

OPINION: A TUMULTUOUS ELECTION P.26 | FEATURES: DIPLOMATIC PEACE EFFORTS P.32

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REFORM AND RENEWAL

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Cover Photo: Skyscrapers line the Huangpu River in Shanghai (VCG)

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EDITOR'S DESK

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Two Hands

In 1776, Scottish philosopher and economist Adam Smith published *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. In it, he put forward the idea that allowing individuals to pursue their own self-interest in commerce promoted economic prosperity.

In China, Smith is best known for his concept of the invisible hand, a metaphor for the unseen forces that deliver this prosperity. Since China decided to bid farewell to its planned economy in 1978, remarkable transformation has taken place. With the unleashing of market forces, China has turned itself into the world's second largest economy and brought more than 700 million people out of extreme poverty. In China's view, however, the market is only one side of the economic coin. The country also attaches importance to the "visible hand," or the role of the government in regulating economic activity.

A resolution adopted at the recently concluded Third Plenary Session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee reaffirmed this approach. Focusing on the pivotal issue of balancing the relationship between the government and the market, the resolution makes arrangements for economic structural reform in the next five years.

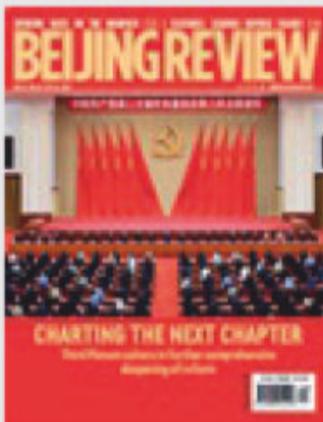
"We will see that the market plays the decisive role in resource allocation

and that the government better fulfills its role," the resolution reads. It calls for leveling the playing field to make economic operations more efficient. At the same time, it underlines the need to ensure effective regulation, maintain order in the marketplace and remedy market failures.

The resolution, adopted by senior Party officials at the session, codifies the governing party's vision for further deepening of reform. Drafted based on extensive research and consultation, it represents consensus across a wide spectrum of Chinese society. It will therefore be internalized in Chinese decision making at all levels.

Western countries have often championed free market capitalism as a hallmark of the freedoms that set them apart from other societies and forms of government. However, in recent decades, this economic system has struggled to deliver the same level of benefits as before. Instead, it has contributed to growing economic and societal challenges, exemplified by increasing inequality.

Market dysfunction has long prompted economists to explore a more nuanced approach, characterized by a combination of the visible and invisible hands. China's exploration of a socialist market economy gives these economists food for thought. **BR**



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SPORTING A CULTURAL AMBIANCE

A visitor tries his hand at *chuiwan*, a traditional Chinese ball sport similar to modern-day golf, at the China House in Paris, France, on July 24. The China House for the Paris 2024 Olympic Summer Games was inaugurated at the Hotel Salomon de Rothschild in Paris that day.

The China House is an effort by the Chinese Olympic Committee to promote Chinese culture and friendship to the rest of the world.

China's history, tradition and culture in sports participation, dating back thousands of years, as well as athletic exchanges between China and the Games' host, France, are among the highlights of this year's pavilion.



Great Wall, Grand Welcome

Children from Uzbekistan visit the Huangyaguan section of the Great Wall in Tianjin Municipality on July 24. More than 200 children participating in the 2024 Tianjin International Children's Art Festival visited the tourist site that same day. The five-day art festival, which commenced on July 22, drew over 1,000 young artists from 40 countries and regions.

Brain Health Journal

The journal *Brain Hemorrhages*, initiated by a team of Chinese researchers, has seen a steady increase in international influence in recent years, according to the 2024 Brain Health Conference that concluded in Beijing on July 21.

The journal was included in the Emerging Sources Citation Index, a database for emerging and high-potential journals, in late 2023, and recently received its first impact factor of 1.3, marking a new step in its international academic influence, said Zhang He, editor-in-chief of the journal, who highlighted the progress at the conference.

It was established by a research team from Tongji

Hospital in Wuhan, Hubei Province, in collaboration with the International Hemorrhagic Stroke Association. The journal publishes high-quality original research articles, authoritative reviews and academic briefings in English. The proportion of international submissions is as high as 70 percent.

Cruise Ship

China's second domestically built large cruise ship is expected to be delivered by the end of 2026, and start international journeys from Guangzhou in Guangdong Province in 2027, its owner Adora Cruises Ltd. announced on July 23.

The second ship will serve the South China market, according to the company.

Carrying more than 3,000

passengers, the *Adora Magic City*, or the first domestically built large cruise ship owned by the company, completed its maiden commercial voyage in January, traveling 1,119 nautical miles over the course of seven days and six nights.

Equipped with 2,144 rooms, the second ship will have larger public spaces and more advanced entertainment facilities.

Cancer Survival Rate

China's age-standardized five-year relative survival rate for all cancer types combined was 43.7 percent between 2019 and 2021, according to a report published in the *Journal of the National Cancer Center*, Xinhua News Agency reported on July 23.

The survival rate increased by approximately 7 percentage

points compared to the previous decade, said the report.

The study findings show that China has met the Healthy China Program's (2019-30) interim goal of improving cancer outcomes, i.e., to achieve a five-year cancer survival rate of 43.3 percent for all cancer types combined by 2022.

The research team collected data from over 6.41 million newly diagnosed cancer patients from 281 cancer registries across China from 2008 to 2019.

During this period, researchers observed significant improvements in survival rates for several types of cancer, including those of the lung, prostate, bone, uterus, breast, cervix, nasopharynx, larynx and bladder.

According to the report, these advancements in cancer survival can largely be attributed to major healthcare reforms in China and technological progress, which have enabled earlier diagnosis, more effective treatment, and improved cancer care management.

The study also highlighted that eight types of cancer—thyroid, breast, testis, bladder, prostate, kidney, uterus and cervix—now boast a five-year survival rate exceeding 60 percent. Among these, pancreatic cancer has the lowest survival rate at 8.5 percent, while thyroid cancer has the highest at 92.9 percent.

Education Spending

China's annual expenditure on education totaled 6.46 trillion yuan (\$889.4 billion) in 2023, the Ministry of Education said in a press release on July 22.

The figure increased 5.3 percent from 2022, according to the ministry.

Spending on compulsory education totaled 2.84 trillion yuan (\$391 billion) in 2023, ac-

counting for the greatest share of the overall expenditure, followed by spending on higher education at 1.76 trillion yuan (\$242.3 billion), according to the statement.

Spending on preschool and high school education came in at 538.2 billion yuan (\$74.1 billion) and 1.02 trillion yuan (\$140.4 billion), respectively.

Spending on higher education saw the fastest year-on-year growth in 2023, rising 7.6 percent.

Year-on-year increases in spending on preschool, compulsory and senior high school education came in at 4.7 percent, 6 percent and 6.2 percent, respectively.

Kindergartens saw the fastest per-student expenditure growth last year, increasing 8.8 percent year on year.

Big Data Expo

The China International Big Data Industry Expo 2024 will take place in Guiyang, capital of Guizhou Province, from August 28 to 30, Liu Liehong, head of the National Data Administration (NDA), said on July 22.

During the expo, the NDA will release reports on its achievements since its launch in October 2023.

Often dubbed China's "big

data hub," the mountainous province of Guizhou is China's first national big-data comprehensive pilot zone. It promotes the big data industry as the backbone of its high-quality social and economic development.

The big data expo is a valuable showcase for industry research reports, technical specifications and typical cases, according to Liu.

Liu added that the NDA will advance the building of a national computing power network and the implementation of the "Eastern Data, Western Computing" project, a key part of China's digital infrastructure.

The project aims to coordinate the computing capabilities of the country's eastern regions, where the need for computing is high, with inland western regions, where abundant renewable resources are optimal for the construction of data centers.

Urban Renewal Projects

China has invested 2.6 trillion yuan (\$358 billion) in over 66,000 projects designed to renovate urban infrastructure, the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development said on July 19.

Urban renewal projects



Strength and Spirit

Two men wrestle at the Torch Festival in Eliping Township of Butuo County, Sichuan Province on July 21. The Yi ethnic group's traditional Torch Festival, running from July 21 to 23 this year, features several folk sports events, including horse racing, bullfighting and wrestling.

involve the maintenance, renovation, demolition and improvement of public facilities, with the purpose of readjusting urban space resources to better meet the expectations and needs of the people, and adapt to social and economic developments.

Among the projects, more than 2,600 former factories and

commercial blocks have been renovated, and nearly 15,000 public facilities for medical, sports, educational and cultural purposes have been constructed or renovated.

China plans to renovate 54,000 old urban residential communities this year, and had started revamping 22,600 communities by the end of May.



From the Ground to the Gallery

Tourists attend the trial preview of an exhibition at the Sanxingdui Museum in Guanghan City, Sichuan Province, on July 22. The exhibition, titled "Craftsmanship and Ingenuity—A Showcase of Preservation and Restoration Achievements of Newly Excavated Cultural Relics from the Sanxingdui Site," officially opened the following day. It features 50 newly restored artifacts, including bronzeware, golden objects, jadedware and ivory. The exhibition will run through the end of 2024.

Interest Rate Cut

The People's Bank of China (PBC), the country's central bank, lowered the interest rates on its standing lending facility (SLF) on July 22, to improve the monetary policy transmission mechanism.

The monetary policy transmission mechanism refers to the process by which monetary policy decisions affect economic growth, prices and other aspects of the economy. The official interest rate is the most popular tool by which central banks influence the economy.

According to the PBC, the overnight rate was cut by 10 basis points to 2.55 percent, and the seven-day and one-month rates were each lowered by 10 basis points to 2.7 percent and 3.05 percent, respectively.

The SLF, introduced by the central bank in 2013, serves as a channel to meet the liquidity needs of financial institutions. These institutions can take out SLF loans from the central bank,

using qualified bonds and other credit assets as collateral.

Earlier on July 22, the central bank lowered the interest rate on seven-day reverse repos, a key short-term policy rate, from 1.8 percent to 1.7 percent amid efforts to strengthen counter-cyclical adjustments and better support the real economy.

That same day, China also cut the market-based benchmark lending rate, aligning with market expectations as authorities stepped up monetary support to shore up the economy.

The one-year loan prime rate (LPR) was 3.35 percent on July 22, down from the previous reading of 3.45 percent, according to the National Interbank Funding Center. The over-five-year LPR, on which many lenders base their mortgage rates, was lowered by 10 basis points to 3.85 percent.

The monthly released data are a pricing reference rate for banks, based on rates of the PBC's open market operations.

Foreign Debt

China is set to support prominent, creditworthy companies that promote high-quality development within the real economy by allowing them to borrow medium to long-term foreign debt.

Medium to long-term foreign debt refers to debt instruments issued by companies within China or their overseas subsidiaries or branches, denominated in either local or foreign currency, and with a term exceeding one year. These instruments include perpetual debt, medium-term notes and convertible bonds.

The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) announced this initiative on July 23 as part of the country's strategy to further open up and enhance cross-border financing facilitation.

According to a circular released by the NDRC, companies must meet several criteria to qualify, including compliance with national policies. Their business operations must align

with national macroeconomic controls and industrial policies.

Additionally, the company's revenue over the past year must rank within the top five in its industry, with the debt-to-asset ratio and other financial metrics outperforming the industry average.

The measures, which came into effect on July 29 this year, will remain valid until July 29, 2029.

Natural Gas Consumption

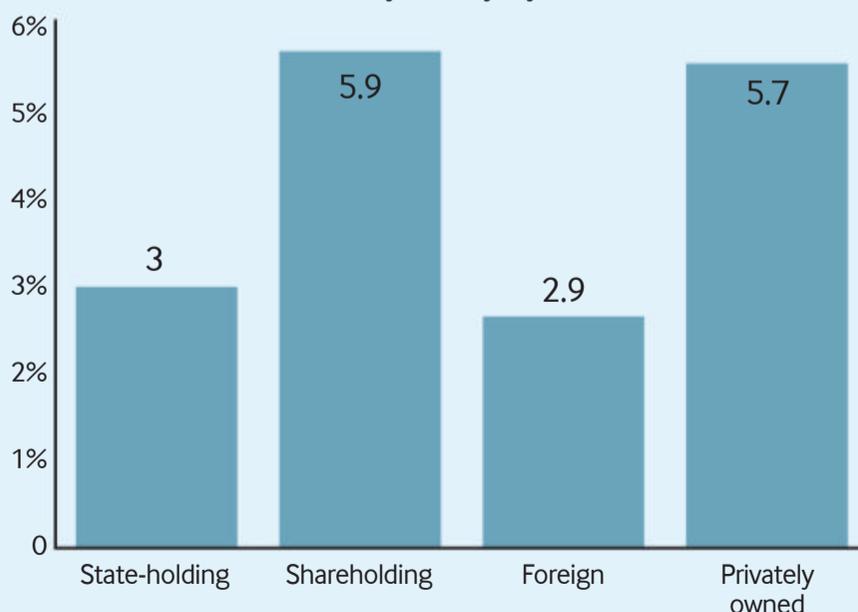
China's natural gas consumption is expected to rise by 6.5 to 7.7 percent year on year this year, a report issued by National Energy Administration showed on July 23.

Total natural gas consumption in the country will reach up to 425 billion cubic meters this year, according to the report. In 2024, China's total natural gas output is estimated at 246 billion cubic meters, an increase of 10 billion cubic meters.

NUMBERS

Industrial Enterprises' Profit Growth by Business Type

January-June (y.o.y.)



The report predicted that the global supply of natural gas will remain relatively sufficient in the second half of the year, while also cautioning against market uncertainties such as geopolitical conflicts and extreme weather conditions.

Natural gas plays a pivotal role in energy transition. China has been working to improve its production, supply, storage and sales system, as part of efforts to ensure the country's energy security and achieve the dual carbon goal—peaking carbon emissions before 2030 and reaching carbon neutrality before 2060.

Last year, the country consumed 394.5 billion cubic meters of natural gas, up 7.6 percent year on year. Natural gas accounted for 8.5 percent of China's total primary energy consumption, an increase of 0.1 percentage point from the previous year, the report showed.

Support for SMEs

China is set to intensify its efforts to develop and support

innovative small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in order to accelerate technological advancements and drive new product development.

SMEs play a big part in driving innovation in China. The latest efforts focus on a select group that uses specialized and sophisticated technologies to create novel and unique products.

According to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT), there will be an intensified effort to support SMEs in transitioning to cloud computing, adopting digital tools and utilizing intelligent technologies.

The aim is to foster distinctive industrial SME clusters and build a high-quality, efficient service system to support them.

To encourage scientific and technological SMEs to increase their research and development (R&D) expenditure, China will raise the rate of additional tax deductions for their R&D expenses, according to the policy document.

Furthermore, efforts will be made to encourage and guide higher education institutions and research institutes to authorize the use of their proprietary scientific and technological advances by micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises on a “use first, pay later” basis.

