

OPINION: A CRITICAL SUPPLIER P.35 | FEATURES: BOAO BECKONS GLOBAL VOICES P.42

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THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

Xinjiang's inclusive
growth agenda

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Cover Photo: Uygur actress Dilraba Dilmurat (COURTESY PHOTO)

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EDITOR'S DESK



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Full-Spectrum Support

China prioritizes basic subsistence and development as fundamental human rights. It is also committed to advancing human rights comprehensively, covering economic, social, cultural and environmental rights, along with civil and political rights. Some in the developed world may not fully appreciate this priority as being equally, if not more, crucial than the rights their own society traditionally underlines.

Take Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in the northwest for instance, which covers an area of 1.66 million square km, about one sixth of China's total land area.

With a population of more than 25.8 million, the region is home to all of China's 56 ethnic groups, the four largest ones there being the Uygur (11.6 million), the Han (10.9 million), the Kazak (1.5 million) and the Hui (1.1 million), according to official figures.

The government has implemented initiatives focusing on infrastructure, education, healthcare and employment to boost the region's development. Over 70 percent of the regional government's fiscal expenditures every year are allocated toward improving the wellbeing of all its residents.

The region's GDP, an indicator of an economy's size and health, rose from 840 billion yuan (\$117.5 billion) in 2013 to

1.91 trillion yuan (\$270 billion) in 2023. Its residents' per-capita disposable income increased from 13,700 yuan (\$1,917) in 2013 to 28,947 yuan (\$4,023) in 2023.

As of late 2020, Xinjiang had eliminated absolute poverty. The region has since joined the national drive to pursue common prosperity, a people-centered development vision aligned with the broader goals of China to ensure inclusive growth where no individual is left behind.

In November 2023, the China (Xinjiang) Pilot Free Trade Zone, the 22nd in China and the first in the country's northwestern border regions, was inaugurated. In China, these zones are designated areas where special economic policies and regulations are tested to promote trade liberalization, investment and economic development.

Xinjiang's new zone is set to transform the inland region into a new frontier of the country's further opening up, unlocking massive potential for its future growth.

In recent years, however, the region has faced Western sanctions over unsubstantiated allegations of human rights abuses. But in effect, banning Xinjiang goods in the name of protecting human rights may only deny many the development opportunities they deserve. **BR**



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OPERA OVATION

Artists perform in a new season of the historical opera *Princess Wencheng* in Lhasa, capital of Xizang Autonomous Region, on March 12. Since its premiere in 2013, more than 1,800 performances of the opera have graced the stage.

The show recounts the tale of Princess Wencheng, who journeyed from the city of Chang'an (modern-day Xi'an in Shaanxi Province) over 1,300 years ago to wed the Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo.



Ready to Ro-Ro

Vehicles for export are parked at the Jiangyin Terminal of Fuzhou Port in Fuzhou, Fujian Province, on March 12. Four thousand vehicles produced by the passenger car workshop at the Ningde base of SAIC Motor Corp. Ltd. boarded the ro-ro (roll-on roll-off) cargo vessel *Wisdom Ace* at the terminal that day. This batch of vehicles is headed to countries including the Netherlands, Egypt and the UK.

New Publications

An English edition of the first two volumes of *Selected Readings From the Works of Xi Jinping* has been published by the Foreign Languages Press and distributed both in and outside China.

The first two volumes of the book series contain Xi's important works from November 2012 to October 2022, according to an official statement on March 11.

The English edition can help international readers to understand Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, as well as further the global community's understanding of Chinese modernization and

the modern civilization of the Chinese nation, according to the statement.

Spring Farming

China has earmarked 830 million yuan (\$115.5 million) to support this year's spring farming efforts, Xinhua News Agency reported on March 12.

The fund was jointly allocated by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

The fund will be used to boost disaster prevention and relief related to crop replanting, as well as the restoration of facilities involving agriculture, animal husbandry and fisheries in 12

provincial-level regions, including Jiangsu, Anhui, Henan, Hubei and Hunan provinces.

China's grain output hit a record high of 695.4 million tons last year, with per-capita grain possession standing at 493 kg, higher than the internationally recognized grain security line of 400 kg, official data showed.

