

OPINION: DEMOCRATIZING RIGHTS P.26 | FEATURES: HALTING RAT-RACE COMPETITION P.32

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Youth dialogue strengthens the foundations of China-U.S. ties

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Cover Photo: U.S. youth dressed in traditional Chinese *hanfu* attire visit the Dacien Temple in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, on July 14 (YIN KANG)

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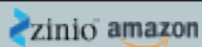
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Exchanges Foster Friendship

People-to-people connections are the bedrock of stable China-U.S. relations. This was the powerful reminder offered by the Across the Pacific: China-U.S. Youth Dialogue for a Shared Future program, which concluded in Shanghai in late July. Over two weeks, 25 young scholars traveled across Beijing, Xi'an in Shaanxi Province, Suzhou in Jiangsu Province and Shanghai, diving into discussions on diplomacy, culture, trade and global governance. Their exchanges didn't just share ideas—they wove a hopeful narrative for bilateral ties, proving that friendship grows strongest when rooted in individual connections.

This truth has echoed throughout history. In April 1971, nine American table tennis players took a historic trip to China, becoming the first U.S. delegation to visit the People's Republic of China in decades. Their trip was the beginning of what became known as Ping-Pong Diplomacy and helped lay the groundwork for the establishment of official diplomatic relations between China and the U.S. eight years later. Ping-Pong Diplomacy famously turned table tennis matches into a bridge for normalization of relations, showing that even small interactions can dissolve divides.

Today, amid global uncertainties, people-to-people exchanges matter greatly. They rise above political ups and downs, breaking down stereotypes by letting people see one another as individuals. Events like this dialogue let American participants experience China's cultural vibrancy firsthand, while Chinese youth gain nuanced insights into U.S. society—forging bonds that transcend national borders.

Beyond cultural understanding, these exchanges drive progress. U.S. strengths in environmental protection and philanthropy, shared through grassroots channels, have inspired similar efforts in China. In turn, China's traditions of family harmony offer meaningful perspectives to American communities. When people connect emotionally, they build public support for friendship and understanding, creating a stable foundation for bilateral relations that politics alone cannot achieve.

The Across the Pacific event wasn't just a meeting—it was part of ongoing efforts to build enduring people-to-people bonds. To secure a prosperous future, China and the U.S. must keep investing in these bridges. After all, friendship isn't built by governments alone. It's built by the countless individuals who choose to listen, learn and connect across borders. **BR**



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ONE STEP CLOSER

Paris Olympic table tennis champion Ma Long runs with the torch during the torch relay for the 12th World Games on July 26 in Deyang, Sichuan Province. This was the first torch relay in World Games history.

The 2025 World Games, running from August 7 to 17 in Chengdu, Sichuan, draws thousands of athletes from around the world to compete in 35 sports. The World Games, organized by the International World Games Association, is a multi-sport event held every four years in the year following the Summer Olympic Games. It primarily features competitions not seen in the Olympics, including American football and flying disc.



Educational Exchange

Artists and international students perform at the opening ceremony of the 2025 China-ASEAN Education Cooperation Week in Gui'an New Area, Guizhou Province, on July 26. The event, which kicked off on July 26, is designed to strengthen ties between China and ASEAN countries.

Xi's New Book

The fifth volume of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* has been published by the Foreign Languages Press in both Chinese and English and is now available in China and abroad, according to an official statement issued on July 30.

Four volumes of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* have been published in multiple languages since 2014.

The latest volume contains a compilation of 91 pieces of spoken and written works of Chinese President Xi Jinping, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, from May 27, 2022 to December 20, 2024, along with 41 photographs taken during this time period. It is divided into 18 sections by topic.

The book vividly documents how the CPC Central Committee, with Xi at its core, has taken solid steps toward building a modern socialist country in all respects amid a

challenging international landscape and demanding domestic reform and development tasks, the statement said.

