

Sizzling pace

China forecast to overtake US as largest chemical market > p13

Survival strategy

New measures rolled out to protect wild pandas

> CHINA, PAGE 5



Festival time

Latin American and Caribbean music returns to Beijing

> LIFE, PAGE 19



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SOUTH CHINA SEA

Xi: Talks key to resolving differences

Countries outside region 'welcome to make a positive contribution to peace and stability'

By ZHANG YUNBI and AN BAIJIE

President Xi Jinping, speaking on the South China Sea issue on Thursday, said China upholds the peaceful resolution of disputes through friendly consultation and negotiation with the countries directly involved.

The president said that for some time developments in the South China Sea have attracted extensive attention.

China "unswervingly safeguards its own sovereignty and relevant rights and interests in the South China Sea," the president said.

Xi made the remarks in Beijing as he addressed the fifth foreign ministers' meeting of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia.

Observers said Xi's remarks come at a time when the US is worsening the situation in the South China Sea by boosting its military presence there, and after the US and the Philippines embarked on joint military drills recently.

Outlining his ideas to increase security in Asia as a whole, Xi said, "We welcome countries outside the region making a positive contribution to peace and stability here and working with Asian countries to promote the security, stability, development and prosperity of Asia."

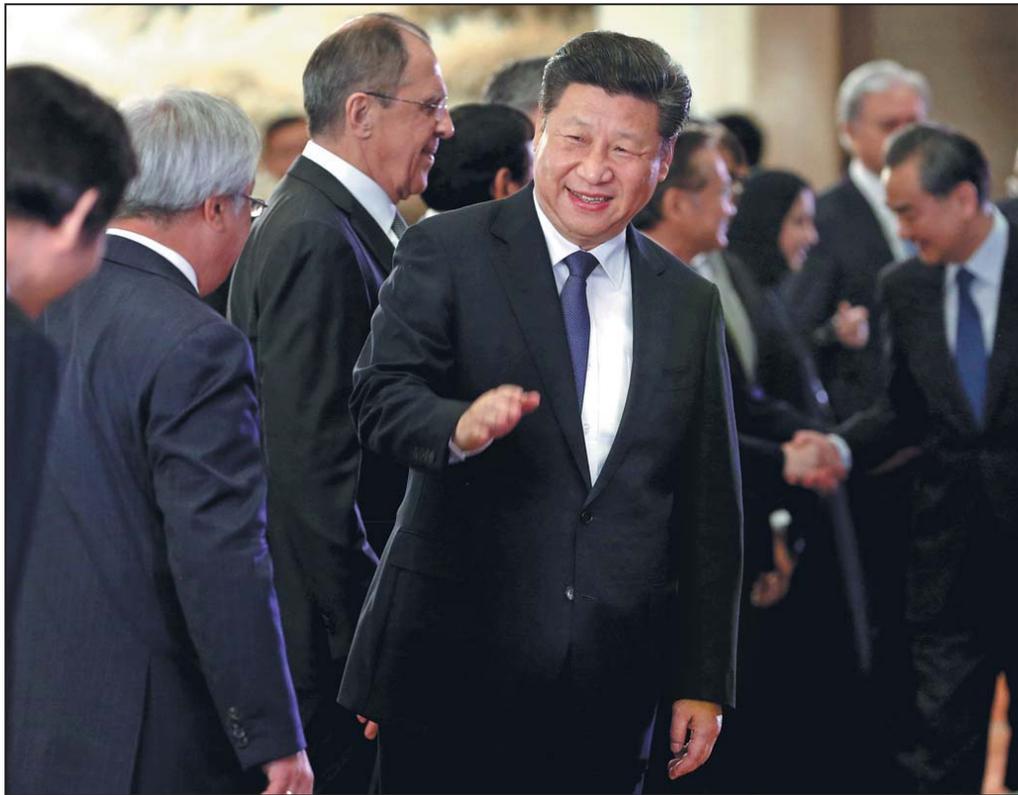
Su Xiaohui, a researcher of international strategies at the China Institute of International Studies, said Xi's remarks on the South China Sea illustrate two of China's key strategic goals — championing State sovereignty and safeguarding regional stability.

Xi is also sending a message that "China does not accept any attempt to ruin the big picture", and such attempts include the international arbitration sought unilaterally by the Philippines against China, Su said.

