.

Six of the game's 15 lead changes took place in the tight fourth quarter. The game was knotted up at 67-67 with only 44 seconds left on the clock until free throws from Nikolaos Noumeros and Jan Zidek helped push the Czech team ahead for good.

The back-and-forth game was highlighted by runs from both sides, with each going on 9-0 surges in the second quarter to end the first half tied at 37 apiece.



Players from the Czech Republic celebrate after defeating Brazil in the men's basketball final at the Chengdu FISU World University Games on Sunday. YANG QING / XINHUA

Czech player Zidek scored 11 points of his game-high 24 in the first quarter.

Three Brazilians scored in double-digits, with captain Caio de Souza Pacheco notching 14 points and Paulo Barbosa Junior scoring 17. Victor Camilo da Silva lodged a double-double with 10 rebounds and 12 points.

The atmosphere in the 18,000-seat stadium reached fever pitch after a spectacular assist from Pacheco to a teammate for a reverse slam halfway through the fourth quarter. Despite his team's valiant efforts, he was very disappointed after losing the game.

"We have the medals on our chest. But we don't want the silvers, we want the golds," Pacheco said.

He added that his experience in Chengdu has been incredible. "I am proud of what our group has achieved and hungry for more."

Lubos Kovar from the Czech Republic said basketball is a team sport, and his teammates stepped up to achieve a great feat.

"I love it. Everybody likes to be in first place, so I think it's very nice. It's a very great feeling," Kovar said after the game. "I want to say thank you to the crowd. They have been cheering and encouraging us all the time, and we are very grateful to them."

The defending champion United States settled for bronze after beating Argentina 102-91 in an earlier game at Fenghuangshan on Sunday.

It was a closely contested match, with the teams exchanging leads 16 times and tying nine times. The US led 59-58 entering the second half.

The US extended its lead to nine points at 79-70 in the third quarter and carried that momentum to close out the game.

US fencer meets old panda pal while relishing games

By CUI JIA in Chengdu
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When Kamar Skeete met Mei Lan, a giant panda at the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding, on the sidelines of the Chengdu FISU World University Games, he said the experience was "a little bit surreal".

The fencer from the United States had previously met Mei Lan in Atlanta, Georgia, when both of them were just kids.

"We are on different sides of the planet, and he probably doesn't recognize me. I'd like to think that he does though," the 21-year-old said, adding that what's important is that they've both grown up and met again, thanks to the Chengdu games.

Skeete, who hails from Atlanta, was present when Mei Lan was born at Zoo Atlanta on Sept 6, 2009. The giant panda was sent to China in February 2010.

The Pennsylvania State University student has been sharing his experiences during the Chengdu games online, including his visit to the research base, and his posts have created quite a buzz both in the US and China. He has also posted about his stay in the athletes' village and people's lives in Chengdu.

He said he wants to show people at home what it's like to be in China because not everybody gets

the chance to be here.

"I try to let people know that there's a lot of diversity within China that people don't understand. China is like an umbrella. There's a bunch of different things under the umbrella," he said. "It will be great to have more open-minded people like me."

This is Skeete's third trip to China. He visited Beijing and Shenzhen, Guangdong province, when he was 10 and went to Wuxi, Jiangsu province, for a fencing tournament.

"China looks different every single time I come. It's my first time in Chengdu, which is a lot bigger than I imagined. I didn't know what to expect, but I had a really nice experience, and the people are really helpful," he said.

The Chengdu games have provided Skeete with a great opportunity to make new friends from all over the world. He said he set a goal to meet three to five people every day.

Skeete competed for Team USA in the men's sabre team event on Saturday. The team lost 43-45 to Japan in the first round.

After competing at the Chengdu games, he said he can now fully concentrate on exploring the city, sampling street food, trying the spiciest hotpot and learning more about Chinese people and their culture. As he is heading home on Wednesday, he said there is no time to waste.

CHENGDU FISU GAMES

In 2001, when Zhao Jing applied to be a volunteer for the World University Games in Beijing, she did not realize just how much her life would revolve around the international sports gala ever since.

After graduating from university, Zhao became a public servant at China's Ministry of Education, and in 2005 she was an official with the Chinese delegation at the Summer University Games in the Turkish city of Izmir.

Three years later, she joined the International University Sports Federation (FISU), becoming deeply involved in the Shenzhen games in 2011 and then the Chengdu games.

Recalling her career trajectory, Zhao said that the FISU games present an opportunity to demonstrate the changes that have taken place in China — on and off the sporting field — over the past two decades.

City to city

The Chengdu games was originally scheduled for the summer of 2021, but was ultimately pushed back until 2023 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, Chengdu managed to get everything in place for the event before it officially opened on July 28.

"I know very well about the capability of my motherland," said Zhao, who oversaw Chengdu's bid for the games and preparations for the event. "I have more confidence in China's organizing committees than any other country."

Zhao's confidence stemmed from the 2001 games in Beijing. Staged a month after the Chinese capital was awarded the hosting rights for the 2008 Olympics, the 2001 games were widely considered a full rehearsal for the Olympics.

Building on the lessons learned from the games, Beijing successfully delivered the 2008 Olympic Games, showcasing China's organizational ability for international sports events.

That prowess was again in evidence in 2011 when Shenzhen, an economic hub just 30 years old at the time, successfully hosted the University Games.

Chengdu, with a history of over 2,300 years, is the third city in the Chinese mainland to host the biennial University Games. FISU acting president Leonz Eder has visited China more than 20 times since his first trip in 1985. "China always hosts our events with great passion and great success, and that's why we are more than happy to return to any Chinese cities to host our games," Eder said.

Emiliano Ojea, founding president of the Argentinian University Sport Federation, who participated in Shenzhen 2011, echoed those sentiments.

"China is one of the countries with the highest level of hosting events in the world, possessing high-quality sports venues and infrastructure, as well as enthusiastic and professional event volunteers," said Ojea.

The Chengdu games mark the first time a city in western China has hosted a major international sporting event, a testament to the country's development as a whole.

Universities up their game

China topped the medal table at the 2001 games, boosted by the stellar performances of star athletes like hurdler Liu Xiang and basketball



With world-class sporting action, smooth organization, warm hospitality and enthusiastic crowds, Chengdu has set a benchmark for future hosts of the FISU World University Games. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

SETTING THE STAGE FOR EXCELLENCE

From Beijing to Shenzhen to Chengdu, World University Games showcase China's organizational expertise and hospitality



Chinese sports icons (from left) Yao Ming, Liu Xiang and Hu Kai have all embraced the spotlight at the FISU World University Games, which have witnessed the growth of China's sporting prowess as both a competitor and a host. The games have also showcased the nation's comprehensive urban development over the past 20 years.

XINHUA AND PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



XINHUA

star Yao Ming. However, both Liu and Yao were products of the traditional Chinese sports system rather than universities.

In 2005, Hu Kai, a Tsinghua University student, won a rare sprint gold for China in the men's 100 meters race at the World University Games in Turkey, ushering in a new era of university sports in China.

In Chengdu, China is represented by 411 student-athletes, and over 80 percent of the athletes are making their international debuts.

"Whereas professional athletes groomed by sports schools used to form the bulk of China's delegation, the presence of non-professional athletes from ordinary universities has grown steadily in recent years," said Zhong Bingshu, a renowned Chinese scholar who specializes in school sports.

Chinese universities have increasingly contributed to the success of elite sports. China's delegation for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics included 252 student-athletes from 72 universities.

For today's student-athletes, the World University Games represent more than just a competition.

Tennis player Guo Hanyu, one of China's two flagbearers at the opening ceremony, personifies the spirit of friendship and goodwill at the games, saying she planned to explore Chengdu with athletes from other delegations.

"I will definitely recommend some delicious Sichuan cuisine to them. And of course, we will also visit the giant pandas!" said Guo, who studies at Southwest University.

Catalyst for development

The 2001 games were a prelude to Beijing's journey to host both the Summer and Winter Olympics over a span of 14 years, while the 2011 games played a role in Shenzhen's rise as a destination for international sports events.

Similarly, the Chengdu games has driven significant urban changes in the southwestern city. To prepare for the event, Chengdu built 13 new venues and renovated 36 existing structures. A wave of enthusiasm for sports has engulfed the city, as locals increasingly enjoy sports and fitness activities in parks and community centers.

"The Chengdu games have presented a feast of sporting action to our local residents, exerting a positive impact on their lives as they care more for sports and health. For instance, a 5-year-old child in the community watched a swimming competition and then pestered his mother to sign him up for a swimming course," said Zhang Biao, a community official in Chengdu's Tianfu New Area.

In 2017, Chengdu unveiled plans to become a hub for international sports events. The experiences the city has gained in hosting the games, as well as last year's World Team Table Tennis Championships, have helped it close in on that goal.

In 2025, Chengdu will host the World Games. Eder has been so impressed by the city that he reckons it is capable of staging any high-level international events, including the Olympics.

"It is a mid- and long-term strategy to build relations with international sports federations, which can further enhance the influence of Chengdu worldwide and boost tourism," he said.

'Thank you, China!' Iraqi athlete amazed by online fame

By SHI FUTIAN in Chengdu
shifutian@chinadaily.com.cn

Iraqi athlete Maryam Abdulleh has expressed her gratitude to China and Chengdu after becoming a surprise hit on Chinese social media and enjoying a warm welcome at the FISU World University Games.

Abdulleh, who competed in the women's high jump, became an instant online hit when she led the Iraqi delegation out as the team's flagbearer during the opening ceremony on July 28. Her photogenic looks caught the attention of netizens, generating a series of trending topics across several platforms.

One of the most popular hashtags — "Iraqi flagbearer is astonishingly beautiful" — was viewed over 79 million times on Weibo up until last weekend, with fans welcoming Abdulleh to China and wishing her the best in the comments sections.

She says she feels honored by all the attention.

"Thanks for the wonderful wel-

come and help from the Chinese people and Chinese netizens. Chengdu is such a beautiful city, the people here are so friendly, and their culture is wonderful," Abdulleh told China Daily through a translator.

"Since the first day we arrived here, the Chinese people have treated us like the most distinguished guests, giving us the warmest welcome. And the city here is so safe and beautiful. The sports facilities and venues are also top class."