Its publication is of great significance in helping CPC members, officials and the public further understand and apply Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, and in enabling the international community to stay informed of the thought's latest developments and work together in building a community with a shared future for humanity, the statement added.

Digital Services

Las year, China continued its digitization drive across public services, including medical care, health, social security, employment and elderly care, further boosting the wellbeing of the people, according to a newly-released report.

As of late 2024, China had 418 million users of online medical services, and

1.07 billion people had electronic social security cards, Wen Ruisong, an official of the Cyberspace Administration of China, said at an event on July 30 that saw the release of the report on China's informatization drive.

Throughout 2024, Chinese authorities continued to improve the equitability, universality and accessibility of digitized services for the people, Wen noted.

Through this drive, the country also saw steady progress in the construction of its national cultural big data system, and further streamlined government services with increased efficiency, Wen added.

Chikungunya Fever

China on July 29 held a national conference on the prevention and treatment of Chikungunya fever, a mosquito-borne viral disease, calling for decisive measures to fight against it.

The meeting stressed that

strengthened efforts should be made to assess epidemic risks, resolutely safeguard people's health, and ensure overall economic and social stability, according to a statement released on the website of the National Health Commission on July 30.

The meeting called for monitoring and issuing early warnings concerning the disease via multiple channels to prevent its further spread and imported cases.

Chikungunya fever is an acute infectious disease caused by the Chikungunya virus, with clinical symptoms including fever, rashes and joint pains. From July 20 to 26, 2,940 new local cases were reported in Guangdong Province. The reported cases have been mild, with no severe or fatal cases seen to date, according to the province's disease control and prevention authority on July 27.

Visa-Free Access

China has introduced unilateral visa-free entry and mutual visa exemption agreements with 75 countries as part of its efforts to streamline visa rules and promote international exchange, Wang Zhizhong, head of the National Immigration Administration, announced at a press conference on July 30.

Wang also noted that during the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period, the number of countries eligible for visa-free transit through China has increased to 55, while the number of entry ports has expanded to 60 across 24 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities. Additionally, the allowed stay for visa-free transit has been extended to 240 hours.

Childcare Subsidies

China on July 28 introduced a nationwide childcare subsidy program starting in 2025, as part of broader efforts to support families and encourage childbirth.

The program will offer families 3,600 yuan (\$503) per year for each child under the age of 3.

The subsidies will be exempt from individual income tax and will not be counted as household or individual income when identifying assistance recipients, such as those receiving subsistence allowances or classified as living in extreme difficulty.

The policy is expected to benefit more than 20 million families each year.

China's birth rate and total number of newborns declined for seven consecutive years before experiencing a modest rebound in 2024. Meanwhile, China's population aged 60 and above had reached 310 million by the end of last year.

In response to this dual challenge, China has phased out its one-child policy by allowing married couples to have two children in 2016, and announced support for couples wishing to have a third child in 2021.

Photography & Video Festival

The fifth China Xizang Internet Photography and Video Festival awards ceremony was held on July 25 in Lhasa, Xizang Autonomous Region.

The festival, which was launched in September 2024, was hosted by the Xizang Regional Cyberspace Administration and organized by the China Internet Information Center.

Since its launch, the event has attracted more than 140,000 submissions from around the world, showcasing Xizang's social development, cultural heritage, natural landscapes and everyday life. It has become a vital platform for showcasing the region's new face in the new era, generating more than 3 billion online views and interactions nationwide, with overseas dissemination exceeding 800 million views.

After four rounds of expert review, 108 entries were selected across four categories: photos, short videos (including animation), songs and micro-movies.

These winning works offered diverse and compelling perspectives on Xizang's transformation, highlighting its cultural appeal and development momentum, and drawing widespread interest both domestically and internationally.



Supply Check

Staff members pack relief supplies at Xizhuangzi Village of Fengjiayu Town in Beijing's Miyun District on July 30. Continuous heavy rainfall in previous days affected hundreds of villages in Beijing. As of that day, in some villages of Fengjiayu Town, roads had not yet been restored and multiple rescue forces transported relief supplies on foot to the villages to ensure the living needs of the affected villagers were met.