In terms of the service system, China has so far established more than 1,780 public service institutions for SMEs at the national, provincial, municipal and county levels, according to the latest MIIT data.

First Stores

Over the past three years, more than 3,700 first stores of different brands have opened in Beijing, the Beijing Municipal Commerce Bureau told a press conference on July 25.

“First store” refers to the very first retail outlet opened by a brand or company in the global, Asian, or Chinese mainland markets.

In July 2021, the Central Government authorized

Shanghai, Beijing, Tianjin and Chongqing municipalities, and Guangzhou in Guangdong Province to spearhead the development of international consumption center cities.

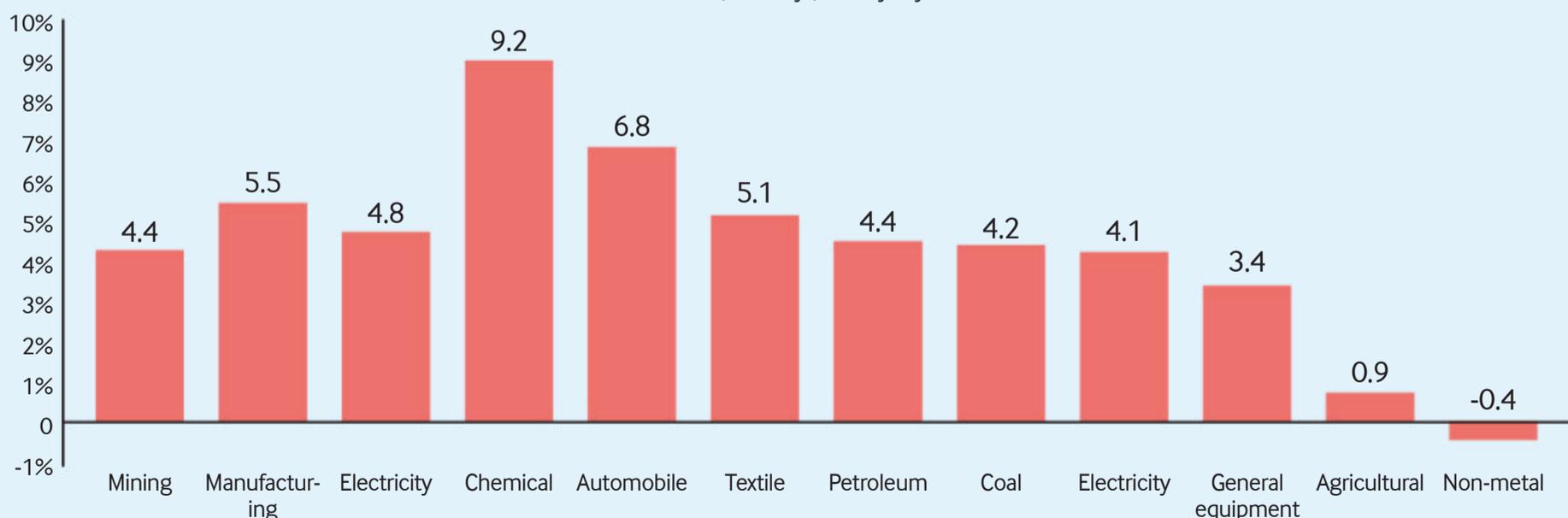
Over the last three years, Beijing has promoted the “first-store economy,” with over 4 million square meters of new commercial spaces dedicated to these first stores, according to Piao Xuedong, head of the bureau.

During this period, Beijing has led the country in urban competitiveness, the total number of Fortune 500 companies present, the added value of the service sector, and the number of tax refund stores for departing tourists, according to Piao.

Additionally, 26 multinational consumer sector companies, including multinational coffee giant Starbucks and French high-end department store chain Galeries Lafayette, have established their regional headquarters in Beijing.

Industrial Enterprises' Profit Growth by Sector

January-June (y.o.y.)



(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)

THIS WEEK WORLD



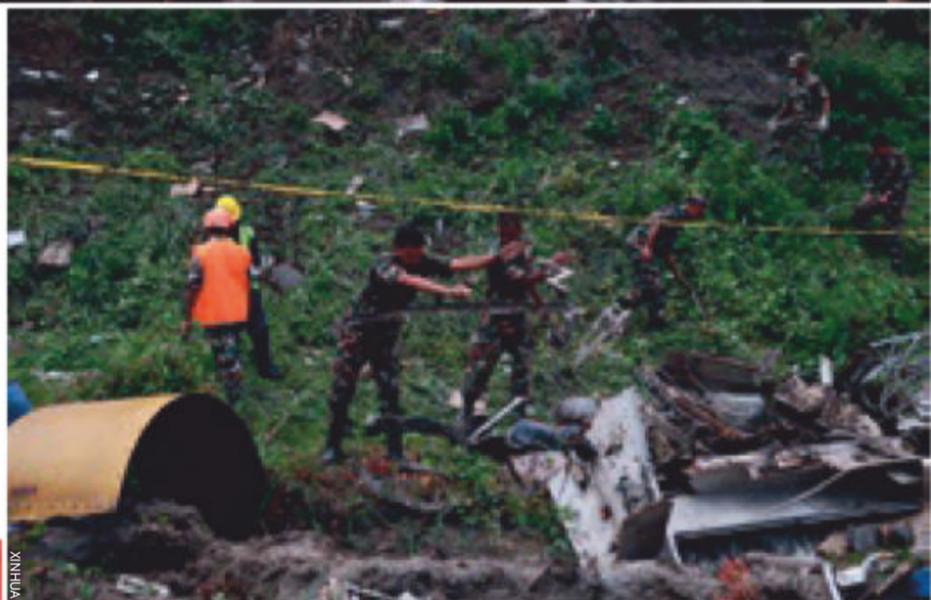
FRANCE

Audiences cheer before the kick-off of the men's pool C rugby sevens match between France and the United States of the Paris 2024 Olympic Summer Games at the Stade de France, Paris, on July 24



MEXICO

A performer dances at the Guelaguetza Auditorium in Oaxaca City on July 22. The performance was part of an annual showcase of the country's indigenous cultures hosted by the auditorium



NEPAL

Rescue workers collect debris at the site of an air crash near the Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu on July 24. Eighteen bodies were recovered after a plane crashed near the airport



BELGIUM

A military and civilian parade during the Belgian National Day celebrations in Brussels on July 21



CANADA

Firefighters battle a wildfire in Fort McMurray, northern Alberta, on July 18



UNITED STATES

Vice President Kamala Harris (center) speaks at the White House in Washington, D.C. on July 22. Harris has secured the support of a majority of Democratic delegates to become the party's nominee for president since President Joe Biden left the race on July 21



THIS WEEK PEOPLE & POINTS

↓ MEN'S BASKETBALL HEAD COACH

Guo Shiqiang has been appointed as the head coach of the Chinese men's basketball team, the Chinese Basketball Association (CBA) announced on July 21.

Having led the team as acting head coach for over a month, the 49-year-old Guo succeeded Serbian coach Aleksandar Djordjevic, who had failed to guide the team to qualify for the Paris Olympic Summer Games, which officially opened on July 26.

It will be Guo's second time as head coach of the Chinese men's team. He was in charge of the team in 2009, but stepped down later that same year following a lopsided loss to Iran in the final of the Asian Championships.



Guo was a member of the Chinese team that finished eighth at the Athens Games in 2004. He began his career as a coach in 2005 and led the Liaoning Flying Leopards to win the CBA league title in the 2017-18 season.

E-Adoption

Rednet.cn

July 18

Over the past few years, more and more Chinese netizens are turning toward virtual adoption as a means to support and care for their communities. Spotting a pattern and an opportunity, zoos, parks and farms across China have been offering up animals, trees and even vegetables for online adoption. By completing an online application, each adopter will receive an electronic adoption certificate as well as regular updates on the wellbeing of their adopted animals or plants.

These programs have not only allowed more money and public awareness to be directed toward nature conservation, but

also are part of a larger trend that sees the increasing popularity of rural life among Chinese urbanites. For today's overworked and burned-out city dwellers, virtual adoption offers a temporary escape from the social pressures of urban life and a chance to connect with nature on a deeper and more personal level. By allowing adopters to track the growth of a single vegetable or fruit plant, the digital adoption of farm produce can help farmers build a stronger and more direct bond with consumers.

However, virtual adoption also faces many daunting challenges, which include high operation costs, food safety issues and the high risk of fraud. Given these obstacles, all parties involved should work in tandem to ensure that this budding sector will one day mature into a full-blown industry.



Small Town Fantasies

Lifeweek

July 15

In recent months, Chinese social media have been swept by a new trend dubbed "small town literature." Driven by a surge in interest in traveling to small counties across China, the trend first started with the rise of a photography style that captures young Chinese wandering in desolate streets in an unknown town against a backdrop of soulful music. As of late June, the hashtag "small town literature" had amassed over 700 million views on Douyin, the Chinese version of

"Basic science is the cornerstone of humanity's quest to explore the unknown, providing the fundamental theories and methods to understand natural phenomena and solve real-world problems."

Shing-Tung Yau, a world-renowned mathematician and Chairman of the International Congress of Basic Science, at the congress' inauguration in Beijing in mid-July

"We must strengthen protection responses, including child-sensitive justice mechanisms, raise awareness... and tackle the root causes of exploitation by helping vulnerable families."

António Guterres, UN Secretary General, in a message for the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, observed annually on July 30, calling for more efforts to protect children from human trafficking

TikTok.

The trend has also spilled over into other artistic realms. In May, *Factory*, a rap song about growing up in a small county by Chinese rapper Zhang Fangzhao became a massive hit on Chinese video-sharing platform Bilibili. This summer, thriller dramas that focus on murders in small towns, including *Tender Light* and *Lost in the Shadows*, were also launched across Chinese video-streaming sites.

As a linkage between China's vast rural regions and rapidly expanding urban landscapes, counties are where the urban-rural divide is most acutely felt. Typically portrayed as cultural backwaters, these counties have been transformed through the "small town literature" movement into alt-cool cultural symbols.

This new narrative is rooted in a wider trend that sees more and more disillusioned young Chinese return to their hometowns after migrating to megacities for work. By reimagining small towns as idyllic spaces untouched by the woes of urban life, the "small town literature" craze is a form of nostalgic expression that reflects the common aspirations and frustrations shared by the country's younger generations.

Figurine Frenzy

Southern Daily
July 19

On July 1, fans flocked to Thailand's Bangkok Suvarnabhumi International Airport to welcome the arrival of Labubu, a fluffy monster character owned by Pop Mart, a Chinese company that specializes in designer toys. The character has recently become a sensation in Thailand, where fans are forming long queues at local stores or even traveling to China to buy its figurines.

The character's surging popularity in Thailand is just one example of how China's designer toy sector is rapidly expanding both domestically and across the globe. Having first emerged in the 2010s, the sector has

evolved from a niche market reserved for a small troupe of toy collectors into a highly integrated industry spread across entertainment, tourism and many other fields. In 2023, Pop Mart opened Pop Land, the country's first all-immersive toy-inspired theme park, in Beijing. The industry has also been actively engaged in collaborating with visual artists, cultural institutions and some of the world's most well-known brands.

However, the industry has also been facing a chronic exhaustion of creativity, as different franchises have begun to look increasingly alike. To always remain relevant in a market that is constantly changing, Chinese designer toy brands should dig deeper into the country's rich cultural assets and find new ways to fuse tradition with modern aesthetics.

↓ CHINESE FLAG BEARERS

Table tennis icon **Ma Long** (left) and artistic swimming team captain **Feng Yu** were named the flag bearers for the Opening Ceremony of the Paris 2024 Olympic Summer Games, during an online press conference held by the Chinese Olympic delegation on July 24.

Ma, 35, will compete in the men's team event in Paris and has the opportunity to set a new Olympic record by winning a sixth gold medal. He is the first male player to achieve a career Grand Slam, encompassing Olympic, World Championship, World Cup, Asian Games, Asian Championships, Asian Cup, ITTF World Tour Finals and National Games singles titles.



Feng, 24, is a multi-time world champion in artistic swimming, which was previously known as synchronized swimming. Paris 2024 is her second trip to the Olympics, after she helped lead the Chinese team to silver at the pandemic-delayed Tokyo 2020 Olympic Summer Games.

“Art has no borders. I hope children will see more, experience more and feel the delicate emotions in Chinese culture.”

Li Ye, Dean of the Oregon International Ballet Academy in the U.S., while leading 12 American children to participate in the 2024 Tianjin International Children's Art Festival, which commenced in Tianjin on July 22

“Technologies sometimes cannot solve everything, and we also need policies and legislation, as well as interdisciplinary and inter-institutional coordination.”

Ona Vileikis, Secretary General of CIPA Heritage Documentation, an international nonprofit organization, during the 2024 International Symposium on Cultural Heritage Conservation by Digitization, which took place in Beijing on July 16-19



COVER STORY

A PROACTIVE PLEDGE

Economic structural reform remains the spearhead in China By Tao Xing

A robotic arm manufactures solar photovoltaic cells in the intelligent workshop of a factory in Jinhua, Zhejiang Province, on January 4

Questions and speculations surrounding the future direction of China's economy, and whether it will continue pursuing reform and opening up, have predictably surfaced around the recently held Third Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), which concluded with the release of a communiqué on July 18.

Some critics have asserted that politics is suffocating China's economy. Others have voiced opinions that while the words "reform" and "economic development" occur frequently throughout the communiqué, the document contains few specific details of the measures China will take to continue the revival of its economy.

However, those with seats closer to the action suggest these critics may be looking in the wrong places. "The communiqué is about principles and directions. It is relatively abstract," Tian Xuan, associate dean and chair professor of finance at Tsinghua University's PBC School of Finance, told *Beijing*

Review. "In addition to studying the communiqué, we also need to study the resolution, which provides more specific measures," he added.

"I feel that this communiqué is all about economic development and reform. That's my personal understanding," he said.

The Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Further Deepening Reform Comprehensively to Advance Chinese Modernization



was adopted at the third plenum on July 18, and made public on July 21.

The adoption of the resolution is the most important outcome of the third plenum, Tang Fangyu, deputy head of the CPC Central Committee Policy Research Office, said at a press conference held to introduce the guiding principles from the just-concluded plenum on July 19.

The resolution, with economic structural reform as the spearhead, provides comprehensive plans for reforms in multiple fields, Tang

said, adding that the resolution puts forward more than 300 major reform measures, all of which involve reforms on the levels of systems, mechanisms and institutions.

“The aim of reforming economic institutions is actually to provide comprehensive support and a guarantee for high-quality development,” Tian said.

On market economy

In building a high-standard socialist market economy, the role of the market must be better leveraged, a fairer and more dynamic market environment will be fostered, and resource allocation will be made as efficient and productive as possible, the resolution said.

“Regarding the reforms to economic institutions,

there are some misunderstandings of the resolution to ‘better leverage the role of the market and foster a fairer and more dynamic market environment,’ and it’s necessary to clarify these points,” Dong Yu, Executive Vice President of the China Institute for Development Planning at Tsinghua University, told *Beijing Review*.

