

## Cultural bonds

Exhibits seen as proof of interaction between civilizations LIFE, PAGE 10

Philippines urged to rethink its ties with US WORLD, PAGE 5

## Break time

Short-distance tours favored during Mid-Autumn Festival CHINA, PAGE 2



WEEKEND EDITION

# CHINADAILY

中國日報

chinadaily.com.cn RMB ¥2

September 14 - 15, 2024

## Forum expected to pool wisdom for lasting peace

Nations called on to enhance security through sharing responsibilities

By JIANG CHENGLONG  
jiangchenglong@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping stressed on Friday that China makes relentless efforts to build a world of lasting peace and universal security as it practices the Global Security Initiative, in a congratulatory letter to the 11th Beijing Xiangshan Forum.

In the letter, Xi emphasized that faced with global changes of a magnitude not seen in a century and the expectations of people worldwide for security and stability, China continues to consolidate consensus among all parties, works to eliminate the root causes of international conflicts and improves global security governance.

He expressed hope that the forum will continue to uphold the spirit of equality, openness, inclusiveness and mutual learning, while fostering consensus and deepening mutual trust, and further contributing to addressing global security challenges and advancing the building of a human community with a shared future.

This year's forum, themed "Promoting Peace for a Shared Future", has attracted more than 1,800 participants, including official representatives from over 100 countries and international organizations, as well as experts, scholars and observers from various nations.

In a speech at the forum's opening ceremony on Friday, Defense Minister Dong Jun called for all countries to unite and support each other in exploring a new path to security based on the "greatest common denominator" among all parties rather than the interests of small groups.

He emphasized that in an indivisible security community, nations should enhance security through sharing responsibilities and promoting common development.

Dong pointed out that in the face of changes on a scale unseen in a century, all countries should respect each other, treat each other with sincerity, seek common ground while reserving differences, and embrace openness and inclusiveness.

He called for win-win cooperation and mutual success, and for jointly seeking a path of harmonious coexistence.

Dong stressed that major countries should set an example by taking the responsibility of safeguarding the security of all humanity, abandoning zero-sum games and avoiding bullying the weak.

## Decision to progressively raise retirement age unveiled

By CHENG SI  
chengsi@chinadaily.com.cn

China will progressively raise the statutory retirement age in next 15 years starting from 2025, after conducting thorough research of the nation's current population structure and people's health condition, with the move aiming to facilitate more reasonable and better use of human resources.

The 11th session of the Standing Committee of the 14th National People's Congress, which concluded on Friday, approved a decision to raise the retirement age of male workers to 63, and females to 55 or 58, depending on their jobs or occupations.

The current retirement age for men in urban areas is 60, and women

In addressing regional issues, countries in the region should unite and strengthen themselves to maintain regional peace and security, ensuring that the leadership of regional security remains firmly in their own hands, Dong said, adding that other parties constructively involved in regional affairs should work in tandem with regional countries, upholding fairness and justice.

He noted that when facing turmoil and conflicts, all parties should maintain confidence in political solutions, uphold an objective and fair stance, and adopt a comprehensive approach to address both symptoms and root causes, jointly advocating a multipolar world that is equal and orderly.

### Equality advocated

Dong said that in today's world, regardless of whether a country is developed or developing, or large or small, all should participate equally in international affairs, express their concerns equally and protect their legitimate rights equally.

Amid intense international competition and a complex global landscape, every country increasingly recognizes that maintaining independence and not targeting, depending on, or being controlled by others is essential for making the best choices in their fundamental interests, he said.

The Chinese military is committed to implementing the Global Security Initiative, and it is willing to work with the militaries of other countries to build new types of security partnerships, advance practical and open military cooperation, enhance security governance in emerging fields, and jointly provide guarantees for high-quality development, further contributing to building a community with a shared future for mankind and maintaining world peace and security, he added.

Addressing the forum's first plenary session, Vietnamese Defense Minister Phan Van Giang called for enhanced security cooperation among countries, especially in nontraditional security areas such as terrorism, transnational crime and cybersecurity.

"These are significant challenges for all countries, regions and the world, requiring good-faith cooperation to address them together," he said.

He cited a Chinese proverb, "A single thread cannot make a cord, and a single tree does not make a forest", to underscore the importance of unity and cooperation.

50 or 55 — depending on their jobs — which is among the world's lowest for major economies. It's the nation's first adjustment of retirement ages since the current system was launched in the 1950s.

The changes will take effect from Jan 1, 2025, and are based on a proposed policy by the State Council, China's Cabinet. The new policy also stresses "being voluntary and flexible", giving people greater latitude to plan or choose their own retirement.

Under the new policy, for male employees who originally retired at the age of 60 and females who left the workforce at 55, the retirement age will be adjusted accordingly to facilitate compliance with the new system.

See **Policy**, page 2



President Xi Jinping, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, greets local residents during his inspection of a section of the Yellow River near Zhongshan Bridge in Lanzhou, Gansu province, on Wednesday. WANG YE / XINHUA

## Xi calls for promoting reform, innovation in Gansu

By CAO DESHENG  
caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping has urged Gansu province in Northwest China to further promote reform and innovation on the path toward modernization, with an emphasis on areas including ecological conservation, green development, rural vitalization and ethnic unity.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks during an inspection tour of Gansu province from Tuesday to Friday.

He urged Gansu to fully implement the decision and deployment of the CPC Central Committee on the national strategies of developing China's western region as well as promoting ecological conservation and high-quality development in the Yellow River basin, and carry out solid work to improve the people's well-being and the region's prosperity.

During the inspection tour, which took him to the cities of Tianshui and Lanzhou, Xi visited two cultural heritage sites, a local community, an apple orchard and a section of the Yellow River, and heard a work report by provincial officials.

He highlighted the importance of protecting cultural heritage, calling for efforts to carry forward, promote and enhance the influence of traditional Chinese culture.

Xi paid great attention to rural vitalization, calling for invigorating the development of agriculture with distinctive advantages to increase farmers' incomes.

While visiting a residential community, he emphasized the need to strengthen governance at the grassroots level, focusing on people's actual needs to improve community services.

After hearing the work report by provincial officials on Friday in Lanzhou, the provincial capital, the president urged Gansu to

develop new quality productive forces tailored to local conditions.

Active efforts should be made to promote new industrialization, accelerate the transformation and upgrading of traditional industries, strengthen and optimize industries with distinctive advantages, and actively develop strategic emerging industries, he said.

Xi called for cultivating a number of competitive agricultural brands in Gansu, and strengthening environmental protection to build a solid ecological barrier for the nation's western region.

He emphasized the need to deepen reform and expand opening-up with greater courage and determination. Gansu should actively integrate itself into the country's efforts to build a unified national market, he added.

While emphasizing the need to deepen the reform of State-owned assets and enterprises, Xi said that concrete measures should be taken to encourage and support the development of the nonpublic sector of the economy.

It is important to implement a people-centered strategy in promoting the new type of urbanization, strengthen the county-level economy, and promote the integrated development of urban and rural areas, he said.

Xi also urged Gansu to actively serve and align with the strategies of regional coordinated development, expand inter-regional cooperation, and deeply integrate into the high-quality construction of the Belt and Road and the development of the New Western Land-Sea Corridor, a trade and logistics passage jointly built by provincial-level regions in western China and members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

On Thursday, Xi met with representatives of military officers stationed in Lanzhou.

On the way to Gansu on Tuesday, he visited the Baoji Bronze Ware Museum and an ecological park along the Weihe River in Baoji, Shaanxi province.

## US, China urged to find right path in ties

By ZHAO HUANXIN in New York  
huanxinzhao@chinadailyusa.com

Finding the right way for China and the United States to get along with each other is what both nations and the international community need the most, a top Chinese envoy said on Thursday.

Chinese Ambassador to the US Xie Feng, speaking at the Vision China event at the Asia Society in New York, said that for the past 50 years, the reopening and development of China-US relations was the most important event in international relations and the biggest contributor to global peace and prosperity.

"History provides us inspirations to look ahead to the future," Xie said in a keynote speech.

He said that in the next 50 years, charting that proper course will be critical to international relations.

Jointly hosted by China Daily and Bank of China, the event brought together more than 200 people to discuss "inspiration from the past" and "vision for the future."

Also speaking at the event, Qu Yingpu, publisher and editor-in-chief of China Daily, said the coun-



Qu Yingpu (right), publisher and editor-in-chief of China Daily, Hu Wei (left), president and CEO of Bank of China USA, and guest speakers holding their souvenir portraits pose for a photo at the Vision China event in New York on Thursday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

**Inside**  
See more, pages 6-7

try's only national English-language newspaper has chronicled the development of Sino-US relations and "faithfully recorded the bonds forged between the two peoples."

"China-US relations are the most important bilateral relations in the world, and they must be managed well, despite the risks and challenges," Qu said.

Qu said the newspaper "has never been absent" when important moments unfolded in and between the two countries.

See **Ties**, page 3

75 years on

INSIDE

President signs order to award national medals, honorary titles to 15 individuals on occasion of 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China

Top News, p3

国内统一连续出版物号: CN 11-0091  
国际标准连续出版物号: ISSN 0253-9543  
代号: 1-3

© 2024 China Daily  
All Rights Reserved  
Vol. 44 - No. 13833

ANN  
ASIA NEWS NETWORK  
A member of  
the Asia News  
Network



## CHINA

# PwC unit fined in Evergrande accounting fraud

Auditing arm faces \$62.1m penalty; biz operations to be suspended for 6 months

By ZHOU LANXU  
zhoulanxu@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese authorities have slapped 441 million yuan (\$62.1 million) in penalties and imposed a six-month business suspension on PwC's auditing unit in the country, after the entity was found to have "covered up and even condoned" fraud at Evergrande Real Estate Group.

The China Securities Regulatory Commission said on Friday that PwC Zhong Tian LLP had failed to exercise due diligence in its audit of Evergrande Real Estate Group, the flagship subsidiary of Evergrande Group.

In May, the CSRC had fined the troubled real estate developer some 4.18 billion yuan for fraudulent bond issuances and false statements.

Based on China's Securities Law, the commission confiscated the auditing unit's revenue involved in the Evergrande case of 27.74 million yuan and fined it 297 million yuan — totaling about 325 million yuan, which, according to the commission, was a "record-breaking" punishment against auditing firms.

The Ministry of Finance also said on Friday that, in accordance with the law of certified accountants, it had decided to impose a six-month business suspension on PwC Zhong Tian and fined it 116 million yuan, while closing down its Guangzhou office.

CSRC and the Finance Ministry have examined PwC's role in the Evergrande fraud, in which the developer was found to have engaged in five fraudulent bond issuances based on false statements in the annual reports of 2019 and 2020.

CSRC said PwC Zhong Tian had

violated multiple audit standards with inaccurate working papers and ineffective on-site inspections, failed to detect Evergrande's fraud and issued unqualified audit reports.

"PwC's actions were not merely simple audit negligence or failure. To some extent, it covered up and even condoned Evergrande Real Estate's financial fraud and fraudulent bond issuances.

"The actions severely eroded the foundation of law and integrity, significantly harmed the legitimate rights and interests of investors, seriously undermined market confidence and should be severely punished according to the law," said CSRC.

Citing the case, the Finance Ministry said it will continue to enhance supervision and inspection.

"For any discovered cases of accounting and auditing fraud, we will investigate and punish them severely to ensure that regulation has 'teeth and thorns'."

PwC issued a statement on its global website to say that PwC Zhong Tian's work in Evergrande's case fell unacceptably below expected standards. It said it respects the regulators' decisions and that it would fully comply with the administrative penalties.

Dai Guanchun, a senior capital markets lawyer, said the punishments indicate that Chinese regulators are intensifying their crackdown on violations by capital market intermediary institutions according to law.

The case could help deter other institutions from misbehavior as it would result in not only financial losses but reputational damage to PwC's China business, Dai added.

## Mid-Autumn Festival enhances cross-Strait ties

By HU MEIDONG in Fuzhou and ZHANG YI in Beijing

Ahead of the Mid-Autumn Festival, a traditional Chinese holiday that symbolizes family reunions and falls on Tuesday this year, more than 200 people from both sides of the Taiwan Strait gathered in Fuzhou, capital of East China's Fujian province, to call for peaceful development.

Song Tao, head of both the Taiwan Work Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, stressed upholding the one-China principle and the 1992 Consensus as well as resolutely opposing "Taiwan independence" while meeting with Taiwan guests attending the event on Thursday.

"It is a tradition for Chinese people to reunite with the whole family and celebrate the festival," Song said, adding that the Chinese mainland will actively boost the cross-Strait flow of personnel as well as exchanges and cooperation in various areas, and continue deepening integrated development across the Strait.

Hsia Li-yan, vice-chairman of the Chinese Kuomintang, said, "People from both the mainland and Taiwan are all Chinese and close as family."

The activity featured snacks, cultural performances and exhibitions

by Taiwan firms. Guests from both sides, as well as children dressed in hanfu attire, joined hands to light lanterns, hoping together for a better future across the Strait.

The event was co-hosted by Fuzhou and Matsu — an island off the coast of Fujian and administered by Taiwan, which has become a frontier for interactions between Taiwan and the mainland. In April, the mainland announced the resumption of permitting Fujian residents to travel to Matsu, after suspension for several years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Weng Ying-min, executive vice-chairman of the Fuzhou Taiwan-funded Enterprises Association, said, "Local residents have a deep longing for mainland residents to visit Matsu and Kinmen for tourism, which would greatly benefit the local economies."

Chen Yi-ting, a member of the All-China Federation of Taiwan Compatriots, said: "It was particularly meaningful because compatriots from both sides gathered to celebrate the festival of reunion. Such moments are especially precious. In Taiwan, we also like to find a place to enjoy the fun of barbecuing together."

Wang Chenye and Wen Linxiang contributed to this story.  
Contact the writers at zhangyi@chinadaily.com.cn

## A wholesome spread!



Giant pandas feast on delicious items including bamboo shoots, cakes, and ice treats prepared by staff members of the China Conservation and Research Center for Giant Panda in Ya'an, Sichuan province, on Friday. The celebratory meal for the adorable animals was held amid the breeding season for giant pandas, which runs from July to September each year. HE HAIYANG / CHINA DAILY

## China to expand trade in services within APAC, boost openness

By ZHONG NAN  
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

Fueled by a galloping services sector, digital technologies and industrial chain advantages, China's trade in services is set to become a key driver in supporting economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region and attracting foreign investment, said economists and business leaders on Friday.

In contrast to goods trade, trade in services refers to the sale and delivery of intangible services like transportation, tourism, telecommunications, advertising, education, computing and accounting.

China will increasingly engage in services trade within the Asia-Pacific region through abundant high-quality human resources, digital technologies, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and international cooperation, said Long Guoqiang, vice-president of the State Council's Development Research Center.

Long was speaking at a sub-forum during the ongoing 2024 China International Fair for Trade in Services in Beijing.

Sharing similar views, Vladimir Kazbekov, vice-president and chief operating officer of Shanghai-headquartered New Development Bank, said China has made notable strides in liberalizing its services sector, creating new opportunities for further

advancement and attracting foreign investment.