Abdulleh's popularity online has made her a true star at the games. Inside the athletes' village and even on the streets of Chengdu, Abdulleh was often recognized by fellow athletes, volunteers or locals. And she has been happy to oblige their requests for selfies or a quick chat.

"The atmosphere here feels great, and the whole experience here has made me more confident. I really want to thank the Chinese people for their support," said Abdulleh.

She has also been mightily impressed by the Chinese culture,

which has been showcased throughout the games thanks to a daily cultural fair in the athletes' village.

Activities at the fair include dressing up in *hanfu* (traditional Chinese attire), playing Chinese chess and practicing Chinese calligraphy. Licensed products, including the panda mascot Rongbao, sold at souvenir shops present a more modern take on Chinese culture.

"I know China has a very long history. When I came here, the beauty of the Chinese culture, the great natural landscape and the country's rapid development impressed me," Abdulleh said.

"And of course, in China, the panda is the most famous animal. We just love Chinese culture and the Chinese people."

Although Abdulleh failed to reach the podium in Chengdu, her passion for sports remains as strong as ever.

"Sports have gradually changed me in the best possible way, mentally and physically. By competing in domestic and international events, I

learn from other athletes and gain more experience and confidence. It's also a great way to learn about different cultures and different people," said Abdulleh.

"The most important lesson that I learned from sports is to never give up easily, even if you suffer defeats. No matter what, I will keep marching forward to future success. I will need to train hard and fulfill my goals."

"Through sports, I have also learned that you can make your dreams come true. There will always be difficulties and problems, but we can learn to overcome these obstacles."

Chinese volunteer Tang Yunjing has spent time with Abdulleh and the rest of the Iraqi delegation, and reckons their complimentary words about Chengdu and China are more than just being polite.

"Having talked with them, I can sense that they are sincere. They want to get to know us more, and they have displayed a genuine interest in our culture. They have also

bought many things, especially pandas!" Tang told China Daily.

Detailing her work as a volunteer, Tang said that she often helped the Iraqi delegation to schedule meetings and arrange transport. As a sophomore university student herself, Tang is also relishing the opportunity to meet international counterparts.

"There have been so many funny and memorable moments from the games. One of the coaches is very funny — he cannot speak Chinese or English but he still insists on chatting with me as much as possible through a translation app," Tang added.

"I'm so proud to participate in such a great international event. It allows me to see a bigger world. I'm also bettering myself here. For instance, my ability to deal with emergencies has improved a lot. Every day, I need to help participants solve all kinds of problems in a very short time. Even when I'm not with them, I have to arrange things well for them. All of these experiences are enriching."



Since the first day we arrived here, the Chinese people treated us like the most distinguished guests with the warmest welcome."

Maryam Abdulleh, flagbearer of the Iraqi delegation during the opening ceremony

CHENGDU FISU GAMES



From top: The dish *Mapo* tofu, or sauteed tofu in hot and spicy sauce, is one of the widest known Sichuan dishes. Steamed Chinese cabbage in supreme meat soup and Chinese crispy bread filled with beef. *Huiguorou*, or stir-fried pork slices in spicy sauce. *Ciba*, a kind of brown sugar glutinous rice delicacy.

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Sichuan cuisine, renowned as one of China's eight great regional culinary fares, is enhancing Chengdu's international profile as the city continues its stride toward more openness.

Sichuan cuisine, which was developed as early as the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24), began flourishing during the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and the Song Dynasty (960-1279) and is celebrated in the works of venerated ancient Chinese poets Du Fu and Lu You. In recognition of that history, in 2010, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization named Chengdu a "City of Gastronomy", making the capital of Southwest China's Sichuan province the first city in Asia to be accorded that honor.

The development of Sichuan cuisine is inseparable from the abundant resources of the Chengdu Plain, including fish, shrimp, crabs and turtles from the rivers and lakes, and wild delicacies from the mountains. Seasonal vegetables and mushrooms, along with tender poultry and livestock and an abundance of high-quality brewing and seasoning ingredients round out the menu.

The Dujiangyan irrigation system on the Minjiang River in the northwest region of Chengdu Plain was built under the auspices of local governor Li Bing in 256 BC, and the area has been free from both droughts



Spicing up Chengdu's calling card to the world

Sichuan cuisine has earned the city international acclaim



Clockwise from top: Foreign visitors learn how to cook Sichuan cuisine with local chefs. Two visitors sample hotpot, a key representative of Sichuan cuisine famous for being spicy, fresh and fragrant. A foreign visitor gets his ears cleaned at the Guanying Teahouse in Chengdu's Shuangliu district. A face-changing show at one of Chengdu's streets. A Sichuan Opera performer spits fire in a show. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

and floods ever since. During the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) and Tang Dynasty, Chengdu was one of the most prosperous trading cities in China and home to wealthy merchants who tirelessly promoted the development of Sichuan cuisine. As an important source of goods on the northern Silk Road and the starting point of the southern Silk Road, the city introduced crops such as cucumbers, walnuts, pomegranates and garlic through trading.

Modern Sichuan cuisine is largely the result of migrant intervention. During the late Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) and late Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), there were large-scale migrations to Sichuan from provinces such as Hubei, Jiangxi, Fujian, and Guangxi, resulting in cultural exchanges between diverse culinary cultures that eventually produced Sichuan cuisine.

It is worth mentioning that just as

modern Sichuan cuisine was taking shape more than three centuries ago, chili peppers from America were introduced to the region — an ingredient that gives Sichuan dishes their distinctive character to this day. According to a local guidebook published in 1909, the chili peppers are used very frequently in 1,328 Sichuan-style recipes in the book.

While many people attribute the spicy, numbing taste of Sichuan cuisine to the liberal use of peppers, its actual essence has more to do with flavor diversity. Modern Sichuan cuisine emphasizes seasoning and has 24 different flavor profiles, but delicate dishes with no spicy or pronounced numbing flavors account for about two-thirds of them.

In recent years, as Chengdu has enhanced its profile on the world stage as the birthplace and development center of Sichuan cuisine, the city's culinary signature has also

become more popular globally, showcasing its charm and vitality through international exchanges.

For many foreign political figures and celebrities, "interaction" with Sichuan cuisine is a must-have experience. When David Cameron was serving as prime minister of the United Kingdom, he visited Chengdu specifically to enjoy Sichuan tea and hotpot. Former United States' first lady Michelle Obama also sampled authentic Sichuan-style hotpot during her visit to Chengdu, and when former German chancellor Angela Merkel came to the city, she consulted a local chef on how to prepare classic Sichuan *kung pao* chicken.

Along with hotpot and *kung pao* chicken, Chengdu is the birthplace of *Mapo* tofu and is famous for its exquisite and diverse street snacks. And while enjoying their meal, diners at city restaurants are often treated to performances of unique

Sichuan Opera skills such as face-changing and fire-spitting.

To experience the food scene in Chengdu, the Kuixinglou Street is a must-visit. Located in the downtown area, the street encompasses a 400-meter street lined with dozens of restaurants — most of which are overflowing with diners at mealtime. Chengdu locals, who consider eating a major part of life, are willing to wait for hours in long queues just to have a taste.

The irresistible flavors not only attract locals but also many tourists who have visited other attractions in Chengdu. Meanwhile, street vendors offer their signature snacks to satisfy people waiting for their meals. From egg custard cakes to sugarcoated glutinous rice dumplings and ice jelly, visitors can find almost all authentic Chengdu snacks in this area.

Another preferred destination is Yulin Street. Made popular by the



From top: *Dandan* noodles, a delicious snack whose name refers to the baskets that street vendors sold them from in ancient times. *Zhangcha* duck, or tea-smoked duck, a quintessential dish of Sichuan cuisine cooked with hot smoking tea leaves and camphor leaves. *Lai* glutinous rice balls with sesame stuffing.

song *Chengdu* by Zhao Lei, the street is home to small bars and a food paradise featuring scrumptious barbecue and hotpot, skewers, roasted rabbit and crayfish. The dozens of streets and lanes are home to cozy outlets where you can find everything from the most casual fare to luxurious dining experiences.

Xiangxiang Alley on Wangping Street is another great late-night stop for famished foodies. It offers a diverse range of cuisines, including Sichuan dishes, hotpot, barbecue, Western food, Thai food, desserts, teahouses and bars. Meanwhile, Jinli is an ancient street featuring traditional Sichuan-style architecture and Chengdu delicacies. Here visitors can also enjoy Sichuan folk and opera performances and browse souvenir shops.

Chunxi Road in Chengdu's city center is a bustling commercial street known for high-end shopping and entertainment, and its restaurants feature a variety of Sichuan specialties, including rabbit head, roasted pig trotters and spicy rice noodles.

For nightawks, the Jiuyan Bridge on Jinjiang River is home to dozens of bars and serves as the after-dark hub of Chengdu. The bars vary in size, with some only accommodating a few tables. Most offer both indoor and outdoor seating, and when night falls, the entire street reflects in the glittering river, creating a beautiful spectacle.

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Teahouses can be found all over China, but those in Sichuan are quite different as they reflect the inherent leisureliness of local residents — and nowhere is that more evident than in the provincial capital of Chengdu.

Found everywhere from bustling markets to old streets, narrow alleys, parks, gardens and universities, Chengdu's teahouses come in all shapes and sizes — and on sunny days are invariably packed with patrons relaxing on bamboo benches or armchairs as they sip their favorite hot beverage. Traditional teahouses in Chengdu usually serve drinks in a covered bowl from a three-piece set that also includes a lid and saucer.

"The three-piece set of covered-bowl tea utensils should be of the best quality," said famous Ba-Shu culture scholar Yuan Tingdong. "The tea saucer supports the bowl, providing stability and convenience when picking up or putting down the bowl, preventing the tea from flowing onto the table or spilling on one's clothes. The tea bowl has a moderate capacity, larger on the top and smaller on the bottom, facilitating the rolling of leaves during brewing. The lid is not tightly

Brewing up a sense of intimate community



From left: Foreign visitors sip their favorite tea at a teahouse located near the Wuhou Shrine in Chengdu. Guests watch an acrobatic tea-pouring performance at a Chengdu teahouse.

sealed, which allows for heat preservation, dust prevention and ventilation, and it can also be used to stir the tea and block floating leaves when drinking."