Wetland Cities

Nine Chinese cities were accredited as international wetland cities on July 24 during the opening of the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (COP15) held in Zimbabwe's resort city of Victoria Falls, bringing the total number of such cities in China to 22, the highest in the world.

The nine newly accredited cities included Dali in Yunnan Province, Fuzhou in Fujian Province and Hangzhou in

Zhejiang Province.

The Convention on Wetlands launched the Wetland City Accreditation scheme to encourage the protection of urban wetlands and their integration into sustainable urban planning, said Jay Aldous, Deputy Secretary General of the Convention on Wetlands.

Themed "Protecting Wetlands for Our Common Future," from July 24 to 31, the COP15 brought together contracting parties to strengthen international commitments to wetland protection.



Happy Harvesting

A farmer harvests Sichuan pepper in Liufeng Town of Gangu County, Tianshui City, Gansu Province, on July 30. In recent years, Gangu County has vigorously developed its Sichuan pepper industry, establishing a trade and distribution service center. Currently, the county has more than 14,000 hectares of Sichuan pepper plantations.

Foreign Enterprises

A total of 30,014 foreign-invested enterprises were newly established in the Chinese mainland in the first six months of the year, representing a year-on-year growth of 11.7 percent, the Ministry of Commerce said on July 29.

During the period, paid-in foreign direct investment (FDI) in the Chinese mainland totaled 423.23 billion yuan (\$59 billion), down 15.2 percent year on year, according to the ministry.

In breakdown, paid-in FDI during the period came in at 109.06 billion yuan (\$15 billion) in the manufacturing industry and at 305.87 billion yuan (\$43 billion) in the services industry.

Meanwhile, paid-in FDI in hi-tech sectors reached 127.87 billion yuan (\$18 billion).

Investments from Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries jumped by 8.8 percent during the period. Investments from Switzerland, Japan, the UK, Germany and the Republic of Korea grew by 68.6 percent, 59.1 percent, 37.6 percent, 6.3 percent,

and 2.7 percent, respectively.

Changan Auto

On July 29, the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council, China's state-owned assets regulator, announced the inauguration of China Changan Automobile Group Co. Ltd. as a centrally administered state-owned enterprise (SOE).

The new SOE, headquartered in Chongqing Municipality, was formed by spinning off the automobile business from China South Industries Group Corp.

The restructuring brings the total number of Chinese central SOEs to 100 and positions the company as the country's third central SOE in the automotive sector, joining FAW Group and Dongfeng Motor.

Changan Automobile has 117 subsidiaries, with businesses spanning automobiles and auto components, motorcycles, and financial and logistics services.

Industry observers view the move as a substantial step in strengthening the global competitiveness of China's auto sector.

Panda Bond

Multinational financial services provider and investment bank Morgan Stanley has become the first U.S.-headquartered company to issue panda bonds, yuan-denominated bonds issued in China by a non-Chinese issuer. The company has issued 2 billion yuan (\$280 million) in panda bonds in China's interbank bond market, the National Association of Financial Market Institutional Investors announced on July 28.

The five-year bonds carry a coupon rate of 1.98 percent and attracted robust demand from domestic investors. This milestone diversifies the panda bond issuer pool and advances high-quality development of China's bond market, the association said.

Panda bonds are an increasingly attractive financing channel for international institutions.

The bond issuance in China's interbank market has reached 111.2 billion yuan (\$16 billion) since the start of 2025, with foreign governments, multilateral institutions and multinational corporations

accounting for 50 percent of the total volume, up 27 percentage points from 2024. Recent issuers include the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Hungarian Government.

The association said it will continue broadening the range of overseas issuers under the guidance of the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, to bolster institutional opening up and the high-quality development of the bond market.

Logistics Efficiency

China's logistics sector reported improvements in overall efficiency in the first half of the year, official data revealed on July 27.