The country's dedication to expanding market access, aligning its compliance mechanisms with international standards and implementing a negative list for cross-border trade in services underscores its strong commitment to this process, said Wang Bo, deputy director of the department of trade in services and commercial services at the Ministry of Commerce.

Echoing that sentiment, Jiang Hao, a partner at global management consultancy Roland Berger, said China has pledged to deepen its opening-up policy and welcome foreign investment in areas that were previously restricted.

For example, the Ministry of Commerce announced earlier this month that China plans to allow wholly owned foreign hospitals in Beijing, Shanghai and seven other cities or regions.

"Recently, China opened certain areas of the culture and entertainment sectors to foreign investment. Similar policies have also been put in place in the finance sector," Jiang said. "The country's vast service market is clearly appealing to foreign investors, offering significant potential for foreign companies to succeed in China."

Ulrik Knudsen, deputy secretary-general of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, said services are a

crucial part of the digital and physical infrastructure that underpin supply chains. Lowering barriers can boost access to foreign investment, improve interoperability and encourage diversification of suppliers.

To achieve this, Knudsen said governments must collaborate to revitalize discussions on services trade, including initiatives for progressive liberalization through bilateral and multilateral services trade agreements.

Pointing out that the role of global agricultural and food supply chains in international trade has become more prominent, Ye Huiqing, vice-president of COFCO Corp, said the group will actively partner with international stakeholders, exploring new business models and formats for global trade, especially in the area of trade in services.

"We are committed to promoting digital and green global trade and structural reforms of the global agricultural and food industry," Ye said.

COFCO Corp, China's largest food processor, manufacturer and trader by sales revenue, will support the development of both upstream and downstream players in the agricultural and food industry, including small and medium-sized enterprises. This approach contributes to building an inclusive and equitable global economy, she added.



## Readers' bonanza

Visitors make the most of a newly opened book fair in Ditan Park, Beijing, on Friday. During "The Temple of Earth and Me" book fair, which kicked off on Friday and will last until Sept 23, visitors can read books and enjoy various cultural events spread over 10 exhibition zones, including poetry recitals, a bookstore street, a creative cultural products zone and an area devoted to children's books.

WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

## Policy: New retirement system aims to address aging issue

From page 1

The government launched retirement age calculating services on official websites and WeChat mini programs at the official account of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security.

People will be allowed to voluntarily retire no more than three years in advance after reaching the minimum year of pension contributions, which will gradually rise from 15 to 20 years from 2030. But they are not permitted to retire earlier than the previous statutory age.

Also, people can voluntarily postpone their retirement age for no more than three years after reaching the new statutory retirement and reaching an agreement with their employers. Employers should not force employees to choose retirement ages against their will.

Wang Xiaoping, minister of human resources and social security, said that the retirement policy has become more flexible compared with the previous "one-size-fits-all" approach.

Wang said that the adjustment is based on the current population structure, people's improving health

condition and the public's concerns of a relative lack of flexibility in arranging their working and retiring lives.

"Chinese people's average life expectancy rose to 78.6 years in 2023 from around just 40 in the 1950s. Years of schooling also increased from eight years in the late 1970s and early 1980s, to currently 14 years, thus postponing people's time for landing their first job," she said.

The new policy will also help ease the decline in the working-age population, address the aging problem, and maintain vibrant economic growth and social development, she added.

"The number of people in China aged 60 and above reached 297 million by the end of 2023, accounting for 21.1 percent of the nation's total population. Among them, the number of those ages 65 and over was 217 million," she said. "Meanwhile, the working-age population saw continuous decreases from 2012 at a rate of 3 million per year, and the fall may intensify in the future."

The new policy also highlights employment support for youths and workers at older ages, and encourages local authorities to tighten prevention of age-related job discrimination

while prompting employers to hire more senior candidates.

Under the new policy, employers who hire workers older than the statutory retirement age should give such new employees basic working benefits related to income, right to rest, safety and job-related injury insurance.

Li Zhong, vice-minister of human resources and social security, said that the new retirement policy will be implemented steadily and at a modest pace, and positions vacated by new retirees may not be that suitable for youths, so the changes will likely have a mild impact on youth employment.

Li said the nation will continue to prioritize youth employment to let it grow at a reasonable rate and with higher quality.

## Cultural vibes favored by tourists in upcoming holiday

By CHENG SI  
chengsi@chinadaily.com.cn

Based on the buying trends of Chinese travelers who will embrace the three-day Mid-Autumn Festival holiday from Sunday, tourism service providers have found that short-distance tours with loose schedules are gaining in popularity.

Dating back thousands of years, the annual holiday is one of China's most traditional festivals and falls on the 15th day of the eighth month in the Chinese lunar calendar. It is normally celebrated with family reunions, worshipping the full moon, and praying for a good harvest and happiness.

Travel portal Fliggy said that as of Sept 4, tour bookings — including hotel, car rental services and tickets for tourism attractions — have experienced double-digit growth on its platform in the recent week, when compared to pre-COVID-19 levels.

Allowing for the short duration of the holiday — from Sunday to Tuesday with Saturday for work in lieu of the day off on Monday, this year — short-distance tours to places near one's working or living cities are favored, Fliggy said. Tourism attractions with strong Chinese cultural vibes and folk activities such as temple fairs and rabbit-shaped lanterns, common traditions during this particular holiday, have received an increase in bookings for the festival.

Beijing, Hangzhou, Shanghai and Shenzhen are the top five destinations this year, said Fliggy, which attributes their high popularity to the rich number of tourism resources both in the city centers and outskirts, as well as the abundance of convenient transportation options within the cities and to neighboring towns and tourist attractions.

Fliggy found its users are also focusing more on enjoying traditional rituals to celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival, with searches for tours concerning temple fairs, as well as moon and lantern appreciation surging on the platform by an average of 60 percent.

Customers have also shown a greater interest in taking photos wearing hanfu — traditional Chinese clothing — during their trips.

Li Qing, 33, from Shanghai said: "I've planned a family trip with my parents, husband and little daughter to Suzhou, in Jiangsu province, as the city is very close to Shanghai — roughly half an hour by high-speed train. The holiday is short and we just need a place to chill and relax."

Suzhou is Li's mother's hometown, so it's "a meaningful trip for the family to get some old-world memories during the holiday carrying meanings of reunion," she said.

Online travel agency Tuniu said travel bookings to Shanxi and Gansu provinces, which boast cultural relics of temples and Buddhist grottoes with a history of thousands of years, are experiencing remarkable growth.

The company said that the surge in bookings to these destinations is mainly driven by the recent hit video game *Black Myth: Wukong*, which is based on the Chinese traditional novel *Journey to the West*, as well as people's increasing desire for experiencing cultural vibes during the holiday.

Travel agencies said many customers plan to have a longer vacation of five or even eight days by asking for several days off work following the holiday, eyeing destinations farther afield or even overseas trips.

Fliggy confirmed that overseas travel bookings for the Mid-Autumn Festival holiday this year surpassed levels during the three-day Dragon Boat Festival in June, and short-distance overseas destinations including Japan, Malaysia, South Korea and Thailand remain the top choices.

# TOP NEWS

## President signs order awarding state honors

Medals, titles go to 15 prominent figures ahead of country's 75th anniversary

By CAO YIN  
caoyin@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping signed a presidential order on Friday awarding 15 individuals national medals and honorary titles for their outstanding contributions to the country's development as the People's Republic of China prepares to celebrate its 75th anniversary.

The order came after the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, adopted a decision on conferring the honors at its latest session, which concluded on Friday.

Four people were awarded the Medal of the Republic, which is conferred on prominent figures who have made great contributions and achievements to the building of socialism with Chinese characteristics and in defending the State.

Wang Yongzhi, a missile and rock expert and a pioneer of Chi-

na's manned space program, was honored posthumously, while the three others are Wang Zhenyi, a medical scientist known for breakthroughs in leukemia treatment, wheat breeding and agricultural strategy expert Li Zhensheng, and war veteran Huang Zongde.

Dilma Rousseff, president of the New Development Bank and former Brazilian president, was awarded a Friendship Medal.

Ten figures were awarded national honorary titles, which are conferred on those who have greatly contributed to — and achieved success in — various areas, including science and technology, education, health and economic research.

They include the late renowned radar expert Wang Xiaomo, prominent jurist Zhang Jinfan and the late distinguished geophysicist Huang Danian.

The NPC Standing Committee called on everyone to learn from

these honored individuals, and work together to forge ahead, so as to make more contributions to comprehensively promoting Chinese modernization and national rejuvenation.

The selection of award winners began earlier this year, and the nominations were open to seek public opinions from Aug 12 to 16.

In 2019, on the occasion of celebrating the 70th anniversary of the founding of the PRC, 42 individuals were awarded the Medal of the Republic, the Friendship Medal and national honorary titles. It was the first time that these honors were awarded.

Later, a few prominent figures with contributions to disease control were awarded national medals and national honorary titles, and some foreign dignitaries were also awarded the Friendship Medal.

These awards serve as good examples for the whole of society, arousing the public's patriotic enthusiasm, and expanding China's open and inclusive image around the world, according to a recent official release.

### List of individuals awarded national medals, honorary titles

#### Medal of the Republic:

**Wang Yongzhi** (1932-2024) From Changtu, Liaoning province, he was an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering and chief engineer of "Project 921" — China's manned space flight project. He was one of the co-founders of China's manned space flight sector, leading the research and development of various missiles and rockets, also participating in the blueprint of China's manned space missions.

**Wang Zhenyi** Born in 1924 in Xinghua, Jiangsu province, he is an academician at the CAE and former head of the Shanghai Institute of Hematology. A medical scientist and educator in blood-related diseases, he developed an effective treatment against acute promyelocytic leukemia and significantly increased the survival rate of patients worldwide of this aggressive disease by not applying for a patent for the cure.

**Li Zhensheng** Born in 1931 in Zibo, Shandong province, he is an academician and former vice-president of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and an agronomist. He systematically studied distant hybridization — crossing genetically dissimilar species — between wheat and quackgrass, and developed new wheat varieties that can efficiently carry specific nutrients. His work played a significant role in guaranteeing the production growth and food security of China's grains.

**Huang Zongde** Born in 1931, he is from Rongcheng, Shandong. He is a veteran and former consultant at Corps 52824 of the People's Liberation Army. He joined the army when he was 17 and bravely fought in multiple battles including the Yangtze River Crossing Campaign (1949) and the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea (1950-53), winning various military honors.

#### Friendship Medal:

**Dilma Rousseff** Born in 1947, she was president of Brazil from January 2011 to August 2016. As the first female Brazilian president, she was elected

for two consecutive terms. Rousseff has made significant contributions to promoting friendly cooperation between China and Brazil. The economist is now president of the Shanghai-based New Development Bank.

#### National honorary titles:

##### PEOPLE'S SCIENTIST

**Wang Xiaomo** (1938-2023) From Shanghai, he was a CAE academician, renowned radar expert and pioneer of China's early warning aircraft development. He led the research of China's first three-dimensional radar and early-warning aircraft system.

**Zhao Zhongxian** Born in 1941 in Xinmin, Liaoning province, he is a CAS academician and the main advocate and practitioner of China's high-temperature superconductivity research, helping establish China as one of the front-runners in the sector.

##### PEOPLE'S GUARD

**Bayika Kalidibek** Born in 1952 in Tashikurgan Tajik autonomous county, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. A member of the Tajik ethnic group, he is a former border patroller in Tashikurgan. For some 70 years, three generations of his family helped guide border soldiers patrolling the Pamirs and save them from hazards and from getting lost. Laqini, his son, died when trying to save a child who accidentally broke through the ice of a frozen lake.

##### PEOPLE'S ARTIST

**Tian Hua** Born in 1928 in Tangxian, Hebei province, Tian is a former first-class actress of the August First Film Studio. She portrayed various classic roles on the screen and participated in numerous charity events after she retired. Her portrayal of iconic female characters in early Chinese cinema has left a lasting impact on the industry.

##### PEOPLE'S CRAFTSMAN

**Xu Zhenchao** Born in 1950 in Rongcheng, Shandong, he is a senior manager and senior technician at Qingdao Qianwan Container Terminal. He broke the world record in container loading and unloading nine times and

helped with the fuel-to-electricity upgrade of rubber-tired gantry (cranes at ports) that led to significant cost reductions.

##### PEOPLE'S EDUCATOR

**Zhang Jinfan** Born in 1930 in Shenyang, Liaoning, he is a renowned jurist and former vice-president of China University of Political Science and Law. His research is fundamental in the theoretical basis and structural paradigm in the discipline of legal history in China.

**Huang Danian** (1958-2017) From Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, he was a renowned geophysicist and an exceptional representative of researchers who returned to China from overseas. He also loved being an educator and made great contributions to China's talent cultivation cause.

##### PEOPLE'S HEALTH WORKER

**Lu Shengmei** Born in 1944 in Beijing, she is a former vice-president of Jiaxian People's Hospital in Shaanxi province. She came to a grassroots hospital in an underdeveloped area in northwestern China and served some 150,000 patients over the years. Her methods of childbirth and immunity helped significantly reduce infant mortality.

##### OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTOR TO ECONOMIC RESEARCH

**Zhang Zhuoyuan** Born in 1933 in Meixian, Guangdong province, he is an economist who helped China navigate the socialist market economy by coming up with constructive proposals in areas such as price reforms and remodeling relations between the market and the government.

##### OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTOR TO SPORTS

**Zhang Xielin** Born in 1940 in Zhenjiang, Jiangsu, he is a renowned table tennis player and coach. He won China's first world championship titles in men's doubles and mixed doubles, and the Chinese women's team won 10 team championships under his coaching.



Premier Li Qiang addresses the UAE-China Business Forum in Dubai on Thursday. Li was on an official three-day visit to the United Arab Emirates starting from Wednesday. This year marks the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and the UAE. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

## Li calls for high-quality BRI bond with UAE

By ZHOU JIN  
zhoujin@chinadaily.com.cn

Premier Li Qiang has wrapped up his official visit to the United Arab Emirates, where he highlighted the Gulf state's role in China's Middle East diplomacy and called for opening up new opportunities for bilateral cooperation.

Li returned to Beijing on Friday after the four-day regional tour, which also brought him to Saudi Arabia.

When addressing the UAE-China Business Forum in Dubai on Thursday, Li said that relations between the two countries stand at a historic juncture, while economic and trade cooperation is facing crucial opportunities for upgrading.

More than 200 representatives from the governments, chambers of commerce and businesses from both countries attended the forum.

The premier called on enterprises from the two countries to seize new opportunities for high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, and enhance cooperation in areas such as connectivity, infrastructure and financing to promote their deeper integration into global industrial and supply chains.

Li also urged the enterprises to

identify more areas of shared interest and opportunity for cooperation from the intersection of their strategic priorities, and deepen cooperation in trade, new energy, tourism and other sectors.

Cooperation in cutting-edge fields such as advanced manufacturing, the digital economy and artificial intelligence should also be emphasized to jointly seize future development opportunities, he added.