“Some people did not find the line ‘the market plays the decisive role in resource allocation’ in the communiqué and have questioned China’s attitude to the role of the market, but it was later seen in the resolution,” Dong said. “It is a statement that was unequivocally put forward at the 20th National Congress of the CPC [in 2022], and will not and cannot be changed or shaken,” Dong said.

“Fostering a fairer and more dynamic market environment” emphasizes fair entry, fair competition and fair development, aiming to build a healthier market environment. Some people mistakenly interpret this solely as fairer income distribution, which is a common misconception that needs to be addressed, he said.

“Building a high-standard socialist market economy” has always been the primary focus of reforms to economic institutions included in different documents in recent years, including the report to the 20th National Congress of the CPC and the long-range objectives through the year 2035. “In simple terms, China will adhere to the basic market-oriented approach. This is an extremely clear signal to all business entities and entrepreneurs,” Dong added.

When the document on building a unified national market was released in 2022, some commentators suggested it indicated a return toward a planned economy, negatively ►►

impacting expectations for the Chinese economy. “What we need to know is that the most important thing for a unified national market is to establish and improve four systems: property rights protection, market access, fair competition and credit supervision. These four systems are the cornerstone of a market economy in any Western country,” Dong said.

Improving systems such as property rights protection, information disclosure, market access, market exit, and credit supervision are included in “the systems underpinning the market economy” section of the resolution, Dong continued.

On government’s role

“We will see that the market plays the decisive role in resource allocation and that the government better fulfills its role,” the resolution said.

“This requires us to emphasize both the role of the market and the government. And it is necessary to play the role of a proactive government, especially, the complementary roles of an effective market and a proactive government,” Tian said.

“It means allowing the visible hand to hold the invisible hand, which suggests the coordination of government intervention and market forces for balanced and sustainable development,” Tian explained.

The resolution further stated that “we will lift restrictions on the market while ensuring effective regulation, striving to better maintain order in the market and remedy market failures. By doing so, we will ensure smooth flows in the national economy and unleash the internal driving forces and creativity of our society as a whole.”

“We need to correctly understand the terms ‘lifting restrictions’ and ‘effective regulation.’ It’s a challenging issue in the governance



A press conference on the guiding principles from the Third Plenary Session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee is held in Beijing on July 19

of any country,” Dong said, adding that it is not a simple matter of “wanting both,” and the key is to “grasp the balance point of the lever in economic work and, according to the characteristics and requirements of different areas and stages, grasp the rhythm and intensity of the two in a targeted manner.”

“Lifting restrictions” emphasizes the goal, while “effective regulation” emphasizes the capability of governance. The balance of the two should be closely linked to the current economic situation, Dong said. “The communiqué unusually devoted a large section to expounding upon the annual economic work, indicating that it is necessary to make use of reforms to solve the current economic difficulties and challenges. This is a signal that requires high attention.”

On private economy

China has indeed emphasized the relationship between the public and private sectors of the economy in recent years. The resolution reaffirmed that “we will stay committed to unswervingly consolidating and developing the public sector and unswervingly encouraging, supporting, and guiding the development of the non-public sector.”

“The fundamental point of future reforms is still to encourage the role of the market and insist on

adhering to the two ‘unswerving’ commitments,” Tian said.

In upholding and fulfilling the commitments to the public and private sectors, China must also “ensure that economic entities under all forms of ownership have equal access to factors of production in accordance with the law, can compete in the market on an equal footing, and are protected by the law as equals, thus enabling them to complement each other and develop side by side,” according to the resolution.

“The equal access and legal protection are important for the developing the private economy,” Tian said.

According to Tian, the private economy contributes 70 percent of China’s innovation and 80 percent of its employment opportunities. “We should encourage and promote the entrepreneurial spirit, and recognize outstanding private entrepreneurs,” he added.

“We will continue to implement



A dancing robot attracts visitors at the 2024 World Artificial Intelligence Conference in Shanghai on July 5

principles and policies that help foster a favorable environment and create more opportunities for the development of the non-public sector. We will formulate a private sector promotion law. We will do more to remove barriers to market access, work to see that the competitive areas of infrastructure are open to market entities in a fair manner, and improve the long-term mechanism by which private enterprises participate in major national projects,” the resolution said.

“All in all, we need to implement these measures to further boost confidence in the private economy,” Tian said.

On opening up

“Opening up is a defining feature of Chinese modernization. We must remain committed to the basic state policy of opening to the outside world and continue to promote reform through opening up. Leveraging the strengths of China’s enormous

market, we will enhance our capacity for opening up while expanding international cooperation and develop new institutions for a higher-standard open economy,” the resolution said.

“My understanding of ‘a higher-standard open economy’ is that we need to proactively align with international standards in economic and trade rules, engage deeply in the international trade division of labor and cooperation, accelerate the process of ‘bringing in’ and ‘going global,’ and participate deeply in the global restructuring of industrial and supply chains,” Tian said, adding that these efforts will also promote the flow of talent, capital, and technology.

“We should steadily improve the openness of rules, regulations, and management standards to enhance China’s role and significance in the international market governance system,” he said.

“In terms of international cooperation and exchange by domestic enterprises, we should support them not only in engaging in international trade but also in ‘going global,’ promoting their overseas development,” Tian said. This facilitates the integration of domestic and international markets, ensuring smooth circulation between domestic and international economies.

On diverse measures

The resolution also put forward reforms to specific sectors of the economy, such as strengthening agriculture, benefiting farmers and enriching rural areas. “We will develop new types of rural collective economies, establish related operating mechanisms featuring clearly defined property rights and rational income distribution, and ensure that farmers enjoy more adequate property rights and interests. We will promote orderly reforms for market-based transfers of rural collective land designated for business construction and improve the mechanisms for distributing returns realized from the appreciation of land,” the resolution said.

Out of the 14 reform tasks laid out in the resolution, economic reform encompasses six parts: building a high-standard socialist market economy, promoting high-quality economic development, supporting all-around innovation, improving macroeconomic governance, promoting integrated urban-rural development, and pursuing high-standard opening up.

In this allocation of tasks, the proportion dedicated to economic reform remains undiminished compared to previous key documents, fully reflecting the principle of “regarding economic structural reform as the spearhead” within the guiding philosophy of the resolution, Dong said. The reform tasks laid out in the resolution shall be completed by the time the People’s Republic of China celebrates its 80th anniversary in 2029, according to the communiqué. **BR**

EMPOWERING EMPLOYMENT

China bolsters job opportunities through multifaceted initiatives By Lu Yan

For Wang Zixin, a recent college graduate majoring in computer science and technology from Changchun, Jilin Province, the job hunt did not prove as challenging as he had anticipated.

Wang attended five job fairs and received seven job offers. Ultimately, he decided to accept a position at a bank.

“The job fairs, which were mostly organized by my university or the local district and city government’s human resources and social security departments, provided graduates like me with a wider range of options to consider,” Wang told *Beijing Review*. He added that the majority of his classmates were able to secure employment at a company or organization prior to graduation, with the exception of those who opted for more flexible forms of employment.

China created 6.98 million new urban jobs in the first half of this year, official data showed on July 23. In June, the country’s surveyed urban unemployment rate stood at 5 percent, with the employment situation remaining generally stable, according to the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security.

China will develop sound mechanisms for promoting high-quality and full employment, refine the related public services system, and work hard to tackle structural unemployment, according to the resolution on

further deepening reform comprehensively to advance Chinese modernization adopted at the Third Plenary Session of the 20th Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, which took place in Beijing from July 15 to 18.

Employment goes first

The country has set an annual target of creating more than 12 million new urban jobs this year. It also aims to maintain the surveyed urban unemployment rate at around 5.5 percent this year.

The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security attributed the stable performance of the job market to China’s ongoing economic recovery, a resurgence in service consumption, and faster growth in the industrial sector.

However, the ministry also cautioned that the

external environment remains complex, domestic effective demand is still insufficient, and some enterprises continue to face relatively high pressures in production and operations. This, it noted, requires greater efforts to be made in order to bolster employment.

“We will improve the system of employment support for key groups such as college graduates, rural migrant workers and ex-service members, and the system of lifelong vocational skills training,” the resolution read.

The country will also improve the policy environment to boost employment



Young job seekers explore more than 6,000 positions on offer at a job fair in Haikou, Hainan Province, on July 20

by encouraging business startups, and support and regulate the development of new forms of employment.

It will also build a sound social security system to serve people in flexible employment, rural migrant workers and those in new forms of employment.

Wang expressed his appreciation for the government's employment assistance policies in Jilin. "Graduates employed in Jilin with at least one-year labor or employment contracts, and who are making social insurance contributions, can receive monthly living allowances," Wang explained. According to the policy document, the allowance amounts are 2,500 yuan (\$344) for doctoral graduates, 1,500 yuan (\$206) for master's graduates, and 1,000 yuan (\$137) for bachelor's graduates. The subsidy period can last up to two years.

The policies also benefit those pursuing flexible employment. College graduates who are unemployed within two years of graduation can receive subsidies for their social insurance payments when they take on flexible jobs. The subsidy generally covers up to two thirds of their actual insurance contributions, for a maximum of two years. Similar policies have been launched in different localities based on local conditions.

Reflecting on the impact of these initiatives, Wang said, "The application process is quite straightforward. Benefiting from these supportive policies, we feel much more confident about securing our livelihoods after graduation."

"High-quality employment cannot be achieved without the support of relevant national employment systems and policies," Zhao Zhong, Dean of the School of Labor and Human Resources at Beijing-based Renmin University of China, told news portal Jiemian.com.

He said it also requires efforts from enterprises and cooperation between them and the government. "By aligning with social and economic development, enterprise transformation and upgrading, as well as the development of emerging industries, expanding the scale of employment and improving the quality of employment should be set as important goals for government policies and corporate social responsibility," he said.

Secure the silver

Liu Chuanfang, a retiree from Nantong, Jiangsu Province, has recently secured a job with the help of her residential community's employment service center, an initiative guided by the local government.

After retiring, Liu found herself feeling idle at home. However, she soon learned that her community had established an employment assistance hub right in the neighborhood. Interested, Liu decided to visit the service center and try her luck in finding a part-time job to supplement her income.

To Liu's pleasant surprise, she was able to land a position at the cafeteria of a nearby vocational school. Reflecting on her newfound role, Liu told local newspaper *Yangtze Evening Post*, "The job is relatively light, and I find great joy in interacting with the energetic students. It has really reinvigorated me."

Established across the country and guided by supportive local policies, these community-based employment service centers have proven to be invaluable resources, enabling residents like Liu and others to access job information and opportunities conveniently located right in their own neighborhoods.

Beyond just connecting job seekers to openings, these centers take a comprehensive approach to boosting local employment. They organize a variety of job-matching events, including online and offline job fairs, to help residents find suitable roles. These centers also arrange public welfare positions specifically to employ individuals facing difficulties in the job market.

Official data show that China was home to 297 million people aged 60 and above at the end of 2023, accounting for 21.1 percent of the total population.

To respond to population aging, China will refine the policies and mechanisms for developing elderly care programs and industries. "We will develop the silver economy and support the creation of diverse jobs tailored to elderly people," the resolution adopted at the third plenary session said. It added that in line with the principle of voluntary participation with appropriate flexibility, China will advance reform to gradually

raise the statutory retirement age in a prudent and orderly manner.

China's statutory retirement age is 60 for men, 55 for female professionals and 50 for other female workers, with the average retirement age of people participating in employees' pension insurance being under 55, the youngest in the world.

Due to factors such as personal choice, work status and physical condition, it is indeed difficult to adopt a "one-size-fits-all" model for retirement age. Delaying retirement by adhering to the principles of "voluntariness and flexibility" gave seniors more choices.

In the era of technological, digital and intelligent transformation, the traditional nine-to-five work model and high-intensity commuting requirements are no longer suitable for the population reaching or even exceeding the statutory retirement age, said Yuan Xin, Vice President of the China Population Association and a professor of demography at Nankai University.

"Therefore, we should explore more flexible and diverse work arrangements, including but not limited to adjustments to work hours, job nature, work location and compensation structure. For example, allowing them to choose part-time over full-time work based on individual circumstances, and utilizing modern communication technologies to work remotely from home, to reduce unnecessary commuting pressure and improve work efficiency and quality of life," Yuan told news portal Southcn.com.

"The specific details of the implementation of this retirement age system still await the publication of the official plan," Yuan concluded. **BR**

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CHARTING THE ROAD AHEAD

Continuing the process of building a high-standard socialist market economy By Jon Taylor

The Communist Party of China (CPC) recently concluded the long-anticipated Third Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee. The meeting brought together the Party's top leadership to discuss and articulate China's policy goals for promoting Chinese-style modernization and its strategic measures for further comprehensive reform.

Several questions arise regarding the third plenum's work. Specifically, did the plenum chart a clear path toward achieving new quality productive forces? [The concept of new quality productive forces refers to the shift toward innovation-driven growth, technological advancement and high-quality development in various sectors of the economy—*Ed.*] Additionally, did the plenum address the structural challenges within China's economy? What additional announcements were made at the plenum? And, finally, what's next for China as a result of the third plenum?

Third plenums

Before I tackle each of these questions, a quick note about third plenums. Traditionally, the CPC Central Committee's third plenum is meant to be a broad blueprint

for long-term development, not a quick fix. The third plenum's communiqué serves as a foundational summary for China's medium- and long-term development. The detailed policy plans and proposed laws will follow in the coming months.

Invariably, plenums are not designed to provide specific solutions. Rather, they aim to initiate the directions and/or guidelines. This means that the Party's core leadership is not responsible for the minutiae of policy development and implementation. That is a task best left to Party officials at all levels as well as the relevant national ministries and provincial authorities. The Party leadership's task is to guide the country into general policy trends based on thorough deliberations within the central committee.

A key task of the recently concluded third plenum was to consider a draft of the Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Further Deepening Reform Comprehensively to Advance Chinese Modernization, which lays out the Party's plans to develop the economy during the coming years. Within the context of China's long history of reform and opening up, the third plenum's resolution on the draft will likely be viewed as a key event in China's efforts to continue to develop and improve the socialist system with Chinese characteristics, pursuing a path to comprehensively deepen reforms, and promoting Chinese-style modernization.

Questions answered

So, let's move on to answering the questions that I previously posed. First, did the plenum chart a clear path toward achieving new quality productive forces? The answer is a resounding yes.

Some Western critics have expressed concerns about the omission of the phrase "decisive role of the market" in the communiqué. Upon review, I

believe they overlook the broader context of the Party's goal of balancing market mechanisms with state involvement. The resolution clearly states "we will see that the market plays the decisive role in resource allocation and that the government better fulfills its role." A reading of the resolution conveys the Party's sense of urgency regarding the economy, acknowledging short-term risks and growth goals, and offers plans to accelerate the issuance of special-purpose bonds to support local governments. Additionally, the fiscal reforms aimed at addressing the imbalance between the Central Government and local governments' fiscal resources and responsibilities are clearly highlighted.