Heart Stents

From 2021 to 2023, more than 3.7 million heart disease patients in China received implants utilizing discounted stents purchased through the country's bulk procurement program, according to the National Healthcare Security Administration (NHSA), Xinhua

reported on March 12.

During the same period, the country saw an increase in the use of the stents enlisted in the program, which registered an annual average growth rate of 17 percent, the NHSA said.

China in November 2020 initiated the centralized procurement of high-value medical consumables, with the first order being heart stents, slashing the price of the selected products to around 700 yuan (\$97.4) to 800 yuan (\$111.3).

Prior to the program's launch, the average price of heart stents was 13,000 yuan (\$1,808.3), and the imported ones were even priced at nearly 20,000 yuan (\$2,781.9).

According to the NHSA, over 95 percent of the patients receiving heart stent implants now opt for stents included in the program.

On the Move

Chinese primary and secondary schools have received a directive from the Ministry of Education regarding myopia prevention and control, Xinhua reported on March 12. The directive instructs schools to ensure that students engage in proper physical activities outside their classrooms between classes.

Schools are required to schedule a 30-minute recess for sports activities each day to help students alleviate visual fatigue. This initiative is part of a nationwide campaign for myopia prevention and control launched earlier in March, jointly announced by the ministry and three other departments.

Furthermore, the directive calls on market supervision departments throughout China to rigorously investigate and address any misleading marketing and publicity activities related to

myopia prevention and control products for children and adolescents per the law.

AI Inspection

China's southwestern province of Yunnan has implemented artificial intelligence (AI) technology to conduct most routine inspections at 621 power substations, replacing the need for human involvement, Xinhua reported on March 12.

The AI inspection system, using cameras, drones and walking robots, can complete an inspection in less than five minutes, a significant improvement from the five hours typically required by human workers, according to the Yunnan branch of the China Southern Power Grid (CSPG).

Yunnan, known for being a significant producer of hydropower and other forms of clean energy, boasts 1,937 power substations with a voltage of 35 kilovolts or higher, many of which are situated in mountainous regions. Wang Xin, a senior manager at CSPG's Yunnan branch, highlighted that accessing nearly half of these substations entails a journey of over three hours by road.

The CSPG has outlined plans to expand the implementation of

AI inspections to the remaining substations in the province within the next two years.

Plant Reintroduction

In Hubei Province, a significant conservation effort saw the reintroduction of 3,000 artificially bred rare and endangered plants into the wild in the Three Gorges Reservoir area on March 12.

Among these plants are 1,000 *Myricaria laxiflora* and 2,000 *Plantago fengdouensis*, both of which are endemic to the Yangtze River region. Through dedicated artificial breeding initiatives, these plants have been successfully reintroduced to their native habitats, reinstating them in their historical distribution areas.

Researchers highlighted that the reintroduction of the two plant species, known for their strong resistance to water flow and waterlogging, serves a dual purpose in the Three Gorges Reservoir area. Not only do these plants contribute to soil stabilization, but they also help to restore biodiversity in the region, researchers said.

Among the 2,000 *Plantago fengdouensis*, 500 are descendants of space-mutation breeding



Hydroponic Hi-Tech

A worker monitors the growth of hydroponic vegetables at a cutting-edge agricultural demonstration park in Guantao County, Hebei Province, on March 8. In a push toward agricultural modernization, the county has embraced smart technologies in recent years to enhance agricultural production processes.

plants. This marks a significant milestone as it represents the first instance of reintroducing the space-breeding species into the wild.

Afforestation Progress

China stepped up its greening efforts last year with 3.998 million hectares of forest planted, official data showed on March 12.

The figure was higher than the 3.83 million hectares of afforestation seen in 2022, according to a report issued by the National Greening Commission. In 2023, the country further restored 4.379 million hectares of degraded grassland and treated 1.905 million hectares of sandy and stony land.

China celebrated its 46th National Tree Planting Day on March 12.



She Power Unleashed

Teachers take part in a tug-of-war game at a primary school in Xianju County of Taizhou, Zhejiang Province, on March 8—International Women's Day. This event was part of celebrations held nationwide in honor of this day.