China welcomes more enterprises from the UAE to invest in the country, Li said, adding that he believes that with the joint efforts of entrepreneurs from both sides, bilateral trade cooperation will continue to thrive.

UAE investment in China grew 120 percent in 2023, representing 90 percent of all Arab investment in China, said Chinese Ambassador to the UAE Zhang Yiming.

China's investment in the country has been growing by more than 16 percent annually, reaching \$1.3 billion in 2023 and accounting for 60 percent of China's total investment in Arab countries.

In the Middle East, the UAE is China's second-largest trading partner, largest export market and the third-largest market for Chinese engineering projects.

On Thursday, Li also held talks with UAE Vice-President and Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the UAE.

The two countries signed more than 130 bilateral agreements and memorandums of understanding over the past four decades. And in 2018, the two countries upgraded their ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership.

China has long placed the UAE as a priority in its Middle East diplomacy, and stands ready to work with the country to firmly support each other and consolidate the political foundation of bilateral ties, Li said.

He stressed that China and the UAE are good partners on the path of common development, and it is in the fundamental interests of both sides to strengthen cooperation and help each other succeed.

A mutual visa exemption arrangement between the two countries came into effect on Jan 16, 2018, making the UAE the first country in the Middle East to achieve full visa exemption status with China.

## Ties: Speakers share views on improving relationship

From page 1

"Just as President Xi Jinping pointed out 'the hope of the China-US relationship lies in the people, its foundation is in grassroots connections, its future depends on the youth, and its vitality comes from subnational exchanges' — those are the key aspects we should constantly work to strengthen," Qu said.

The veteran journalist said he is a firm believer that "mutual understanding is the foundation of friendly cooperation" and that "a modernized China represents an opportunity, rather than a challenge, to the US".

Given that China and the US have accumulated remarkable "cognitive deficits" amid profound changes taking place in the world, it is crucial that the two peoples reacquire themselves with a real, multidimensional and comprehensive view of each other's country, he said.

In his keynote speech, Xie, the ambassador, said: "The history of the China-US relationship in the past 45 years, especially the ups and downs in recent years, tells us that pressure, sanctions, isolation, containment and blockade don't serve the purpose. Rather, they bring self-inflicted trouble and require extra work to offset the unwanted results."

"The idea of 'decoupling' is illusive. Viewing each other as new Cold War adversaries will prove to be the biggest strategic misjudgment in the 21st century," he said.

The envoy underscored that among the four red lines that China has drawn — Taiwan, democracy and human rights, path and system, and development rights — the Taiwan question is paramount in China-US relations and is a red line that must not be crossed.

"For China-US relations to have a 'stable floor', it is critical to avoid touching these 'high-voltage wires'" Xie said.

The Vision China morning session featured presentations from six Americans. They came to tell stories of friendship with China in a time wrought with uncertainty. They are people who have remained steadfast in their support of China while trade and political tensions persist, particularly in a US presidential election year.

#### US' wrong assumptions

US policy on China has veered off course because the assumptions have changed, in many ways radically, David Firestein, CEO and president of the George H.W. Bush Foundation for US-China Relations, said during his speech at the event.

"They have changed in a way that they have become less accurate than they were before," he said.

He outlined six wrong assumptions: China is no longer a partner but an enemy; building a constructive relationship with China does not serve the long-term interests of the US; China no longer accepts the existing world order and seeks to reshape it; China is trying to replace the US as the sole superpower; excessive engagement with China harms the US and makes it vulnerable; China-US relations are a "zero-sum game".

"They're all wrong, every one of them," Firestein said of the assumptions.

In 1979, teenagers Kelly Van Dries and her elder sister Kitty were working at a rodeo in Simonton, Texas, which was owned by their parents. Kelly had the honor

of presenting a cowboy hat to Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping.

Sarah Lande of Iowa recalled the friendly exchanges of the city of Muscatine with Hebei province.

Their presentations were followed by a Gen Z debate and exchange in the afternoon, at which US and Chinese youths debated "The impact of artificial intelligence on human life" and discussed how to avoid the Thucydides Trap, while overcoming "information bubbles" for better China-US communication.

Ge Haijiao, chairman of Bank of China, said it is the longest continuously operating and most globalized bank in China. The bank has been a witness, participant and contributor to the ever-deepening and mutually beneficial cooperation between China and the US.

"Bank of China is firmly committed to promoting trade and commerce between China and the United States, to the benefit of both societies," Ge said in a message read in New York by Hu Wei, president and CEO of Bank of China USA and chairman of the China General Chamber of Commerce-USA.

Steve Blake, chief representative for the environmental group Wild-Aid in Beijing, said his experience in China "has really shaped my entire life for the most part".

"Study Chinese, go check out China. ... On the ground, it's still an amazing place," he said.

Angela Chen, co-chair of the New York Philharmonic's International Advisory Board, said: "I'm really touched by these stories. You should share them with US audiences."

"I encourage your team to make a documentary featuring all the stories shared today — US audiences should know that there are still many people building connections between the US and China," she added.

Belinda Robinson, Minlu Zhang and Heng Weili in New York contributed to this story.

## Cave art

An inscription from Mogao Grottoes Cave 61, from the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), is unveiled with the help of staff members at the China Art Museum in Shanghai on Thursday. The exhibition "Great Art of Dunhuang" is set to open on Sept 20 and features a combination of cultural relics, replicated classic caves as well as mural sculptures.

ZHU WEIHUI / FOR CHINA DAILY



CHINA DAILY

## COMMENT

China and the World Roundtable | People's Congress System

**Editor's note:** This year marks the 70th anniversary of the people's congress system. Why should China adhere to a form of democracy that aligns with its political system? Three experts offer their views on the issue:

Ong Tee Keat

## Chinese democracy: Proof in the pudding

The collective West has long had an entrenched ideological prejudice against China's governance system, questioning the legitimacy of the Communist Party of China as the country's ruling party. The West is biased against China because, as some in the West claim, China does not follow a liberal democratic political system and hold multiparty elections. Yet China's National People's Congress, the country's top decision-making body, continues to shine by making extraordinary achievements to meet the rising needs and aspirations of the Chinese people, while propelling the country's development to new heights.

An apt example of the Chinese political system's success is the eradication of absolute poverty from the country — China lifted more than 800 million people out of poverty in a little over four decades. That China succeeded in eradicating extreme poverty 10 years ahead of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda's target speaks volumes of the Party's determination to serve the people.

The high public approval rating of 93 percent enjoyed by the Chinese government, according to a study, is proof that the West's labeling of the NPC as a "rubber stamp" is nothing but a prejudicial propaganda spin. The findings of the study, titled "Understanding CCP Resilience: Surveying Chinese Public Opinion Through Time", were released by Edward Cunningham of ASH Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation, Harvard Kennedy School, in July 2020.

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the NPC's inception. The participatory nature of people's involvement in Chinese governance — from the election of deputies to various tiers of people's congresses to policy formulation based on, among other things, the aspirations of the people and the post-policy enactment monitoring of legislation implementation — signifies the entire process is indeed truly people-centric. That's what makes China's whole-process people's democracy unique.

In essence, whole-process people's democracy is a consequentialist model of political decision-making, which should be judged based on how well the government is able to pursue high-quality development, and improve people's livelihoods and living standards, rather than being driven by the dictates of the multiparty electoral system. This is in stark contrast to the limited electoral role played by the electorate, who are by and large margin-



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY



The author is president of Malaysia-based Belt and Road Initiative Caucus for Asia-Pacific.

alized in policy formulation in the practice of Western liberal democracy.

The West has consistently been critical of "single party rule". Models of governance inconsistent with its multiparty electoral template are simply disdained as "authoritarian". In this context, the West has found in China a favorite punching bag. Yet Western ideologues rarely realize that

"majority rule", cherished by liberal democrats, in most cases, hardly leaves any room to accommodate minority views. Plainly put, it's a game of "winner takes all" — a golden rule of liberal democracy that dominates the game. Worse, the tyranny of majority prevails in many cases.

From the perspective of Western democracy, a multiparty system is a prerequisite for having a system of check and balance. But this is no monopoly of the West. A multiparty check-and-balance

system does exist in China's NPC, but more in the form of advisers and consultative partners, than confrontational adversaries, to the ruling CPC. It is this element of inclusive consultation which is lacking in Western democracy.

Parallel to this, the quality of China's statecraft speaks volumes of its model of governance. Common sense tells us that an "autocratic administration" run by a "rubber stamp-like legislature", as claimed by the West, can never achieve remarkable feats such as transforming an impoverished agrarian society into an economic superpower.

If China were indeed an authoritarian and mediocre economy, it wouldn't have been labeled as a "systemic challenger" threatening the US' primacy on multiple fronts by the collective West. Nor would the US-led West have endeavored to hobble China at all costs.

Intriguingly, while Washington is intensifying its extra-territorial intervention through long arm jurisdiction, notably through brutal "regime change" in other countries, its spiraling debt continues to

soar alongside an ever-escalating plethora of social ills at home. Yet in its hubris, the US Congress continues to resort to rhetoric on issues beyond American shores, contributing zilch to mitigating hotspot issues. Not to mention the array of laws that the US Congress has passed targeting China.

In contrast, year after year, the annual sessions of the NPC and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference never fail to catch global attention from friends and foes alike as they chart the course of the nation's statecraft.

Seventy years on, the NPC is still thriving with its vigour and relevance. The cacophony created by the various doom-sayers' theories targeting China may continue to make ripples in the international media from time to time. But the endgame of all this is China's unstoppable rise.

After all, proof of the pudding is in the eating.

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

Liu Dongchao

## Democratic system improving

The people's congress system is a crucial component of China's political structure, one of the key elements of the country's current political system, and an important institutional part of whole-process people's democracy. The people's congress system, established in 1954, is suited to China's national conditions. After decades of development, while undergoing a gradual process of refinement and adapting to changing circumstances, especially since 2012, the National People's Congress system has further matured.

For example, in March 2021, the Organization Law of the National People's Congress, which had been in use for nearly 40 years, was amended to affirm the leadership of the Party over the NPC and its Standing Committee. This crucial measure was taken to ensure the Party plays the leadership role in all national affairs, including the development of the NPC system.

Another key amendment emphasized that the NPC and its Standing Committee operate on the principle of democratic centralism, promoting democracy and collectively exercising power. The amendment reinforced the organizational and operational principles of the NPC and its Standing Committee.

Before that, in March 2018, the central leadership established the National Commission of Supervision. The 2021 amendments also introduced new provisions, such as allowing the NCS to submit proposals to the NPC and its Standing Committee, and instituting mechanisms for questioning and removing NCS members, including its head.

Alongside these changes, laws and rules such as the Legislation Law, the Rules of Procedure of the NPC Standing Committee, and the Rules of Procedure of the NPC have also been amended, ensuring that the NPC system remains relevant, improves over time, becomes more mature and assumes a more established form.

As the highest organ of State power, the NPC and its Standing Committee wield broad and diverse powers. Generally, the powers of the NPC and its Standing Committee are divided into four categories: legislative power, supervisory power, appointment and removal power, and decision-making power.

The most basic form of supervisory power is the NPC's power to deliberate on and review reports from the government, the judiciary and the prosecution services. The NPC has been exercising its powers more effectively since the 18th National Congress of the CPC in 2012. For instance, to enforce the Constitution and laws and to safeguard the unity of the national legal system, the NPC and its Standing Committee have diligently reviewed administrative regulations. Since 2017, the NPC Standing Committee has deliberated on and reviewed reports on the filing and examination of regulations on a yearly basis.

To further standardize this work, the NPC Standing Committee passed the "Decision on Improving and Strengthening the System of Recording and Review" in December 2023, which can be regarded as a system of parallel processes for resolving legislative conflicts, demonstrating a key aspect of its supervisory role. In fact, the NPC's supervision work has increasingly diversified in recent years, which has improved its mechanisms and ensured its supervision is scientific, effective, and conducted in accordance with law.

Moreover, the NPC has consolidated its social foundation. The NPC system enjoys a broad social base. One of its manifestations is that the NPC deputies today are more representative of society, with a larger percentage of them coming from the grassroots. For example, the structure of the 14th NPC (elected between December 2022 and January 2023) is highly balanced, with appropriate numbers of representatives from all regions, ethnicities and social groups. Among them, ethnic minority representatives make up 14.85 percent of the total, women 26.54 percent, grassroots workers and farmers 16.69 percent, and professionals 21.3 percent, reflecting the increasingly proportionate social foundation of the NPC system.

Relevant laws stipulate that NPC deputies must maintain close contact with their original constituencies and the public, for which they can attend local people's congress meetings and, through various channels, listen to and reflect on the views and demands of the people. To meet this need, the deputies' residents and liaison stations have been set up across the country to connect with the people.

With the progress of time, the NPC system will continue to develop in a more scientific and efficient way. But its development over the past decade, in the new era, has already become a valuable asset for the people's congress system, which will continue to play an important role in the future.

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

John Milligan-Whyte

## Socialism gifts whole-process people's democracy

A fundamental feature of China's political stability and economic development is its socialist system of governance marked by Chinese characteristics and the existence of three bottom-up and top-down feedback loops combining public administrators, experts in different fields and people's representatives from all walks of life.

To understand China's unprecedented economic success, it is necessary to first understand the roles and effectiveness of the economic and social development inputs provided by the three bottom-up and top-down feedback loops operating within the Communist Party of China, the National People's Congress and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the people's congress system.

The three loops in the Party, the NPC and the CPPCC National Committee provide continuous bottom-up and top-down feedback for the Party and the government, identifying problems, suggesting ways to solve them, giving public policy advice, and collecting public opinions from the representatives of 1.4 billion Chinese people. This phenomenon is evident in the Party, people's congresses and people's political consultative conferences, from the national down to the village level.



The author is chairman of the America-China Partnership Foundation.

The Party, the NPC and the CPPCC National Committee bring together representative members and leaders chosen based on merit, and enable the three feedback loops to help improve the already effective system of representative and responsible governance.

China has a history of more than 2,000 years of selecting administrative officials through a civil service examination system based on merit. The Party's crucial leadership role is to ensure good governance for the benefit of all Chinese people and make officials "accountable to the people".

The bottom-up and top-down feedback loops of the NPC and the CPPCC National Committee also identify 1.4 billion people's needs and priorities, and shape public policy. They are perceived by foreign observers as merely "rubber stamps" for top-down Party policy decisions. But the reality is that the three information feedback loops work together to create one of the world's most effective systems of representative and responsible government.

Most Americans cannot accept the success of China's governance system. This

system has propelled the country's economic development and social progress at a speed, scale and size unprecedented in history.

World Bank studies show China has contributed to almost three-quarters of global poverty alleviation, and its economic growth has been driving global development. In the more than four decades since the launch of reform and opening-up, China has lifted over 800 million people out of extreme poverty. Reform and opening-up have also helped China increase its GDP from \$218 billion in 1978 to \$17.8 trillion in 2022.

Besides, China has one of the most effective, representative, and responsible governments globally. The success of lifting 800 million people out of poverty is a testament to this. While Westerners may perceive the NPC and the CPPCC National Committee as mere "rubber stamps" of the Communist Party of China, these institutions actually operate as vital feedback loops.