The resolution emphasizes advancing new quality productive forces, noting that China will accelerate efforts to build a high-standard market system, which is a major reform task for the country. Further, efforts will be made to build a unified national market, including the development of a unified urban-rural construction land market, a nationwide integrated technology and data market, and a unified national electricity market. Additionally, China will enact reforms aimed at improving the market system and rules for

production factors such as labor, capital, land, knowledge, technology, management and data. Finally, the resolution also recognizes the need for demand-side support, and improvements to the social security network and *hukou* system, or the country's household registration system.

The second question I posed centered on the plenum addressing the structural challenges facing China's economy. Again, the answer is an unequivocal yes.

For those who have doubts, it must be noted that the resolution consists of 15 sections and 60 articles and is divided into three main parts. It is a document that underscores the Party's substantial efforts at continuing to improve the modernization of China.

The first part of the resolution elaborates on the significance and overall requirements of further comprehensively deepening reform and

advancing Chinese-style modernization. The second part discusses how and where China will comprehensively deploy reforms in a variety of areas, with economic system reform as the driving force. The third part discusses strengthening the Party's leadership over reform and deepening the reform of the Party building system.

The resolution proposes more than 300 important reform measures, all of which involve all levels of the Party and the state. Some of the proposals improve and enhance previous reform measures, while others are new ideas aimed at reforms based on practical needs and pilot explorations. Again, this is a document that carefully addresses China's commitment to pursuing further reform and opening up.

The third question that I posed regarded additional announcements made at the plenum. While the resolution showed that the Party is as focused on security as on the economy, which is nothing new or unusual in and of itself, it also had a substantial focus on foreign relations, reflecting China's role as a major global power.

Several important announcements stood out, including the pursuit of the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilizations Initiative, a call for an equal and orderly multipolar world, global governance reform, and universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization.

And what about the fourth and final question that I posed? What's next for China as a result of the third plenum? While I'm not always keen on making predictions, the third plenum's resolution clearly lays out a path for China's future.

The resolution notes that by 2035, China will have finished building a high-standard socialist market economy in all respects, further improved the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, generally modernized the system and capacity for governance, and basically realized socialist modernization. And how will it achieve this? If the most frequently mentioned words and phrases in the resolution are any indication of China's future path, it will mean that the country will have completed the comprehensive reform tasks laid out in the document by the time of the 80th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China in 2029.

As the resolution states, China is entering a crucial period for building a great nation and achieving national rejuvenation through modernization. In order for the country to basically achieve a high-standard socialist market economy in all respects by 2035 and to build China into a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious and beautiful by the centenary of the People's Republic of China in 2049, the third plenum's resolution is an important milestone in pursuit of deepening and advancing comprehensive reforms and Chinese modernization. **BR**



Visitors experience virtual reality games inside an exhibition hall of Kunshan Metaverse Industrial Park, in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, on June 22

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REACHING PAST LUNAR LIMITS

By Robert Walker

Chang'e is the Chinese moon goddess. Named after her, the *Chang'e-6* lunar module returned to Earth this June carrying 1,935.3 grams of rocks and dust from the far side of the moon.

A world first, the unique samples—more viscous and clumpier than previously collected lunar specimens—will be distributed globally for scientific analysis.

China's lunar program, initiated in 2007 with the launch of *Chang'e-1* to create a high-resolution 3D map of the moon's surface, illustrates the country's enviable ability to concentrate its efforts on major tasks.

This ability, President Xi Jinping has suggested, is one of the major advantages of China's socialist system.

A major event

The results of China's capacity to concentrate on major tasks are equally evident in its rapid transition from a rural economy to a global industrial power, in the successful elimination of extreme poverty, in building the world's largest high-speed train system, and in pursuing a fast transition to green energy.

It is apparent, too, in the transformation of China into a leading scientific nation. As recently as 2019, London-based *The Economist* magazine asked whether China could become a scientific superpower. This June, it concluded: "Today, that question has been unequivocally answered: 'Yes'."

And this is why the recently held Third Plenary Session of

the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) is so important. The Central Committee, elected by the quinquennial National Congress, is, after the congress itself, the Party's top decision-making body.

This year, the third plenary session introduced major policy initiatives with an eye on the future.

Many third plenums have become waypoints delineating China's progress and relationship with the world. The 1978 third plenary session laid the foundations for the reform and opening-up policy. The 1993 plenum announced the liberalization of the yuan while emphasizing a socialist market economy. Those in 1998 and 2008 focused on agriculture and consequently contributed to the eradication of rural poverty and to establishing China as the world leader in agricultural science. The 2013 plenum introduced the strategy of the comprehensive deepening of reform.

The recent plenary session focused on deepening reform placing science and technology at the heart of the high-quality development that China intends to achieve. As the official communiqué stated: "We must fully implement the strategy of

invigorating China through science and education, the strategy of developing a quality workforce, and the innovation-driven development strategy, make coordinated efforts to promote integrated reform of institutions and mechanisms of education, science and technology, and human resources, and improve the new system for mobilizing resources nationwide to make key technological breakthroughs."

Science-based

It is noteworthy that China has scientists at the center of governance, with several members of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee being eminent scientists.

Among them are Ma Xingrui and Yuan Jiajun, who were respectively chief commander of the *Chang'e-3* program that successfully placed a lander on



Researchers prepare to weigh the *Chang'e-6* lunar samples during a returner-opening ceremony in Beijing on June 26

the moon in 2010, which is still operational today, and chief commander of the *Shenzhou* spacecraft in China's national manned space program. Both scientists hold executive positions that enable science to directly inform policy decisions.

The Central Science and Technology Commission, established in 2023, promotes science-based innovation as the driving force of China's new development model. Headed by Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang, an engineer, it ensures that the efforts of ministries, research institutes and industries focus on transforming scientific excellence into practical applications.

Exploiting its lead in frontier technologies and the digital economy, China can successfully transition to become a high-income country, avoiding the "middle-income trap" that has prevented further development in many other countries. Equally, science-led, high-quality development must be sustainable, low-carbon and green. This will need to be supported by innovative fiscal, investment and pricing regimes, and by enhanced ecological protection compensation schemes.

To adopt the poetic language of the plenary session's communiqué, "We must improve ecological conservation systems, make concerted efforts to cut carbon emissions, reduce pollution, pursue green development and boost economic growth, actively respond to climate change, and move faster to improve the systems and mechanisms for applying the principle that lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets."

China intends to avoid mistakes made by other countries that have hollowed out traditional industries. Around 30 percent of global manufacturing output is currently

contributed by China, which leads the world in two fifths of the major categories of industrial products. It is imperative for enterprises in these sectors either to adopt advanced technologies to remain competitive or to transform when upgrading proves impossible. China's ability to facilitate such transitions rests on its unique ability to combine effective government with the efficient use of market forces.

The country's response to the new information revolution is not aided by those insistent on global leadership and fearful of fair competition. The U.S. has imposed export controls, financial sanctions and inbound and outbound investment screenings that are narrowly focused on Chinese technology.

In contrast, China's opening up has always been seen as a two-way opportunity. Vice Premier Ding reiterated this when addressing the 2024 Zhongguancun Forum in April. China, he emphasized, was keen to work with others to put into action the principles of "open, fair, just and non-discriminatory" international cooperation in science and technology, fostering a global scientific community.

Similarly, the third plenary session articulated aspirations to "steadily expand institutional opening up, deepen the foreign trade structural reform, further reform the management systems for inward and outward investment, improve planning for regional opening up, and refine the mechanisms for high-quality cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative."

Small steps, giant leap

While a lack of international cooperation would slow learning and hold back global development, informed commentators recognize that it could eventually strengthen the Chinese economy.

In 2018, for example, China needed to import 35 key technologies but, when threatened, these so-called "chokepoints" can be addressed. Seven times more STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) students graduate in China annually than in the U.S., and thousands of Chinese scientists working abroad could be welcomed home. As *The Economist* noted, "Even Huawei has prospered despite foreign sanctions."

Scientists might study science for science's sake. However, the ultimate goal of China's development and reform is to meet people's aspirations for better quality of life. President Xi stressed this when speaking at a symposium of business leaders and academics in Jinan, Shandong Province, in May. He drew attention to the pressing concerns and aspirations of the general public concerning employment, income

growth, education, healthcare, housing, government services, childcare, elderly care, personal safety, and property security.

These pressing concerns mean that action is required while the new information revolution is still unfolding. Development must generate more high-quality employment, create better entrepreneurial opportunities, be more inclusive, and reduce regional and urban-rural disparities.

New wealth generated through technological advances should be fairly distributed, with better access to education and public healthcare, and more comprehensive social security. Those newly arriving in cities should be better integrated and rural dwellers should be able to share in China's growing prosperity through economic revitalization and improved service provision.

The legacy of this year's third plenary session may be its response to the pressing concerns identified by Xi. It pledged to: "improve the institutions and mechanisms for advancing new urbanization, consolidate and improve the basic rural operation system, [...] improve the income distribution system, the employment-first policy, and the social security system, further reform the medical and healthcare systems, and improve the systems for facilitating population development and providing related services."

Science and technology are tools for realizing greater goals. Reaching the moon is merely a step toward achieving common prosperity. **BR**

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THE WORLDWIDE IMPACT OF CHINA'S MODERNIZATION

By David Morris

Each generation deals with big changes, but today's world is experiencing a perfect storm of seismic disruptions in the balance of power, a technological transformation, and a climate crisis. China is central to each of these, and how the country manages its internal challenges will affect the people of China and the rest of the world.

It's a highly charged international environment that China must cope with. The United States appears to be hopelessly polarized and is therefore unpredictable. Russia's conflict with Ukraine seems to have thrust Europe back into a traditional battle of wills. We are in a more pessimistic era than the world has known for decades and this brings real risks of miscalculations contributing to a downward spiral of confrontation and conflict.

Meanwhile, China's ambitious building of new institutions and platforms for interdependence across large areas of the world, from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS to the Belt and Road Initiative, is interpreted in the West as reshaping the world order. But it can be observed that to contribute to stability, international cooperation and development, all are much needed in tumultuous times.

We are also seeing a retreat into nationalist protectionism. The U.S. has levied 100-percent tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles and 50-percent tariffs on solar cells, and has gradually tightened restrictions on Chinese access to high-end semiconductors. U.S. presidential candidate

Donald Trump is threatening 60-percent (or more) tariffs on all imports from China. None of this makes economic sense but populism has mobilized strong constituencies in Europe as well as the U.S. against a level playing field for trade.

China has benefited—and the world enjoys net benefits—from free trade. Hopefully, China can resist the temptation to join a tit-for-tat trade war. Reform of the World Trade Organization will be in everyone's interests, as would greater transparency around subsidies provided to nurture industries by all major economies.

Perhaps China's most significant contribution in the coming years will be its leading role in combating climate change. This is the slow crisis the world has seen coming, but we are approaching a tipping point this decade if we cannot slow global warming. The switch to renewable energy is well underway, with China's rapid transition a major reason why world leaders agreed at UN Climate Change Conference in 2023 to triple renewable energy output by 2030.

China is also leading the world in the rollout of new-energy vehicles. The smart digitalization and greening of all industries are underway. China accounts for around 30 percent of the world's industrial production; therefore, a green China will mean a greener world.

Besides these big global disruptions, China has many internal challenges. It is transitioning from the heady, high-growth era to inevitably slower growth that must be more balanced. The country needs less speculative real estate development and more productive investment in the industries of the future. It needs

The Third Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee sought to find solutions to some tricky economic problems in a complex, global environment

to manage the demographic challenge of a declining workforce while ensuring there are enough new, well-paid jobs as new technologies eliminate some of the old low-paid jobs.

A climate of dialogue and understanding between major powers on how to provide confidence and security would go a long way here, rather than the recent tendency of fear and blame. Many global leadership changes are underway this year, so there may yet be some room for innovation and initiatives that could stabilize the international environment, rather than continue the recent downward spiral.

The Third Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, held in Beijing from July 15 to 18, sought to find solutions to some tricky economic problems in a complex, global environment. All this will require hard work, but nobody ever accused Chinese people of avoiding hard work.

The bottom line for the world—that should provide some confidence for the medium term—is that China has built an impressive infrastructure for trade and can contribute to a more sustainable international environment as it trades, invests and disseminates the green technologies of the future. **BR**

The author is president of 1Earth Village, a senior fellow at the Center for China and Globalization, and a former Australian and multilateral diplomat. This article was first published on the China Focus website. Copyedited by Elsbeth van Paridon. Comments to yanwei@cicgamericas.com

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A Global Imperative: Five Principles Of Peaceful Coexistence

By Warwick Powell

Beijing hosted an event commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence on June 28. The event served not only as a celebration of historical achievements, but also as a focal point for nations and peoples worldwide to orient themselves amid extensive global transformation.

The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, proposed 70 years ago to contribute to building a just post-war international order and properly managing state-to-state relations, remain essential to the world. They are: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.

These principles later influenced the consensus reached at the 1955 Bandung Conference, where representatives from 29 Asian and African nations, comprising over half of the world's population, gathered. Through intense discussion and negotiation, they agreed upon a 10-point declaration promoting world peace and cooperation, which incorporated the Five Principles and key principles of the UN Charter.

Uni- to multipolar

As conflicts rage worldwide, nations find themselves at another inflection point. The concerns that gathered representatives from 29 countries in Bandung, namely, the reluctance of Western powers after World War II to meaningfully consult them on issues impacting Asia and Africa, are recurring one way or another.

The Beijing event contributed to a necessary global dialogue, drawing on the strengths of historic alignments to shape

the institutions and ethos of an emerging multipolar world.

As the unipolar world of the “Pax Americana” gives way to the reemergence of global multipolarity, a new international architecture is needed to ensure prosperity and peace. Over the past three decades, the financialized global capitalist system has failed to meet the needs of a significant portion of the world's population. Even in many of the world's wealthiest nations, most people have seen a relative decline in living standards. Moreover, environmental degradation has led to

existential threats, and social inequality within countries has intensified. Uneven development remains the primary source of international instability.

In particular, hegemonism, power politics and unilateral bullying continue to undermine peace, stability and development of the world, and human life and dignity are, more often than not, ignored under the law of the jungle.

Additionally, the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence poses new risks and dangers, unless the technology is regulated and governed comprehensively on a global scale.

Addressing these challenges requires aligned and coordinated efforts across nations. Actions must be taken



The Sino-Uganda Mbale Industrial Park in Mbale, Uganda, on April 4. The industrial park, launched in 2018, houses more than 40 companies



The venue where the 1955 Asian-African Conference, also known as the Bandung Conference, was held in Bandung, Indonesia, is now a museum

through common agreements in which all countries, adhering to the spirit of the Five Principles, consider each other's interests and concerns. Attempts to enforce actions through unilateral moves, buttressed by kinetic interventions or threats, are no solutions and are likely to backfire, with unilateral sanctions as a case in point.

Effective coordinated action on shared global or cross-border challenges requires social stability as a foundation. To achieve this, it is essential to respect each nation's requirement to govern itself in ways that are legitimate and align with its unique history and current circumstances.