Observing the service practiced in Chengdu teahouses is like watching an acrobatics performance. A staff

member skillfully carries a tray of bowls to the table, and with one swift motion slides one in front of each customer. Then, with one hand grasping a long-necked copper pot, the server flips the lid with the other hand and pours a stream of steaming liquid into the bowl before



quickly replacing the lid. It's all done with astonishing speed and graceful rhythm — with no mess!

For Chengdu locals, teahouses are more than just places to sip. Inside they can find people chatting, playing cards, discussing business, telling stories, shining shoes or selling

melon seeds and tofu puddings. The diversity of activities often leaves visitors astounded.

In his book *Ba-Shu Cultural Chronicle*, Yuan writes: "Tea culture is a very important and distinctive part of Ba-Shu folk culture. The teahouse is a small Chengdu, and

Chengdu is a big teahouse. Half of the city's residents are tea drinkers." The author also opines that teahouses are places for rest, socializing, entertainment, and the source of some people's livelihood. Patrons can make friends, conduct business, hear news, seek employment and mediate disputes.

For anyone wanting to experience the authentic teahouse culture of Chengdu, a visit to the century-old Heming Teahouse located in People's Park in the city center is highly recommended. People's Park once had six teahouses, but while some have moved or been rebuilt, Heming Teahouse, where scholars used to gather, retains its original form and is well maintained, preserving the original atmosphere of old Chengdu.

There is another century-old gem called Guanying Teahouse in Pengzhen town of Chengdu's Shuangliu district, with its old-style traditional Sichuan tile roof, walls and uneven muddy floors. The sunshine beats down on the cement stove and old aluminum kettle, and the worn tables and chairs add to the deep sense of history. Seemingly frozen in time, Guanying Teahouse is a popular stop for photography enthusiasts.

COMMENT

Editorials

Manila should not let unprincipled prodding push it to 'daredevil' folly

When it comes to the territorial disputes between China and the Philippines, or any other Southeast Asian nation, in the South China Sea, that the former is bigger does not make it a bully. Nor does being smaller mean the other disputing party naturally commands the moral high ground.

Over the past decades, the South China Sea has become home to one of the busiest sea lanes in the world and the region has become a world growth engine. This is due in no small part to all the disputing parties having remained committed to negotiations to settle the disputes peacefully. That is also testimony to China never having tried to bully any other party.

As a matter of fact, for most of that time, China did not have the means to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity in the South China Sea from being encroached on by other regional countries, which had the backing of the United States.

That explains how the Philippines could exploit a chance in 1999 to intentionally ground a navy transport ship, the BRP *Sierra Madre*, on China's Ren'ai Reef of the Nansha Islands, with a small crew living on board, in an attempt to create a fait accompli that the shoal and its adjacent areas belong to it.

Even though China's ability to better protect its core interests in the region has been substantially enhanced in recent years, it has exercised tolerance and restraint and demonstrated a humanitarian

spirit toward the "squatters" on its island by allowing Manila to supply them and rotate them, in the hope that the farce would come to an end naturally after the ship weathered to an inhabitable ruin.

However, that does not mean Beijing will indulge Manila trying to continue the pantomime it started nearly a quarter of a century ago by sending construction materials to consolidate the quasi shipwreck into a permanent foothold. That's why the China Coast Guard stopped Philippine vessels taking construction materials to the ship on Friday.

Given the provocativeness of its actions, not to mention its reprobate ploy of a shipwreck for an island, it was absurd of the Philippine Coast Guard to issue a statement on Saturday condemning China's "dangerous maneuvers" and the "use of water cannons" against its vessels.

In the same vein, the we-support-Manila statement the US State Department published shortly after the Philippine Coast Guard statement only served to show how the US seeks to exploit the maritime dispute to sow discord between Manila and Beijing and its high-handedness in acting as a judge ruling that the reef does not belong to China.

It is to be hoped that Manila can bear the bigger picture of Sino-Philippine relations in mind while handling the incident. As many in Manila have pointed out, the US is simply trying to push the country instead of itself to the forefront of a possible conflict with China.

Japan unwise to join US' Taiwan-card games

It is no secret that the United States wants to bind Japan more tightly to its war bandwagon, as evidenced by the US National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2024, which was passed by the US Senate at the end of last month. It requires the US secretary of defense to devise a plan for enhancing US security cooperation with Japan.

It is based on this provision that the US government has begun discussions with Japan as the latter moves to set up its first Permanent Joint Operational Headquarters for Japan Self-Defense Forces, according to Japanese media reports over the weekend, quoting people familiar with the matter. The new headquarters, which is expected to be functional by March 2025, would oversee operations of all three branches of the Japan Self-Defense Forces.

The long-standing so-called sword and shield relationship between the US and Japan — in which the US with its strike capabilities is the spear and Japan is the sanctuary-providing shield — is deemed to be outdated. With Japan acquiring long-range strike capabilities such as Tomahawk cruise missiles, and indicating that it is willing to get involved in military operations, the US wants to establish joint command elements in Japan to make the alliance more deeply integrated and operationally effective. The US military is therefore reportedly proposing to modify its own command structure in Japan to better coordi-

nate with the Japan Self-Defense Forces.

For years rightist politicians in Japan have pushed hard for the revision of the country's pacifist Constitution, especially changes to the war-renouncing Article 9, in an attempt to make Japan a "normal nation" with a full-fledged military. To justify the drastic policy change that has met with wide public opposition, Tokyo has cited external security threats using Beijing's reunification cause with Taiwan island as an easy excuse. The provocative claim "an emergency for Taiwan is also an emergency for Japan" underscores a remarkable shift in Japan's stance on the most contentious issue.

Japan's policy has become increasingly aggressive. It has announced plans to raise its defense spending to 2 percent of its gross domestic product in five years, a dramatic increase for a nation that has adopted a defense-only stance since the end of World War II. Moreover, the armed forces of the US and Japan have already worked out draft plans for a joint operation in case of a possible war involving Taiwan. The latest discussions are just another fine-tuning of their collaborative efforts aimed at compromising the reunification of the Chinese nation for their own respective agenda.

The Taiwan question concerns China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Japanese politicians are putting their own country's security at stake speculating on Washington's playing of the "Taiwan card".

Washington's toxicity not helping EU

For China and the European Union, which have no fundamental differences or conflicts, there is no better choice than cooperation. Restoring routine bilateral official exchanges, which have been disrupted over the past three years by the COVID-19 pandemic and the concurrent geopolitical elements, is a matter of urgency for both sides.

It is good to know this is already on their agenda. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi invited EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell and his delegation to visit China in the fall. In a telephone call on Sunday, both diplomats mentioned preparations for a leaders' meeting later this year, an important signal of a shared interest in strategic communication and fence-mending.

Reiterating the bilateral consensus on cooperation as a main characteristic of the China-EU relationship, Wang appealed for more "institutionalized dialogue" between the two sides. While highlighting the EU's dedication to developing better relations with China, Borrell said the EU's "Global Gateway" and China's "Belt and Road" are not battling against each other, but mutually complementary.

Brussels' recent identifying of China as a systemic rival and calls for "de-risking" from a dependency on Chinese supply chains have resulted in considerable confusion both in China and the rest of the world, as such measures seem to be aligning the EU with the United States' strategy to contain China. A perception that is reinforced by the ongoing "recalibration" of the EU's foreign policy that is

integrating it with Washington's "Indo-Pacific" geopolitical deployments.

Such a shift is driven more by the US' strategic needs than those of the EU.

China and the EU no longer seem to be the cozy partners they used to be, when business was just business, before Washington decided to take a wrecking ball to the global economic trade system.

With Washington reveling in its demolition work, in the delusion that it would be spared any permanently deleterious consequences, it soon became apparent that no countries were to be permitted to be friends with its "enemies". As a result, in an abrupt break from the general friendliness that both sides had long taken for granted, relations between the EU and China have become increasingly fraught. The EU's "de-risking" is a prescription for mutual damage. Both sides know it, but there appears to be no option when the politicians in Brussels have to take China as an imminent threat to stay in Washington's good books. Beijing, on its part, is left with no choice but to push back. The two sides now find themselves in a standoff that is neither of their creation, nor to their liking.

In their talks on Sunday, both Wang and Borrell made it clear that both sides hope to use the forthcoming meetings to put relations on firmer ground so as to inject new and strong impetus into the China-EU comprehensive strategic partnership. If it is truly striving for strategic autonomy, there is certainly no reason for the EU to sacrifice its relationship with China, which is mutually beneficial.

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Spying Chinese EVs claim harms Sino-UK pragmatic cooperation

An article in the Daily Telegraph on Sunday said that a number of Cabinet officials in the United Kingdom recently issued a "warning" that Chinese electric vehicles imported to help the UK achieve zero emissions targets will allow China to "spy" on UK citizens.

Citing sources close to the UK government, the article claimed the technology embedded in these electric vehicles can be used for location data collection and making audio and video clips. One cabinet minister even suggested that Chinese EVs were vulnerable to "remote interference".

A cross-party parliamentary group called on London to take measures to prevent the UK from losing control of the "critical infrastructure" of its car market or risk its car market being overrun by Chinese EVs, creating a "security risk". Former UK home secretary Priti

Patel even linked Chinese EVs to Huawei's 5G equipment, falsely claiming they both pose a "surveillance risk". While playing up the "surveillance risk" and advocating intervention in Chinese companies' business in the UK, the Daily Telegraph, however, admitted that Chinese companies hold a dominant position in the EV industry, and it will not be easy to "curb" them. Chris Stark, chief executive of the Committee on Climate Change, told the UK parliament last month that although Germany remained the largest supplier of cars to the UK, China had moved into second place and was on track to overtake Germany.

Under the UK's upcoming EV quota proposal, carmakers have to ensure that by 2024, 22 percent of vehicles they sell in the UK are zero-emission. This has to be raised to 80 percent by 2030, something that could benefit Chinese car companies.

In recent years, UK politicians have repeatedly intervened on the issue of investment by Chinese companies, something the UK media, too, frequently hypes up. In November, China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said the UK was generalizing the concept of national security and directly interfering with normal investment cooperation of Chinese enterprises, something China firmly opposes.

Today's deeply integrated world faces multiple challenges that require cooperation among all countries. A Cold War mentality runs counter to the interests of all countries, including the UK. China has been developing its relations with the UK in the spirit of equality and mutual respect, but the UK is clinging to an outdated mindset that will only lead it farther away from progress.