SEE "DISPUTES" PAGE 3

Inside

- See more > p3
- Editorial > p8



President Xi Jinping greets delegates at the opening ceremony of the fifth meeting of foreign ministers of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing on Thursday. WU ZHIYI / CHINA DAILY

Xi's remarks on other international topics

On the Korean Peninsula:

China will never allow the Korean Peninsula to have war or chaos, because it will be no good for anyone. China hopes all the parties involved exercise restraint, avoid provocation and put the nuclear issue back on a track of dialogue and negotiations at an early date.

As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, China implements the relevant council resolutions in an all-out and integral manner.

On Afghanistan:

China proactively participates in the Istanbul Process on Afghanistan, supports the country's peaceful reconstruction, and supports the inclusive political resolution process under the guideline of "led by Afghan people, owned by Afghan people".

China hopes Afghanistan will realize peace, stability and development at an early date, and is ready to continue to offer support and help for the peaceful reconstruction and political reconciliation ... of Afghanistan.

On the Middle East:

China stands for and will continue to help promote a peaceful settlement of the Syrian issue and the Palestine-Israel issue through political negotiation.

China has played a constructive role in reaching the comprehensive agreement on the Iran nuclear issue and will continue to press ahead with the implementation through joint efforts with all sides.

LEGISLATION

New law adopted on overseas NGOs

By CAO YIN
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China adopted its first-ever law on overseas NGOs on Thursday to facilitate their legal operations on the mainland but to combat any activity that might harm national security.

The 54-point law, passed at the bimonthly session of the top legislature, clarifies the registration process, operational rules and liabilities of overseas NGOs, as well as measures for their operations in China.

The law, which takes effect on Jan 1, requires all overseas NGOs operating in China to be registered and regulated by central or provincial-level police authorities, a stipulation that has caused concern among some NGOs over whether their operations and activities will face restrictions.

"Such worries are totally unnecessary if they follow Chinese laws," said Zhang Yong, deputy director of the Legislative Affairs Commission of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. He said overseas NGOs have made a great contribution to China's development.

There is no specific figure on how many overseas NGOs are in China. Chinese media have estimated there are more than 6,000, and most are engaged in environmental protection, education and poverty relief efforts.

“Worries are totally unnecessary if they (NGOs) follow Chinese laws.”

Zhang Yong, a National People's Congress official

The adopted law includes many changes to the previous draft version. For example, the earlier draft required exchanges between Chinese and foreign colleges, hospitals, and science and engineering research institutes, but the adopted version exempts this.

The law also removes the restriction limiting each NGO to a single office on the mainland, but the number and locations must be approved by regulatory authorities.

Guo Linmao, a member of the commission, said the rights of NGOs will be fully protected, but those that break China's laws will be punished accordingly. "A very limited number of overseas NGOs have conducted activities in China that harm our national security or interests," he said.

Behavior that damages China's territorial integrity, regime and people's interests is defined as harming state interests, he said.

The new law gives police the authority to talk with representatives of overseas NGOs and ask them not to conduct such activities, or even blacklist or deport them. If they are found to have broken China's Criminal Law, they are also subject to criminal punishment.

SPORTS

Investors eye Italian soccer giants

By WANG MINGJIE
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Two of Italy's top soccer clubs, Inter Milan and archrival AC Milan, say they have been approached by Chinese groups either seeking a stake or offering strategic partnerships.

A 12-person delegation from Suning Commerce Group, one of China's largest privately owned retailers, visited Inter Milan last Friday and Saturday. The club's chief spokesman Robert Faulkner said the delegation was headed by Suning Chairman Zhang Jindong.

AC Milan said it had received several expressions of interest in acquiring a stake, including some from Chinese groups.

However, China's richest man, Jack Ma, the Alibaba founder, dismissed reports that he is to buy AC Milan.

Faulkner said the purpose of Suning's visit was to discuss a potential strategic partnership between the club and Suning

“It is highly likely that we will see more European club acquisitions.”

Simon Chadwick, a UK sports enterprise professor

Commerce Group. This includes potential capital investment from the retail group and opportunities for the club in China.

The Chinese group owns Jiangsu Suning soccer club, and Faulkner said it is also interested in Inter Milan's academy structure and training center.