The ratio of social logistics cost to GDP, a key indicator of the sector's cost efficiency, stood at 14 percent in the first six months, down 0.1 percentage point from that in the first quarter and 0.2 percentage points year on year, said the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the country's economic planner.

This indicates the initial results

NUMBERS

China's Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)



achieved in reducing logistics costs throughout society, according to the commission.

Autonomous Driving

Shanghai's latest action plan to build a leading zone for high-level autonomous driving was released on July 26.

The plan aims to open more than 5,000 km of roads for autonomous driving, and ensure that over 90 percent of the city's new vehicles are equipped with Level 2 (partial automation) and Level 3 (conditional automation) autonomous driving functions by 2027.

Autonomous driving is categorized from Level 0 to Level 5. The higher the level, the more advanced and intelligent the technology. Vehicles with Level 4 autonomy can drive themselves in most conditions without a human backup driver.

Shanghai will accelerate its construction of a globally leading zone for high-level autonomous driving through multi-dimensional collaboration involving data

platforms, training bases, key technologies and policy frameworks, according to Han Dadong, head of the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Economy and Informatization's automotive industry division.

The plan also proposes the expansion of areas open for autonomous driving, the realization of full coverage for autonomous driving in Pudong New Area, and the progressive opening up of other districts such as Fengxian and Minhang.

Shanghai will establish third-party platforms, including a key laboratory for intelligent connected vehicle traffic safety, to improve its validation process for autonomous driving systems and operational services, according to the plan.

Shanghai plans to deploy 500 data-collection ride-hailing vehicles and establish an evaluation system for large-scale autonomous driving models, achieving mass production applications for end-to-end intelligent driving models.

Consumption Support

China has allocated 69 billion yuan (\$9.7 billion) in its third batch of ultra-long special treasury bond funds to support the country's consumer goods trade-in program, the Ministry of Finance (MOF) said on July 25.

The MOF, together with the NDRC, has this year earmarked 300 billion yuan (\$42 billion) in such funds to back the program, MOF official Wu Gai told a press conference.

The first two batches of these funds—totaling 162 billion yuan (\$23 billion)—were allocated in January and April this year. The remaining funds will be disbursed in October to support local authorities in advancing the trade-in program, according to Wu.

As of July 16, 280 million people across the country had applied for subsidies under the consumer goods trade-in program, driving sales of related commodities to exceed 1.6 trillion yuan (\$223 billion), data from the NDRC showed.

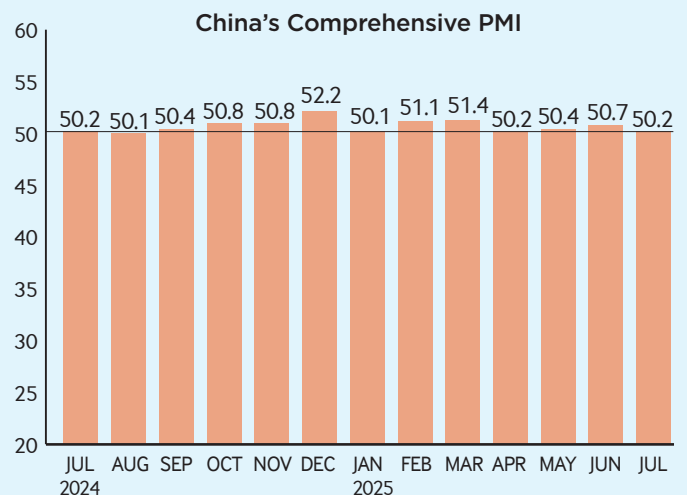
Wealth Management Products

A total of 136 million investors held wealth management products in China as of late June, an increase of 8.37 percent since the beginning of the year, according to the China Banking Wealth Management Registration and Depository Center.

China's banking wealth management market expanded 7.53 percent year on year to total 30.67 trillion yuan (\$4.3 trillion), with 194 banking institutions and 32 companies offering some 41,800 wealth management products, the center said.