— GUANCHANG

TSMC's dilemma shows 'chip war' has no winner

In his latest interview with The New York Times, TSMC chairman Mark Liu admitted that his company's unit that moved to the United States had encountered problems, such as higher construction costs and rifts between TSMC and local workers. He also said he had told the US government "that it needed to offer American companies incentives, beyond the \$52 billion in subsidies in the CHIPS Act, to buy American-made chips".

When reports about TSMC moving its plant to Arizona under US pressure surfaced in late 2022, analysts said it might encounter higher costs and cultural gaps. Soon after, Taiwan engineers who were

relocating to the US complained on social networking sites about discrimination from their colleagues in the US. However, the US, which calls itself the beacon of racial equality, did nothing about it.

That is because, for the US, TSMC is nothing more than a mere tool in its greater design to tighten its hold on the global semiconductor industry. Grasping the global situation will explain the US' ambitions better. The island of Taiwan will one day be reunified with the mainland, and when that happens the semiconductor industry on the two sides of the Taiwan Strait will also be reunified. The reason why the US pressurized TSMC to move to Arizona must be

seen in this context. Clearly, the idea is to ensure the US continues to strangle China's semiconductor industry.

TSMC is more like a hostage held by the US in its plan of killing China's high-tech industry. So the target of the US' technological bullying is China, and TSMC is a mere hostage whose interests are the least of the US' concerns.

Liu said that TSMC's roots remain in Taiwan even though it has gone global. It would be more apt to say that TSMC's roots are in China. Wherever it establishes branches, China's semiconductor industry will serve as its vast market and resource support.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Quality seeds and arable lands key to food security

The central authorities recently stressed safeguarding the country's food security, highlighting the importance of the protection of farmland and self-reliance in seeds.

The slowdown in global grain production, the Russia-Ukraine conflict and other geopolitical risks have brought great uncertainty to global food security. At the same time, extreme weather events have become more frequent in China in recent years. The floods this summer will have an impact on agricultural production.

Whether it is out of the need to stabilize the food supply chain or strengthen agricultural disaster prevention and reduction, the nation should strive to protect arable land and realize self-reliance in seeds.

The central government has implemented a series of policies and measures in this regard, effectively protecting the country's seed resources, improving its seed breeding capacity, promoting the modernization of agriculture and enlarging the area of high-standard farmland.

However, the country cannot rest easy just yet. It should be noted that the overall development situation of China's seed industry is still unsatisfactory. The comprehensive competitiveness of the seed industry enterprises is not strong enough in the world market. The gap between the research and development capacity of domestic seed industry and that of some developed countries is still large. The country still relies heavily on for-

eign imports for some types of seeds that are crucial to its food security.

It should also be noted that the country's total area of cultivated land is small compared to the size of its huge population. The overall quality of arable land is not high, and the shortage of agriculture-related reserve resources has not changed fundamentally. Both the industrialization and urbanization of the country will further squeeze the area of the farmland.

Therefore, greater efforts are required to promote the national seed industry, and speed up the improvement of the quality of cultivated land so that the nation can hold its bowl in its own hands more firmly than before.

— ECONOMIC DAILY

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COMMENT

Shahbaz Khan

Sustainable tourism benefits heritage sites

There are 1,157 World Heritage properties in 167 countries as of July 2023, and a great many of them are tourist destinations. World Heritage sites are recognized for their outstanding value to all humanity; they also create jobs, generate incomes, support local activities through art and craft, and can foster sustainable tourism. The relationship between World Heritage and tourism is a two-way affair: World Heritage properties are major tourist attractions and the tourism sector has the ability to "present" World Heritage to the public and to help create greater awareness among communities about their importance and realize their economic benefits.

In our ever-evolving and expanding world, the dramatic surge in international and domestic travel poses both opportunities and challenges for World Heritage sites and the communities residing around them. As the pace of change accelerates, the impact of this trend on these iconic locations and the people who live near them becomes increasingly significant.

The promotion of tourism, visitor engagement and cultural interchange can bring a range of benefits to a World Heritage site, contributing to its preservation, and education and research on it, promote infrastructure development and support the well-being of the local community while raising global awareness of its importance. World Heritage sites often host unique cultural assets and fragile ecosystems, and their global recognition and popularity can also expose them to a range of threats, including over-tourism, pollution, degradation of the site's integrity and authenticity, and even illegal trade in cultural artifacts.

Without proper management and sustainable practices, the threats posed by the fast-growing tourism industry risk causing irreversible damage to the sites' unique values. This makes it clear that the balance between accessibility and conservation can be maintained only through sustainable tourism.

Sustainable tourism seeks to create a harmonious relationship between visitors, the environment, and the local community. It serves as a lifeline for World Heritage sites, mitigating the negative impacts that conventional tourism can have on these cherished

properties. To ensure sustainable and responsible tourism development, as well as properly manage the flow of visitors, it is imperative that the managements of such sites effectively collaborate with all related public agencies.

The UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme has introduced a fresh approach centered on dialogue and collaborative efforts among stakeholders. The approach is aimed at integrating tourism planning and heritage management at the destination level, valuing and safeguarding natural and cultural assets while fostering responsible tourism development. By establishing an international framework for cooperation, the UNESCO program facilitates coordinated efforts across sectors to preserve heritage and foster sustainable economic development. Such a cooperative commitment and coordination are vital to maintaining the integrity and significance of these unique natural and cultural wonders which represent our past, our jour-

ney to the present, and belong to all of us.

China, with its ancient history and diverse cultural heritage, is a treasure trove of UNESCO World Heritage sites. From the Great Wall to Mount Huangshan in Anhui province and the Jiuzhaigou Nature Reserve in Sichuan province to the Mogao Grottoes in Gansu province, these sites not only hold immense historical, cultural and natural significance but also attract millions of tourists from around the world.

Many of China's World Heritage sites are nestled within delicate ecosystems that are vulnerable to environmental threats. Threats such as pollution of natural resources to deforestation can be further escalated due to poorly managed tourism, which can create significant hazards to the sites as well as their surroundings.

To help improve development management practices UNESCO Beijing Office, in collaboration with the World Bank and the Gansu provincial government, is working to enhance capacity

building in local communities through sustainable tourism initiatives, strengthen their resilience and safeguard the heritage sites in Gansu.

By fostering creativity, emphasizing the importance of local cultures and focusing on visitor management and cultural route creation, the joint efforts will help establish synergy between World Heritage protection and sustainable tourism, showcasing how embracing these principles can better protect China's cultural riches for future generations while bolstering the tourism industry in a sustainable and responsible manner.

UNESCO is making efforts to determine the impacts of tourism on World Heritage sites and find ways to better protect the World Heritage properties. The primary goal of the UNESCO 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage is to identify, protect, conserve, present and transmit the cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal values of the World Heritage sites to future generations.

The success of implementing the convention's objectives at every site relies on how the World Heritage community responds to the opportunities and challenges presented by tourism. The convention embraces the concept of "sustainable development", and in this context, tourism, and along with the tourism industry, collaborates with relevant agencies, conservation bodies and local communities responsible for safeguarding cultural and natural heritage. Together, they can play a pivotal role in helping achieve this essential goal of sustainable development.

World Heritage sites are the embodiment of shared human heritage, representing a link between the past, present and the future. Every World Heritage site has its unique sustainable tourism capacity which needs to be carefully assessed, for which sustainable tourism plans must be devised by carefully designing responsible travel practices in partnership with the local communities.

Preserving the natural and cultural assets will not only protect our shared heritage but also build a more sustainable and compassionate future for the planet.

The author is UNESCO Representative to China. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.



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Kang Bing

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Measures needed to ensure people enjoy a good cup of tea

Editor's note: China's traditional tea processing techniques and practices are inscribed in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Tea culture embodies the Chinese culture of harmony between humans and nature, individuals and society, writes a veteran journalist with China Daily.

The inclusion of China's traditional tea processing techniques and their associated social practices in UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity late last year came to me as a surprise. Not because the techniques and practices are not part of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity but because, unlike many other heritages that are dying, tea is gaining in popularity in its birth place, China, as well as across the world.

Tea making and drinking is China's 44th entry into UNESCO's representative heritage list. Judging by the previous entries, it appears the heritages are ancient artistic forms or practices which are now rarely practiced or draw little audience.

Tea's inclusion, however, is an exception. Written records show the ancestors of Chinese people began using tea leaves to treat wounds about 5,000 years ago. By the Tang Dynasty (618-907), the culture of tea making and drinking became systematic, especially among officials and the gentry as evident in the poems of the time.

It was during the Tang Dynasty that tea was introduced to many other countries and regions through the West-bound Silk Road and the "tea-horse routes" leading mostly to the South. Today, tea is the favorite drink of more than 2 billion people in 160 countries and regions.

As a result, whether the tea from a garden is good or not largely depends on how much money a company spends on publicizing its product.

While more than 60 countries grow tea today, China remains the biggest producer. It produced about 1.85 million tons of tea, about one-third of the world's total, last year. Statistics show China today has about 1.5 million tea-related farms and companies which employ more than 50 million people for planting, picking, processing and marketing tea.

But danger looms behind the prosperity.

Increasing planting hectares and higher output by using new technologies could soon lead to oversupply of tea in the Chinese market, which may eventually reduce the profits of tea growers. Also, tea exporters find the global competition getting fiercer. Last year, China exported nearly 400,000 tons of tea, earning an average of only \$5.9 on each kilogram. To tea growers, that profit margin is very low considering the investment and workforce involved.

Rising labor costs are another factor that may affect the development of China's tea industry. While modern machines are being widely used in production, tea leaves and bud heads still have to be picked with the nimble hands of skilled workers. One such tea-picker can collect about 20 kg of fresh tea leaves a day and is paid a daily wage of 100-200 yuan in China.

While the daily pay in China appears decent, their counterparts in some South, Southeast Asian and African countries are paid only one-fourth that amount, which gives the tea growers in other countries an edge over Chinese tea planters in terms of labor costs. Given the present global tea price, tea garden owners in China will have little money left after paying the tea pickers, not least because 5 kg of fresh tea leaves, after processing, are reduced to 1 kg of dried tea.