Auto Sales

Nationwide auto sales rose 11.1 percent year on year to nearly 4.03 million units in the first two months of this year, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

The country's auto output during the January-February period increased 8.1 percent year on year to 3.92 million units. Passenger car output and sales stood at 3.36 million units and 3.45 million units, up 7.9 percent and 10.6 percent year on year, respectively.

Commercial vehicle output surged 9 percent year on year to 560,000 units, while commercial vehicle sales went up 14.1 percent year on year to 575,000 units.

The new-energy vehicle (NEV) sector maintained fast growth momentum during the first two months.

In China, NEVs refer to vehicles completely or mainly driven by new-energy sources, including battery electric vehicles, plug-in hybrid electric

vehicles and fuel cell vehicles.

The country's NEV output reached 1.25 million units, climbing 28.2 percent compared with a year earlier. Sales of NEVs rose 29.4 percent year on year to 1.21 million units.

Total auto exports amounted to 822,000 units during the mentioned period, an increase of 30.5 percent year on year, the data revealed.

Freight Train Expansion

China-Europe freight train services recorded solid expansion in January and February, data from China State Railway Group Co. Ltd. (China Railway), the country's railway operator, showed.

The number of China-Europe freight train trips reached 2,928 in the first two months of this year, up 9 percent year on year, according to China Railway.

About 317,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) of goods, with TEU being an inexact unit of cargo capacity, were transported

via the freight train services during this period, up 10 percent from a year earlier, the railway operator said.

By the end of February, the train services had expanded to cover 219 cities across 25 European countries, according to China Railway.

New Air Route

China's self-developed large passenger aircraft, the C919, commenced operation on its third regular route, connecting Shanghai with Xi'an in the north-western province of Shaanxi, on March 8.

The C919 completed its first commercial flight last May and has since maintained regular operations between Shanghai and Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province. Its second regular route connects the megacities of Beijing and Shanghai.

As of February 29, the China Eastern Airlines' C919 fleet had completed 1,131 commercial flight trips, accumulating more than 3,272 safe flight hours and

transporting more than 145,000 passengers.

Payment Services

The General Office of the State Council, the highest state administrative organ, has released a guideline to continue optimizing the country's payment services.

The document aims to provide higher-quality, more effective and more convenient payment services for senior citizens and international visitors.

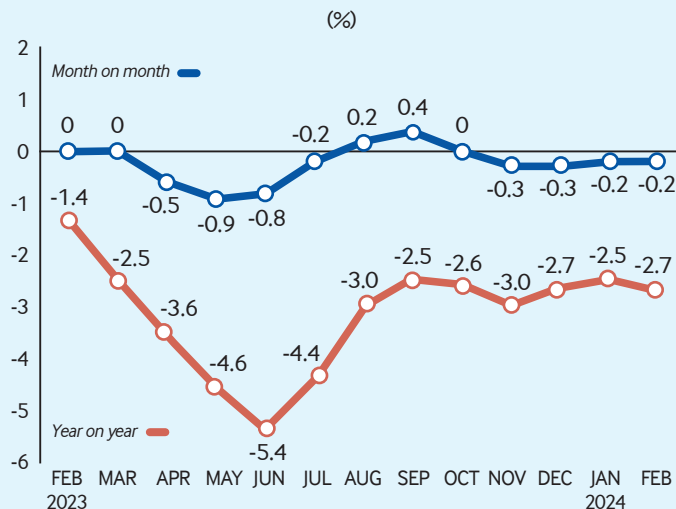
It emphasizes the need to expand the acceptance rate of bank card payments to meet the demand of seniors and foreigners who use bank cards in various scenarios.

China will facilitate the use of cash and currency exchanges, according to the document. Banks and payment institutions are encouraged to work with clearing houses to upgrade their services for the convenience of seniors and overseas visitors, per the guideline.