A 2020 Harvard University study, titled "Understanding CCP Resilience: Surveying Chinese Public Opinion Through Time", the longest-running independent study to track Chinese citizens' satisfaction level with the government's performance, shows the percentage of Chinese people satisfied with the government's performance increased from 86 percent

in 2000 to 93 percent in 2013.

Moreover, the Democracy Perception Index Report 2022, the world's largest annual study on democracy, said people in China have the highest level of trust in their government in the world. The Chinese people have experienced the results of decades of the poverty alleviation program, which has transformed China from one of the poorest countries to the second-largest economy in the world.

No wonder Chinese people believe their government is indeed people-centric. In contrast, 63 percent of the respondents in the US said the administration serves the wealthy and big corporations, not the general American public.

Also, a Princeton University study's findings suggest the US has turned into a plutocracy, which has not been working well for all Americans. And Harvard Law School professor Steven Lessing's study found that the US is a "limited-process democracy" where citizens have the right to vote, but less than 1 percent of the people control the US' wealth as well as the political system.

China has developed a form of socialist democracy that addresses the deficiencies in other forms of democracy. China describes its unique system of government as whole-process people's democracy, which is people-centric and adheres to socialism with Chinese characteristics. A fundamental difference between the US' limited-process democracy and China's whole-process people's democracy is capital's control over politics and public policy in the US, and socialism's control over capital, politics and public policy in China.

This enables China to promote whole-process people's democracy and people-centric governance for the benefit of all Chinese people.

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

## CHINA DAILY WORLDWIDE

Contact us at:

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

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

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

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

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

# WORLD

## Unity, peace key topics of diplomat's talks

Moscow keen to work with Beijing for fair international order, multipolarity

By ZHANG YUNBI  
zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

The upcoming BRICS summit, unity in the Global South, border affairs and peace in the Middle East were key topics of a series of bilateral talks held by senior Chinese diplomat Wang Yi in Russia's St. Petersburg.

Earlier this week, Wang, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the CPC Central Committee, attended a high-level BRICS conference on security affairs there.

On Thursday, Wang met with Russian President Vladimir Putin and talked respectively with senior officials of India and Iran in charge of national security affairs.

The BRICS summit in Russia's Kazan next month will be the grouping's first leaders' meeting in the wake of its most recent historic expansion.

Putin expressed his warm expectations for the Chinese side to attend the summit and appreciated Beijing's support for Russia's BRICS presidency.

Russia is ready to strengthen coordination with China to unite more Global South countries, join hands to push forward the world's multipolarization process and build an international order based on justice and international law, he added.

The senior diplomat conveyed President Xi Jinping's cordial greetings to Putin, saying China will continue to fully support Russia in fulfilling its duties as the chair of BRICS and to make the summit a success.

He noted that the two countries had strengthened strategic collaboration, opposed unilateralism and hegemony and rejected bloc confrontation, which is "in line with the progressive trend of the times and the common aspiration of the vast number of South countries".

At a separate meeting on Thursday, Wang talked to India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, and they discussed the progress made in recent bilateral consultations on border affairs.

The two countries agreed that achieving stability in China-India relations is in the fundamental and long-term interests of the two peo-

ples and is conducive to regional peace and development.

"Both sides agreed to implement the consensus of the leaders of the two countries, work to enhance understanding and mutual trust, create conditions for the improvement of bilateral ties and continue to maintain communication in this regard," the Chinese Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Friday.

### Eastern civilizations

Wang referred to two shared identities of China and India — ancient Eastern civilizations and emerging developing major countries.

The two countries "should uphold independence and self-reliance and choose unity and cooperation; stick to making each other successful and avoid draining each other," he said.

It is believed that "both sides have the wisdom and ability to look at each other in a proper perspective", deal with differences in a pragmatic manner and find the right way for the two neighboring major countries to get along with each other through constructive thinking, he said.

Doval said India and China should focus on their respective and common development and the rapid development of the 2.8 billion Indian and Chinese people will change the whole world.

Also on Thursday, Wang met with Ali Akbar Ahmadian, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council.

China appreciates the new Iranian administration's reaffirming commitment to friendship with China and its plan to deepen Iran-China relations. Last year, Iran and Saudi Arabia realized a historic reconciliation in Beijing.

Wang said China supports Iran and countries in the Middle East region to further resolve their differences through dialogue and consultation, build on the hard-won momentum of reconciliation and "keep the process for improving relations moving forward, and send positive signals for regional peace and stability".

Ahmadian said Iran's new administration is firmly committed to consolidating and strengthening its friendship with China and is willing to work with China to expand all-around practical cooperation.

## Helping hand



Residents are helped through high floodwaters by police in Pinyinmana town, in Myanmar's Naypyidaw region on Friday, following heavy rains in the aftermath of Typhoon Yagi. The typhoon brought a colossal deluge of rain that has inundated a swath of northern Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Myanmar, triggering deadly landslides and widespread river flooding. SAI AUNG MAIN / AFP

## China, ASEAN share strong connection

By LEONARDUS JEGHO  
in Jakarta, Indonesia  
For China Daily

China and the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations remain interconnected and interdependent not only in economic and trade ties, but also in regional security, according to ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn.

Attending an event in Jakarta marking the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China on Friday, Kao mentioned the urgency of maintaining peace and stability in the South China Sea, saying that ASEAN and Beijing should ensure the area remains a sea of peace, stability, friendship and cooperation.

"In essence, our security is profoundly interlinked and interconnected and its growing interdependence underscores the importance of ASEAN and China security cooperation," Kao said.

ASEAN highly values China's support for ASEAN centrality and unity, which together with interconnected security is a testament to the two sides' shared dedication to fostering a peaceful, stable and secure Asia Pacific, he said.

"Beyond our extensive economic ties, the cultural ties, and the people exchange between ASEAN and China, the deep historical roots spanning centuries remain a cornerstone of our relations," Kao. Kao noted that the ASEAN-China

relationship had evolved significantly from its humble beginnings in 1991 to establishing a comprehensive economic partnership in 2021.

"The important evolution spans a wide range of sectors," Kao said, noting geopolitical security, trade and investment, cultural exchange and collaboration, technology, education and health, sustainable development and environment, agriculture, and energy.

China's Ambassador to ASEAN Hou Yanqi stressed China's path of socialism with Chinese characteristics suits China's national conditions and has made China the world's second-largest economy.

### Sound relations

"China has maintained sound relations and built partnerships with almost all countries in the world. The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence proposed by China 70 years ago has become widely recognized principles of international society and continues to play its role in the era," Hou said.

She said that China's vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind points the way for human society and will lead to peace, security and common development.

She noted the two sides are working closely to implement the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and upgrade the ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement.

The Permanent Representative of Malaysia to ASEAN Sarah Nava Rani Al Bakri Devadason said her country appreciates China's unwavering support for ASEAN centrality and ASEAN community-building efforts.

"As the current country coordinator for ASEAN-China relations, Malaysia looks toward working closely with other ASEAN member states and China to further advance the ASEAN-China Comprehensive strategic partnership," Devadason said.

Noting this year is the ASEAN-China year of people-to-people exchanges, she said they play "an irreplaceable role in enhancing mutual understanding, friendship and trust, consolidating social foundation and public support, promoting economic and social development, and maintaining regional peace and stability".

In addition to China retaining its position as ASEAN's largest trading partner since 2009, Devadason lauded the sociocultural pillars established as foundations for cooperation in other fields.

Devadason noted the progress made by both sides on public health, science and technology, education, culture, environment, media, youth, social development, poverty reduction and disaster management.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

## Philippine govt urged to rethink its ties with US

By PRIME SARMIENTO  
in Hong Kong  
prime@chinadailyapac.com

The Philippine government's dependence on United States' military aid is further straining Philippines' ties with China, keeping relations between the two Asian countries in crisis, a forum in Manila heard Friday.

In addition, expanded US access to Philippine military bases has undermined the cause of peace in the South China Sea and continues to threaten Philippine sovereignty, observers said at a hybrid event organized by the Asian Century Philippines Strategic Studies Institute, or ACPH, a Manila-based think tank.

"It seems almost forgotten now that the Philippine Constitution mandates an independent foreign policy for the country. The Constitution states that foreign military bases, troops, or facilities shall not be allowed in the Philippines," Herman Tiu Laurel, ACPH's president said.

Laurel said that under the administration of Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, the US military bases in the Philippines have even "installed banned intermediate missile launchers within the country, which has put the country in the crosshairs of America's enemies".

Laurel was alluding to the US' deployment of the Mid-Range Capability missile system at Luzon. The northern Philippine island faces China's Taiwan region — a flashpoint of tense Sino-US relations.

Sass Rogando Sasot, a political blogger and scholar of international relations, said the US wants to ensure that Filipinos "will always see China as a threat" and to use the military bases in the Philippines "to prevent the unification of Taiwan with the Chinese mainland".

"The United States has to make sure that Philippine and China relations will remain in permanent crisis. It is never on the US agenda for China and the Philippines to pursue a compromise solution," Sasot said.

Sasot said the Philippines needs to recalibrate its foreign policy to avoid being a battleground.

"Just ask yourselves, how many times has the United States initiated any diplomatic talks between the Philippines and China? None," Sasot said.

She said the US will never go against Vietnam or Malaysia — both of which have competing claims over the strategic waterway — for the sake of the Philippines.

"The US will keep on encouraging Filipinos to pursue absolutely unrealistic goals," Sasot said. She said "the only realistic goal" for the Philippines is to pursue joint development with China over the South China Sea.

"This transforms the relationship of China and the Philippines from (a) relationship in perpetual crisis into a collaborative relationship," Sasot said.

Daniel Hugo Santos, ACPH's youth representative, said the South China Sea is "just one part of the relationship" between the Philippines and China, and called for more cultural and trade exchanges between China and members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

## Record nine candidates vie to become LDP chief

By JIANG XUEQING in Tokyo  
jiangxueqing@chinadaily.com.cn

Implementing political reform and restoring trust of the public in politics are among the most important themes in Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party, or LDP, leadership election, but none of the current candidates have clearly presented policies on these matters, experts said.

A record nine candidates launched a 15-day election campaign on Thursday to vie for leadership of the LDP, aiming to succeed Fumio Kishida as the country's next prime minister.

Kishida announced on Aug 14 that he will not seek reelection as leader of the ruling party. His cabinet has continued to struggle

with low approval ratings.

Noriyuki Kawamura, an emeritus professor at Nagoya University of Foreign Studies, said: "Most of the candidates are focusing on creating a superficial sense of renewal, or so-called changing the atmosphere. In other words, they believe that by changing the face of the top leader, the atmosphere will change. But that alone is highly insufficient."

He emphasized that whoever becomes the leader of the LDP will also become the prime minister of Japan, and the person must carry out fundamental political reform. Only by doing so can the public's trust in politics be restored.

"The Kishida cabinet has not conducted any thorough investigation

into the issue of politics and money, and the Political Funds Control Act has not undergone any fundamental revision but rather only minor surface-level adjustments," said Kawamura.

Despite receiving large sums of taxpayer money through party subsidies, LDP politicians repeatedly held political fundraising events and failed to report the funds they received, said Kazuyuki Hamada, an international political economy scholar and former parliamentary vice-minister for foreign affairs of Japan.

The LDP's ability to reform itself and its vision for national reconstruction are being called into question. The people have lost faith in the current political system and nearly

half of them do not even bother to vote in elections, said Hamada.

"This race seems like something orchestrated by the LDP to divert attention from the issue of politics and money ... However, the candidates are not addressing the critical issues facing Japan's politics, economy, or defense," said Hamada.

Satoshi Tomisaka, professor at the Institute of World Studies at Takushoku University, said that voters can experience a certain sense of renewal by observing a somewhat transparent process of power transfer, but that effect will not last long.

Both the renewal of a change in leadership within the LDP and the renewal of a change in the governing party have the same temporary

effect of raising expectations. However, this does not stop the overall systemic fatigue, said Tomisaka.

In addition to the need to tackle the issue of politics and money, a significant shift in Japan's foreign policy is also required. Stabilizing relations with China will be a key challenge for the country's next leader, according to Kawamura of Nagoya University of Foreign Studies.

In recent years, Japan's foreign policy has increasingly aligned with the United States, particularly in its adherence to US efforts to contain China. This approach has contributed to growing instability and tensions in Japan's relationship with China, Kawamura said.

"To safeguard Japan's national interests and determine its future direction, it is essential to balance its relationships with both China and the US," he said.

### Briefly

#### UNITED NATIONS Guterres condemns airstrikes in Gaza

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Thursday condemned the death of at least 18 people, including six UN workers, in Israeli airstrikes that hit a school in the Gaza Strip on Wednesday. The incident raised the number of staff members of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, or UNRWA, killed in the conflict to 220, according to a statement by Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for the UN

chief. The continued lack of effective protection for civilians in Gaza is unconscionable, the statement noted, adding that "civilians and the infrastructure they rely on must be protected and the essential needs of civilians met".

#### IRAN President pays visit to Iraq's Kurdistan region

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian paid a historic visit to Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region on Thursday, the first by an Iranian president to the area, to discuss

strengthening ties and border security. Pezeshkian met with Kurdish leaders including the president of the regional government, Nechirvan Barzani, in the region's capital Erbil on the second day of his Iraq trip.

#### DPRK Top leader makes military inspections

Kim Jong-un, top leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, made multiple military inspections, the official Korean Central News Agency reported on Friday. The inspections include a guided tour to

oversee the test-fire for verifying the performance of a new-type multiple rocket launcher, a trip to the country's Nuclear Weapons Institute and the production base of weapon-grade nuclear materials, and an inspection of the training base for special operation force. During the inspection, Kim learned about the production of nuclear warheads and current nuclear materials and set forth tasks for a long-term plan for increasing the production of weapon-grade nuclear materials, KCNA reported.

XINHUA

## Union victory



Union members cheer following a vote count on the union contract at the IAM District 751 Main Union Hall, in Seattle, the United States, on Thursday. Boeing's factory workers are poised to walk off the job after members of its largest union rejected a contract offer and voted to strike. M. SCOTT BRAUER VIA GETTY IMAGES

## INSPIRATION FROM THE PAST

China Daily event in New York City brings guest speakers and youth from China



David Firestein

## 6 'wrong' US assumptions damage ties

By MAY ZHOU in New York  
mayzhou@chinadailyusa.com

The United States has changed "six assumptions" it has historically held about China — and all the new viewpoints are "wrong", David Firestein, CEO and president of the George H.W. Bush Foundation for US-China Relations, said on Thursday.

"One of the things that has happened in recent years, speaking from an American standpoint, is that I think American policy for China has veered off course because the assumptions have changed, in many ways radically," said Firestein, one of the featured speakers at the Vision China event at the Asia Society in Manhattan. The event was co-hosted by China Daily and the Bank of China.

"They have changed in a way that they have become less accurate than they were before," he said.

Firestein detailed the assumptions that the US now makes about China, and what they used to be.

"Number one, we used to assume that China was a partner of the United States and that China approached the relationship as a partner," he said. Today, the overwhelming assumption in the US government, the media and to a significant degree in American society is that, "China is the enemy of our nation, not the partner".