Coordinated economic development, guaranteeing the benefits of economic progress are shared fairly among all participants, is crucial for maintaining social stability. When development is uneven, with global centers exploiting and extracting resources from peripheral nations, it fosters resentment and instability in many regions worldwide.

The principles of peaceful coexistence recognize the intrinsic symbiotic relationship between fair and equitable development, social stability, and transnational peace. This is why today, in the

face of global challenges, the Five Principles are as relevant as ever.

Putting words into action

We witnessed these principles take institutional form when the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) held its 24th summit in Astana, Kazakhstan, on July 3-4.

The SCO Summit endorsed the initiative on world unity for justice, harmony and development, which is grounded in the inseparable relationship between fair and equitable economic development across nations on the one hand, and peace, stability and security on the other. As Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung once observed, one "will never reach peace through security, but one will reach security through peace."

The fabric and ethos of the SCO dictate a set of relationships that aim to foster a

mutually supportive environment, where the actions of one contribute to the conditions of the whole, and where the actions of others bolster the security and stability of one.

These collaborations are fundamentally shaped not by an orientation toward an external threat or enemy, but by recognizing that social and economic development, stability, and security are best achieved through common endeavors.

Once again, the echoes of the Five Principles can be heard.

The Five Principles, embodied in the institutions and practices of the SCO and other cooperative mechanisms, point to ways of international cooperation better suited to tackling today's challenges. Rather than forging alliances defined by external threats or enemies, this model of multipolar engagement is focused on the shared interests of the participants, without any reference to stymying or facing off against third parties.

"The old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born: In this interregnum, a great variety of morbid symptoms appear," said Italian philosopher and politician Antonio Gramsci in the 1930s, as he observed the rise of fascism in Europe. Just as Europe in the 1930s saw economic crises drive political upheavals, ultimately leading to transcontinental wars, today, we also confront disruption as the "old world" of American unipolarity gives way and a new multipolar world is being born.

Multipolarity necessitates new institutions and methods to affirm and enhance existing multilateral frameworks, such as the UN, to improve their functionality. The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence must form a key part of these efforts. **BR**

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Beyond the Ballot

By Zhao Wei

After former U.S. President Donald Trump survived an assassination attempt at his rally on July 13, the American political landscape has once again been thrown into disarray.

In a surprising turn of events, President Joe Biden bowed out of the 2024 presidential race, throwing his support behind Vice President Kamala Harris as the Democratic standard-bearer.

This unexpected development sent shockwaves through the United States and garnered global attention. Biden's decision to step aside not only reshapes the dynamics of the Democratic primary but also introduces a new level of unpredictability into an already contentious election.

Biden's withdrawal followed a storm of challenges. Recent health concerns, including a positive COVID-19 test, cast doubt on his ability to endure the rigors of another presidential campaign—let alone another term. What's more, his political capital had been waning, as evidenced by declining poll numbers and a decrease in donor support. The growing chorus of influential party voices calling for new leadership only compounded the pressure on him not to seek reelection.

Meanwhile, the Republican camp faces its own turmoil. The shocking shooting incident that occurred at a Pennsylvania rally on July 13 has further inflamed an already volatile political climate in the U.S. The event served as a stark reminder of the deep divisions plaguing American society and the potential for violence in an increasingly polarized electorate.

Amid this tumultuous backdrop, both parties have zeroed in on China as a key campaign issue. Trump continues to hammer home his message about China's alleged impact on U.S. jobs and prosperity.

The Biden administration, for its

part, has focused on the perceived security threats posed by Chinese technology. This fixation on China by both sides of the political aisle adds yet another layer of complexity to an already fraught China-U.S. relationship.

During a livestreamed discussion organized by the official social media account of *Beijing Daily* newspaper on July 22, professor of international relations and diplomatic affairs Wei Zongyou from the Center for American Studies at Fudan University expressed his belief that the U.S. political landscape is undergoing a seismic shift. Trump is reshaping the Republican Party into an entity focused on his "Make America Great Again" slogan, embracing neo-isolationism and trade protectionism—a stark departure from traditional Republican values. Meanwhile, the Democratic Party sees the ascendance of progressive figures like Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, pushing for more radical social and cultural reforms.

But despite all the obstacles and uncertainties, China-U.S. cooperation must transcend the realm of electoral politics. As the world's two largest economies, their collaborative efforts are not just beneficial, but essential for mutual growth and global stability.

The giants' cooperation spans the economic, techno-

logical and cultural domains. Substantial trade volume, intertwined supply chains, and joint technological innovations drive global progress. Cultural exchange fosters mutual understanding between the two nations.

However, U.S. campaign rhetoric and proposed policies often tend to threaten this cooperation. Trump's suggested 60-percent tariffs on Chinese imports could disrupt international trade, while the Biden administration's "small yard, high fence" approach in technology, maintaining a narrower but more controlled range of core national security interests, might impede innovation collaboration. These policies potentially harm both nations' interests—and global economic stability.

On July 22, Wang Yi, a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and Minister of Foreign Affairs, met with a delegation from the Board of Directors of the U.S.-China Business Council in Beijing.

The meeting underlined Beijing's focus on reform, further opening up and stronger bilateral relations, highlighting its approach to Sino-U.S. relations. Wang advocated for stability in this relationship, grounded in mutual respect and win-win cooperation. It's clear that Beijing remains committed to fostering a mutually beneficial relationship.

While the U.S. electoral process is an internal affair, one can only hope that the eventual victor will emphasize cooperation with China rather than using the country as a scapegoat for domestic woes purely for the sake of short-term political gain.

The Sino-U.S. partnership, if and when nurtured, can contribute to global stability and progress.

The path forward, though challenging, offers immense potential for both countries and, by extension, the world at large. **BR**

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From Stones to Milestones

By Lan Xinzhen

Reform and opening up have been pivotal to modern China's trajectory, serving as a major driver of the country's economic and social development. Initially characterized by a cautious approach likened to "crossing the river by feeling the stones," adopted in 1978, China's reform and opening up today have entered a new stage.

The challenge lies in advancing the reform to boost economic and social progress.

In this context, the Third Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, which concluded on July 18, decided to further the comprehensive deepening of the country's reform and propel Chinese modernization.

The session outlined more than 300 reform initiatives, with a prevailing emphasis on expanding institutional opening up to create a new system for a higher-level, more open economy. The underlying strategy is to align with international standards in economic and trade practices, harmonizing regulations, management and standards across a range of fields, including property rights protection, industrial subsidies, environmental protocols, labor rights, government procurement, e-commerce and finance. The goal is to foster a transparent, stable and predictable institutional environment, integrating China more deeply into the global economy.

Institutional opening up was first proposed at the 2018 Central Economic Work Conference, a yearly meeting held in December to outline the economic priorities for the 12 months ahead, when it was put forward as a means to "promote the transformation from opening up based on the flow of goods and factors of production to opening up based on rules and related institutions."

In the past four decades, China's reform



and opening up mainly relied on the flow of goods and factors of production, which played a big part in the country becoming the world's largest trading nation. However, this form of opening up primarily benefited labor-intensive enterprises and production models.

As China now enters a phase of high-quality development, on the basis of opening up based on flows of goods and factors of production, it is necessary to evolve beyond this traditional approach. The next step involves taking on a bigger role in the global economic system. But doing so requires institutional opening up to enhance the country's engagement with international economic practices and standards. This new move is also necessary to lift the country's international competitiveness.

For China, one of the main components of institutional opening up is to study international rules and participate in the formulation of international rules.

Over the past 40 years, China's reform and opening up have included a series of measures for institutional opening up.

At first, China had to revise its systems passively to meet international standards. Now, as a major world economy, the country has assumed the responsibility of sustaining economic globalization. The rise of trade protectionism in some developed countries has seriously undermined this globalization. Therefore, it is China's obligation to uphold the multilateral trade system centered on the World Trade Organization. This includes participating in the reform of the global economic governance system and contributing to the development of fairer international rules.

This mission necessitates the further comprehensive deepening of reform and the expansion of institutional opening up to maintain economic globalization and uphold international multilateral trade rules.

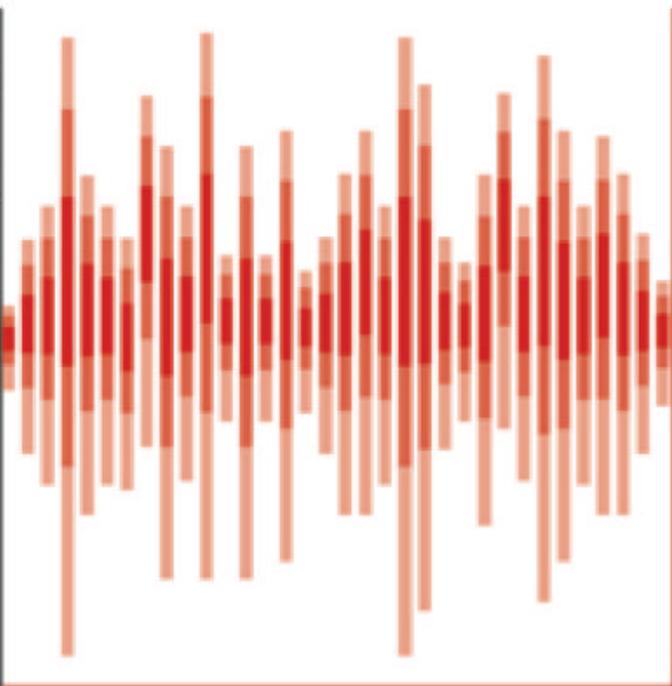
International competition among institutions and regulatory frameworks is now intensifying. The rapid rise of China and other emerging economies has shifted the global balance of power, triggering structural conflicts between, for instance, China and the United States regarding systems and strategies.

The U.S. seeks to modify the current multilateral trade system to establish trade and investment rules that favor developed countries, in turn potentially disadvantaging enterprises from China and other developing countries.

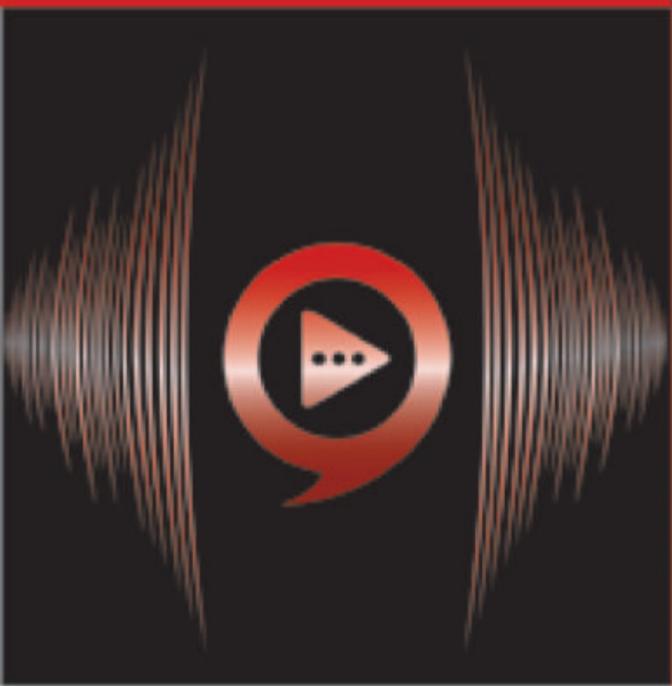
These conflicts represent a wider rivalry between established and emerging systems, as well as a struggle for influence over global economic governance and international trade rules. Given these dynamics, China must expand and expedite its institutional opening up to better navigate and help shape this evolving landscape. **BR**

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What Lies Ahead?

China and the Philippines have reached a provisional arrangement on the situation at Ren'ai Jiao but still dispute key elements

By Li Wenhan

Beijing has urged Manila to honor its commitments after the Philippines denied key elements of a “provisional arrangement” reached by both sides on managing the situation at Ren'ai Jiao, or Ren'ai Reef, in the South China Sea, just hours after the deal was announced and detailed by the Chinese Foreign Ministry on July 22.

Tensions between the two countries have been escalating since 2023 due to a series of Philippine incursions at Ren'ai Jiao, part of China's Nansha Islands, to supply the *BRP Sierra Madre (LT-57)*, a tank landing ship that Manila deliberately grounded there in 1999.

In its announcement, Beijing confirmed that, following de-escalation talks, an agreement had been reached, contingent on three conditions: the towing away of the *Sierra Madre*, prior notification and “on-site verification” of supplies, and the exclusion of construction materials from those supplies.

“We hope that the Philippines will honor its commitments, work with China, and jointly manage the situation at sea,” Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said on July 22.

What's in the 'arrangement'?

A statement from the Foreign Ministry released on July 22 said that Ren'ai Jiao is part of China's Nansha Islands and China has sovereignty over both, as well as their adjacent waters.

For decades, the Philippines has kept a warship grounded at Ren'ai Jiao, violating China's sovereignty and the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC). Article 5 of the DOC specifically states that parties should avoid inhabiting uninhabited islands and reefs.

On how to handle the current situation at Ren'ai Jiao, China has publicly stated the principled position which consists of three points.

First, by keeping its warship grounded at Ren'ai Jiao for decades running, the Philippines has been violating China's sovereignty and the DOC, especially Article 5 which says the parties should refrain

from action of inhabiting on the uninhabited islands and reefs. China continues to demand that the Philippines tow away the warship and restore Ren'ai Jiao's state of hosting no personnel or facilities.

Second, between now and when the warship is towed away, should the Philippines need to send living necessities to the personnel living on the warship, China is willing to allow it in a humanitarian spirit if the Philippines informs China in advance and after on-site verification is conducted. China will monitor the entire resupply process.

Third, if the Philippines were to send large amount of construction materials to the warship and attempt to build fixed facilities or permanent outpost, China will absolutely not accept it and will resolutely stop it in accordance with the laws and regulations to uphold China's sovereignty and the sanctity of the DOC.

Based on these three points, China recently had a series of consultations with the Philippines on managing the situation at Ren'ai Jiao and reached a provisional arrangement on humanitarian resupply of living necessities. The two sides agreed to jointly manage differences on maritime issues and work for de-escalation in the South China Sea, the statement concluded.

However, the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) swiftly responded to China's statement by posting on X, formerly known as Twitter, rejecting the idea that Manila will inform Beijing in advance and allow verification of deliveries.

“We take note that the Philippines said it's ready to implement the arrangement it reached with China. We hope the Philippines will keep its word. We call on the Philippines not to backpedal, not to create problems, and not to do anything that would complicate the situation,” Mao said at a press briefing.

This is not the first time the two sides gave opposing accounts over what they had agreed to.

In early May, a transcript was released of the supposed recording of a phone call between China and the Philippines' Western Command (Wescom) Commander Vice Admiral Alberto Carlos on January 3, indicating Carlos agreed to a “new model” for resupply missions to Ren'ai Jiao. Newspaper *Global Times* later confirmed the document to be real, citing a source “familiar with the affair,” on May 8.