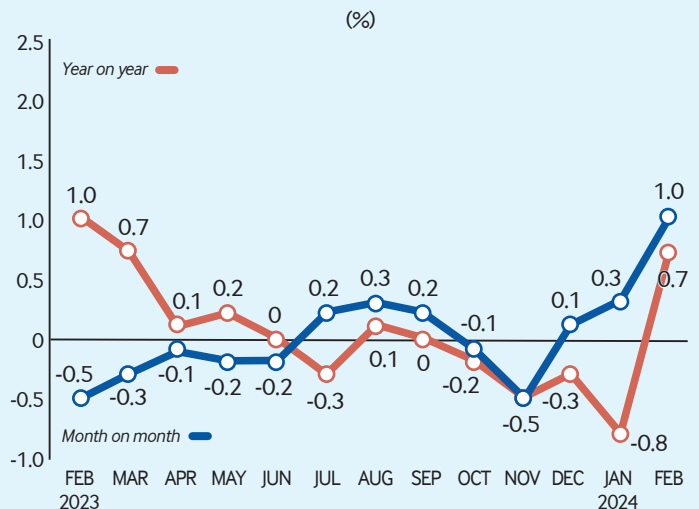
It states that large business districts, tourist attractions, hotels,

NUMBERS

China's Producer Price Index Growth



China's Consumer Price Index (CPI) Growth



hospitals and other key locations are required to support diversified payment options.

Fiscal Budget

China's fiscal budget was well implemented in 2023 thanks to the upward trend in the Chinese economy, a report released by the Ministry of Finance showed on March 7.

In 2023, China's fiscal revenue rebounded and the country strengthened fiscal support for major national strategic tasks and key areas such as science and technology, rural revitalization and ecological and environmental protection, the report said.

China's rural revitalization strategy is an extension of the country's poverty alleviation efforts and aims to boost economic development and living standards in rural areas through targeted policies and investments as well as narrow the urban-rural gap.

Newly implemented measures led to tax refunds, tax and

fee cuts, and deferrals amounting to 2.2 trillion yuan (\$306 billion) last year, while subsidies timely channeled to support people in need totaled 156.68 billion yuan (\$21.8 billion).

China will enhance the quality and efficiency of its fiscal policies this year, and exert more efforts to support the construction of modernized industrial systems, expand domestic demand, improve people's livelihoods, integrate the development of rural and urban areas, coordinate development among different regions, and prevent and control local government debt risks, according to the report.

Forex Reserves

China's foreign exchange (forex) reserves exceeded \$3.22 trillion as of the end of February, marking an increase of \$6.5 billion, or 0.2 percent, compared to the end of January, according to data released by the State Administration of Foreign Exchange on March 7.

Forex reserves are assets held

by a country's central bank or monetary authority in various foreign currencies. These reserves are crucial for a country's economic stability and are used to support the domestic currency.

In a statement, the administration said affected by factors such as macroeconomic data and expectations of monetary policies of major economies, the U.S. dollar index, a measure of the value of the U.S. dollar against a basket of currencies, increased while global financial asset prices were mixed.

It attributed the increase in the amount of the country's forex reserves to the combined effects of currency translation and changes in asset prices and other factors.

The Chinese economy will continue to pick up, which is conducive to keeping the scale of forex reserves generally stable, it added.

Research Lab

U.S. tech giant Apple announced on March 12 it will expand its

applied research lab in Shanghai and establish a new lab in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, later this year.

The labs in the two cities will support intelligent manufacturing, along with the reliability, quality and material analysis of products, providing resources for the global engineering and design team, according to Isabel Ge Mahe, Apple's Vice President and Managing Director of Greater China.