Second, the US used to assume that it was in the long-term interest of the US to have a constructive relationship with China. "And oddly enough now, in official Washington and across much of the country, we seem to believe that it is in the long-term interest of the United States to not have a constructive relationship with China but rather to have an adversarial relationship with China."

Third, the US used to assume that China wanted to be deeply invested as a stakeholder in the existing global system, but now believes that, "China seeks to bring an end to the existing international order, to topple the international order and to recreate some new order that presumably would work to a greater degree to China's advantage".

Fourth, he said that the US used to believe that China aspired to be a major power but did not seek to displace and supplant the US as the world's only superpower.

"But now, in official Washington, we see many voices who articulate the view that China seeks to displace and supplant the United States as the world's only superpower and to basically kick us off the top of the hill and take our place," he said.

Fifth, the US used to assume that trade and other exchanges were good, and "mutual dependence between the United States and China was actually a good thing because it made conflict less likely".

Now the US assumes "that the more engagement, the worse for the United States, that relying unduly on China creates vulnerability for the United States and thus it has led to these efforts coming out of Washington and the rhetoric, which talks about decoupling and so forth and so on".

Finally, the US used to believe that the relationship generated mutual benefit but now sees that anything that China does is bad for the US, which has a zero-sum mentality.

"They're all wrong, every one of them," Firestein said of the assumptions.

"So, in conclusion, the assumptions have changed. I think we have veered off-target and off-course. As a result, US policy toward China is not working optimally, meaning we're not getting the results that we ourselves say that we want," he concluded. "When it comes to US-China relations, 'dependence' is good, and 'it increases our security, not decreases it," Firestein said.

## Debate on impact of AI brings youths of two nations closer

By LIA ZHU in New York  
liazhu@chinadailyusa.com

In a clash of opinions that bridged borders, eight young voices from the United States and China converged in New York City to debate one of the world's most pressing issues — artificial intelligence.

This wasn't a typical debate. These contestants, fluent in each other's respective languages and steeped in the cultures of both nations, brought a unique perspective to the issue. Their goal was to inspire collaboration between people in the two countries on a technology that could reshape humanity's future.

Liam Green, a member of the "pro-AI" team, focused on the technology's potential to revolutionize education in the debate organized by China Daily with the theme "Bridging Futures: China-US Youth Debate and Exchange".

"AI can assist students as a companion, and this is advantageous for both lesser economically developed countries and more economically developed ones," Green said. He emphasized AI's unique ability to promote accessibility and equality, countering concerns about potential societal disparities.

Green, who spent eight years in China before going to university in New York, highlighted the importance of collaboration between the US and China on AI policy.

"These two countries are able to work together to pass laws that are effective," he said, stressing the need for transnational cooperation in an increasingly globalized world.

On the opposing side, Zixin Wang, a Harvard Kennedy School graduate from Chengdu, China, voiced concerns about AI's potential negative impact. "Right now, in society, we have seen so many misuses of artificial intelligence, from scams using fake faces and fake videos

to trick you, to those who use artificial intelligence to make falsified documents," Wang said. While acknowledging AI's benefits, he emphasized the current lack of regulations and the potential threats posed by advanced AI systems.

Despite their opposing stances, the debaters recognized the value of this cross-cultural exchange. Wang expressed his enthusiasm for engaging with young people from both countries. "I believe conversations can alleviate all the barriers of understanding and also enhance the understanding of each other," he said.

Amelia Yuan, a California native studying at New York University-Shanghai, echoed that sentiment. She viewed the debate as an opportunity to gain diverse perspectives on international relations and finance, adding she had benefited from working with her team members. "It's super exciting," she said, referring to the past week that she spent preparing for the debate.

The debate's significance resonated beyond the participants themselves. After observing the event, John W. Allen, a founding member of the New York-based Chinese Cultural Foundation, told China Daily, "It's a good debate because I can see both sides".

"Above the pros and cons," Allen said, "what is more important about the debate is to make sure that as artificial intelligence plays more of a role in our lives and as we make this transition, we influence artificial intelligence with the human values we have today."

Allen saw the debate as a microcosm of a larger trend: increased collaboration between young people from the US and China. "If I go to China and learn Chinese, and you come to the US and learn English, and then we multiply that relationship," he said.



## Emmy-winning producer documents forgotten story to bridge the gap

By MINLU ZHANG in New York  
minluzhang@chinadailyusa.com

Three-time Emmy Award-winning film producer Bill Einreinhofer has long been a bridge between the United States and China, forming bonds with both new and old friends. Whether traveling with film crews or sharing personal moments, his experiences have highlighted the deep connections between the two nations.

On a scorching August afternoon 20 years ago, Einreinhofer interviewed the oldest taxi driver in Shanghai. After climbing five flights of stairs in the heat, he was warmly welcomed and served a steaming cup of coffee.

Trying to be polite, he sipped it, but the family soon thought they "made a mistake" to their American guest. They quickly decided that what their American guest really needed on such a hot day was ice cream. The taxi driver's granddaughter dashed to a nearby store and returned with Wawa ice cream, which Einreinhofer said he thoroughly enjoyed.

"These people didn't need to do any of this. After all, I had arrived at their apartment and disrupted their lives. I was a stranger who they would probably never see again. But that was the whole point. I was a visitor from afar. Chinese hospitality



Bill Einreinhofer

insisted I feel welcome in their home," Einreinhofer said in his speech during the Vision China event in New York.

His new documentary *Valor and Memory* will air this November on PBS TV stations across the US and focuses on the complex historical relationship between the US and China during World War II, and a friendship build-up that has lasted between the two countries for decades.

"Last October I was in Beijing. I was amazed at the media coverage being given to two elderly American military veterans. They were members of a group called the Flying Tigers — American pilots who risked their lives to help China during World War II or The War of Resistance — as it is known in Chi-

na. Everywhere they went, they were greeted as heroes. Here in America, they are pretty much forgotten," Einreinhofer said. He then decided to pick up his camera and document the lasting friendship.

The documentary comes as the current China-US relations have deteriorated.

"Now, more than ever, it is important for America and China to understand each other. That doesn't necessarily mean agreeing. Instead, it is each side having knowledge of how history and culture have brought us to this moment, and how potentially we can move forward," Einreinhofer said.

He has also made many new friends in China as he traveled and shared meals with filmmakers in cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou in Guangdong province. Some later sought his help as the only international producer and director they knew to take their programs globally.

"Almost accidentally, I became something of a 'bridge' between two countries and two cultures," he said.

Einreinhofer added through his interactions with film colleagues in China, "I really learned what it is like to live in China. You don't find that information in guidebooks or newspaper stories. Plus, if you are there long enough, you begin to experience that reality firsthand".

## How a Texas rodeo became a symbol of

By YIFAN XU in New York  
yifanxu@chinadailyusa.com

A memorable moment in the US-China relationship was revealed in the form of an American cowboy hat, as two sisters, Kitty Van Dries and Kelly Van Dries, shared their extraordinary memory — leading the grand entry at their family's Round-Up Rodeo in Simonton, Texas, during Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping's historic visit in 1979.

Their story, interwoven with the excitement of the rodeo and the gravity of a pivotal moment in US-China relations, captivated the audience during the Vision China event in New York. It painted a vivid picture of how two young Texan girls, then in high school, became an unexpected part of a diplomatic milestone.

"When we were told the vice-premier of China was coming to Simonton to see a rodeo, we didn't know what to expect," Kelly said at her pair presentation with her elder sister, Kitty.

The sisters' father had purchased the rodeo arena a few years earlier, turning their



Kelly Van Dries

regular Saturday night entertainment into a family business and an unforgettable chapter in their lives. Six months of preparation culminated in a day filled with bright lights and reporters worldwide.

According to their speech, it is a tradition that they begin every rodeo with a grand entry. "On Feb 2, 1979, the grand entry was led by my sister and I. I carried the American flag, and my sister Kelly carried the Chinese flag," Kitty said.

Kelly said the Chinese flag was nearly twice the size of the American flag. She showed a picture from

# ST, VISION FOR THE FUTURE

a and the United States together to share their views of improving bilateral ties



**Clockwise from top:** Qu Yingpu (6th from right), publisher and editor-in-chief of China Daily, Ma Xiaoxiao (6th from left), deputy consul general of China in New York, Hu Wei (5th from left), president and CEO of Bank of China USA, and David J. Firestein (5th from right), inaugural president and CEO of the George H. W. Bush Foundation for US-China Relations, pose for a photo with participants of a debate on AI at a Vision China event in New York on Thursday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY The audience listen to a speech during the event. WINSTON ZHOU / FOR CHINA DAILY Elyn MacInnis, founder of "Friends of Kuliang", speaks at the event. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

## What they say



The Vision China event was excellent because it shows there's so much compatibility between the Chinese and the Americans, and that if we work together, we will always find a solution.  
**John W. Allen**, chairman of Greater China Corporation



Your event (Vision China) really helps many people understand more about the culture of China and also the innovation that's going on, both the past, the present and the future. And I think that involving the young people along with the more established older is a very good thing. So the event, I think out of 100, it's 110.  
**Michael J. Daly**, Private Equity - Venture Capital CEO



Today's been super exciting. It's nice to see a lot more US-China business and communication. It's really helpful. And this great debate, in which the young folks talked about AI shows the depth of their knowledge and ability to listen, provide their views and respond.  
**Jesse Weiner**, co-managing partner and entertainment lawyer



A lot of people here are educated not only on the past of China, but also the future. I think the vision here is shared by a lot of people that are all successful in different fields.  
**Brock Gillespie**, former NBA player



Vision China had a really interesting range of speakers. There were stories that I'd never heard before. I've been to a lot of events on China-US relations. I myself lived in China for a long time. So, I've been in this space for a long time. It's really fun to still hear new stories.  
**Steve Blake**, account director, *Impact*



**Sarah Lande**

## Xi's unique bonding with America

By **MAY ZHOU** in New York  
mayzhou@chinadailyusa.com

Sarah Lande, hailing from the small Iowa city of Muscatine, has a special bond with Chinese President Xi Jinping since 1985.

She has even published a memoir titled *Old Friends: The Xi Jinping-Iowa Story* in 2017.

"Our relationship started with friendship. It has continued to grow through the years as people of all ages and all interests have had the opportunity to learn and share each other's culture, history and government," Lande told the audience at the Vision China event in New York through a video recording.

Lande first met Xi when he led a delegation to the riverfront city in southeast Iowa "to learn to feed his people" in 1985.

"He came to Muscatine, visited farms, had a boat ride on the Mississippi (River), stayed at the family house, and I was honored to have a potluck dinner hosting him in my home," Lande said.

When Xi revisited Muscatine in 2012 to meet with his "old friends" there, Lande hosted him and his delegation at her Muscatine home, and the friendship was renewed, she said.

At the reunion, Xi told Lande and others, "You were the first people in America I met, and to me you are America."

Years of exchanges between China and Iowa made Lande publish the memoir. It was inspired by the memories and impressions written by the four gentlemen who were part of the 1985 delegation to Iowa led by Xi.

In November last year, Lande and other longtime friends were invited to meet with Xi when he was attending the APEC forum in San Francisco. There, Xi announced a program to invite 50,000 US citizen students to visit China and to get to know the language and culture.

"President Xi's generous support of youth education exchange has resulted in over 40 Muscatine High School students, educators and citizens traveling to China this year," Lande said.

She said the special relationship has resulted in numerous exchange visits to Muscatine this year. A Chinese delegation brought dances and acrobatics to Muscatine to celebrate Chinese New Year with local residents.

A dragon boat festival was held to savor a piece of Chinese traditions. High-ranking officials from Beijing and Hebei province visited the city.

Those "old friends" also participated in events in China and at the Chinese embassy in the US. About 120 students are taking Chinese-language classes at Muscatine High School. More exchanges are planned for the fall and next year.

"At this time, the world, our Earth needs the bright minds and big hearts of the peoples and leaders of the two largest economies to work together to solve critical issues of the day, including climate, food security, drugs and conflicts," she concluded.

Lande shared an August message from Xi in which the president said: "I thank you for your long-term efforts to promote cultural exchanges and people's goodwill between China and the United States. I count on you to continue to play your role as envoy of friendship between our two countries and make greater contributions to the friendship between our two peoples."

## o and a cowboy hat f US-China relations



**Kitty Van Dries**

"It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience and I am more than grateful as I was able to be part of it," Kitty said.

Kitty said when she was carried to the back, Deng sent his personal physician there to make sure she was okay. Then, she was invited to sit with Deng, his wife and the translator in the stands for a while. "They asked me questions about the different rodeo events and I explained everything to them in detail."

And Kitty still remembered what happened the next day. "The People's Republic of China sent our family a three-foot multiple five-foot needlepoint of the Great Wall of China, which was beyond beautiful!" In their memory, this art had been hanging in their parents' living room for many years.

Kitty said, "People back home still talk about Deng's visit even 45 years later!"

Kelly said, "Who would have thought a cowboy hat would become a huge deal for the relationship between the United States and China!"

that day of her riding a horse with part of the flag tucked into her boot and the rest in her hand. Their performance wasn't without its challenges. Kitty just recovered from a knee surgery; her horse lost its footing and fell, sending her tumbling.

Replacing his sister, Kelly rode her horse up to the fence, holding her reins in one hand and presenting the cowboy hat for Deng in the other. "As I gifted him the hat, he accepted the gift and placed it on his head," she recalled, describing the arena "went wild" with applause, flashlights and shouts.

## Mountain of memories: Kuliang's legacy brings East and West together

By **MINGMEI LI** in New York  
mingmeili@chinadailyusa.com

China's Kuliang, nestled in the mountains and shrouded in a light mist, has produced countless stories that span time and distance.

The small town in East China's Fujian province, once a popular summer retreat from the late 1800s until 1949, attracted many foreigners who lived in harmony with the local community generation after generation. "For eight years, it was almost like a treasure hunt," Elyn MacInnis, the consultant for the Kuliang history and culture research organization and also the founder of "Friends of Kuliang", said in a speech on Thursday at the Vision China event in New York.

"We found so many treasures along the way, but especially the discoveries of people from the US and other countries who worked and lived with the Chinese people with understanding and respect.

"Their love and friendship was so deep that it is still echoing in our families to this day," said MacInnis.

After living and working in China for 30 years, MacInnis, who speaks fluent Mandarin, returned one day to Kuliang, the town where her husband, Peter, a descendant of a World War II Flying Tigers member, was born.

Initially, she was merely curious about her husband's family's roots,



**Elyn MacInnis**

but as they delved deeper into their research, more and more stories — like those of her own family — began to unfold, through museum archives, newspaper reports, diaries and albums.

"We had no idea where his former cottage was located. The local government came to our rescue, welcomed us, and took us on a tour, starting at the old post office, where we found a map on the wall," she said.

MacInnis found her family's old house, even though it was in ruins, but also found more details about the town, with the help of locals from Fujian and Chinese scholars, who were also interested in exploring Kuliang. "We had Peter and I, Professor Lin Yanan (an associate professor at East China University of Science

and Technology) and his students in Shanghai, and later, we found Guo Qing, who lives there and knows the people and the mountain like the back of his hand," she said.