Faulkner said Inter has been in talks with three or four potential investors, but "the discussions with Suning are probably at the most advanced stage, as they came to visit us in Milan".

Simon Chadwick, a professor of sports enterprise at Salford Business School in Manchester, UK, said, "As China pursues its sports industry vision and its football goals, it is highly likely that we will see more European club acquisitions. ... Buying a club contributes to a diversified business portfolio, something that aligns with the conglomerate of some Chinese entertainment businesses," he said.

Strong Chinese interest in European soccer stems in part from the ambition heralded by President Xi Jinping to raise the quality of the sport in China.

The most prominent acquisitions to date are the purchase of a 13 percent stake in the company that owns Manchester City, worth \$400 million, by China Media Capital and CITIC Capital, and 20 percent of the shares in Spanish club Atletico Madrid bought by Chinese billionaire Wang Jianlin's Dalian Wanda.

In the news



All lit up: The Olympic flame enters the Panathinean stadium in Athens on Wednesday during a torch relay before it is handed over for the 2016 Rio Olympics, triggering a 100-day countdown to the start of the Games. See story > p23 LOUISA GOULIAMAKI / AFP

CHINA Growing force

The number of migrant workers reaches more than 270 million in 2015. > p4

SPORTS Super Saul strikes

Sensational solo goal helps

Atletico sink Bayern in Champions League. > p24



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BROADCASTING

Pirate radio poses surprising challenge in internet age

By ASSOCIATED PRESS
in Irvington, New Jersey

In the age of podcasts and streaming services, you might think pirate radio is low on the list of concerns of US federal lawmakers and broadcasters. You'd be wrong.

They are increasingly worried about its presence in some cities, as unlicensed broadcasters commandeer

frequencies to play anything from Trinidadian dance music to Haitian call-in shows.

They also complain that the Federal Communications Commission can't keep up with the pirates, who can block listeners from favorite programs or emergency alerts for missing children and severe weather.

Helped by cheaper technology, the rogue stations can

cover several blocks or larger areas. Most broadcast to immigrant communities that pirate radio defenders say are underserved by licensed stations.

"The DJs sound like you and they talk about things that you're interested in," said Jay Blessed, an online DJ who has listened to various unlicensed stations since she moved from Trinidad to Brooklyn more

than a decade ago.

"You call them up and say, 'I want to hear this song,' and they play it for you," Blessed said. "It's interactive. It's engaging. It's communal."

Last year, nearly three dozen congressional members from the New York City area urged the commission to do more about what they called the "unprecedented growth of pirate radio operations".

The National Association of Black Owned Broadcasters made a similar appeal, saying that pirates undermine licensed minority stations while ignoring consumer protection laws that guard against indecency and false advertising.

The New York State Broadcasters Association estimates that 100 pirates operate in the New York City area alone, carrying programs in languages from Hebrew to Gaelic to Spanish.

Commission chairman Tom Wheeler cited a stagnant budget and the smallest staff in 30 years. He said fines and seizures are not enough, because pirates often refuse to pay and quickly replace transmitters and inexpensive antennas.

ICBC 中国工商银行

First Quarterly Financial Report of 2016

Page 16-17

2 PAGE TWO

Looking ahead

Events and stories coming up in the next few days

Briefing on education, water resources

The State Council is scheduled to hold a media briefing today at the State Council Information Office. Officials from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Water Resources are expected to discuss the latest policies related to educational development in central and western China before 2020, and the management of farmland and water facilities. The event is open to reporters from home and abroad.

Law on seabed resource exploration

The country's first law on deep sea floor resource exploration is set to take effect on Sunday. The law is seen as the latest move to protect the rightful interests of Chinese citizens and organizations in their search for ocean resources and surveys of the deep sea.

Crossing borders to learn



Before the government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region introduced a "zero delivery quota" in 2013 to restrict the handling of Chinese mainland births, about 202,300 infants with non-local parents, mostly from the mainland, had been born in the city. In the Pearl River Delta area alone,

more than 24,990 children had to commute to Hong Kong for the 2014/2015 school year, according to Hong Kong's education authorities. China Daily will track the latest developments in the field with in-depth stories in the days ahead.