Besides, tea has been a favorite gift for the Chinese people, but nowadays many people hesitate to gift tea to relatives and friends, because of the high prices of good tea. And the absence of tea-tasting institutions to determine the quality of tea has caused much disorder in the domestic tea market. You may spend 4,000 yuan (\$557.82) to buy your friend a beautiful tea gift package. But he/she may throw it away because he/she may not have any idea about the quality of the tea or because the neighborhood tea shop may be selling a similar tea package for less than 100 yuan.

Although there are a few self-proclaimed tea-tasting institutions and companies, their labeling cannot be accepted as authoritative, and even if they have qualified tea tasters, their small number can't meet the needs of about 1.5 million tea producers and companies.

As a result, whether the tea from a garden is good or not largely depends on how much money a company spends on publicizing its product. Tea prices are also decided by the sellers, leaving the innocent consumers confused.

However, after the inclusion of traditional tea processing techniques and associated social practices in UNESCO's intangible heritage list, I hope relevant departments will take measures to address the challenges facing the tea industry and help us enjoy a good cup of tea.

Digby James Wren and Seun Sam

BRI brings profound impact to Cambodia

The Belt and Road Initiative, the most ambitious and expansive infrastructure connectivity and development project ever conceived, was proposed a decade ago. The initiative connects about 150 countries in Asia, Europe, Africa and Latin America through a network of infrastructure investments, trade agreements and cultural exchanges. Cambodia is among the countries that have seen the greatest impact of the Belt and Road Initiative on its infrastructure, economy and cultural landscape.

Cambodia's strategic location on the Mekong River south of Laos and between Thailand and Vietnam on the Gulf of Thailand has made it an important hub for trade and connectivity in the Southeast Asian region. And China's investments in Cambodia have catalyzed a remarkable transformation of its infrastructure.

New highways, railways, seaports and airports have been built or old ones upgraded, facilitating efficient transportation of goods and movement of people within and beyond Cambodia's borders. These infrastructure are connected to free trade zones (FTZs) and special economic zones (SEZs) that have further improved regional connectivity, facilitating trade and attracting foreign investment while boosting Cambodia's economic growth and creating employment opportunities for its people.

The Belt and Road Initiative has also played a significant role in strengthening trade relations between China and Cambodia. With improved infrastructure and logistical capabilities and a new free trade agreement between the two countries, Cambodia has become an attractive destination for international investors and businesses looking to expand their presence in the region. The increased trade volume has resulted in a more diversified economy and

helped Cambodia develop its energy, telecommunications, financial, logistics, tourism and agricultural sectors.

Besides, Chinese investments in Cambodia's agricultural sector have helped modernize farming and improve productivity, and have had a positive impact on Cambodia's agricultural exports, benefiting local farmers and boosting the country's processing and packaging sectors. In fact, Cambodia has become a key source of rice, fruits and vegetables for the Asian market.

Cambodia is rich in minerals, and the Belt and Road Initiative's infrastructure projects have helped increase mining and mineral processing activities. Large-scale projects such as mining and forestry require strict environmental controls and monitoring. And since its focus on sustainability and green development is guided by the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, the initiative prioritizes stringent environmental regulations and monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance to the SDGs when it comes to investments in mining, agriculture and forestry. The Belt and Road Initiative accords priority to renewable energy sources, too, and promotes biodiversity conservation efforts.

Keeping all these factors in mind, China's investment in energy infrastructure has helped alleviate Cambodia's power shortages and fostered sustainable development. The construction of hydropower plants, solar panel farms and power transmission networks has increased the country's energy production capacity, reducing dependence on costly imported energy sources, which in turn has improved power supply, spurring industrial growth and attracting foreign direct investment in energy-intensive sectors. Also, Chinese companies' investments in the electrification of the transport sector have widened the electricity

charging network. As a result, Chinese-made electric vehicles have become a common sight on Cambodia's Belt and Road Initiative-funded highway networks.

One of the most significant outcomes of Belt and Road projects in Cambodia is the construction of the Sihanoukville Special Economic Zone, which has attracted foreign investments and boosted Cambodia's manufacturing sector, leading to job creation and increased exports. In partnership with investors in the Sihanoukville and Phnom Penh SEZs, Cambodia is now processing its rubber into car tires, and has become a leading exporter of other value-added products such as car parts and bicycles.

Investments in Cambodia under the Belt and Road framework have also stimulated the construction and real estate sectors, leading to the development of modern residential and commercial properties across the country. Despite slowing down during the COVID-19 pandemic, the construction sector remains a key employment generator, boosting incomes, improving living standards, reducing poverty and underpinning socioeconomic development.

The socio-cultural impact of the Belt and Road Initiative projects on Cambodia has also been profound, with significant changes evident in local communities. One notable change is the rapid urbanization and modernization of previously rural areas as the construction of roads has connected remote regions to major cities, facilitating the movement of goods and people. This has resulted in the emergence of new urban centers and the expansion of existing ones.

In the post-pandemic period, international and Chinese tourists in Cambodia are benefiting from improved transportation, hospitality infrastruc-

ture and globally integrated electronic payment systems. Thanks to the improvement in infrastructure connectivity, the country's rich cultural heritage and historical sites have become more accessible to both domestic and international tourists, with the influx of tourists generating significant revenue and providing new economic opportunities for local communities, which are working for, operating or have built hotels, restaurants and retail shops.

Moreover, cultural exchanges between China and Cambodia have increased as a result of the Belt and Road Initiative. With Chinese tourists, workers and investors bringing their traditions, language and customs to Cambodia, the integration of Chinese elements into Cambodian society has intensified. And many Cambodian students enjoy scholarships and increased access to universities and vocational training institutions in China through Belt and Road cultural and education networks. Such intercultural exchanges enrich cultural diversity.

In conclusion, the Belt and Road projects in Cambodia highlight the benefits of comprehensive planning, good and transparent governance, environmental protection, partnership building and robust monitoring mechanisms. To realize the full potential of the initiative, Cambodia and China should deepen win-win cooperation to jointly build a high-quality, high-level Cambodia-China community with a shared future.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

XU XIULI AND LI XIAOYUN

Catalyst for change

A coming challenge for China is how to better coordinate with the existing global public goods system in specific fields, procedures and rules

Over the past decade, China has emerged as a new contributor and innovator in the provision of global public goods, although it also faces unprecedented challenges. Although China has not used the term "global public goods" in official expressions for a long time, its foreign aid practices, as an important channel for providing global public goods, dates back over 70 years. In the early 1960s, China put forward the Eight Principles for Economic Aid and Technical Assistance to Other Countries, featuring equality, mutual benefit, respect for sovereignty and not attaching any strings or pursuing any privileges. Such principles provided new ideas and momentum for South-South cooperation at that time. The Tanzania-Zambia Railway was an important public good serving the national independence and development of African countries, promoting solidarity among countries in the Global South and pursuing an equitable international system during that historical context.

China has actively engaged in the supply and governance of global public goods with a more proactive stance since 2000, especially over the past decade.

Based on official data, China's annual foreign aid contribution over the past decade has reached \$7 billion — about 10 times the average annual level over the past 60 years. It is now among the top 10 foreign aid providers. The international development cooperation being emphasized by China is not just foreign aid in a traditional sense. Moreover, it serves as a catalyst to promote global trade, investment, and other international economic cooperation, thus enhancing the multiplier effect of aid in promoting sustainable development. Additionally, Beijing has launched several international development cooperation financing mechanisms and platforms, including the Belt and Road Initiative, the Global Development Initiative, the Silk Road Fund, the Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund, and the Peace and Development Trust Fund, which provide significant solutions to reduce the global development deficit.

China has played an increasingly active role in the construction of multilateral international organi-

zations. Beijing has underlined the transformation of foreign aid into international development cooperation since 2000, especially after the establishment of the China International Development Cooperation Agency in 2018. Beijing has kept expanding mechanisms and channels for multilateral and trilateral cooperation, thus further deepening its involvement in the construction of the global public goods system. In traditional multilateral international organizations, China mainly contributes through two channels: First, in keeping with the payment standards of various United Nations organizations and Bretton Woods system organizations, China has become one of the major donors to international organizations. It has made voluntary donations to these organizations through trust funds and other means, making contributions and offering innovative ideas to the international multilateral architecture established after World War II. For example, by the end of 2019, through the South-South Cooperation Assistance Fund, China had implemented 82 projects with 14 international organizations and agencies, including the UN Development Programme, the World Food Programme, and the World Health Organization, covering fields such as agricultural development and food security, poverty reduction, and health for women and children. Second, China has taken the lead in establishing new types of international multilateral organizations such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the New Development Bank, exploring more streamlined, green and locally adaptable operating paths, thus enhancing sustainable development capabilities of different regions.

As China commits itself to the innovation of the global public goods system, it also faces unprecedented challenges. Apart from increasing vulnerabilities at the global level and deficits in governance, trust, peace and development, there are lingering tensions between China's innovative models and mechanisms of global public goods and the existing post-World War II governance framework.

First, China has been a pragmatic innovator. In innovating the global public goods system, instead of rigidly adhering to any

particular value or ideological framework, China has made adaptive adjustments based on local realities, leading to the integration of various elements. This approach aligns with China's consistent emphasis on common development, non-interference in other countries' internal affairs, and encouraging countries to explore the development paths that suit their own national conditions. However, this pluralistic concept is now facing growing tensions with the Western concept of modernization, which is based on monism.

Second, through regional cooperation platforms with Africa, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Central and Eastern Europe, China has greatly strengthened the paradigm for horizontal partnerships among developing countries. The difference between this cooperation paradigm and the one advocated by the US and Europe since World War II, which emphasizes cooperation between the Global North and the Global South, may lead to conflicts due to differences in rules and interests. For instance, conflicts may arise concerning the rules of development cooperation, whether they are based on consultation and collaboration among relevant parties or designed on the basis of liberal and preconceived rationality, especially regarding the design of democratic political systems. China is currently the world's largest trading nation and a major trading partner and important exporter to more than 130 countries and regions. This has had a significant impact on global value chains, which were previously based in North America and Europe. In recent years, China has contributed up to about 30 percent of global economic growth, which has had an impact on the willingness and capacity of the original global public goods suppliers.