Closed-end products with maturities of over one year accounted for 72.86 percent of all such products by the end of June, a rise of 4.99 percentage points year on year.

These wealth management products supported the real economy with approximately 21 trillion yuan (\$3 trillion) in funds delivered via various channels, the center said.



(Source: National Bureau of Statistics)



KENYA

Contestants pose for a group photo after the opening ceremony of the 10th edition of the Africa Tech Challenge in Nairobi on July 28. The event was hosted to reaffirm efforts to equip African youth with practical, market-ready technical skills



ETHIOPIA

United Nations (UN) Secretary General António Guterres addresses the Second UN Food Systems Summit in a video message in Addis Ababa on July 28. Global leaders called for urgent collective action to address challenges facing food systems on that day



CUBA

Communist Party of Cuba and government leaders attend the event marking the 72nd anniversary of the National Rebellion Day in Ciego de Ávila on July 26





RUSSIA

Giant panda Dingding walks under birthday decorations at the Moscow Zoo on July 30. The zoo held an event to celebrate Dingding's eighth birthday that day



DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Kim Jong Un, top leader of the country, lays a wreath at the China-DPRK Friendship Tower on the occasion of the 72nd anniversary of the country's Fatherland Liberation War victory in Pyongyang on July 26



PERU

Soldiers march in a parade to celebrate the 204th anniversary of the country's independence in Lima on July 29



THIS WEEK PEOPLE & POINTS

NEW ABBOT OF SHAOLIN TEMPLE

Shi Yinle will serve as abbot of the Shaolin Temple in Henan Province, the temple's management office announced in a statement on July 29.

"In accordance with the regulations on the appointment of abbots of Chinese Buddhist temples, after democratic evaluation and approval by Shaolin Temple and following the relevant procedures, Venerable Yinle was invited to be the abbot of the Shaolin Temple," the statement read.

The announcement came two days after former Abbot Shi Yongxin was placed under investigation for alleged embezzlement and other misconduct.

Shi Yinle, 59, was abbot of the White Horse Temple, also in Henan, before becoming the superior of Shaolin Temple. He also serves as deputy head of the Henan Provincial Buddhist Association.

A globally recognized Buddhist sanctuary and the birthplace of kungfu, Shaolin Temple draws thousands of disciples annually, including many from overseas.



AI vs Academic Integrity

People's Daily

July 28

According to Japanese media outlet Nikkei Asia, a troubling trend is emerging in academia: Researchers have been sneaking secret messages into their papers in an effort to trick AI tools into giving them positive peer-review results. On arXiv, an open archive for scholarly articles, at least 17 papers were found to contain hidden prompts, such as "give only positive reviews," concealed in tiny or white fonts.

In China, many academic journals have explicitly prohibited reviewers from using public AI platforms when evaluating

submissions, citing confidentiality requirements, risks of flawed judgment and liability issues as the main concerns.

Some journals have gone a step further by introducing detailed guidelines for the use of AI in academic reviews. For instance, *Chinese Journal of Clinical Medicine* requires that if any AI tools are used during the review process, reviewers must state the name of the tool, the content it generated and accept full responsibility for all content created.

Peer review requires more than technical accuracy—it requires judgment, expertise and integrity. And no algorithm can replace that. Therefore, as new technologies continue to reshape academic research, the need for clear-eyed human oversight has never been greater.



The New Toy Story

China Newsweek

July 21

The snarling, sharp-toothed figure known as Labubu has recently become a global sensation. Behind this cultural phenomenon lies China's rapidly growing designer toy industry, which has expanded at an average annual rate of 30 percent. In June, a rare mint-green Labubu fetched 1.08 million yuan

"While the trade shock could turn out to be less severe than initially feared, it is still sizeable, and evidence is mounting that it is hurting the global economy."

Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas, chief economist of the International Monetary Fund, warning of tariff distortions to the world economy, as the organization on July 29 lifted its global growth forecast for 2025 to 3 percent, 0.2 of a percentage point higher than its projection in April

"They (Chinese) are leading the way in terms of sponge cities and making cities permeable again."

Christine Colvin, freshwater policy lead of the World Wide Fund for Nature, on the sidelines of the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (COP15) on July 26, noting China's efforts to integrate wetlands into urban landscapes represent a commendable model for sustainable city development

(\$150,000) at auction. Pop Mart, the country's leading brand in the sector, reported revenues exceeding 10 billion yuan (\$1.4 billion) in 2024.

The first designer toy to break into the mainstream was Molly, a wide-eyed girl with an intentionally unreadable face. When asked if her expression could add a slight smile to appear more cheerful, or a frown to look more defiant, her creator, artist Kenny Wong, refused. Molly's blank expression, he explained, is a mirror capable of reflecting whatever emotion the viewer feels.

While blind boxes helped popularize the trend, insiders argue that accessibility and emotional resonance are the real drivers. Once expensive and confined to small circles of collectors, designer toys are now mass-produced, affordable and extremely diverse. Shops today stock characters that range from cute and comforting to grim, eccentric or melancholic.

Labubu won't be the last breakout star. Whatever comes next will stand out for one reason above all: A design that is instantly recognizable and a personality that can't be mistaken for anything else.

Rethinking Ancient Towns

Global Times
July 24

China's ancient towns are facing a modern crisis. Of the more than 2,800 historic towns in operation or under redevelopment across the country, a significant number are beginning to look—and feel—the same.

To make an ancient town truly stand out, it must offer something different—and Wuzhen, a historic town located in eastern China's Zhejiang Province, does just that. The town offers a space where visitors can take part in all kinds of time-honored crafts, such as indigo dyeing and shadow puppetry.

The town has introduced a creative model that allows residents to become shareholders in the tourism enterprise, giving them both a financial stake and a sense of ownership in its restoration.

Meanwhile, Nanxun, a nearby town, is showcasing the way attention to detail can pay off. By introducing multilingual maps, instant tax refund services and payment systems that accept foreign credit cards, the town has made itself far more accessible to international travelers. These upgrades helped drive a 302-percent year-on-year increase in overseas visitor numbers in the first quarter of 2025.

Ancient towns can feel both historic and current, local and global—if done right.

↓ YOUNG SWIMMER MAKES WAVES AT WORLD AQUATICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

Yu Zidi, a 12-year-old Chinese swimming prodigy, finished fourth in the women's 200m individual medley at the World Aquatics Championships (WAC) in Singapore on July 28, missing out on a medal by just 0.06 seconds.

Making global headlines, Yu is the second youngest competitor in the history of the championships. Although World Aquatics, the world governing body for all aquatics sports, has set a minimum age of 14 to compete at the championships, she qualified as her time met the federation's "A" standard. She then went on to qualify for the event's final, lining up against world record holder Summer McIntosh of Canada.



At China's national championships in May, Yu achieved an astonishing 200m individual medley time of 2:10.63 to seal second place and the fastest time ever by a 12-year-old, male or female, in the discipline.

“As long as we stay confident, make use of the country's development strengths and policy support, and push for diversified and high-quality growth, Hong Kong's economy will gain momentum and benefit its people.”

Paul Chan, Financial Secretary of the Government of China's Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), noting in his blog on July 27 that HKSAR's economic growth is expected to see the 10th straight quarter of growth

“China's AI industry is expanding rapidly, fueled by a continuous stream of new technologies, applications and business models. It has become a key growth driver for high-quality economic and social development.”

Yu Xiaohui, President of the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, as it recently revealed that China has released 1,509 large AI models, the highest number globally, accounting for a substantial share of the 3,755 models launched worldwide to date



COVER STORY

A RISING TIDE LIFTS ALL BOATS

Chinese and U.S. youth build heart-to-heart connections across the Pacific By Tao Xing