Global horticultural platform

The park of the International Horticultural Exposition in Tangshan, Hebei province, is set to open today. The city is the fifth one to host the expo and the first to do so in a former mining zone, without using any farmland for the event. The park, which covers more than 500 hectares, boasts the latest horticultural and gardening trends that embrace environmental protection and a low-carbon lifestyle. The expo will be held till Oct 16.

May Day holiday edition

China Daily will publish a Holiday Edition for the May Day break this weekend. There will be 12 pages published on Saturday and Monday.

On chinadaily.com.cn

Visit for breaking news and exclusive content

Society: Rare snub-nosed monkeys at Beijing Zoo

On Wednesday, a Guizhou snub-nosed monkey cuddled her newborn at the Beijing Zoo, delighting many visitors. The newborn is the second offspring of a pair of snub-nosed monkeys at the zoo. The monkeys are a very rare and endangered species, with only about 750 worldwide, according to latest figures. In comparison, giant pandas, another endangered species, number more than 1,000. The newborn monkey, over 10 centimeters long and weighing nearly 500 grams, is in good condition and expected to climb a net in the enclosure soon, according to zookeepers.



Travel: Less crowded spots for May Day holiday snaps



Many people will be deciding whether to travel during the upcoming May Day holiday weekend. Those who choose to travel face the likely possibility of getting overwhelmed by throngs of other tourists from all over the country. Taking holiday photos at scenic spots away from the crowds will be difficult, so our website presents readers a number of lesser-known, less crowded areas around China where they can truly relax.

People: Sweet success through ice cream

Entrepreneur Cui Jianwei has been working with friends in Beijing to develop a high-quality pasture to feed more than 80 cows, so that he can source fresh milk to make "the best ice cream". He also refuses to use processed foods, such as jam and fruit juice with additives, in his ice cream. Cui and his team even bake fresh nuts by themselves for their products. Cui opened his first ice cream shop in university in Beijing five years ago. He decided to expand his brisk business — last year, he created a new ice cream brand with partners, opening more shops in many cities across the country.

Photos: Classic railway station

Beijing's Qinglongjiao railway station is part of the Beijing-Zhangjiakou railway and dates back a century. The railway was the first one designed, funded and built solely by Chinese people.

Scan it!
Read more on chinadaily.com.cn



Hot topic

A number of Chinese consumers have expressed little interest in Apple Inc's latest iPhone SE smartphone, citing its small screen and similar appearance to a previous model, a recent industry study showed.



Few people use 4-inch smartphones. Although the new iPhone SE is a powerful model, most of the advanced functions won't be used in daily life."

Wang Shaofan, civil servant in Taiyuan, Shanxi province

"Some people who use small screens will like the new phone. But the price is still too high compared with domestic ones."

Zhang Qian, decoration company employee in Shijiazhuang, Hebei province

"I use the iPhone 6 Plus. The new model is not so different from the iPhone 5. I prefer to wait for the iPhone 7."



Huang Yingying, TV station employee in Beijing

"I won't buy the new iPhone, because there is little change in appearance and the price is relatively high."



Liu Zhenyu, journalism student in Changchun, Jilin province

COMPILED BY CHINA DAILY



Candid camera: Open season

Residents grab pamphlets for the Shanghai Disney Resort, which is set to welcome visitors on June 16, at the service center of a new subway station serving the theme park, on Tuesday. LAI XINLIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

So long, farewell, auf Wiedersehen, goodbye



Tym Glaser
SECOND THOUGHTS

So it comes to pass that after well nigh seven years in China, this old hack is hopping on an aerial caboose and heading home.

Around this time next month I can imagine myself at Silversands beach in my adopted island of Jamaica, sinking a few cold Red Stripe beers, nibbling on jerk chicken and pork and watching my boys pretend they can swim.

Then, after reassuring myself the likelihood of them drowning is down to low, single figures percentage-wise, I will look back on my time in China and wonder was that really seven years, and how did I survive with a

Chinese vocabulary of about nine words?

OK ... eight.

China, and Beijing in particular, has been one long, strange ride. I've lived the expat journo life for about a quarter of a century now but have never stayed in a city as massively large as the nation's capital. Heck, you could put Jamaica, the third-largest island in the Caribbean, inside Beijing and it would still rattle around and not touch the sides.