Third, the existing system for global public goods has become increasingly diversified with increasing participation from developed countries, developing countries, multinational corporations and social organizations. The establishment of multilateral organizations at the global and regional levels, as well as the development of specific rules and norms, has made the global public goods system more institutionalized at different levels. However, the increasing diversification of participants and a higher level of institutionalization has led to flaws such as the fragmentation of governance bodies, making multiple parties much less likely to arrive at consensus. This is evident in the current dispute settlement and negotiation mechanism of the World Trade Organization.

China's participation in the existing global public goods system through development cooperation mechanisms, including the forms of trade and investment, often prioritizes the actual results in the execution process, i.e., whether it can solve problems in an efficient manner. However, in the future, the challenge before China will be how to better coordinate with the existing global public goods system in specific fields, procedures and rules.

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LI MIN / CHINA DAILY



WANG JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

WU HAO

For green network

China and Japan should enhance their third-party market cooperation with the focus on carbon neutrality

The Belt and Road Initiative, which marks its 10th anniversary this year, has become well recognized and acclaimed by the world as an international cooperative platform and global public good. Meanwhile, third-party market cooperation, an innovation of China, contributes to the construction of the Belt and Road Initiative as a new impetus with the emphasis on extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits.

Since its initiation, Sino-Japanese third-party market cooperation has made preliminary achievements in different areas, revealing both the strong economic complementarity between China and Japan and the breadth and depth of their third-party market cooperation. Nevertheless, under the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the international situation, the cooperation also faces challenges. First, the pandemic has triggered drastic changes in the global economy and geopolitical relations, further heightening the already existing stresses and conflicts in global governance. Second, in pursuing the US security strategies, Japan has hampered the Sino-Japanese economic cooperation. Third, Chinese and Japanese enterprises need to further strengthen coordination in third-party market cooperation due to their different business models.

Addressing climate change, a universal challenge confronting all mankind, remains a top priority in global governance. By focusing on green development with collaborative, practical efforts and fostering a mutual understanding of climate change issues, the two countries can forge a dynamic Sino-Japanese relationship that resonates with the new era and contributes to the improvement of global governance.

At the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2020, President Xi Jinping announced that China will strive to peak carbon emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060. In November 2020, the Japanese government also declared its goal of realizing a carbon-neutral, decarbonized society in its Green Growth Strategy through Achieving Carbon Neutrality in 2050. The respective targets and implementation paths toward carbon neutrality of the two countries show their joint willingness to participate in global climate governance.

Enhancing the Sino-Japanese third-party market cooperation in green development offers more than mere economic and environmental benefits for both nations. It will also empower the third-party countries or regions with more cost-effective and competitive products, technologies and services.

In recent years, the Sino-Japanese third-party market cooperation in green development has made initial progress. Here are a few examples.

In January 2019, the Nepal Tana Lake Hydropower Project officially began construction. As the first major pumped-storage hydropower plant in Nepal, it represents a significant achievement of the Sino-Japanese third-party market cooperation in the field of green hydropower.

In the same year, construction commenced on Indonesia's first plant to produce battery-grade nickel chemicals, a project that combines the advantages of China, Japan and Indonesia in respect of technology, market and resources, which achieves comprehensive joint benefits. It manifests the amplifying effect of third-party market cooperation for mutual gain.

Meanwhile, in April 2019, Noor Abu Dhabi, the stand-alone operational solar photovoltaic plant built by the United Arab Emirates and a consortium of Chinese and Japanese companies, was officially put into commercial operation. It will reduce the UAE's carbon dioxide emissions by 1 million metric tons per year. The project has great significance for the stable power supply of the Middle East.

In pursuit of carbon neutrality, green development is a motif of Sino-Japanese third-party market cooperation. They will further exploit the emerging market fields, gain mutual benefits, and promote the innovation of the global industry, supply and value chains.

Green Sino-Japanese third-party market cooperation can be outlined at the level of industrial layout, with the primary focus on decarbonization and carbon sequestration under the core framework of promoting green infrastructure, renewable energy, smart construction and green finance. Strategic priority should be given to the development of the hydrogen energy industry and new energy battery industry.

To strengthen Sino-Japanese third-party market cooperation in

the context of carbon neutrality, carbon neutrality should be set as a general goal for the third-party country's green development plan and carrying out the Sino-Japanese third-party market cooperation. Both countries should actively align with the carbon-neutral path planning of third-party countries and regions and engage in high-quality cooperative projects with a focus on green development.

A long-term mechanism for the Sino-Japanese third-party market cooperation centered on green development should be established with an emphasis on scientific research innovation and operation effectiveness.

It is also important to fully leverage the comparative advantages of China, Japan and the third-party countries and regions in building a mutually beneficial Sino-Japanese third-party market cooperation framework under the context of carbon neutrality.

The leading role of policy-based financial institutions should be highlighted and a green finance third-party cooperation model should be established. The supporting and leading role of policy-based financial institutions should be fully utilized.

It is important to deepen green Sino-Japanese third-party market cooperation within the RCEP framework. China and Japan should continue to cultivate third-party market cooperation in Southeast Asia to facilitate the formation of a regional green cooperation network.

Although the Sino-Japanese third-party market cooperation started relatively late, it has shown good momentum. China and Japan should treat each other with sincerity and honesty, strengthen communication, manage differences, be vigilant against interference and obstacles to Sino-Japanese economic and trade cooperation, remain committed to the path of green development, and actively promote the green Sino-Japanese third-party market cooperation.

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LIFE



Above: Violinist Lao Li performs at her concert at Carnegie Hall, New York, on July 6, featuring pianist An Tianxu. **Below:** Trained by the legendary violin professor Lin Yaoji (1937-2009), Lao has returned to China and teaches at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Violinist hits perfect note with Carnegie ovation

Audience rises to applaud musician's talent and pride in Chinese music, **Chen Nan** reports.

When violinist Lao Li had her concert at Carnegie Hall, New York, on July 6, she was so touched that a Chinese piece, *Violin Concerto No 1*, by the acclaimed composer Zhao Jiping, was met with a standing ovation.

It was performed during the second half of the concert. After Lao finished the last note, she realized that the audience was standing, cheering and applauding.

"I was so overwhelmed and touched that the audience would react so warmly to a Chinese composition," recalls Lao, who left the stage after bowing three times. Along with pianist An Tianxu, she returned to the stage and played Saint-Saens' *Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso*, which was the last piece on the program. After the audience's enthusiastic applause, the concert ended after encores of two pieces by Lao and An, and took five curtain calls.

Violin Concerto No 1 by Zhao was commissioned by the National Centre for the Performing Arts in 2017. The concerto expresses and describes the generosity and kindness toward humankind.

Last year, the composer contacted Lao, hoping she would play the piece and give it a female perspective and a new energy. Lao spent a month learning the music piece and performed it for the first time along with the Guiyang Symphony Orchestra under the baton of conductor Zhang Guoyong during a concert tour in August 2022 in Zhao's hometown, Xi'an, Shaanxi province.

"I felt very connected to Zhao's *Violin Concerto No 1*, which is very warm and conveys universal love," says Lao. "I would always like to introduce more Chinese compositions to Western audiences and Zhao's *Violin Concerto No 1* came to mind instantly when I prepared for the concert at Carnegie Hall."

According to Lao, she planned to give the concert at Carnegie Hall in the summer of 2020, but it was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the first half of the concert, she played classical Western music, such as Chopin's *Nocturne in C Minor*, Tchaikovsky's *Melodie*, and Schumann's *Sonata No 1 for Violin and Piano*. In the second half of the concert, she presented Chinese music.

During her concert, Lao premiered a popular Peking Opera song, called *Li Hua Song*, or Ode to Pear Flowers, for the first time presenting through the violin rather than voice. The song, composed by



"I wanted to do something both to continue our culture, and in the meanwhile add some creativity."

Lao Li, violinist

Yang Nailin, rearranged by Xia Liang, was from Peking Opera production, *The Royal Consort of Tung*, which is about the legendary royal concubine Yang Yuhuan of the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and her tragic love affair with Emperor Li Longji. In 1925, Peking Opera master Mei Lanfang (1894-1961) premiered the Peking Opera piece by playing the role of Yang.

Lao is very fond of Peking Opera and decided to premiere the song as a violin piece.

"I used my violin to imitate Peking Opera singing, which is very challenging. I wanted to do something both to continue our culture, and in

the meanwhile add some creativity. When I played the Peking Opera song at Carnegie Hall, the audience got a glimpse of the ancient art form through the interpretation of violin," Lao says.

It's not the first time that the violinist used her instrument to imitate sounds of different traditional Chinese music and instrument. In 2017, she premiered the violin version of *Chinese Sights and Sounds*, a suite consisting of 24 orchestral compositions by Bao Yuankai in 1991, by using violin to imitate sounds of traditional Chinese musical instruments, such as the *erhu* (Chinese fiddle), *xiao* (a vertical

bamboo flute) and *suona* (a double-reed woodwind instrument).

During her recent concert at the Carnegie Hall, Lao also played *Cai Diao*, a selection from Bao's *Chinese Sights and Sounds*, which is adapted from a folk song of Yunnan province.

She has just finished recording an album with the leading classical music label Naxos, featuring most of the pieces she performed during the concert at Carnegie Hall.

Raised in Wuhan, Hubei province, and Beijing, Lao was introduced to the violin by her mother, who is a pediatrician and an early age music educator.

"My mother loves music and she still took violin lessons when she was pregnant. So the sound of the instrument has been with me even before I was born, I guess," says Lao.

After she was enrolled to study at the primary school affiliated to the Central Conservatory of Music, Lao studied with legendary violin professor Lin Yaoji (1937-2009) as his youngest student at that time.

At 18, Lao won a full scholarship to study at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. Later, she moved to Boston in the United States to study at the New England Conservatory of Music, where she gained her Bachelor's and Master's degrees. With a full scholarship, Lao continued her academic studies at the Reina Sofia School of Music in Madrid, Spain, with the legendary violinist and professor Zakhar Bron. Inspired by Bron's teaching approach, Lao has translated Bron's *The Art of the Etude*, a summation of his years of teaching, into Chinese along with a violin study book.

In 2017, when the Czech National Symphony Orchestra played during the Shanghai International Arts Festival, Lao stepped in at the last moment and earned enthusiastic reviews for her performance of Felix Mendelssohn's *Violin Concerto in E Minor, Op 64*.

"I can still recall that I had to practice on the flight because rehearsals started right after I landed in Shanghai and the concert opened on the same night," says Lao.