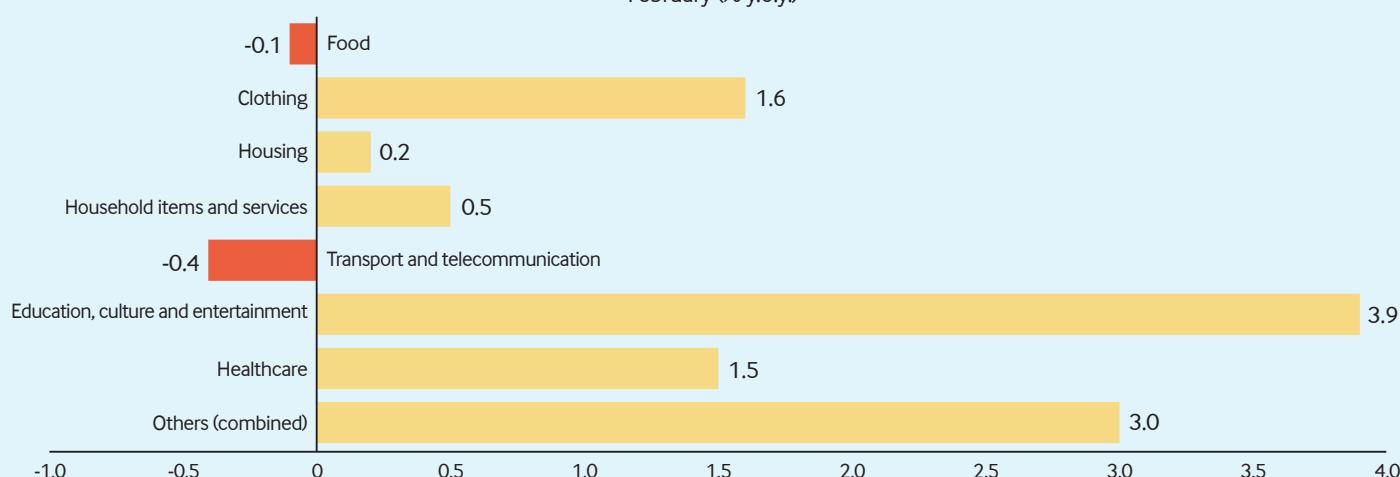
Apple said it has cumulatively invested 1 billion yuan (\$139 million) in building applied research labs in China.

Apple has been working on development in China for over 30 years. Data show that 151 out of the company's 200 major suppliers have production activities in China.

Currently, the company has research and development centers in Beijing, Shanghai, Suzhou in Jiangsu Province, and Shenzhen. Over the past five years, its research and development team in China has doubled in size.

China's CPI Growth by Type

February (% y.o.y.)



(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)

THIS WEEK **WORLD**



PAKISTAN

Rescue workers search for survivors at the site of a collapsed building in Multan City, Panjab Province, on March 12. At least nine people were killed and two others severely injured following the collapse of a residential building



LEBANON

Mourners carry the caskets of four members of one family killed in an Israeli airstrike during a funeral procession in Blida on March 11



RUSSIA

Giant panda cub Katyusha lies on her stomach at the Moscow Zoo on March 8. The first giant panda cub born in the country, Katyusha made her public debut at the zoo earlier that day



UNITED STATES

Performers stage the modern dance production *Dongpo: Life in Poems* in Washington on March 8



MEXICO

A participant dressed in an extravagant costume partakes in the 2024 Xochimilco Carnival in Xochimilco District, Mexico City, on March 8



LESOTHO

People participate in the Moshoeshoe Walk 2024 in Menkhoaneng on March 7 to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the nation's founding



THIS WEEK PEOPLE & POINTS

↓ HKEX'S NEW CHIEF OPTIMISTIC ON HONG KONG

Bonnie Chan, the newly appointed CEO of Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Ltd. (HKEX), expressed her optimism about Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's status as an international financial center.

With more than 30 years of experience in global capital markets, Chan was appointed HKEX CEO on March 1. She has held leadership roles in legal and financial services, with both Asia-Pacific and global responsibilities. Before becoming CEO, Chan was HKEX's co-chief operating officer.

She told reporters on March 8 that Hong Kong enjoys many advantages in areas including financial management, rule of law, tax systems and human resources, and is backed up by the entire Chinese economy. She added that Hong Kong's financial sectors, including banking, insurance and asset management, are all world-class.



TV Viewership in Decline

Beijing Evening News
March 7

Li Dongsheng, founder and Chairman of TCL Electronics Holdings Ltd., a Chinese consumer electronics giant, has sparked discussions by raising questions on why the sales and usage of televisions in China remain low in the era of smart TVs, despite the country's leading position in the high-definition display industry. Frustration with increasingly complex functionality, poor viewing experience, inadequate services, high fees and stale, low-quality content have led to a significant

drop in TV usage in recent years.

The decline, which is now sounding alarm bells for related industries, is tied to the struggle for control among players in these industries, including TV manufacturing, license holding and content provision. The online consensus is that these players have been prioritizing their own interests over those of TV viewers.