The “new model” allowed essential daily supplies delivered to the grounded warship in the subsequent resupply mission after notifying China in advance.

Based on the “new model” arrangement and humanitarian principles, China permitted the Philippine resupply operation, the source told *Global Times*.

Soon after the transcript was released, Carlos, who approved the “new model” with China, was relieved of his post as the Wescom, and replaced by Rear Admiral Alfonso Torres Jr.

The Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro and National Security Adviser Eduardo Año have denied there was such an arrangement. Año called

the agreement “absolutely absurd, ludicrous and preposterous,” while emphasizing in a statement on May 5 that President [Ferdinand Marcos Jr.] did not empower nor authorize anyone in the Philippine Government to enter into or commit to any agreement, understanding or arrangement—more so informal ones.

According to a column published in *Manila Times* on May 15, Francisco Tatad, a Philippine journalist and politician, cited a source saying that “it was specifically Año, who spoke to Teodoro and President Marcos Jr. about the Chinese proposal and gave Carlos the go-ahead” to talk to the Chinese side.

How did we get here?

China’s Nanhai Zhudao (South China Sea Islands) consist of Dongsha Qundao (the Dongsha Islands), Xisha Qundao (the Xisha Islands), Zhongsha Qundao (the Zhongsha Islands) and Nansha Qundao (the Nansha Islands). They include, among others, over 250 islands, reefs, shoals and cays of different numbers and sizes, constituting inseparable parts of China’s territory. Ren’ai Jiao is situated within the Nansha Islands. The activities of the Chinese people in the South China Sea date back over 2,000 years.

Under President Marcos Jr., the Philippines has taken increasingly assertive steps to claim its right in the Ren’ai Jiao, leading to several confrontations off the Nansha Islands.

On January 17, Assistant Foreign Minister Nong Rong cochaired the Eighth Meeting of the China-Philippines Bilateral Consultation Mechanism on the South China Sea (BCM) with Undersecretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines Maria Theresa P. Lazaro in Shanghai.

Both countries reaffirmed that the South China Sea dispute is not the entirety of bilateral relations and agreed to further improve the maritime communication mechanism, continue to properly manage maritime disputes and differences through friendly consultation, properly handle maritime emergencies, in particular, the situation on the ground at Ren’ai Jiao, and constantly promote practical maritime cooperation.

The subsequent “resupply missions” on March 5 and 23 have re-escalated



A China Coast Guard vessel (top) resupplies other vessels in the South China Sea on May 13

tensions and a major escalation took place on June 17.

According to the China Coast Guard (CCG) that same day, the Philippines has continued to send supply ships into waters adjacent to Ren’ai Jiao. Global business publication *Financial Times* reported that the Philippine military has in recent months been carrying out a secret mission to reinforce the dilapidated military vessel grounded at Ren’ai Jiao to extend its service life.

CCG spokesperson Gan Yu stated on that same day that the Philippines broke its promise that it only resupplies the grounded vessel at Ren’ai Jiao with supplies for living.

In late June, Philippine Foreign Minister Enrique Manalo told a Philippine senate hearing that a working group had discussed the proposals earlier this month and Manila was hoping the talks could take place in July, newspaper *South China Morning Post* (SCMP) reported.

Manalo said Manila was committed to working with Beijing on developing “confidence-building measures” following a series of clashes in recent months.

Ding Duo, an associate research fellow at China’s Hainan-based National Institute for South China Sea Studies, told SCMP that at present, it is hard to say whether significant results can be achieved. He added that both Beijing and Manila wanted to try to calm the situation, which he said was overheating.

“The Philippines does not want to go as far as a large-scale conflict with China or even war,” he said, adding that Beijing wanted to “manage differences, deescalate the situation and maintain peace and stability.”

After the interim deal between Beijing and Manila had been struck, Ding said on July 22 that the arrangement shows progress has been made by the two sides in managing frictions and avoiding a crisis at sea, which can help reduce misunderstanding and misjudgment.

The next task is to observe whether the Philippines will abide by the arrangement, or say one thing and do another, Ding concluded. **BR**

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For Peace Only

Chinese and Ukrainian foreign ministers hold talks, highlighting China's commitment to promoting peace By Ma Miaomiao

‘**O**ne issue is in the center of attention, peace in Ukraine. We will talk, we will find common ground. We should avoid rivalry of peace plans and move toward a just and sustainable peace. China could play a major role in it,” Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said in a video posted on social media platform Instagram on July 23. He made the post upon his arrival in Guangzhou in Guangdong Province, for a four-day visit to China.

It was the first of its kind by a Ukrainian official to China since the Ukraine crisis began in February 2022, also the first by a Ukrainian foreign minister to China since 2012.

During talks with Kuleba on July 24, Wang Yi, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and Chinese Foreign Minister, called for a political settlement of the Ukraine crisis and the healthy and steady development of China-Ukraine relations.

“China’s role in the Ukraine crisis has always been promoting peace talks, and the fact that Kuleba is visiting China for talks demonstrates Ukraine’s growing recognition of China’s role in fostering peace negotiations,” Zhang Hong, an associate researcher with the Institute of Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, told newspaper *Global Times*.

Political settlement

The Ukraine crisis has entered its third year and the conflict is still ongoing, with risks of escalation and spillover, Wang said. He continued that China is firmly committed to promoting a political settlement of the crisis, and the four principles laid out by President Xi Jinping form China’s fundamental approach to solving the crisis.

On April 16, while talking with visiting German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Beijing, Xi emphasized the need to prevent the Ukraine crisis

from spiraling out of control and to restore peace at an early date.

“First, we should prioritize the upholding of peace and stability and refrain from seeking selfish gains. Second, we should cool the situation down and not add fuel to the fire. Third, we need to create conditions for the restoration of peace and refrain from further exacerbating tensions. Fourth, we should reduce the negative impact on the world economy and refrain from undermining the stability of global industrial and supply chains,” Xi said.

On this basis, Wang said, China and Brazil jointly issued six common understandings for a political resolution to the crisis in May.

According to the document, China and Brazil call on all related parties to observe three principles for deescalating the situation, namely, no expansion of the battlefield, no escalation of fighting and no provocation by any party. They support the holding of an international peace conference at a proper time that is recognized by both Russia and Ukraine, with equal participation of all parties as well as fair discussion of all peace plans.

The two sides also agree that efforts are needed to increase humanitarian assistance to relevant regions and prevent a humanitarian crisis on a larger scale. Attacks on civilians or civilian facilities must be avoided, and civilians, especially women, children and prisoners of war (POWs), must be protected. They support the exchange of POWs between the parties to the conflict. China and Brazil also call for major measures to prevent nuclear risks and ensure the stability of industrial and supply chains.

The common understandings have garnered widespread support and feedback from the international community, Wang added.

China believes that all conflicts have to end at the negotiating table, and all disputes must be resolved through political means, Wang said, adding that recently both Ukraine and Russia have shown

A meeting of the UN Security Council on the Ukraine crisis is held at the UN headquarters in New York City, on February 24



willingness for negotiations.

“Although the conditions and timing are not yet ripe, we support all efforts conducive to peace and stand ready to continue to play a constructive role for a ceasefire and resumption of peace talks,” he said, adding that China is closely following the humanitarian situation in Ukraine and will continue to provide humanitarian assistance.

Kuleba said Ukraine attached importance to China’s views, and studied the six common understandings for a political resolution of the Ukraine crisis. The Ukrainian side is willing to and preparing to conduct dialogue and negotiations with Russia. Of course, negotiations should be rational and substantive, aiming to achieve a just and lasting peace, Kuleba said, according to a statement on the official website of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky recently signaled a readiness to engage in negotiations with Russia for the first time since the onset of the conflict, suggesting Moscow send a delegation to the next Summit on Peace in Ukraine, which he plans to host in November, as reported by CNN.

From a rational perspective, Ukraine’s close communication with China and seeking China’s support is a reasonable choice, Cui Heng, a researcher with School of Politics and International Relations of East China Normal University, told *Global Times*. “China has no direct interest in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and does not profit from it. Therefore, it is a trustworthy party,” he added.

As an influential major country, China can also set an example for other countries, encouraging the international community to actively participate and jointly strive to help resolve the crisis, said Jian Junbo, Deputy Director of the Center for China-Europe Relations at the Institute of International Studies of the Shanghai-based Fudan University.

Sound bilateral ties

During the meeting, Wang said China and Ukraine are friendly nations to each other, and their interactions over the years have been characterized by friendship and cooperation.

He called on the two sides to maintain communication and exchange, enhance

mutual trust, carry forward the traditional friendship, promote people-to-people relations and advance the sound and steady development of relations.

China and Ukraine are not only strategic partners but also important economic and trade partners, Kuleba said, adding Ukraine supports China’s position on the Taiwan question and will continue to adhere to the one-China policy.

Ukraine was one of the first countries to support and participate in the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative, which aims to boost connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes. China has been Ukraine’s largest trading partner and the biggest export destination for Ukrainian agricultural products in recent years, Wang said.

In the first half of this year, bilateral trade increased by 17.4 percent to about \$4.5 billion, statistics from the General Administration of Customs showed.

The two sides should leverage the role of bilateral cooperation mechanisms and strengthen practical cooperation in various fields, Wang said, adding that China will continue to expand grain imports from Ukraine and jointly maintain smooth logistics channels and international food security.

Wang thanked Ukraine for assisting with the evacuation of Chinese citizens, especially students, in the early stage of the conflict, and expressed the hope that Ukraine will continue to take effective measures to ensure the safety of Chinese personnel and institutions in the country.

Kuleba said Ukraine hopes to work with China to implement the important consensus reached between their heads of state, consolidate political mutual trust, activate cooperation across different fields including economy, trade and agriculture, and strengthen exchanges between the two countries’ sister cities.

From mediating the re-establishment of diplomatic ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran last year to the Beijing Declaration inked by 14 Palestinian factions on ending division and strengthening Palestinian unity on July 21, as well as Ukraine’s recognition of China’s efforts in promoting peace talks—it is evident that China’s inclusive and comprehensive security concepts are being accepted by an increasing number of nations, Zhang concluded. **BR**



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Path to Peace

Palestinian factions embrace reconciliation in Beijing

At China's invitation, senior representatives of 14 Palestinian factions held reconciliation talks in Beijing from July 21 to 23.

Wang Yi, a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and Minister of Foreign Affairs, on July 23 attended the closing ceremony of the reconciliation talks in Beijing, where he witnessed the signing of the Beijing Declaration on Ending Division and Strengthening Palestinian National Unity by 14 Palestinian factions.

Historical moment

In his remarks, Wang noted that since entering the new era, Chinese President Xi Jinping has put forward proposals and propositions on addressing the Palestinian question, contributing Chinese wisdom and solutions for addressing the matter.

"This is an important historical moment in the Palestinian liberation cause. China commends the reconciliation efforts made by all the factions and congratulates them on the success of the Beijing dialogue and the signing of the Beijing Declaration," Wang said.

At a daily news briefing later that same day, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said the declaration commends China's sincere effort to support the rights of the Palestinians, end division and bring about a unified position among the Palestinian factions. The declaration stresses the need to hold, under the auspices of the United Nations, an international conference with a full mandate and broad-based participation from the region and beyond.

According to the declaration, all parties involved believe that the Beijing talks demonstrated a positive and constructive spirit, and agree to realize national unity among all factions under the framework of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, Mao said.

The declaration reaffirms commitment to establishing an independent State of Palestine with

Jerusalem as the capital city, based on related UN resolutions, and ensuring the integrity of Palestinian territory including the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza. Parties are ready to, in line with the consensus of Palestinian factions and the existing basic law of Palestine, establish an interim national reconciliation government, carry out reconstruction in Gaza and prepare and hold a general election as soon as possible in accordance with the adopted election laws, according to Mao.

All parties stressed the need to take practical steps to form a new Palestinian national council in line with the adopted election laws. They unanimously agreed to activate the provisional Unified Leadership framework which will function institutionally, and jointly carry out political decision-making. All parties further agreed to set up a collective mechanism to fully implement the provisions of the declaration and create a timetable for the implementation process, Mao added.

The sole legitimate representative

Wang noted that the most important consensus reached at this dialogue is to achieve grand reconciliation and unity among the 14 factions, and the core outcome is the affirmation that the PLO is the sole legitimate representative of all the Palestinian people.

The most significant highlight is the agreement to form an interim na-



“The key to the Palestinian reconciliation process is to bolster confidence, keep to the right direction and make incremental progress.”

—Wang Yi,
China’s Minister of
Foreign Affairs

The closing ceremony of the reconciliation dialogue among Palestinian factions in Beijing on July 23



tional reconciliation government focused on the post-war governance of the Gaza Strip, and the strongest call is for the creation of a truly independent Palestinian state according to related UN resolutions, Wang said.

“The key to the Palestinian reconciliation process is to bolster confidence, keep to the right direction and make incremental progress,” Wang added.

Reconciliation is the internal affair of the Palestinian factions but cannot happen without international support. On the path toward reconciliation, China shares the same direction and destination with Arab and Islamic countries, Wang said.

Tang Zhichao, a scholar at the Institute of West-Asian and African Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said China has always tried to promote peace and stability in bilateral ties. Last year, China brokered a historic reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran. After the latest Israeli-Palestinian conflict erupted last October, China has been calling for a ceasefire, the speeding up of humanitarian aid, and a lasting, just solution to the Palestinian question.

“China’s stabilizing efforts have not only helped ease tensions within the region, but also catalyzed a wave of reconciliations among Arab states and within the broader region,” Tang added.

Zhu Weilie, a Middle East expert at Shanghai International Studies University, said this was the first time all 14 Palestinian factions had gathered in Beijing and held reconciliation talks. The signing of the Beijing Declaration is a vivid manifestation of China’s concrete actions to promote the building of a community with a shared future for humanity.

Three-step initiative

Wang said that the conflict in Gaza continues to drag on and its spillover impact is spreading. “To help get out of the current conflict and predicament, China proposes a three-step initiative.”

The first step is to promote a comprehensive, lasting and sustainable ceasefire in the Gaza Strip as soon as possible and ensure humanitarian assistance and relief access. The international community should further unite on the issue of ceasefire.

The second step is to uphold the principle of “Palestinians governing Palestine” and work

together to promote post-war governance in Gaza. Gaza is an inseparable and integral part of Palestine, and restarting post-conflict reconstruction as soon as possible is an urgent priority.

The third step is to promote Palestine to become a full member of the UN and begin to implement the two-state solution. It is important to support the convening of a broad-based, more authoritative and more effective international peace conference to work out a timetable and roadmap for the two-state solution.

Wang said ceasefire and humanitarian rescue are pressing priorities, “Palestinians governing Palestine” is the basic principle of post-conflict reconstruction in Gaza, and the two-state solution is the fundamental way out for the future. “The international community should support the parties in taking the three steps in real earnest.”