MacInnis also mentioned that younger-generation students help translate documents. It took her and Peter eight years to search for stories and documents, and now, with the contribution of artificial intelligence, they were able to better identify people in old photos.

"Friendship requires spending time together," she said. MacInnis said that many of the foreign people who summered on the mountain were very committed to their work in China and worked in China for 20, 30, 40 years and generations, as educators, doctors and pharmacists.

Locals and foreigners in Kuliang helped each other by exchanging hometown vegetables and fruits, sharing the public well for water, building houses and rebuilding after typhoons passed through. Meanwhile, children explored the mountains and trees, MacInnis said.

"The foreigners left the mountain in the late 1940s, but they kept this beautiful place, full of friendship and good memories, in their hearts," she said. "Thank you, Kuliang — thank you, Fuzhou and Fujian, and thank you, China, for giving me this beautiful story to share with you today."

## LIFE

## TALES OF SILENT SUFFERING



Women, who have close experiences of depression, pour their hearts out in stage production 'What happened to You?', reports Cheng Yuezhu.



## THROUGH MONOLOGUES

On the stage of Beijing's Drum Tower West Theatre, the narrators, all women, ascended one by one. Against a pure black backdrop, supported only by simple art installations, they shared their own feelings or stories, some through poetic and abstract lines, others via lucid accounts of their own life episodes.

As the last performer, in a gentle yet firm tone, shared her poignant childhood experiences growing up with an abusive father, the other performers joined her on stage and sat in a circle, quietly listening to her.

Each performer had close experiences with depression, most having been diagnosed themselves, while others have friends grappling with the condition. These monologues were their responses to a question they've been too often asked, also the production's title, "What Happened to You?"

Directed by contemporary art critic and curator Liao Wen, the production was staged at the theater between Aug 30 and Sept 1, as a part of this year's sixth Luminous Festival, an annual event highlighting inclusive arts with stage performances, seminars and workshops.

The project was initiated by young artist Li Ruqi, better known as Kouzi. With herself and a few friends having gone through depression, she observed that when encountering individuals with depression, people often ask them what happened, in an attempt to find a logical answer so they'd understand.

However, for those with depression, this question can be overwhelming and nearly impossible to explain, since the personal, intricate and painful sentiments are difficult to convey. So, most of the time, they'd simply respond, "Nothing, I'm fine."

"Depression isn't something that can be generalized. Each person's causes and experiences are unique. So, rather than high-

lighting the concept of depression with a fixed narrative, I'd rather give everyone a chance to express themselves," she says.

Along with Liao, the director, she reached out to her close friends to find those who are willing to participate in the production and share their experiences onstage.

These performers vary in age and occupation, and most of them are performing onstage for the first time, but all of them have close experiences of depression.

The women tell in total seven stories. Their age groups vary between 20 and 50 years.

"We hoped that the actors can use the straightforward method of monologue to express their feelings, so really there is no strict standards of identity, age or stage experience. Our most important standard is that they are able to very genuinely and honestly say what they'd like to say," she says.

The production is created and performed adopting Liao's concept of "life performance", setting itself apart from traditional theater productions by allowing the performers a high degree of freedom to create and express themselves.

Liao started experimenting with this concept around 10 years ago, as an exploration of navigating between performance art and the performing arts.

"The similarity we share with performance art is self-expression rooted in the contemporary art field. As for theater, the performance adopts theatrical structure and certain acting techniques, but the actors are not performing characters. They're portraying themselves," Liao says.

In these performances, it doesn't matter whether the performers are professionals, or whether they're adopting artistic expressions. What truly matters is they are in any way of their choice — lines, movements or gestures — narrating their life situations and deepest emotions.



**Top:** The stage production sees narrators telling their own stories. **From above top:** The stage prop is an artistic installation. Creative members and performers join in a Q&A session. PHOTOS BY LI XIAOAO AND FENG DONGYANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

For this production, since the creative crew intended to emphasize its social significance and ensure the messages are lucidly conveyed to the audiences, they decided to adopt a monologue format.

"All the monologues were written by each of them personally. When I saw the lines they wrote, I was deeply surprised. Everyone expressed their raw feelings in a genuine and unique way, without any deliberate embellishment," she says.

While the production features very few stage props, the vast majority of them are installation artworks by contemporary artists, including *Heart* by Xu Jingyu and *Dog* by Wu Gaozhong.

"This has always been Liao's approach to life performance. In the eyes of the public, artworks often seem a little lofty. They are to be framed, appreciated and not to be touched. But art itself should be closely connected to life. We've been thinking about how to create more interaction and connection between art and real people," Li says.

These installations are matched with each performer after communicating with them. Some performers requested specific imagery, while others were paired with installations that fit naturally into the performers' narratives.

Liao says that before directing this production, she had limited knowledge about depression. However, upon learning about its increasing trend, especially among the younger generations, she hopes that this production can spark discussions, and enhance public awareness and understanding of depression.

The World Health Organization estimates that 54 million people in the country experience depression and about 41 million have anxiety disorders.

"The final result was truly astonishing. It was their first time on stage for most of the performers. When they performed, they

weren't reciting memorized lines written by themselves, but were expressing their most genuine feelings. I think the performances are incredibly moving," Liao says.

"It takes immense courage and bravery to openly express one's weakest and most private moments, not just for them, but for everybody. So, I really feel for them to see them onstage, because they're revealing their most personal feelings rather than performing."

Although the creation and performance processes can be emotionally taxing, the performers believe that the production is a worthy cause to invest themselves in, and they are strong enough to readjust themselves.

"It is strenuous to perform three days in a row. But there's no need to worry about us. We'll carry on performing as long as we can, and we will recharge our batteries afterward," says Gu Feng, one of the performers.

"For me, I expressed my lines based on how I felt each day. For the first performance, I wasn't in a great state, so my delivery may have seemed a little cold or nonchalant. But over time, I started to feel changes in my own state. During the last performance, I felt that it is interesting to share my experiences with others."

According to Ge Huichao, founder of the Luminous Festival, the production is an effort to use art to reflect on social topics. While research and reports indicate a rising number of depression cases, stage productions or artworks addressing this topic are scarce in comparison.

"Presenting such a project in the theater is an opportunity for the performers, the audiences and the general public. It allows us to recognize the structural imbalance and creates a space for mutual understanding and connection," Ge says.

Contact the writer at [chengyuezhu@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:chengyuezhu@chinadaily.com.cn)

## Teachers bring Chinese language to remote Sri Lankan homes

COLOMBO — Voices reading Chinese are often heard on the serene hilly campus of Sabaragamuwa University nestled in the southern foothills of Sri Lanka's central mountains.

Stationed here are three teachers from China, teaching at a Confucius Classroom established in 2019 by China's Huanggang Normal University and Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka.

Life here comes with many inconveniences. Mosquitoes swarm the teachers' dormitories which often have scary visitors like snakes and rats. Water, electricity, and internet cuts lasting seven or eight days during the rainy season are common. Fresh vegetables and daily essentials can only be bought at the farmers' market that is held once a week, and the nearest supermarket requires nearly an hour's drive on mountain roads.

Despite all these, Zhu Song, the director of this classroom, who has persevered here for over three years, remains optimistic. "I have survived the most difficult challenges. I feel quite content with life now," she says.

The other two women, Zhang Huan and Xia Zihan, share a positive and optimistic understanding of their profession as overseas Chinese teachers. "Rather than defining ourselves through sacrifice and dedication, we prefer to inspire children with positivity, friendliness, and vitality, igniting their enthusiasm for learning Chinese and their love for China."

They have tailored Chinese textbooks to suit the students' levels. To foster students' interest in Chinese culture, they have introduced various traditional Chinese art forms. Additionally, this classroom helped set up a Chinese teaching branch at Banda-

ravela Central College in the nearby Uva province, and they regularly train local Chinese teachers there.

The enthusiasm for learning Chinese is gradually spreading here. Xia mentions that there are two weekly Chinese courses for faculty members at the Confucius Classroom, currently attracting nearly 20 persons.

"This year, we had a Chinese food festival, featuring homemade dumplings and *tanghulu* (candied fruits). Over 400 villagers from the nearby areas took part in the festival. When teaching them how to say 'hello' 'thank you' and 'dumpling', I felt like I was a Chinese teacher too," says Dulani Weerakoon, a student majoring in Chinese here.

Rohan Abeywickrama, dean of the faculty of Social Sciences and Languages at the University of Sabaragamuwa, says that in recent years, the enthusiasm of university students

to major in Chinese has registered a conspicuous upward trend.

"This year, there are 21 students who have chosen Chinese as their primary major and an additional 50 students selected Chinese as their second or third major, accounting for more than one-fifth of the students in the same grade. All thanks to the enthusiastic efforts of the three Chinese teachers," Abeywickrama adds.

"The Confucius Classroom offers students more opportunities to connect with China, experience Chinese culture, and even participate in study tours to China, while fostering friendship between Sri Lanka and China. With the Confucius Classroom established here, the Chinese language dreams of the students in the mountain areas are no longer distant," Abeywickrama says.



A teacher shows calligraphy and Chinese characters to her Sri Lankan students on Sept 4. PHOTOS BY CHEN DONGSHU AND WU YUE / XINHUA

# Beating their own drums

Percussion festival gives musicians chance to be loud and proud and make a noise, **Chen Nan** reports.

When we think of music, our minds are often filled with the melodies and harmonies produced by various instruments. One category of instrument that stands out for its unique and captivating sounds is percussion. From drums to cymbals, tambourines to marimbas, percussion instruments span a wide range of forms and sizes.

In 2010, percussionist-conductor Li Biao, along with the National Centre for the Performing Arts, had a bold idea to launch the first NCPA Percussion Festival, hoping to highlight and popularize these instruments. Over nine days, percussionists from around the world staged various shows at the NCPA, allowing every corner of the grand venue to be immersed with rhythmic beats.

Now, 14 years later, the festival, which is held every two years, returns. On Aug 29, Li announced that the 2024 NCPA Percussion Festival is bringing an exciting celebration of rhythm from Saturday to Oct 7.

Under the theme "Dragon Soars Across the Seas", the festival will showcase diverse percussion performances from artists and ensembles from around the world, including 11 from China, Brazil, Germany, and Denmark.

This year, the festival opens with a concert by the China National Traditional Orchestra on Saturday, with musicians displaying the charm of traditional Chinese percussion instruments, such as the folk gongs and drums of Jiangzhou, Shanxi province, and Xi'an Guyue, a type of music integrating drums and wind instruments, which has been played in China's ancient capital of Xi'an, Shaanxi province.

"If you've always been captivated by the rhythm and energy of percussion instruments, then you're in the right place, whether it's the primal beat of the drums or the intricate sounds of the xylophone," said Li at the NCPA in Beijing on Aug 29, adding that he still recalls the exciting moments when the first festival was launched. "If you hope to discover something new about percussion instruments that you may have never experienced before, then you are in the right place too."

"I didn't expect the warm feedback from the audience since, for many people, percussion instruments can only be seen in orchestras, rather than being staged as a solo instrument," he says. "We explored different types of percussion, highlighting their unique characteristics and roles in various music genres. People kept coming back to the festival. Some have been with us from little kids to young adults, which is a very rewarding experience for me."



From top: Musicians Bai Weiqi, Li Biao, Su Shu and Zhu Jianping will be on stage at the 2024 NCPA Percussion Festival.

Li started out as a xylophone player at the age of 5, when he lived in Nanjing, the capital of East China's Jiangsu province. At 12, his talent and sense of rhythm convinced his teachers and parents to send him to the middle school of the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. In 1988, he became one of the first Chinese students of percussion instruments to study abroad on a government scholarship in Moscow.

Li immersed himself in Europe's rich musical history and culture, learning Western classical percussion instruments and modern music with jazz musicians and symphony orchestras. In 2003, he joined as faculty of the Hanns Eisler School of Music Berlin, and two years later, returned to Beijing to establish a percussion instruments' department at the Central Conservatory of Music and launched his band — Li Biao Percussion Band.

On Oct 4, the Li Biao Percussion Band will stage a concert at the outdoor space of the Beijing Performing Arts Centre — a newly launched venue of the NCPA — featuring young Chinese percussionists led by Bai Weiqi, a student of Li, now teaching at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing.

"In the beginning, we launched the band only hoping to keep the students busy during the summer vacations. As more and more students joined in, we started to perform around the country and even abroad," says Li, noting that many percussion instruments are well-suited for group playing, fostering teamwork and collaboration in ensemble settings. The energetic and often loud nature of percussion can be exciting and motivating for young learners, encouraging continued interest in music.

"When a percussionist strikes a drum or a cymbal, they transfer energy to the instrument, causing it to vibrate. It is magical," says Bai, adding that the concert will feature contemporary music pieces, displaying the versatility of percussion instruments. "We will offer a mix of solo, ensemble, and experimental performances to keep the audience engaged with different styles and sounds."

"There will be opportunities for audience to participate, such as drumming workshops and interactive performances, making the experience more engaging," Bai adds.

On Aug 29, Bai also led the audience to experience the simplest percussion by letting people clap their hands to beats. With physical activity, the music-making experience is dynamic and engaging.

On Sept 24 and 25, two concerts will be staged featuring music pieces composed or adapted by Liu



Top and above: Percussionist Li Biao (center, sitting, in the top picture) and his ensemble at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing in August 2023. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Heng, principal percussionist of the China NCPA Orchestra, with chamber music ensembles of various sizes. One of the original music pieces composed by Liu is titled *Vermilion Bird*, for solo marimba, inspired by the mythical creature of heaven in ancient Chinese mythology. Liu will also perform his composition, *Face to Face*, which is a music piece for two performers. Liu's wife, percussionist Ni Ranran, will join the performance. With percussion instruments, including a standard drum set and bongo drums (a pair of

small single-headed Afro-Cuban drums), the music piece portrays the scene when two people meet, argue and compromise.

One of Li's longtime friends, Danish percussionist Gert Mortensen, will join the festival. During the closing concert on Oct 7 at the NCPA, he will perform *I Ching* (The Book of Changes), a four-movement piece for solo percussion, which, inspired by the classic ancient Chinese book of divination, was written in 1982 by Danish composer Per Norgard.

Other highlights of the percussion festival will be concerts by clas-

sical guitarist Yang Xuefei and percussionist Zheng Yu, and China National Peking Opera Company, presenting excerpts from classic Peking Opera that showcase rhythmic percussion instruments, like the *bangu* (a small drum for beating time) or *dahuo* (big gong). The highly stylized performance art, which is about 200 years old, incorporates singing, acting and martial arts. Percussion instruments are widely used in Peking Opera performances.

Contact the writer at [chennan@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:chennan@chinadaily.com.cn)

## Porcelain gets an instrumental role in a national orchestra

By CHEN NAN

The fame of China's porcelain capital Jingdezhen, a city in Jiangxi province, has drawn tourists and artists from all over the country and the world, who have added their creative touch to the old city, where ancient porcelain production stretches back to the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220). About two years ago, musicians of the China National Traditional Orchestra traveled to the city, hoping to get inspired by the Jingdezhen porcelain music instruments, a unique category of musical instruments crafted from porcelain.