To address this, the National Radio and Television Administration has initiated several reform measures. Emphasizing ease of use and quality content is seen by industry insiders and consumers as key to improving viewership. The future of TV lies in viewer satisfaction.



Substitute for Love

Lifeweek
February 26

According to a study conducted by Wenbo Wang, an associate professor with the Department of Marketing, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, love-themed songs have been steadily declining in popularity over the past three decades. The analysis of lyrics from 600 songs revealed a significant decrease in the proportion of songs focused on love, with more emphasis placed on describing life situations, emotions and personal experiences.

“In a world marked by increasing polarization and division, neglecting to invest in each other poses a serious threat to our wellbeing and security.”

Achim Steiner, Administrator of the United Nations Development Program, at the press conference releasing a report warning uneven development progress is leaving the poorest behind, on March 13

“China's mutual fund industry remains an irreplaceable growth market for global asset managers. It offers a great certainty of growth.”

Desiree Wang, CEO of the JPMorgan Asset Management China, in an interview with Xinhua News Agency on March 8

Despite this decline in love-themed songs, individuals still possess a natural longing for love. The desire for love remains, but people are increasingly guarded and hesitant to fully invest themselves in romantic relationships due to the perceived instability.

As a result, many are seeking alternative avenues, often turning to digital platforms. Livestreaming has become a prominent domain for forging emotional bonds and finding companionship. Devoted fans establish deep connections with livestreamers in the virtual space. Additionally, gaming platforms offer opportunities for emotional support.

These alternative forms of connection, often referred to as “love substitutes,” offer low entry and exit costs compared to real-life relationships. Moreover, these substitutes align more readily with societal morality, providing a sense of companionship that is deemed more acceptable when compared to casual encounters.

While these substitutes may provide temporary solace, they are not ideal replacements for genuine love. The commodification of relationships within the digital realm raises questions about authenticity and the true nature of emotional bonds. The search for an ideal substitute for love remains a challenge.

City Renewal

Economic Daily March 11

At a recent press conference, Ni Hong, Minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, highlighted the significant improvements in people’s living standards resulting from changes generated by urban renewal projects. In 2023, China implemented around 66,000 such projects with an investment of approximately 2.6 trillion yuan (\$362 billion). These projects included renovating 53,000 old urban communities and building over 4,100 pocket parks. The process also involved renovating around 100,000 km of urban pipelines and expanding 11,000 hectares

of open lawn spaces.

Improved infrastructure provides peace of mind, new parks offer leisure spots, and enhanced elderly care and childcare facilities reduce pressure on families. This transformation process not only addresses the public’s urgent needs but also identifies areas for introducing sustainability into urban development.

Old industrial areas are being repurposed into innovative parks, historical streets are turned into showcases for intangible cultural heritage, and urban rivers are returned to their original ecological states. These efforts have injected new vitality into cities, enhancing their sustainability and reconnecting them with their historical roots.

↓ DRAMA SELECTED FOR CANNESERIES

To the Wonder, a drama series directed by **Teng Congcong**, has been included in the Long Form Competition at the Cannes International Series Festival, taking place in early April. It is the first Chinese-language series to be selected for inclusion in the competition since its launch in 2018.

The nominated series is an adaptation of the award-winning essay collection *My Altay* by renowned Chinese writer Li Juan. Set in Altay, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, the eight-episode series offers a fresh narrative, blending light comedy with literary aesthetics to explore themes of reverence for nature, and self-discovery.

Teng made her directorial debut with the film *Send Me to the Clouds* in 2019, which was nominated Best Directorial Debut for the Golden Rooster Award, one of the most important movie awards in China.



“It is very concerning that the epidemic of obesity that was evident among adults in much of the world in 1990 is now mirrored in school-aged children and adolescents.”

Majid Ezzati, a professor at Imperial College London and corresponding author of a new study released by medical journal *The Lancet*, which revealed obesity rates for adults had more than doubled between 1990 and 2022, and quadrupled among children and adolescents worldwide

“The series offers a new Olympic immersive experience, where sport is blended with music, art and culture in a single urban park.”