Being the archetypal creature of habit, I narrowed its parameters to fit my comfort zone, which basically meant the only places I went to outside a two kilometer radius of my apartment were Lido (an extremely easy word to tell a cabbie) and Sanlitun (the place every taxi driver assumes a foreigner is going anyway).

Of course, I went to the Great Wall which was, well, a very long wall, Tian'anmen Square, the Summer Palace, the Winter Palace and the Not-Quite-Summer-Not-Quite-Winter Palace but, basically, I'm not really into touristy things.

The sheer size and population of China/Beijing can be intimidating but I have been to few places in the world with friendlier people and that's perhaps the country's greatest selling point.

When no Chinese language meets limited English it becomes a Marcel Marceau mime show for the ages, but it's fun and the point gets across — more often than not.

I have made Chinese friends, new expat pals and hope to keep in touch with them even if I am literally on the other side of the world.

I won't miss the smog, the brutally cold winters, standing behind women at ATMs for hours, the ridiculous amount of paperwork at banks nor men walking around in summer with their shirts rolled up over their bellies.

But those are minor quibbles. I think I will miss China and the energy and vitality of its people. I will miss lazy walks through parks and watching people doing tai chi, cracking whips or merely playing with their kids or grandkids.

I will miss locals laughing at a joke I will never understand. Probably, most of all, I will miss the smiles.

Bye-bye.
(By the way that's one of my eight Chinese words.)

Contact the writer at tym-glaser@chinadaily.com.cn

This Day, That Year

Item from April 29, 1995, in China Daily: Saleswomen in the Lufthansa Shopping Center place Chinese-language introductions on imported cosmetic items. Foreign commodities will not be allowed for sale without Chinese language introductions after May 1 ...

The requirement, the first imposed on foreign goods in the country, is designed to reinforce the implementation of China's quality control law and to protect the interest of local consumers. ... Chinese language warnings and introductions are especially required for those

commodities with harmful functions.

Cross-border e-commerce has recorded impressive growth in China, with volume this year expected to hit 6.5 trillion yuan (\$1 trillion), according to the Ministry of Commerce.

The sector is forecast to account for one-fifth of the country's foreign trade, the ministry said.

Last year, about 24 million Chinese consumers purchased foreign goods through cross-border e-commerce platforms, and the number is set to increase to 35.6 million

Give intro, label in Chinese, please



Customers in the Lufthansa Shopping Center are placing Chinese labels on imported goods. Labels will be placed for foreign commodities with harmful functions.

by 2018, according to figures from the China E-commerce Research Center.

To help boost foreign trade and stimulate the economy, the country plans to set up more cross-border e-commerce pilot zones, the State Council announced in January.

China adjusted the tax structure for retail goods

imported by e-commerce companies from April 8, replacing luggage and postal taxes with value-added tax, consumption tax and customs duty. Tax on foreign infant formula and paper diapers, for example, will increase by about 12 percent, and that on golf equipment and luxury watches will become twice as high.

FRI - SAT APRIL 29-30

weather

TRAVELER'S FORECAST
LOW/HIGH TEMPERATURES, IN DEGREES CELSIUS, AND EXPECTED CONDITIONS

City	Apr 29	Apr 30	City	Apr 29	Apr 30				
Beijing	13/28	C	15/31	S	Shanghai	14/26	S	16/27	S
Changchun	5/19	C	8/19	D	Shenyang	4/18	C	9/24	Sh
Changsha	17/27	C	18/23	T	Shenzhen	23/28	C	22/27	Sh
Chongqing	19/26	O	20/27	Sh	Shijiazhuang	15/31	S	19/34	S
Dalian	12/21	C	13/21	C	Suzhou	7/26	C	10/28	O
Fuzhou	17/25	C	16/25	C	Taipei	17/23	C	18/27	C
Guangzhou	22/29	C	22/28	C	Taiyuan	9/28	S	13/31	C
Guilin	19/23	R	18/22	R	Tianjin	13/32	C	17/30	C
Guiyang	13/19	Sh	13/21	Sh	Urumqi	12/22	C	9/16	D
Haikou	24/29	T	24/30	C	Wuhan	14/26	C	16/27	C
Hangzhou	13/25	S	14/28	S	Xi'an	13/28	S	15/30	S
Harbin	3/20	S	5/20	C	Xiamen	19/25	C	17/22	C
Hefei	13/26	S	16/28	C	Xining	2/23	O	3/23	O
Hohhot	9/25	S	10/27	S	Yantai	11/24	C	17/29	C
Hongkong	23/27	C	22/25	Sh	Yinchuan	11/30	S	13/31	S
Jinan	15/29	S	22/33	S	Zhengzhou	14/29	S	16/31	S
Kunming	12/26	S	13/26	S	Zhuhai	23/27	C	23/27	C
Lanzhou	9/28	S	12/27	C					
Lhasa	6/19	Sh	4/17	C					
Lijiang	11/18	D	11/22	C					
Macao	23/27	C	23/27	C					
Nanchang	16/26	S	18/27	C					
Nanjing	13/26	S	15/28	S					
Nanning	22/27	Sh	21/29	Sh					
Qingdao	11/18	S	15/21	S					
Sanya	25/31	T	26/32	C					