These instruments blend the traditional art of porcelain making

with musical functionality and cover different categories of instruments, such as chimes, drum, *erhu* (Chinese fiddle), and flutes.

On Sept 6, the China National Traditional Orchestra signed a strategic cooperation agreement with the Jingdezhen government in Beijing, aiming at fostering in-depth collaboration in performances, music creation, musician training and collaborative programs.

"We traveled to Jingdezhen many times to do research on those porcelain music instruments, which are very beautiful," says Zhao Cong, a veteran *pipa* (four-stringed Chinese lute) player, who is the president of the China National Traditional

Orchestra. "We were impressed by the city. The once old city has undergone a remarkable transformation, evolving from an old landmark to a vibrant place brimming with youthful energy, especially young entrepreneurs, artists and tourists."

"The rich heritage of porcelain making, the architectural charm and the porcelain musical instruments — all become our inspiration," she adds.

Zhao also says that the orchestra explored over 20 research sites in Jingdezhen to study the tonal qualities and production techniques of porcelain instruments, as well as the history of Jingdezhen's porcelain-making.

This new partnership will bring an innovative approach to blending

traditional culture with modern music elements. The orchestra aims to explore and expand the integration boundaries of traditional music in contemporary scene, drawing inspiration from the porcelain to unlock new possibilities for musical expression, Zhao says.

"These instruments are valued not only for their musical properties but also for their artistic craftsmanship. They represent a fusion of Jingdezhen's porcelain artistry with traditional Chinese musical instruments," says Cui Suxiang, deputy mayor of Jingdezhen, in Beijing on Sept 6. "The porcelain material contributes to a unique tonal quality, often characterized by a clear, resonant, and some-

times delicate sound that is distinct from wooden or metal instruments."

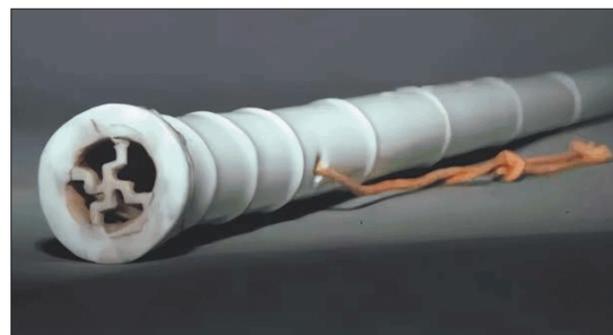
Cui says that Jingdezhen boasts a rich history spanning more than 2,000 years of pottery-making, 1,000 years of official kiln history, and 600 years of imperial kiln heritage. Known globally for qualities that show they are "white as jade, bright as a mirror, thin as paper, and resonant as a chime", Jingdezhen's porcelain musical instruments are not so well documented but hold significant artistic and cultural value.

Jingdezhen porcelain instruments reflect the city's historical and cultural heritage, symbolizing a blend of artistic excellence and musical tradition. They are often

used in performances to highlight this unique aspect of Chinese culture, Cui notes.

The collaboration will also have musicians from the China National Traditional Orchestra to work with local musicians, including the Jingdezhen Singing and Dancing Troupe, which has been known for producing and developing musical instruments made of porcelain since 1985.

Jingdezhen's porcelain ensembles, which perform daily for tourists, will participate in the performances with the China National Traditional Orchestra, allowing more audiences to enjoy the beauty of porcelain music, according to Cui. Additionally, the orchestra will create and arrange porcelain music programs by working with local musicians.



Left: A Tang Dynasty (618-907) black-glazed waist drum housed at the Palace Museum in Beijing. Center: Zhao Cong (left), a veteran *pipa* player, who is the president of the China National Traditional Orchestra, and Cui Suxiang, deputy mayor of Jingdezhen, sign a strategic cooperation agreement in Beijing on Sept 6. Right: A flute crafted from Jingdezhen porcelain. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

# Exhibit gives Greek art a fair shake

Nanjing Museum highlights power of Athenian art, **Zhao Xu** reports.

A man, probably in his early 20s, with short curly hair and a mantle draped over his left shoulder is accompanied by a dog. He is facing a bearded, much more mature-looking man donning a longer mantle baring his chest.

Shown in profile on a marble stele dating to around 400 BC, the two are in the middle of a handshake, with both holding out their right hands.

"This was no handshake in the common sense of the word, but one that allowed a father to say a proper goodbye to his beloved son, who passed at his prime," says Guan Lin, curator of an ongoing exhibition, *The Glory of the Aegean Sea*, dedicated to ancient Greek civilization at the Nanjing Museum.

"In ancient Greek funerary art, the handshake is a gesture of final farewell, with the departed extending his or her right hand," she says.

"This marble relief is a grave stele found in Athens near a seaside church."

A viewer, who looks closely enough, will find a small box dangling from the father's wrist.

Known as aryballos, it was for holding olive oil typically used by athletes before and after exercises. It is within the keeping of the father as a reminder of all the athletic activities no longer performed by his son.

If it is within the capacity of a powerful work of art to move, this one certainly does it in a highly restrained way — there's no explicit reference to death.

Another exhibit on view at the Nanjing Museum that has shed considerable light on the power of Grecian art is a marble female figurine dating to a period between 2800 BC and 2300 BC.

With her gender indicated as much by protruding breasts as by the inverted pubic triangle, the figurine demonstrates an artistic brevity that would have lived up to the intense scrutiny of any modern art critic.

Yet the most powerful examples of the Grecian way of merging art with living are to be found on ancient Greek potteries.

"Wrapped-around canvases, this pottery art depicts every aspect of the Grecian existence and every character who had populated the Greek narrative, be it history or mythology," says Guan, pointing to a few pottery pieces on display that have as their themes a funerary procession, a boxing match and a struggle between Minotaur and Theseus, a divine hero who eventually subdued the human-bodied, bull-headed monster.

Ancient Greece was a land of stories, and the best of all its storytellers was Homer, who lived around the eighth century BC and whose two epic poems — *Iliad* and *Odyssey* — are considered the foundational works of not only Greek but also Western literature.

Homer wrote with such bristling details about the Trojan War, fought between the Greek forces and the city of Troy, arguably located in Hisarlik in modern-day Turkey, that archaeologists and historians who came millennium later found it hard to believe that the author had written purely from imagination.

One of them was renowned German archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann, who was tempted to name a gold mask he unearthed from a burial ground in Mycenae in 1876 "The Mask of Agamemnon," after the legendary Mycenaean king who, in Homer's *Iliad*, commanded the Greek forces during the Trojan War. Mycenae is a prehistoric Greek city located in Peloponnese Peninsula and celebrated by Homer as "rich in gold."

The mask, found laid over the face of a dead person considered a member of Mycenaean royalty, dates to the 16th century BC and is believed to have nothing to do with Agamemnon, even if the man existed. Yet it has retained its glorious name nonetheless.

At the Nanjing Museum exhibition, a copy of the mask created by Swiss artist Emile Gillieron (1850-1924), who once acted as the Greek royal family's official painter, is on view, a reminder of the real-world splendor that fueled Homer's unfailing imagination.

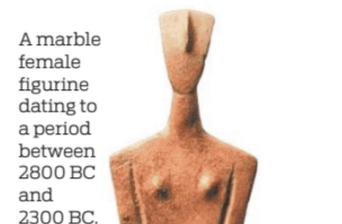
"Meriones gave Odysseus a bow and quiver, and a sword, and on his head, he set a helmet made of hide, with many a tight-stretched thong within; without, the gleaming tusks of a white-tusked boar were set thick on this side and that ..." wrote Homer in Book 10 of *Iliad*.

A helmet "made of hide" and covered with "the gleaming tusk of a white-tusked boar" — exactly as described by Homer — can be seen at the Nanjing Museum exhibition.

"The making of such a helmet required the hunting of approximately 50 wild boars,



An ancient Greek grave stele shows a symbolic handshake between a father and son. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



A reproduction of "The Mask of Agamemnon".



An ancient Greek leather helmet covered with boar tusks.

"In ancient Greek funerary art, the handshake is a gesture of final farewell, with the departed extending his or her right hand. This marble relief is a grave stele found in Athens near a seaside church."

Guan Lin, curator of Nanjing Museum

a fact that made the battle headgear a piece of luxury, as well as a showcase of bravery and strength," says Guan.

Although Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* belonged to an earlier tradition of oral storytelling, they greatly influenced Greek tragedy, a core part of the ancient Greek theater that originated in Athens around the 5th century BC.

Part of the religious festivals dedicated to Dionysus, the god of wine who was given a nod in a controversial scene featured in the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics, the ancient Greek theater was anything but frivolous.

In fact, it was meant to give moral lessons, to provide political commentary, and to make the Athenians more aware of their civic duties, which included the keeping of justice.

A water clock dating to the 5th century BC and on view at the Nanjing Museum was used to time speeches during law proceedings conducted in an Athenian court. According to Guan, the allotted duration of the speech was proportional to the seriousness of the case.

"An experienced speaker could tell the time remaining by observing the dwindling water pressure", referring to the fact that the water clock comprised two vessels placed at different levels, and that one must end his address the moment the water from the higher vessel had flowed completely into the lower one.

All the judges in Athenian courts were chosen by lot, the same way the Athenian tribes picked their representatives to form the Boule, or the Council of Citizens, which played a crucial role in the governance of the city.

"Justice in the life and conduct of the state is possible only as first it resides in the hearts and souls of the citizens," said Plato.

Contact the writer at [zhaoxu@chinadaily.com.cn](mailto:zhaoxu@chinadaily.com.cn)

## Two great civilizations share a cup of knowledge

By ZHAO XU

One of the exhibits that start the exhibition *The Glory of the Aegean Sea* at the Nanjing Museum is a tiny stone amulet with a surface area of no more than 9 square centimeters and a thickness of around 0.6 cm. Its oval contour, together with a few incised lines across its surface, reminds a viewer of a curled-up human figure or a fetus in the womb.

And that offers an apt metaphor for ancient Greek civilization, which the exhibition is hoping to shed light on through more than 270 pieces of exhibits from 14 museums and cultural organizations in Greece. The creativity and splendor spawned by that civilization means it has been viewed by many as lying at the origin of Western civilization, having exerted foundational influence on the latter in areas ranging from philosophy and science to art and literature.

It's a starting point that people in the West look back on from time to time: the Renaissance that ended the millennium-long Dark Ages was emphatically declared a revival of interest in the ideas, art and literature of ancient Greek — and by extension Roman — civilization.

For those familiar with Chinese history, that gigantic, society-wide effort, which involved among many other things the study of ancient Greek texts, might bring to mind one man: Confucius (551-479 BC). Living in the lively and chaotic time of China's Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC), the philosopher, long enshrined by Chinese history, advocated for his contemporaries to look back to the early Western Zhou Dynasty (c. 11th century-771 BC) as a model for moral governance and social harmony.

"It was still far too early for the two civilizations to intersect, let alone interact, but that doesn't mean parallels couldn't be found," says Guan Lin, curator of the Nanjing Museum exhibition, which is being held at the same time of another exhibition at the Shanghai Museum focusing on ancient Egyptian civilization and another one, at the Suzhou Museum, which is introducing its audience to the equally resplendent but lesser-known culture of ancient Assyria.

"Collectively, they have offered us a worldview and a reference point from where we could examine our own cultural traditions," says Ma Minghe, who has been to all three shows.

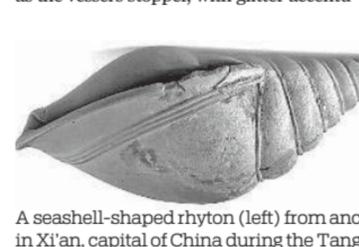
Back at the Nanjing Museum exhibition, a frying pan-shaped clay vessel dating between 2800 BC and 2300 BC is decorated with the image of a multi-oared longboat. The boat is surrounded by sea waves, as suggested by the repeated spiral pattern.

"Ancient Greek civilization is an ocean civilization in the true sense of the word," says Guan.

The item, a piece of tin-glazed pottery dating to the 16th century BC, is on loan from the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, which also has among its collection a seashell-shaped ceremonial drinking vessel known as a rhyton. More than 2,200 years later, similar-shaped vessels, often made of precious metals or stones, would travel the ancient Silk Road to the capital of China during the Tang Dynasty (618-907), where they were known as the *laitong* cup, *laitong* being a homophone to rhyton.

A superb example was unearthed in 1970 from what's believed to be a Tang Dynasty storage of precious items in a small village located in the southern suburbs of Xi'an city, the one-time capital of Tang. Known today as Hejiacun Village Hoard, this treasure trove is widely viewed by archaeologists as offering compelling evidence to the level of material exchange going on across the ancient trade route.

Buried with many pieces of Sassanian-style gold and silver wares was this rhyton wine vessel carved out of beautifully striated agate into a horned bull head whose streamlined, upward-bending curve recalls the ascending spiral of a magnificent seashell. The bull's nose, minted in gold, serves as the vessel's stopper, with glitter accentu-



A seashell-shaped rhyton (left) from ancient Greece and an agate rhyton unearthed in Xi'an, capital of China during the Tang Dynasty (618-907).



A frying pan-shaped clay vessel (above) dating between 2800 BC and 2300 BC and a stone amulet (below).

ated by the muted colors of the agate.

Between this agate rhyton, believed to have been brought to Tang China by Sogdian merchants who dominated the ancient Silk Road between the 4th and 7th centuries, and the seashell-shaped one from ancient Greece, there were numerous others produced over large areas of ancient Eurasia, particularly from Persia to the Balkans. Very often, they took the shape of an animal's head or a bullhorn.

In fact, the word rhyton comes from the Greek word *rhein*, which means "to flow through", thus the two openings on each end of the vessel. Judging by all evidence, it seems that the same words could also be said of ancient Greek civilization itself, which had either trickled or flooded its way across continents and ages to enable a meeting between an ocean civilization and its many land counterparts.

The Nanjing Museum exhibition concluded with a small chapter dedicated to Alexander the Great (356-323 BC), the king of Macedonia — Macedonia being a Greek city-state — and an invincible warrior who, remarkably, harbored a tolerant side and believed in a multicultural society. By sacrificing to the gods of his conquered land and honoring their traditions, Alexander greatly expanded the influence of ancient Greek civilization in a way that also allowed for "a creative synthesis of cultures", to use the words of Angeliki Kotaridi, a highly regarded Greek archaeologist.

In 327 BC, seven years after Alexander invaded the Achaemenid Persian Empire, Alexander married Roxana, a Sogdian princess, despite opposition from those close to him who would have preferred a Macedonian or other Greek to become queen. The ancient Sogdians were an Eastern Iranian people who inhabited the region of Sogdiana in modern-day Central Asia, from where they later embarked on their Silk Road journeys.

However, Alexander, whose ultimate goal was to reach the "ends of the world and the Great Outer Sea", didn't stop there. He invaded India the very next year but eventually turned back at the Beas River in Punjab at the demand of his homesick troops. He died in 323 BC in Babylon, not knowing that there was a whole wide world lying beyond his "ends of the world".