Head of the Fatah [a political and military organization of Arab Palestinians—*Ed.*] delegation Mahmoud al-Aloul and head of the Hamas [or the Islamic Resistance Movement—*Ed.*] delegation Musa Abu Marzouk delivered remarks on behalf of the Palestinian factions. They noted that China holds an important place in the heart of Palestinian people and expressed sincere appreciation for President Xi and China’s unchanging, firm support and selfless assistance to Palestine over a long period of time.

They spoke highly of China’s acting as a responsible major country and upholding justice for Palestine in international fora. They expressed deep appreciation for China’s strong support for intra-Palestinian dialogue and reconciliation. They stated their readiness to implement the consensus, strengthen unity among factions, advance the reconciliation process and work for an early solution to the question of Palestine.

Diplomatic envoys to China or their representatives from Egypt, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Russia and Türkiye, as well as representatives from the 14 Palestinian factions, attended the closing ceremony. **BR**

The article is an edited piece originally published by Xinhua News Agency
Copyedited by Elsbeth van Paridon
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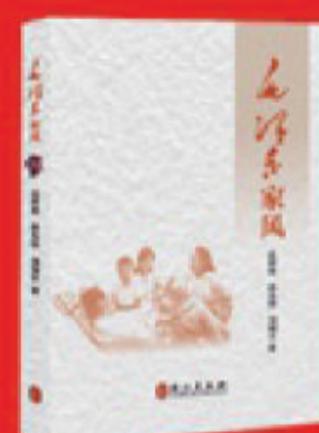
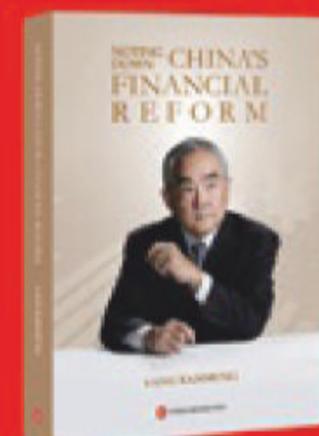
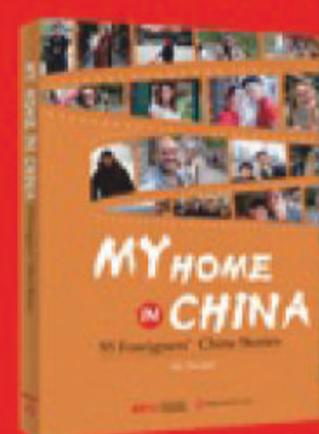
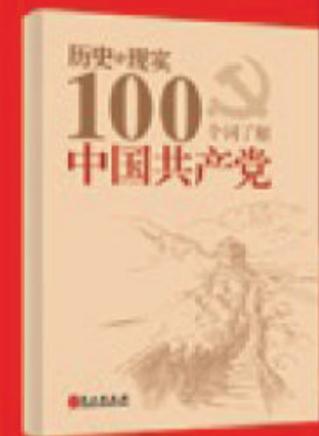
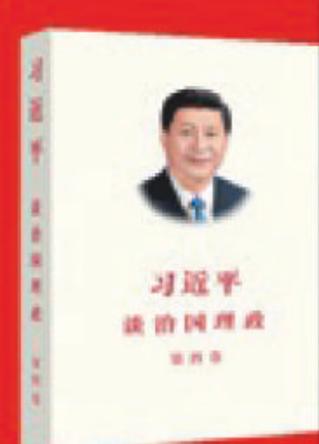
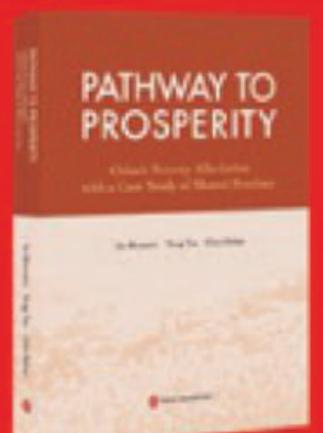
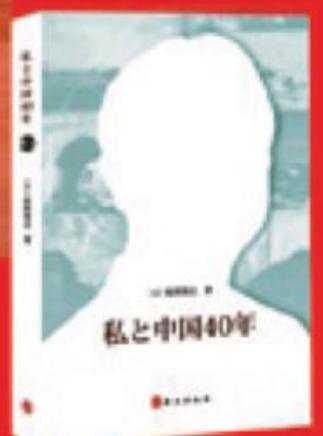
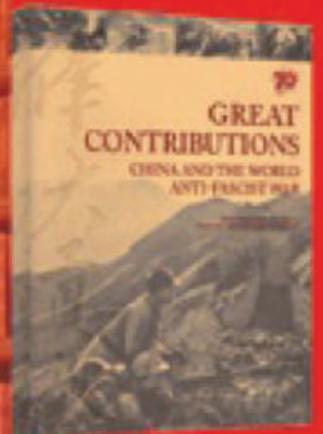
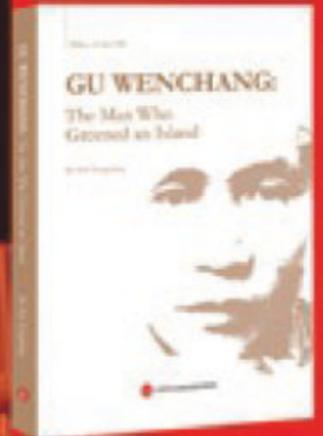
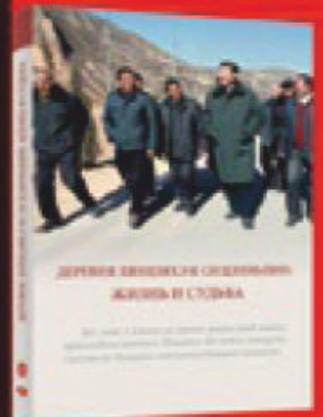
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THROUGH THEIR EYES

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Fat Profits

Inside China's largest *foie gras*-producing county By Ji Jing

Linqu County in Weifang of Shandong Province has recently risen to fame as China's largest producer of *foie gras*, the liver of specially fattened geese and ducks, which is a French delicacy. Last year, the county raised more than 5 million Landes geese, a breed developed in France specifically for their large, fatty livers; and produced more than 5,000 tons of foie gras for the domestic and international markets, accounting for more than 70 percent of domestic goose liver production.

A complete industrial chain

Linqu's path to becoming China's largest producer of foie gras began in 1988, when Shandong Zunrun Sanrougey Food Co. Ltd. imported 10,000 Landes geese from France, initiating the county's foie gras industry.

"Linqu and Landes are on the same latitude and their environmental conditions, including humidity, temperature and soil, are also similar, providing ideal conditions for raising the Landes geese." Gao Shifeng, Chairman of the company, told news portal Q11d.com.

In 1998, the company introduced a set of advanced technologies, management models, and slaughter production lines from France; and established an epidemic prevention system. It also engaged a French livestock expert to provide guidance on the production process from egg to table, including hatching, feeding and slaughtering of Landes geese, as well as liver harvesting, preservation, and transportation.

The company's foie gras is sold both within the domestic market, including to high-end hotels, and Western and Japanese restaurants in first-tier cities, and to the overseas market, including to Japan and the European Union.

Lower labor and feed costs have given the county's foie gras an edge over imported products. According to e-commerce platform Taobao, imported goose liver sells for an average of 0.87 yuan (\$0.12) per gram, while

domestic goose liver is priced at an average of 0.52 yuan (\$0.07) per gram.

Landes geese lay eggs only twice a year, and market demand for Linqu's foie gras quickly began to outpace supply. In 2014, Gao Yuanliang, General Manager of the above-mentioned goose liver company, began to think about how to increase production capacity.

"The quantity of foie gras a goose can produce is fixed, and if you want to increase foie gras production, you need to increase the number of geese," he told Q11d.com. In 2015, the company built an egg base with the help of Shandong Agricultural University, increasing egg production from two seasons to four seasons a year. At present, the base has 30,000 geese, producing 900,000 eggs a year. Goslings from the base are supplied to local farmers in Linqu.

Gao Shangkun, a 68-year-old local farmer, has over 40 years of experience in the geese business. He raises 10,000 Landes geese annually, which brings him an income of over 300,000 yuan (\$41,247) a year. He selects Landes goslings from local goose factories and raises them for around 80 days. Foie gras producers will then purchase the geese from farmers to fatten for an additional 25-30 days.

Currently, Linqu has over 100 goose liver producers and over 6,000 practitioners in the goose liver industry.

Industrial upgrading

In 2018, the foie gras market was approaching saturation, with prices and profit margins decreasing. Goose liver enterprises in Linqu sought to upgrade their products to increase profits. During this time, Shandong Chunguan Food Co. Ltd. developed a packaged, pre-cooked foie gras with red wine and blueberry product.

"In Western restaurants, foie gras is often cooked with red wine. We can make such a dish in our workshop," Ma Lijun, General



“If we can succeed in developing a new breed, we will be self-sufficient in the entire foie gras industrial chain.”

—Ma Lijun, General Manager of Shandong Chunguan Food Co. Ltd.

Manager of the company, told Q11d.com. “Whether to cook liver first or marinate it first, how to remove the gamey smell, how to enrich the taste, and how to achieve mass production were the questions that we had to solve,” Ma said.

After the product came out, the company partnered with Western restaurants to invite diners to taste their product for free and made multiple rounds of adjustments based on their feedback.

The final product was launched in the latter half of 2018. “At that time, the best raw foie gras sold for only 160 yuan (\$22) per kg but our

foie gras with red wine and blueberry could sell for as much as 480 yuan (\$66) per kg,” Ma said.

Thanks to this product, the company’s revenue reached 80 million yuan (\$11 million) in 2019, doubling that of the previous year.

Starting from this popular product, foie gras enterprises in Linqu have developed other pre-made foie gras dishes including foie gras ice cream and foie gras dumplings. Sales channels of foie gras products have also expanded from high-end restaurants to supermarkets and on-line stores.

Gao Yuanliang’s company has collaborated with Jiangnan University in Wuxi of Jiangsu Province to develop products such as goose liver paste. At present, his company has developed three types of this paste: One is used as an ingredient for hotpot restaurants, one is pan fried at Western restaurants and the third one is used for making sushi at Japanese restaurants.

At present, the geese that supply the eggs for Linqu’s foie gras production are all imported from France and need to be replaced regularly to prevent disease. The foie gras enterprises in the county are now working to develop their own breeds of egg-supplying geese in collaboration with research institutes and universities.

Ma’s company has partnered with the Poultry Institute of the Shandong Academy of Agricultural Sciences to develop a new breed. “If we can succeed in developing a new breed, we will be self-sufficient in the entire foie gras industrial chain,” Ma said. **BR**



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Friendship on Horseback

China's national minority games build cultural exchange and friendship between ethnic groups By Li Qing

On July 4, 15 equestrian athletes from Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai Province traveled to neighboring Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region for the equestrian events of the 12th National Traditional Games of Ethnic Minorities.

Their destination was the grasslands of the Tianshan Mountains in Zhaosu County of Ili Kazak Autonomous Prefecture, where they were reunited with their horses, which had traveled there for eight days by road.

From July 8 to 13, they participated in friendly competition with other top athletes in events such as horse racing and horseback archery. Exhibition categories at the event allowed participants to showcase non-competitive equestrian elements derived from their cultures and lifestyles.

Held in mid-summer, the equestrian events took place ahead of more than 160 other traditional ethnic minority competitions and exhibitions, which will all kick off in Sanya, Hainan Province, in November.

“All athletes from the Qinghai delegation are ordinary Tibetan farmers and herders. Equestrian culture is flourishing in Yushu region, with horses being cherished as part of the family,” Wang, head of Yushu Equestrian Association, told *Beijing Review*. In addition to participating in the competitions, they also presented their traditional folk horse performance, Kangba Rongjiu, to spectators.

Kangba Rongjiu involves riders hooking their toes into the stirrups, leaning back to grab their horse's tail and hanging from its sides—their heads almost touching the ground. As the horse gallops, riders rise to stand on its back, extending their arms and long sleeves while swaying gracefully from left to right in an arc. The entire spectacle resembles an eagle soaring through the wind.

“The performance showcases the rich cultural heritage of Qinghai and remarkable skills of our herders,” Wang said, emphasizing that the multi-day event provides a valuable platform not only for demonstrating equestrian skills but also for fostering friendship between ethnic groups.

Although it was his second time participating in the games, Wang said he felt excited as he entered the arena with his team members. “I am proud that Yushu Equestrian Association can represent Qinghai in competition with other delegations. It's a wonderful opportunity to feel that all ethnic groups are part of one big family,” he said.

Friends

The Qinghai athletes began training for the event in March this year. “Because of our herding responsibilities, we were only able to practice for 10 to 15 days each month. However, everyone has shown great enthusiasm,” Wang said.

They also felt great pressure as athletes from Xizang and Inner Mongolia autonomous regions are very competitive, he continued. “We have made many new friends with whom we can discuss and exchange horse-riding skills.”

“Mutual learning and exchange are the goals of the games as the performance of each team showcases the unique culture of their ethnic group,” Liu Hongqin, a coach from the Inner Mongolian delegation told Xinhua News Agency.

Bekjan Bekturson, an athlete from the Xinjiang delegation, was delighted to welcome the Inner Mongolian delegation. As he had previously worked at an equestrian club in Hohhot, the capital of Inner Mongolia, three members of the Inner Mongolian delegation were his former colleagues.

The 2,000-meter horse race kicks off in Zhaosu County on July 8





Delegates participating in the equestrian events of the 12th National Traditional Games of Ethnic Minorities of China at the opening ceremony on July 8 in Zhaosu County, Ili Kazak Autonomous Prefecture of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region

Having grown up in Zhaosu, Bekjan has a deep understanding of the county's climate and conditions for competition. Prior to the games, he exchanged information with his friends about the infrastructure, facilities and equipment inside the arena, as well as essential items they should bring.



Bekjan operates a stable with 10 horses in his hometown, and is transitioning from being a rider to a stable manager. "Many people have purchased horses in Zhaosu but are unable to always be present for their care and training. Two of my friends and I assist with these responsibilities while earning money and spending time with our beloved horses," he told *Xinjiang Daily* newspaper.

A national celebration

Zhaosu, situated in a high-altitude inter-montane basin, is the only county in Xinjiang that does not have deserts. The region has abundant water and lush pastures and has been renowned since ancient times as a key production hub for the Ili horse, known as *Tianma* ("heavenly horse").

In recent years, the county has placed great emphasis on upgrading its horse industry through substantial investments in breed improvement, infrastructure development, and organizing equestrian events. This has made it an ideal location for national equestrian events such as those of the 12th National Traditional Games of Ethnic Minorities.

The equestrian competition included contest and exhibition categories and featured the largest number of participating teams ever, with 229 athletes from 12 delegations.

The national minority games have been held every four years since the second edition in 1982. This event is jointly sponsored by the National Ethnic Affairs Commission and General Administration of Sport of China, and hosted by local governments.