CHINA

Ulaanbaatar 4/19, 0/16

Urumqi 12/22, 9/16

Xining 13/28, 15/31

Beijing 13/28, 15/31

Pyongyang 12/23, 11/21

Seoul 13/21, 11/19

Tokyo 17/23, 18/27

Shanghai 14/26, 16/27

Taipei 24/33, 24/33

Manila 27/34, 26/34

Hong Kong 23/27, 22/25

Macao 24/33, 24/33

Bangkok 26/37, 25/37

Vientiane 26/35, 26/35

Kuala Lumpur 26/30, 26/30

Singapore 25/29, 25/29

Jakarta 26/32, 26/32

ASIA-PACIFIC-MIDDLE EAST

Abu Dhabi 25/39 C, 25/37 C

Bangkok 30/38 D, 30/37 C

Colombo 26/33 D, 26/33 D

Dubai 27/38 D, 26/35 C

Hanoi 24/27 D, 22/29 D

Islamabad 18/31 S, 18/31 S

Jakarta 26/32 D, 26/32 D

Karachi 27/37 S, 27/37 D

Kuala Lumpur 26/30 R, 26/30 D

Manila 27/34 D, 26/34 C

Mumbai 25/33 C, 25/33 C

New Delhi 25/41 C, 23/40 S

Pyongyang 10/22 D, 11/24 D

Riyadh 23/35 D, 21/35 D

Seoul 12/23 C, 11/21 C

Singapore 25/29 D, 25/29 D

Sydney 17/25 O, 19/24 D

Teheran 18/28 D, 15/28 D

Tokyo 13/21 C, 11/19 C

Wellington 15/18 C, 14/17 D

Yangon 26/37 D, 25/37 D

AMERICAS

BuenosAires 5/14 O, 5/13 C

Caracas 26/31 D, 26/30 D

Chicago 6/12 D, 8/11 D

Houston 23/28 D, 22/28 D

Las Vegas 14/20 D, 15/23 C

Los Angeles 13/19 C, 13/20 C

Mexico city 13/27 C, 12/27 C

New York 10/15 D, 8/13 D

Ottawa -2/7 C, 1/10 C

Rio De Janeiro 21/22 D, 21/23 R

San Francisco 12/18 O, 12/18 O

Sao Paulo 14/19 D, 15/18 D

Vancouver 10/16 D, 6/14 D

Washington 13/20 R, 13/21 D

AFRICA

Cairo 18/34 S, 23/37 S

CapeTown 12/18 D, 11/22 C

Johannesburg 11/21 C, 7/17 D

Lagos 27/30 D, 26/34 D

Nairobi 17/25 D, 16/24 D

Historical perspective

Visitors at an exhibition of painter Shen Yaoyi's works at the National Art Museum of China in Beijing view a painting on Thursday that depicts a meeting during the Long March of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army. The exhibition, which celebrates the upcoming 95th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China, will be open through May 10. JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY



REGIONAL COOPERATION

Xi: Uphold concept of Asia security

Common strategy should be implemented, president tells meeting of foreign ministers

By AN BAIJIE
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President Xi Jinping called on Thursday for implementation of the Asian security concept, a proposal he made two years ago to seek a common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security strategy for Asia.

"We should uphold and implement the Asian security concept, accumulate consensus, promote dialogue and enhance cooperation," Xi said.