Violinist Donald Weilerstein once praised Lao's performance as "delicately touching, full of imagination and the warmth of sunlight".

In 2018, Lao returned to China and has been teaching at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing since then.

Contact the writer at chenman@chinadaily.com.cn

Hong Kong's master birdcage maker keeps tradition flying high

HONG KONG — Amid the bustling Kowloon Flower Market in Hong Kong, enveloped by the sweet melodies of chirping birds, you'll find one of Hong Kong's last remaining birdcage makers — Chan Lok-choi, also known as "Uncle Choi".

The 81-year-old craftsman began his apprenticeship at the young age of 13 under the guidance of his uncle, a renowned birdcage maker. Since then, he has become a master in the art of crafting traditional birdcages and has made a name for himself in the industry.

The culture of bird-keeping and birdcage-making has been deeply rooted in Hong Kong society since the 1920s and 1930s. It became an essential pastime for many Hong Kong citizens and contributed to the development of the local birdcage-making craft.

In the past, many teahouses would hang birdcages outside their shops, and bird owners would bring their birds to the teahouses to socialize with other bird enthusiasts. Birdcage making is not just a craft but also a cultural symbol of Hong Kong's unique identity. It represents the city's connection to traditional Chinese culture and the importance of nature and harmony in the lives of the people.

"When I was in school, I always had a knack for handicrafts, and birdcages are one of the most artistic crafts," Chan says. In the 1950s, making birdcages was a niche skill. Many people chose to learn other trades such as hairdressing and carpentry.

Despite his young age at the time, Chan was drawn to the exquisite birdcages that hung high above, and he knew he had found his calling. "I had a sudden realization: What if the master of birdcage making retired one day? Who would continue this craft? With that in mind, I firmly decided to learn how to make birdcages," he says.

In the 1960s and '70s, Hong Kong had an abundance of skilled birdcage makers, and Chan was not yet a household name. He tried his hand at other industries to make ends meet, but he always found himself gravitating back to the craft of making birdcages.

"Making birdcages is still my favorite thing to do. No matter what other work I do, I can't let go of it," he says.

Birdcage making is a skillful combination of bamboo and woodworking, requiring only bamboo, knives, paint, and "a pair of hands". The birdcage maker must have precision and knowledge to create a new world for birds.

To make a simple birdcage, at least 48 bamboo strips are

required, each one meticulously carved to ensure symmetry and evenness. The bamboo is then heated with a kerosene lamp to create the appropriate curvature for the cage, before being threaded through small holes in the bottom of the cage. Skilled artisans carve patterns on the cage's bottom and feet to create a stunning visual effect. Crafting a single birdcage takes anywhere from a few months to several years.

Chan once spent nearly two years making a birdcage for his beloved pet bird. The cage was designed with an added layer to provide more space for his bird to jump and play.

In recent years, the popularity of bird-keeping and birdcage-making has declined, leading to a gradual decline in the craft of making birdcages. However, "Uncle Choi" continues to operate his business every day, repairing birdcages for loyal customers and old friends. He believes that repairing birdcages is just as important as making them.

During the repair process, he studies the original makers' craftsmanship and imitates their techniques. He believes that repairing birdcages is an opportunity to learn from other craftsmen and preserve the beauty of the original design.

The craft of birdcage making in Hong Kong has been recognized as a traditional handicraft and listed as an intangible cultural heritage in 2014. Despite the decline in popularity, exquisite craftsmanship continues to attract young people to learn it.

Chan has taken on eight apprentices from various professions, including design, finance, and dance. They come to his shop regularly to learn the techniques of birdcage making, and he encourages them to observe the process first to ensure they have the patience and perseverance required for the craft.

For the apprentices, birdcage making is not only about overcoming technical difficulties but also a rewarding experience of creating something from scratch. Designer Kwok Dylan, one of Chan's apprentices, has even published a book on Hong Kong's bird-keeping culture and birdcage crafting, hoping to revive interest in this traditional craft.

Despite the challenges, Chan remains optimistic about the future of birdcage making. He believes that with the previous generation passing on their knowledge and the next generation willing to take up the craft, the tradition of birdcage making can be preserved and continued.

XINHUA



Top: Chan Lok-choi, one of Hong Kong's last remaining birdcage makers, also known as "Uncle Choi". **Above:** Designer Kwok Dylan, one of Chan's apprentices, prepares bamboo to make a birdcage. PHOTOS BY CHEN DUO / XINHUA

LIFE

Ancient port reveals its secrets

Finds at best site of its kind in China fill in gaps in record of Maritime Silk Road, **Xu Xiaodan and Wang Ru** report in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province.

A panoramic scroll attributed to Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) court painter Wang Zhenpeng, or his disciple, depicts life in the bustling port town of Wenzhou, which lies on the Oujiang River in Zhejiang province.

Wenzhou was Wang's home, and his scroll shows its busy port, with cargo vessels coming and going, and a variety of people engaged in trade.

Through existing poems and paintings, it has long been possible to trace the past prosperity of ancient Wenzhou port during the Song (960-1279) and Yuan periods, but now a more accurate portrait of that moment in history is emerging from the recent archaeological discovery of the ruins of the city's ancient port of Shuomen.

The discovery was listed as one of the top 10 archaeological discoveries of 2022, as announced by the National Cultural Heritage Administration in March.

Shuomen was uncovered during construction in 2021, and the archaeological excavation, which is still ongoing, began immediately after.

The site, which covers about 5,000 square meters, is roughly divided into three parts, namely the *wengcheng* (the name for a defensive enclosure outside a city gate) area in the west, the water gate area in the east, and the port area near the Oujiang River between the two.

Place of poets

Wenzhou once had intersecting waterways like Venice, and boats were the primary means of transportation. It was built in 323 during the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420), of which the layout was said designed by the geomancer Guo Pu (276-324).

The city had several city and water gates. According to Wu Xianjun, a researcher with the Wenzhou Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, the water gate site currently being excavated is roughly where one was located to the northeast of the city.

It was used to control the flow of water through the city, and locks to do just that have been found, but the gate itself still has not been discovered. Archaeologists have unearthed a sloping wharf, which would allow for the use of carts to transport goods, according to Wu.

The *wengcheng* area in the west, on the other hand, was the location of one of the city gates, known as the Shuomen Gate.

Remains of two *wengcheng* built in different periods of time have been found in the area. The earlier one, dating to the Song and Yuan dynasties, was shaped like an arc. Wu says it stood more than 9 meters when being built.

The later one, dating from the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, was rectangular.

On the Shuomen Gate, a towering building was added for a panoramic view of the river bank.

Wu says the building used to be visited by Xie Lingyun, a poet and government official from the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-581) for a break between duties.

Famous for his landscape poetry, Xie wrote many such poems while he was stationed in Wenzhou, adding to the area's cultural prestige, says Wu.

He adds that in commemoration, people named the building after the poet, calling it the Xiegong Building. Neither the gate nor the building exists today, but a photo taken in 1877 shows how the structure once looked.

The river port site extends for 340 meters from east to west, and has docks of various kinds and sizes, still houses, wells and shipwrecks, and it forms the most complete ancient port from the Song and Yuan periods unearthed to date, says Liang Yanhua, director of the Wenzhou Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology.

Historical literature records that to the north of the Shuomen Gate there was a Zhenjiang Pavilion, and beside the pavilion, there were courier stations for receiving officials or foreign envoys. Excavations have unearthed the remains of wooden trestles, which are believed to have been connected to the pavilion in the past, and so some of the still houses found nearby may have been



Clockwise from top: The water gate area in the east of the Shuomen ancient port site in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province. Remains of the Oujiang River bank of the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127) and a dock. The site is by the Oujiang River. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

used as courier stations, says Liang.

Wu says that according to the records, low-ranking officials, who were responsible for receiving guests, lived such busy lives that they could barely find time to rest.

Export hub of porcelain

Three shipwrecks have also been found. The No 1 shipwreck dates to the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279), and has been removed from the site for better study and preservation. The No 2 shipwreck, which dates to no later than the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127), remains mostly buried, and only parts of it have been exposed. And the third one, smaller and more damaged, is kept underground with some parts exposed as well.

According to Liang, the No 1 shipwreck is of a *fuchuan*, a type of boat also known as a Fujian vessel, one of the four types of ancient wooden Chinese ships, and which was used as a cargo vessel from the Song Dynasty. The wreck contains a coin and bottles from the period.

"The ship was probably abandoned, and had no cargo," says Wu.

"It was a medium- to small-sized ship at the time, only about 20 meters in length, and could hold between 100 and 200 metric tons of cargo. During the Song Dynasty, many freighters were 50 to 60 meters long and had capacities of 700 to 800 tons."

He adds that during the Song Dynasty, Wenzhou was one of the most developed shipbuilding centers in China. Historical literature shows that during the late Northern Song period, Wenzhou built 600 ships for the government every year, the most



Above: Artifacts unearthed from the Shuomen site include porcelain and lacquerware items. **Below right:** A researcher extracts remains of plants found from the site. **Below left:** Archaeologists checking the site in 2022.

built anywhere in China at the time.

Piles of porcelain items and pieces, lacquerware, glazed artifacts, shells and plant specimens dating from the Northern Song to the early 20th century have been unearthed, with Song and Yuan relics making up the largest proportion.

Around 2,000 complete porcelain items have also been found, as well as some 10 tons of fragments, 90 percent of which were produced at the Longquan kiln in Longquan, Zhejiang.

According to Liang, Longquan celadons accounted for a large part of the porcelain sold overseas from the Southern Song Dynasty until the middle of the Ming Dynasty, and is regarded as the first Chinese commodity to have global appeal before the Age of Exploration.

"The discovery shows that Wenzhou was a major distribution center, as well as a starting point for the transportation of Longquan celadons to other countries during the Song Dynasty," says Liang.

Wu adds that Longquan lies on the upper reaches of the Oujiang River, and Wenzhou is on the lower reaches, and so transportation by river was less costly than by road. As a result, a lot of Longquan celadons were shipped to Wenzhou, and then loaded onto ships bound for abroad.

He also mentions Ningbo in Zhejiang, another important node on the ancient Maritime Silk Road, as also being an important port for shipping Longquan celadons overseas during the Yuan Dynasty, but says that Wenzhou was involved in the trade earlier.