Since the first edition in 1953, the number of participants has increased from some 400, representing 13 ethnic groups including Han, Mongolian and Hui, to nearly 10,000 encompassing all of China's 56 ethnic groups. The numbers of competition events and exhibition events have risen from five and three to 18 and over 160, respectively. These events stem from the daily life, culture and festive traditions of China's ethnic groups. **BR**

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Toasty Tales

Turpan, where scorching desert heat meets the thirsty urban beat

By Elsbeth van Paridon

As the mercury rises in Turpan City, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in northwest China, social media posts paint a picture of a city simmering under the unyielding gaze of the sun.

Of the 140,000 posts with the hashtag “Turpan” on Xiaohongshu, a lifestyle and e-commerce platform wildly popular among China’s younger generations, many scream and echo “It’s so hot out here, I can’t take it anymore!” Quick disclaimer: Many of these snippets are related to sand therapy at the city’s Flaming Mountain, a 500-meter-tall red sandstone ridge. We’ll get back to that.

Turpan—or as the locals call it, “Fire City,” is the hottest spot in all of the Middle Kingdom and stands as a scorching testament to human resilience.

This place thrives on extremes. During the day, the sun is merciless, blasting the earth; yet nightfall brings some cool relief to the desert. In this stark realm of heat, lush vineyards sprawl defiantly at the feet of barren peaks, crafting a social media-worthy contrast. Life here ticks to the rhythm of grapes slowly morphing into raisins—a process measured, methodical and richly rewarding in its own sun-drenched way.

While these descriptions might conjure up images of a remote and rustic outpost, Turpan also pulses with trends that are both blisteringly hot and incredibly hip among Chinese urban youth.

Nighttime whispers

It’s early July, and this author begins her Turpan diary under the serene and cool(er) cloak of night, with a tale woven from the Jiaohe Ruins, an ancient city dug out from the yellow desert silt located some 10 km from the city.

Built around the second century B.C., Jiaohe, strategically positioned between two rivers, was a brilliant feat of ancient military architecture, safeguarding its inhabitants through dusty millennia.

Meandering through the remnants, travelers will be transported to an era when the city thrummed as a vital heart along the ancient Silk Road—alive with the babble of foreign tongues and the heady aromas of spices from distant lands.

According to local legends, the murmuring of Jiaohe’s ancient residents can still be heard in the wind late at night, infusing the UNESCO site with a mystical aura that sends shivers down the spine of the modern visitor.

The sight of the ancient Jiaohe Ruins juxtaposed against the distant lights of urban Turpan makes for the picture-perfect *daka* spot—and your tour guide will not fail to mention this.

Many travel destinations, the Jiaohe Ruins included, have created



Captured on July 1, this artsy glimpse into the depths of Turpan reveals the ancient Karez water system, an engineering marvel hiding deep beneath Earth’s surface. This architectural wonder not only once quenched the thirst of Xinjiang’s desert towns, but today, bathed in a neon blue glimmer, quenches the quest for that picture-perfect social media moment



Taking a Buddhist beat at the Bezeklik Thousand Buddha Caves tucked away behind Turpan's red-hot Flaming Mountain. Gazing out over the magnificent landscape, this is the quintessential slow travel destination, inviting visitors to pause and reflect

full-fledged *daka* platforms offering the best angles to get travel photos. *Daka* (literally “punching a card”) means taking one’s photo at a hot destination and then show it off on social media. *Daka* tourism has become a hardcore industry over the past two to three years.

Nighttime flashes aside, it’s during the daytime that Turpan really turns up the trending heat...

The sands of time

Younger generations are increasingly infusing their beauty and wellness routines with elements and practices that date back to the imperial days (before 1912), and that includes a zest of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM).

This trend reflects a growing interest in holistic and natural health practices, which are seen as complementary to modern medicine and beauty treatments, according to a report on what’s driving wellness in China, released by Jing Daily, your go-to online portal for anything and everything regarding the business of luxury in China, in July.

TCM offers a range of practices from herbal treatments to acupuncture, which are being applied to modern lifestyles. For example, herbs and natural ingredients used in TCM are increasingly found in skincare products targeting everything from acne to signs of aging.

In what can be called a cultural reawakening, urban youth are also bringing back techniques such as sunbathing the back and *guasha*, scraping the skin

with jade or plastic tools to improve blood flow, as part of modern wellness.

Chinese social media this summer is also ablaze with posts of users getting baked by the sun and soothed by the sand—in Turpan. We’re talking “sand therapy” (*shaliao* in Chinese).

Hashtag “sand therapy” had raked in 440 million posts on Douyin and “Turpan sand therapy” had garnered 8.8 million snippets as of July 24.

This age-old remedy is far more than simple sunbathing; it’s a dance of elements where heat meets health in the most dramatic of settings.

Imagine this: bodies half-buried in scorching sands, the air quivering above at over 40 degrees Celsius. Onlookers might puzzle over the sight, questioning the wisdom of baking in such extreme heat. Yet, what unfolds in these grains is a sophisticated symphony of natural therapy. The sand, supercharged by the fierce sun, acts like an open-air sauna, its intense heat believed to chase away the dampness that TCM links to ailments like rheumatoid arthritis and cervical spondylosis, according to a related article on ChinaSkinny, a website covering views, news and trends from China.

And the sands of Turpan, declared an “open-air sauna,” are not just hot; they’re healing. Rich in trace elements and basked in potent infrared radiation, these sands are said to boost cellular energy absorption and kick-start metabolism, while their relatively mild ultraviolet rays keep sunburn at bay.

This unique method, perfected by the people from the local Uygur ethnic group, has captured the fascination of Chinese health enthusiasts. As a cornerstone of cultural tourism in Turpan, sand therapy annually attracts over 300,000 visitors, each drawn to the promise of ancient wisdom cradled in the warm sands of time, the article on ChinaSkinny continued.

Thirsty yet?

Quenching the thirst

This author opted not to be half-buried in the searing sand. She instead moved on to her next stop to see where else young tourists to the area are quenching their social media and travel thirst. The answer turned out to be a photogenic gem that proved the perfect contrast to the earlier flaming fad: the ancient Karez water system.

An engineering marvel less celebrated but as ►►

vital as the veins in a body, the system is a network of underground channels, bringing glacier meltwater from the mountains to the once thirsty mouths of Xinjiang's desert towns. This form of complex artery system, invisible beneath Earth's surface, stretches over thousands of km. Crafted ingeniously some 2,000 years ago to avoid the brutal evaporation of the desert sun, like Turpan itself, these tunnels are a testament to human ingenuity and resilience.

The technology was possibly brought to Xinjiang from the Persian Empire by travelers on the Silk Road and then adapted to local conditions.

Today, you can “dive” into the ancient tunnel network in Turpan, going deep underground to observe the life-giving essence—that is water still calmly running through the longstanding tunnels. You will see many an explorer striking a pose in the tunnels now illuminated by neon blue lighting. Click, click, click, flash, flash, flash—all around.

Nevertheless, this stop oozed a sense of calm and quiet... Another thirst many Chinese urban youth have been seeking to quench in recent years.

The Buddhist beat

No pictures allowed at our final destination! Or, at least, not inside.

Tucked away behind the Flaming Mountain, the Bezeklik Thousand Buddha Caves, dating from the fifth to the 14th centuries, stand as a monument to a time when spirituality and artistry flourished under the watchful eyes of different civilizations.

As you approach these sacred hollows, the walls come alive with the tales of 1,000 Buddhas, each mural whispering secrets of ancient rituals and the everyday hustle of Silk Road sojourners. The colors, though dulled by the sands of time, still sing in hues of ochre and lapis, each stroke a testament to a mingled palette of Indian, Chinese, Persian, and Central Asian influences.

Now, speaking about Buddhism... Buddhist tourism was one of last year's hottest must-dos among China's Gen Z urbanites.

The trend encouraged, and encourages, a different kind of Chinese traveler—more observant and reserved, yet eager to explore their cultural



COLLAGE OF DOUYIN POSTS



Sand therapy is hot right now—and especially in Turpan. Urban adventurers are diving into wellness with a twist of traditional Chinese medicine. These “sandy parties” are the latest craze lighting up China's social media, as seen here on Douyin, aka TikTok's Chinese sister app, and fetching likes by the thousands (the “w” stands for *wan*, meaning “10k”)

roots. It's all about slow travel and not darting from one *daka* spot to the next.

The main reason behind this phenomenon is that many young urbanites want an escape from the non-stop torrents of daily life that can suck people in and not let them come up for air. The current flow and speed of China's social environment have placed huge pressures on young shoulders, from professional to financial ones.

Xiaohongshu in June even launched its first “Slow People Festival” in Dali, southwest China's Yunnan Province, including a series of activities such as musical performances and spiritual workshops, according to Dao Insights, a website publishing exclusive articles on and high-value case studies from the Middle Kingdom. Xiaohongshu, in doing so, aims to “help people rediscover the essence of life.”

And gazing upon the stunning natural vista, you will find that is exactly what the Bezeklik Thousand Buddha Caves are all about: taking a Buddhist beat as people pause to embrace the depth of ancient traditions.

This author's tour of a toasty Turpan revealed tales where bustling modernity meets tranquil wisdom of the past, allowing visitors to take a breath of fresh air. **BR**

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Feeling the Heat

The Northern Hemisphere's summer vacation is one of Beijing's busiest seasons for tourism each year, and daily average passenger throughput at Beijing Capital International Airport is currently at around 190,000. Tourists from China and abroad, especially students, are visiting major scenic spots as well as the city's iconic *hutong* alleyways.

Beijing has adopted an array of measures to make visiting the city easier for tourists during the current peak, such as canceling the closure of parks on Mondays and removing the requirement to make advance reservations for most museums and scenic areas introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic. **BR**

(Text and photos by Wei Yao)

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1. A group of college students from France poses for a photo on Tiananmen Square in Beijing on June 29

2. Children search for aquatic life among the rocks on a river on the outskirts of Beijing on July 21

3. Children observe small fish they've caught in a pond in Beijing's Olympic Forest Park on July 22

4. Students view a model of central Beijing, including the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square, while visiting the Capital Museum as part of holiday educational activities, on July 23

Summertime Splurge: Education or Excess?



More and more parents in China are sharing posts on social media about the money they spend on their children during summer vacations. While academic tutoring for first to ninth graders is restricted under the country's related policy to lessen the burden on young students, other educational programs are widely available. These include summer camps, educational tours at home and abroad, and art, music and sports courses. But many parents are now complaining about the rising costs of the summer vacation.

While the school year is primarily dedicated to group learning, summer vacations offer children the opportunity to tap into their own specialties. Ideally, children should be able to choose programs that align with their personal goals and talents. But parents must be cautious not to overload their children with too many classes, as this could lead children to rebel.

Moreover, families need to select summer programs they can financially sustain. Competing with others over the quantity or type of extracurricular activities can exacerbate parental anxiety, in turn potentially affecting their children.

Zhang Chenghao (Rednet.cn): During the sweltering summer months,

few students feel like attending classes. As for parents, high tuition fees constitute a big portion of their daily expenses. If these classes help their children excel, parents will feel justified in their investment. If not, they may regret the expenditure and even experience anxiety. Tutoring institutions and travel companies seem to be the only consistent winners here.

Summer vacations are meant to allow children to relax, immerse themselves in nature, mingle with friends and whatnot. Meanwhile, they can spend more time with their family. Those born in the 1970s and 1980s fondly recall summers free from structured learning, filled instead with catching cicadas in the woods, playing with peers in alleys, fishing in creeks, etc.

But today, when some parents see other children enrolled in summer courses, they worry that their own children will fall behind if they don't follow suit, spurring them to enroll their (usually resistant) offspring in summer classes.

While excelling at school is important, children's mental health and happiness are equally important. Instead of pressuring them into participating in educational programs over the summer

break, parents should try to spend more quality time with their children over the summer holiday, nurturing the parent-child relationship.

Liang Yong (Hengyang Daily): Summer vacations are supposed to be relaxing and enjoyable, but more and

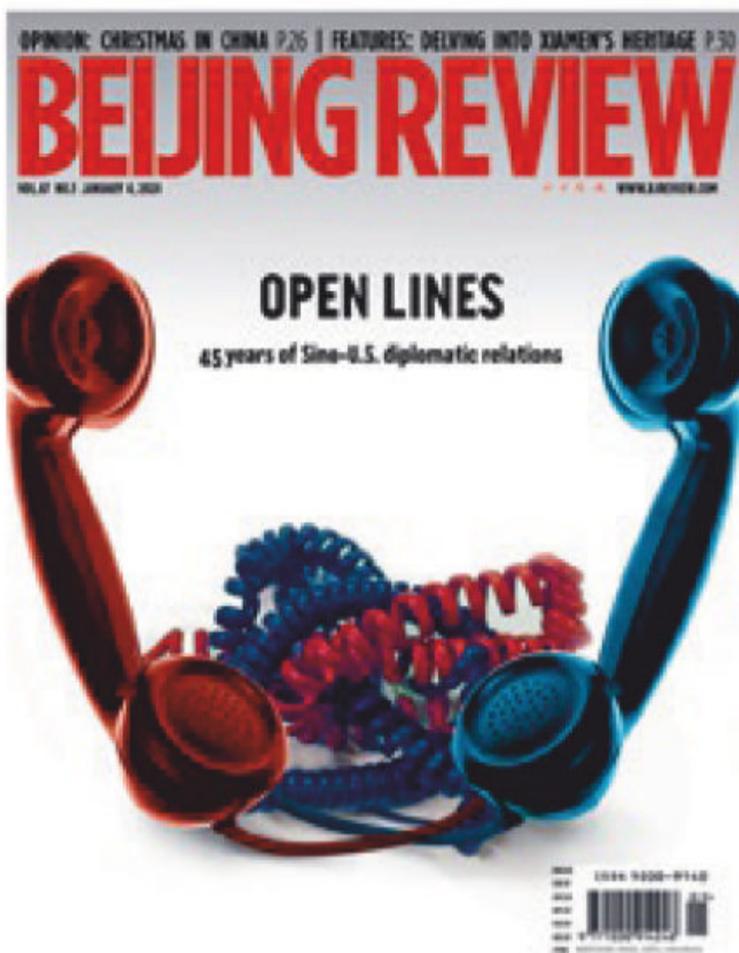
more parents are turning them into a "third semester," filling them with numerous cash-burning activities that place academic and psychological pressure on children.

While extracurricular activities and developing personal interests are beneficial for children's growth, parents must

select projects that are financially feasible and genuinely interest their children. Such engagement can unlock their hidden potential and serve as a confidence booster. But forcing children to take classes or tours without considering individual differences and needs can be detrimental, leading to fatigue and even anxiety in children.

Cramming a child's summer with educational activities not only increases financial strains and academic burdens, but also disregards their interests and limits. The question remains: How should summer vacations be spent? Should they be packed with endless activities arranged by parents, or should they provide a chance for children to explore, discover and create?

It's time for parents to rethink their educational philosophies, paying more attention to their children's mental wellbeing and respecting their real interests and choices. Plus, offering more free or low-cost summer programs and resources could enrich children's holiday experiences while alleviating financial pressures on families. **BR**



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