Pierre Fratter-Bardy, an International Olympic Committee official, as Shanghai hosts the Olympic Qualifier Series featuring BMX freestyle, skateboarding, breaking and sport climbing from May 16 to 19

TUNING INTO UYGUR TRADITION

Xinjiang Muqam melodies resonate through the corridors of time

By Li Fangfang & Wang Zhiwei

As dawn breaks over the ancient Silk Road lands of China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, Dilixiati Parhati is gearing up for yet another busy day. He juggles multiple roles: musician, scholar, leader of a Muqam art troupe and, most recently, a voice in China's National People's Congress (NPC)—the country's top legislature.

In all these roles, safeguarding the soul-stirring music of Uygur Muqam, often dubbed “the mother of Uygur music,” for future generations is his mission.

Life is a dance

A day in Dilixiati's life brims with music, creativity and the relentless pursuit of excellence. Inside the conference room of the Muqam Art Troupe of Xinjiang Art Theater, he engages in lively discussions with the troupe's creative core about the upcoming staging of Muqam performances. As the afternoon unfolds, he reviews newly choreographed works with the directors, meticulously examining every detail for possible challenges and innovative opportunities. Late into the night, he fine-tunes the suggestions put forth earlier in the day.

Muqam is a multifaceted performance art, blending elements of song, dance and music. It covers an array of cultural expressions, from ancient philosophical insights to enchanting folk tales, creating a rich tapestry of Uygur life and society. This traditional art form, with a history spanning centuries,

has evolved significantly over time.

Originally, the Uygur Muqam tradition was transmitted orally, passed down from generation to generation through performances. Cultural interactions and exchanges have long allowed the art to evolve and grow in diversity, a fact that never fails to light up Dilixiati's eyes.

“So how do we safeguard its legacy in the 21st century, how can we ensure its continued relevance and how do we keep its vibrancy intact? Finding the answers to these questions are perhaps our most crucial tasks as inheritors of the art form,” he shared in an interview with *Beijing Review*.

Since being elected as an NPC deputy in 2023, Dilixiati's responsibilities have multiplied. He's now expected to venture beyond the confines of professional rehearsal halls and actively engage with folk artists. This entails absorbing their perspectives and injecting the art form he loves with greater authenticity and vitality.

NPC deputies come from all sectors of society, from politics to arts, and engage with different communities and stakeholders within their respective domains. As part of their role, they gather feedback and recommendations regarding the Central Government's policies and actions, which are later brought to the attention of the NPC. These suggestions are then forwarded to the appropriate government departments for consideration and can influence legislative adjustments. Throughout this process, deputies also identify and address key issues within their specific fields, contributing to ongoing enhancements and developments in their areas of expertise.

Dilixiati often asks local folk artists how he can assist them in preserving the Muqam art form. “They don't always articulate it clearly, but I do get what they're trying to say: How can we ensure this beautiful art continues to resonate in people's hearts?” Dilixiati shared.

Safe and sound

At present, the Uygur Muqam preservation system in China comprises four key areas: transmission

through folk artists, educational initiatives, professional troupes and textual documentation.

The preservation efforts for the Xinjiang Twelve Muqam, a comprehensive repertoire of the genre originating from the city of Kashgar in south Xinjiang, began in the early 1950s.

A pivotal moment occurred when the local official came across Tuerdi Ahong, a talented local artist capable of performing 24 hours nonstop. Recognizing its cultural importance, the “discovery” was reported to the Central Government and piqued the interest of then Premier Zhou Enlai.

In 1951, then, a young Beijing-based musician called Wan Tongshu (1923-2023) was tasked with a mission to preserve the art of Muqam in Xinjiang.

Accompanied by his wife Lian Xiaomei and their 1-year-old daughter, Wan embarked on a train journey to the western region. That same year saw the official formation of the Xinjiang Twelve Muqam Organizing Task Group, with Wan appointed as its leader. In the years that followed, Wan worked closely with ethnic poets and artists to undertake and complete the recording, arrangement, notation and translation of all the lyrics for the Twelve Muqam, as performed by Tuerdi Ahong.

“The recordings were a crucial step. They marked an unprecedented feat,” Dilixiati recalled.

In 1954, with the introduction