Besides ceramics, lacquerware was also a notable Wenzhou prod-

uct. During the Song Dynasty, the city was home to a great number of workshops producing lacquerware, which made Wenzhou lacquerware a recognizable name.

On the busy streets of Bianjing (now Kaifeng, Henan province), the imperial city of the Northern Song Dynasty, and Lin'an (now Hangzhou, Zhejiang), the imperial city of the Southern Song Dynasty, many shops sold Wenzhou lacquerware, says Liang. Wu infers from this that the success of lacquerware was related to the developed level of shipbuilding at the time.

"There are many links between ship-making and lacquerware making. For example, the wooden offcuts from ship building could be used to make lacquerware, and the ships needed to be covered in hard, black varnish for fear of their wood rotting."

The artifacts were clearly made for trade, says Wu, as they show no trace of having been used. Moreover, most of the pieces found were broken, and losses perhaps incurred during storage or transportation.

Nine different kinds of docks have been unearthed. Some are believed to have belonged to the government, while others were probably for private use. The No 3 dock, which dates to the Southern Song period and which was rebuilt several times, is the most complete of them all.

"Following changes to the river bank, the dock was made longer and narrower to adapt to its new environment," says Liang.

Wu says that Song and Yuan governments encouraged maritime trade. According to historical records, when cargo ships docked in Wenzhou, crew were welcomed by local officials responsible for maritime trade. The owners were required to give part of their cargo to the government in duties before they could sell their goods or buy other goods in the city.

"What they brought to sell in Wenzhou was usually luxuries like spices, medicines, pearls and jewels. Of course they never returned with an empty ship, and bought porcelain, silk and tea in Wenzhou to sell elsewhere," says Wu, adding that the ships usually remained in Wenzhou for weeks at a time in order to sell all their goods.

When foreign traders were ready to leave, a send-off ceremony was often held by the local government, which included rituals to the god of the sea to pray for the ship's safety.

"The captains usually chose a good time to leave, particularly favoring days when the wind was blowing in the right direction," says Wu.

Although Wenzhou maritime trade experienced its heyday during the Song and Yuan periods, making it an important station on the ancient Maritime Silk Road with the establishment of professional institutes governing maritime trade, it actually has a much longer history.

According to Liang, early in the Warring States Period (475-221 BC), present-day Wenzhou was one of nine ports in China.

Before the discovery of Wenzhou's ancient port, sites have been found in other cities, but none of them compare to Shuomen.

Liu Qingzhu, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and dean of the history school at Zhengzhou University, tells Xinhua that this site is the most complete of its kind in China. Its relics and artifacts, which can be accurately dated, provide solid evidence that the Maritime Silk Road thrived during the Song and Yuan dynasties.

"As of present, whether it is cities already listed as World Heritage site, like Quanzhou (Fujian province) and Macao, or their counterparts applying for global recognition as port cities on the Maritime Silk Road, like Guangzhou, Ningbo (Zhejiang), Dengzhou (today in Penglai, Shandong province) and Yangzhou (Jiangsu province), archaeological evidence is lacking," says Liang.

"The archaeological work at the Shuomen site fills in this blank, and can be seen as part of the precious heritage of the history of maritime civilization," he adds.

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LIFE



The exhibition, *Visionary: The Works of Xu Jiang*, features powerful impressions of landscapes and city scenes. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Outstanding in his field

With an oeuvre inspired by sunflowers, exhibition shows the best of renowned Chinese artist, **Ma Zhenhuan** reports.

Renowned Chinese artist Xu Jiang may be recognized as primarily a landscape painter, but it is his painting and sculpting of sunflowers that has become his signature in the last two decades — at least as far as the public and some of his fellow artists are concerned.

For the past 20 years, Xu has been devoted to creating artwork on the theme of sunflowers.

He has traveled far and wide looking for them, from the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region during the sunflower harvesting season to the Inner Mongolia autonomous region where they were covered with snow, and right on his doorstep in Zhejiang province, where several sunflowers still stood tall and proud, despite the ravages of a devastating typhoon.

In fact, for over a decade, Xu has cultivated sunflowers himself on a plot of land at the Xiangshan Campus of the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, where he served as the president between 2001 and 2020.

Indeed, “for the last two decades, not a day has passed by without Xu thinking about sunflowers, and not 10 days have passed by without him painting sunflowers”, according to the introduction of his latest exhibition in Shanghai.

Until Aug 27 at the Shanghai Jiushi International Art Center, *Visionary: The Works of Xu Jiang* presents some of the artist's best sunflower paintings.

For Xu, sunflowers are full of symbolism.

“They are like people, especially the Chinese people,” Xu says. “They are strong, fervent and tough.”

In his painted works, sunflowers rarely appear individually and in isolation; instead, he has invariably restored



sunflowers to the environment in which the plants grow, usually vast stretches of fields.

In particular, through painting, sculpting and writing about sunflowers, he says he hopes “to use them to represent our generation”, as Xu believes the collective portrait of the plant embodies the life, as well as the spirituality, of his generation.

Born in Fuzhou, capital city of Fujian province, in 1955, Xu graduated from the China Academy of Art with a major in oil painting in 1982. In 1988, he went to study at the University of Fine Arts of Hamburg in Germany. Four years later, Xu returned to teach at his alma mater.

The defining moment of Xu's career as an artist, as he recalls, came on a day in August 2003.

On a cultural trip to Turkey with a group of Chinese artists, he happened to see swaths of sunflowers near the Sea of Marmara.

“I was suddenly confronted with an expanse of withering sunflowers standing in the setting sun,” he says. “And they struck me as if they were made of steel and copper, blended with the earth.”



Above: Four paintings depicting Shanghai with a hazy perspective by artist Xu Jiang, whose work is on show in an ongoing exhibition in the city. Above left: Xu Jiang. Bottom: Sunflowers, in various states, are a key theme in his paintings.

“I thought I saw a legion of aged troops, or indeed ourselves,” Xu says.

As they drove on for another 100 kilometers, the ancient ruins of Troy, immortalized in Homer's *Iliad*, appeared before Xu.

The contrast of the two sights — a flower that blooms and falls each year on the one hand, and the 4,000-year-old repository of human civilization — seemingly ignited Xu's passion for sunflowers, and helped him identify a lifelong painting subject.

Ever since, sunflowers have captured his imagination: To Xu, they are not just plants, they represent his spiritual underpinnings.

As another well-known artist Qiu Zhijie once quipped, “Once Xu Jiang stepped into that sunflower garden, he has never looked back.”

Another part of the exhibition showcases Xu's paintings of Shanghai's Bund, created over 20 years ago, presenting a historical panorama of metropolis at the time.

In these paintings, Xu has depicted “the ruins and monuments of time” for the viewer, says Gao Shiming, Xu's successor, the current president of the China Academy of Art.

“The Bund in his works is no ordinary urban landscape; rather, it is a witness to the vicissitudes of modernity,” Gao says.

“Holding an exhibition at the Bund by the Huangpu River is quite a memorable experience,” Xu said in a speech at the opening ceremony of the exhibition.

“The Bund of many years ago appeared in my paintings and my gaze frequently. Standing here, I feel like I'm in a scene from history or a garden of nostalgia,” he says.

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Cultural administration trying to tackle ticketing issues

By WANG RU
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On July 13, the Beijing Public Security Bureau announced that it has punished nine ticket scalpers who snapped up a number of free tickets to the National Museum of China and sold them to tourists, making a tidy profit for themselves, while limiting access to tickets for would-be visitors.

This is just one of the measures authorities are taking to solve a problem being faced by many people, who are finding it increasingly difficult to get tickets to museums and galleries, especially during holiday periods, says Liu Yang, director of the museum and antique department of the National Cultural Heritage Administration.

He mentioned the incident during a news conference held in Beijing on July 28, at which officials of the administration elaborated on what has been done in recent years, especially since last year's 20th

National Congress of the Communist Party of China.

In 2022, China registered 382 new museums, bringing the total number to 6,565 nationwide. Throughout the year there were 34,000 exhibitions and nearly 230,000 educational activities held, receiving 578 million visits, according to Liu.

He also mentions a recent survey of 45 large and medium-sized museums in China, which include some top level national and provincial level institutions. This shows that the phenomenon of ticket scarcity often occurs at famous and popular museums, reflecting “the contradiction between the ever-growing spiritual and cultural needs of the people and unbalanced and inadequate high-quality cultural supply”, says Liu.

He mentions many museums, like the National Museum of Classic Books and the Military Museum of the Chinese People's Revolution, have extended their opening hours and increased the cap on the num-



Visitors flock to the Suzhou Museum in Jiangsu province in July. Authorities are making it easier for the public to get tickets to museums and galleries. WANG JIANKANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

ber of visitors they receive. Some others, like the Palace Museum and Sichuan Museum, have opened special ticket booking and entry channels for underage, old and disabled

people to shorten their queuing time.

In the future, a blacklisting system to punish ticket scalpers will be established, and tourist guides'

work will be standardized to optimize visits.

Li Qun, director of the National Cultural Heritage Administration, introduced to assembled media the latest discoveries of a comprehensive national research program to trace the origins of Chinese civilization, which was launched in 2001.

According to Li, in 2020, the fifth session of the program kicked off, with the participation of more than 500 researchers from 29 institutes nationwide studying eight subjects. In the following years they have made important discoveries.

For example, discoveries have been made in some central settlement sites, like the crisscrossing road network unearthed at the Erlitou site in Luoyang, Henan province. The site is widely believed to have been the capital of the Xia Dynasty (c. 21st century-16th century BC) during its latter stages. Six new sacrificial pits have been found at the Sanxingdui site in Guanghan, Sichuan province,

with 12,000 artifacts unearthed.

Moreover, they have made important breakthroughs in the methods used to measure the time period of ancient sites, to restore the ancient natural environment in a more accurate way to reveal its role in the origin and formation of the Chinese civilization, and in understanding ancient economies and their relationship with social development, says Li.

The archaeological progress is not only important academically, but also serves urbanization and social development, according to Deng Chao, director of the artifact and historical site department of the National Cultural Heritage Administration. He says archaeological sites are becoming important cultural landmarks and tourist destinations. For example, UNESCO World Heritage Sites in China receive more than 300 million annual visits, while national archaeological ruins parks receive 34.6 million visits a year.