That death, which some equated with the end of ancient Greek civilization, heralded in another historical period known as the Hellenistic Period (323-31 BC). Marked by Rome's rise to prominence, this period saw the continued spread of Greek cultural influence throughout the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East. Some scholars even suggested that this period may have witnessed the earliest interactions between the civilizations of ancient Greece and China, as Alexander's expansion into Central Asia brought the influence of Greek culture closer to the outer frontiers of China's powerful Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24).

Julius Caesar (100-44 BC), the legendary Roman general, was believed to have once turned up at a theater draped in resplendent Chinese silk, causing an outcry from the senate whose members had arguably sought to ban silk importation from China in an effort to prevent the outflow of gold. That was about eight decades after the initial opening of the ancient Silk Road, by the legendary Chinese emissary-explorer Zhang Qian between 139 BC and 126 BC.

That story was never substantiated, but a popular Latin saying of the time went: *Seres, a fortunatissimis sinibus*. *Seres* refers to the people of Serica, an ancient term often associated with China or other silk-producing Asian regions. The phrase effectively translates into "The Seres, from the most fortunate and prosperous shores".

# LIFE



Konchog Raptan and his mother (right) enjoy quality time in their home in the summer pasture in Nyingchi, Xizang autonomous region.



Konchog Raptan (left) is picked up by his father from school in Nyingchi to go to the summer pasture for a four-day break.



With his younger sister at his side, Konchog Raptan demonstrates his Tibetan calligraphy with a pen.

Photos by JIGME DORJE and TENZIN NYIDA | Xinhua

About 4,000 meters above sea level, in the highland area of Nyingchi, Southwest China's Xizang autonomous region, lies a vibrant primary school. It is where 10-year-old Konchog Raptan in Nyangpo township thrives in his fifth-grade studies.

The Nyangpo Township Central Primary School stands as the highest school in the township, accommodating 397 students, most of whom are from alpine pastoral regions, with some living more than 50 kilometers away from home. Consequently, most opt to board.

Equipped with modern facilities, including classrooms with interactive touch-screen teaching systems and heating, the school has indoor and outdoor basketball courts and two soccer fields.



## The height of learning

School, 4,000 meters above sea level, gives students greater opportunities



Konchog Raptan (left) has fun with his cousin whose eyes are covered by clothing.

### 960,000 students

the number receiving tuition from 3,472 schools at various levels in Xizang by the end of last year

To ease the burden of daily commuting, the school is operated on a special calendar that sees students attend for 10 days and then enjoy a four-day break.

For Konchog Raptan's father, the schedule is well designed for his son during the summer, when the family moves to the pastures and on his days off, Konchog Raptan returns to them. Amid the verdant hills and flowing water, he assists his father with herding and aids his mother in tasks.

"If not for boarding facilities, balancing daily commutes and our bustling lives would be incredibly



Top: Fifth-grader Konchog Raptan, in glasses, concentrates on a lesson at the Nyangpo Township Central Primary School in Nyingchi, Southwest China's Xizang autonomous region. Above: During a break at school, students line up to get milk.

challenging," the father says, adding that their summer pasture is about an hour's drive to school.

Every day, after washing up and having breakfast in the morning, Konchog Raptan begins his day of study with his classmates.

In addition to three daily meals, they enjoy snacks like bread, fruit and yogurt during breaks at the school. After evening study sessions, students return to the dormitory before 10 pm. Konchog Raptan takes pride in his proficiency in Tibetan calligraphy, often showcasing his skills to his younger sister upon returning home. Students in Xizang have been enjoying 15 years of publicly funded education — from kindergarten to high school — since the 2010s. Apart from preferential compulsory education policies, children of farmers and herdsmen in the region are exempted from paying tuition and get free meals and dormitories in schools.



Before the lights are turned off, Konchog Raptan (below right) and his roommates enjoy a moment in the dormitory.

The Xizang autonomous region has witnessed a remarkable transformation in its educational landscape since the region started practicing democratic reform in 1959 with the region's investment in education increasing to 39.3 billion yuan (\$5.52 billion) last year from more than 1.82 million yuan in 1959, according to the regional government work report delivered in January.

The report shows that the educational subsidy, including nutrition fees, in Xizang has been raised to 5,620 yuan per student per year this year, benefiting 746,000 students.

By the end of last year, Xizang boasted 3,472 schools at various levels, with 960,000 students — 26.3 percent of its total population — receiving tuition, according to data from the regional education authorities.



At the summer pasture, Konchog Raptan (left) and his father herd cattle.



With spectacular mountains in the background, he helps his mother with the chores.

# Service trade fueling growth across borders

Opportunities presented by digital economy and cooperation highlighted by Georgia

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Officials and experts from home and abroad recognized the key role of the service trade in driving global transactions and called for enhanced international cooperation at a summit on Thursday.

The Global Trade in Services Summit, a key part of the ongoing China International Fair for Trade in Services, attracted Chinese and foreign government officials and leaders of international organizations to share their insights on topical issues and trends.

The service trade has become an important pillar for economic growth, job creation and driving innovation. It is propelling global trade development and shaping the development landscape, Georgia's First Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Economy Levan Davitashvili said in his speech at the summit.

With global trade increasingly shifting toward digital platforms, the digital economy presents opportunities, Davitashvili said. Georgia is focused on creating a conducive environment for e-commerce, financial technology and digital services. Meanwhile, the country is committed to sustainable development, with an emphasis on such areas as environmental protection, healthcare services and cultural preservation, he said.

Georgia attaches significance to investment cooperation with China and the two countries have cooperated in diverse sectors including construction, finance and energy, he said.

Davitashvili emphasized the crucial role of international cooperation in the service trade and called for the international community, which is facing common challenges, to work together to create solutions that benefit all stakeholders.

In this regard, CIFTIS provides a sound platform, which is expected to enable cooperation in new fields and enhance collaborations, thus helping to provide solutions for a more interconnected, sustainable and prosperous global economy, he said.

Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organization, Daren Tang, pointed out that global trade is increasingly shifting from tangible products transported by vehicles and vessels to intangible products on the electronic superhighway and digital platforms.

This shift is also driving growth in the global trade in services, he said. WIPO data show that the growth of intangible asset investments has been much higher than that of tangible asset investments over the past 15 years.

IP is playing a pivotal role in promoting the development of international trade and it can serve as a catalyst to support entrepreneurs and businesses in creating employ-



ment, transforming research into economic growth, Tang said.

Data from China's Ministry of Commerce show that IP-intensive services accounted for 41.4 percent of China's international trade in services in 2023. Of its export services, 57.5 percent were IP-intensive, growing 7.8 percentage points from 2022.

WIPO and the global IP community need to collaborate with all stakeholders in establishing global trade, financial and business ecosystems, and will continue to promote the use of IP to support trade and assist exchanges, Tang added.

Secretary-General of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Mathias Cormann, said in his video speech that the global trade in services has shown robust growth in recent years, becoming a crucial engine for global economic development. China is a key contributor to the global trade in services and there will still be ample room for China's development in the future.

China's foreign trade in services is at the forefront of the world. Its import and export accounted for 7.5 percent and 4.8 percent, respectively, of the world's total in 2023, according to data from China's Ministry of Commerce.

The OECD looks forward to strengthening its partnership with China, including cooperation with the Ministry of Commerce and the Development Research Center of the State Council to boost the development of open and dynamic trade in services, Cormann said.

The value of China's foreign trade in services, denominated in US dollars, saw a 6.2 percent average annual increase over the past decade. It outpaced the global average growth and that of China's foreign trade in goods during the same period, Wang Dongtang, director-general of the Department of Trade in Services and Commercial Services at the Ministry of Commerce, told Xinhua News Agency.

The figure rose to 6.6 trillion yuan (\$928.74 billion) in 2023, a record high, and continued momentum into the first seven months of this year to reach 4.2 trillion yuan, up 14.7 percent year-on-year, with both imports and exports realizing double-digit growth.



A robot, which can simulate the movements and singing in a Peking Opera Monkey King performance, is a major attraction at the thematic exhibition of culture and tourism services at the 2024 CIFTIS. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

## Tech's role in public entertainment in spotlight

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The themed exhibition on culture and tourism services at the ongoing 2024 China International Fair for Trade in Services has featured immersive and tech-powered projects, where artificial intelligence and digital innovations enhance interactivity, drawing significant visitor attention.

As one of highlights of this year's CIFTIS, running from Thursday to Monday, the culture and tourism service exhibition is being held at Beijing's Shougang Park in Shijingshan district, with the exhibition area spanning 11,700 square meters.

A total of 832 exhibitors, including 50 Fortune Global 500 and industry-leading companies, are showcasing cultural and tourism innovation at the fair through AI-generated content, virtual reality and mixed-reality technologies.

Chinese VR headset maker Pico's latest MR device, the Pico 4 Ultra, along with a VR interactive game based on the *Three-Body Problem* novel, made their debut at such a large fair. The game allows users to immerse themselves in iconic scenes from the novel.

The world's first outdoor open-space MR cultural tourism experience project, based on Apple Vision Pro, is being showcased at the fair. Visitors can wear the headset to blend original virtual content with elements from Chaoyang district, surpassing the spatial limits of the exhibition hall and offering a high-quality mixed-reality experience for the audience.

The China National Film Museum has cooperated with a domestic tech company to create an extended reality virtual cinema, offering an immersive experience of the limitless possibilities of light and shadow art.

The thematic exhibition of the fair also highlights the latest achieve-



**From top:** A man focuses his handheld gimbal camera on an array of robots at the thematic exhibition of culture and tourism services. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY Taking advantage of advanced technology, a visitor to the CIFTIS exhibition tries his hand at riding a sword in the air like a swordsman from a kung fu movie. SONG JIARU / FOR CHINA DAILY

ments in the creative transformation and innovative development of traditional Chinese culture.

Key exhibits include sitting in a VR cabin to travel the Beijing Central Axis, a VR experience of the Great Wall and AI-generated content themed around the Grand

Canal, showcasing the majestic beauty of these landmarks.

The Beijing Central Axis, inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in late July, is especially featured in the exhibition area. It highlights its historical significance, cultural value and World Heritage

application process through more than 10 related exhibits and special activities.

Besides, more than 1,200 cultural and creative products from 46 key cultural institutions and companies, as well as more than 400 products from 11 parks and the Museum of Chinese Gardens and Landscape Architecture, offer visitors a rich cultural experience.

In recent years, Beijing has achieved success in high-quality cultural development, said Huo Zhijing, deputy head of the Beijing Publicity Department.

In the first half of this year, Beijing's cultural companies achieved a revenue of 1.04 trillion yuan (\$146.12 billion), increasing 7.9 percent year-on-year.

Among them, new cultural industries generated 742.52 billion yuan in revenue, up 12.4 percent year-on-year. It accounted for more than 70 percent of the total revenue of the city's cultural companies.

The high-quality development of Beijing's cultural industry has fostered a wealth of diverse scenarios and applications.

At the tourism sector, tech giant Baidu is presenting a smart tourism system covering food, accommodation, transportation, shopping and entertainment, while online travel agency Qunar launched a customized AI travel planning platform at the fair.

The exhibition also features Beijing-produced cultural works, which allow visitors to watch the Italian opera *Tosca* by the National Center for the Performing Arts and the *Teahouse* play by Beijing People's Art Theater on a 75-inch 8K BOE screen.

They can also enjoy live excerpts from Peking Opera play *Qi Baishi* by the Jingju Theater Company of Beijing and participate in Peking Opera experience activities, where they can observe props, costumes and traditional attire up close.

## Global influence of event evident by number of foreign exhibitors

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The China International Fair for Trade in Services, which is being held in Beijing, has gained in popularity among international exhibitors.

A total of 85 countries and international organizations have pledged to organize exhibitions, conferences or promotional activities at this year's event. Thirteen of them, including France, Portugal and Nigeria, are independently hosting offline exhibitions at the CIFTIS for the first time.

Located in the China National Convention Center, one of the two main venues for the CIFTIS, the guest country of honor France has set up its booth that draws inspiration from iconic buildings in Paris. This is particularly evident in the replica of the Arc de Triomphe at the entrance and the arches of the Pont de Bir-Hakeim bridge within the exhibition area.

Ten renowned French companies and institutions — including insurer AXA, cosmetics company L'Oréal and tech company Schneider Electric — are exhibiting their high-

quality services in event management and operations; cultural and tourism services; green economy; healthcare; insurance and legal services; as well as their cooperation with Chinese partners, demonstrating the diversity and richness of France's involvement.

Norway has brought several industry-leading companies such as krill-based products supplier Aker BioMarine and high-tech manufacturer Kongsberg to its national booth at the 2024 CIFTIS.

These companies are showcasing Norway's achievements in biotechnology, healthcare and digital solutions, as well as the country's accomplishments in art, home design and innovative technologies.

At the booth of the United Arab Emirates, an official from the country said they wish to showcase the diversification of the UAE economy to the world.

He said his country is about more than just the oil industry. It has tourism, finance, aviation and more to offer.

At the Australian pavilion, more than 20 Australian businesses from industries such as finance, educa-



A replica of the Arc de Triomphe acts as the entrance of the French national booth at the 2024 CIFTIS. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY

tion, telecommunications, construction and green energy are participating.

Dominic Trindade from the Australian embassy in China told Chinese media that he is interested in China's achievements in sustainable development, response to climate change, and carbon emissions.

These are among the areas where Australia and China can collabo-

rate, he said, adding that by participating in the CIFTIS, they are seeking opportunities for collaboration with Chinese partners, with an attitude of openness and cooperation.

Trindade said that the CIFTIS serves as an opportunity for China to expand its opening-up and a key bridge for various countries to deepen their cooperation.

High-level internationalization is

a highlight at the other main venue for the CIFTIS, Shougang Park, which is hosting nine major themed service exhibitions, including culture and health.

The high level of international participation has been a hallmark of the education service exhibition at CIFTIS. One of the exhibition's four dedicated areas focuses on international education cooperation and exchange.

At the education service exhibition, 97 higher-education institutions and international organizations are present, a record high. Together with more than 150 online exhibitors in the education exhibition they are creating a diverse, open and cooperative platform for international exchanges, organizers said.

Of the offline exhibitors, more than 40 percent are overseas institutions from 15 countries across five continents.

At the sports service exhibition, more than 300 brands from home and abroad are on display. At least 56 of them are from overseas, covering more than 30 countries and

regions including France, Italy, Slovenia, Austria and Finland, organizers said.

The level of international participation demonstrates the CIFTIS sports service exhibition's influence and appeal, they noted.

At the themed exhibition on telecommunication, computer and information services, tech companies from Russia, France, Britain and other countries are showcasing their technological innovations in finance, intelligent manufacturing and medical sectors. Overseas brands account for 33 percent of exhibitors at the innovation incubation area.

At the health service exhibition, international brands account for 33.3 percent of total exhibitors.

Since its inception in 2012, the annual CIFTIS, which has been held 10 times, has seen its global recognition and influence rise. It has attracted a total of more than 900,000 exhibitors and attendees from 197 countries and regions, thus becoming a crucial platform for enhancing international cooperation in the service trade, according to organizers.