The president made the remarks in a speech at the opening ceremony of the fifth meeting of foreign ministers of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, which was held in Beijing.

The CICA, established in 1992, describes itself as "a multinational forum for enhancing cooperation toward promoting peace, security and stability in Asia". It has 26 member countries, including China, Russia, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Turkey and Thailand and 12 observer countries, including the United States and Japan. International organizations also participate.

During the fourth summit of the CICA held in Shanghai in 2014, Xi proposed the Asian security concept, which calls for equal participation among countries on regional security affairs and equal responsibility for upholding security.

While pursuing national interests and development and safeguarding national security, the countries involved should consider other countries' concerns, promote joint development and respect others' security needs, Xi said.

The president also encouraged the building of what he has called an Asian community of common destiny, boosting communication among different cultures, resolving disputes

While pursuing national interests and development and safeguarding national security, the countries involved should consider other countries' concerns, promote joint development and respect others' security needs, Xi said.

peacefully through dialogue and negotiation, and seeking to establish a security framework with regional characteristics.

During the meeting, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that in the next two years, China, as CICA chairmanship country, will work with forum members to boost mutual trust, implement practical cooperation, promote capacity building and uphold inclusiveness and tolerance.

The security of Asia should be jointly maintained by the member countries, and the development of Asia should also be jointly promoted by the members, he said.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that Asia is facing many security threats, including activities of the Islamic State group in Syria and Afghanistan, and he called for establishing an anti-terrorism alliance to safeguard security.

According to China's Foreign Ministry, more than 40 delegations from CICA member countries, observer countries and international organizations attended the meeting. The CICA has held a foreign ministers' meeting every four years. China holds the CICA chairmanship from 2014 to 2018.

CHINA-JAPAN TIES

Forum will focus on the global economy

By MO JINGXI
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The 12th Beijing-Tokyo Forum will be held in the Japanese capital in late September, the China International Publishing Group has announced.

Twelve members of the forum's executive committee, including Zhao Qizheng, former chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, and Yasushi Akashi, former UN undersecretary-general, met in Beijing on Thursday and exchanged views on topics for discussion.

Since its founding in 2005, the forum, jointly organized by China International Publishing Group and Japanese non-profit think tank The Genron NPO, has become a nongov-

ernmental platform for high-level dialogue between China and Japan.

This year's event will focus on peace in North Asia and the world economy. Parallel sessions will be held to discuss diplomacy, trade and the two countries' economies, security and media.

It was decided that more young intellectuals should be invited to offer their opinions at the forum, and efforts should be increased to offer advice and suggestions for bilateral cooperation, especially regarding the two economies.

Thursday's announcement came a day ahead of the beginning of Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida's three-day official visit to Beijing.

Inside

Comment > p9

BUSINESS

Hotelier abandons plan to hike prices

By ZHENG YANGPENG
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InterContinental Hotels Group has become the first international hotel brand to drop its price increase plan after government intervention, and the China National Tourism Administration has warned the hospitality industry against raising prices in the face of value-added tax reform.

After a meeting that the Shanghai tax authority held with four major international hotel operators — InterContinental, Hyatt, Marriott and Hilton — InterContinental pledged not to raise its prices after Sunday, when the VAT reform expands to the hotel industry, China Business News reported.

40 percent

The tax reduction for hotels with annual revenue of less than 5 million yuan under value-added tax reform

21.9 percent

The higher service fee rate that four major international hotel operators had planned to implement

The meeting in Shanghai, where the four hotel operators have headquarters, came after they announced in mid-April that they would increase service fees on rooms to 21.9 percent from 15 percent. They cited concerns about the possible negative impact of the VAT reform.

Managers of the three other operators assured the Shanghai tax authority that they would "not add to consumers' burden", according to China Business News.

The response to the price increase plan illustrated the Chinese government's determination to safeguard VAT reform, a tax shift at the center of Premier Li Keqiang's supply-side economic reform, analysts said. The reform is meant to slash business costs to spur growth.

"The government is very serious about the reform," said Zhu Qing, a tax professor at Renmin University of China in Beijing. "It is natural that getting in the way of implementing the plan will not be tolerated."

SOUTH CHINA SEA

Beijing sees US moves as 'provocations'

By WANG XU
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Beijing views Washington's "freedom of navigation" operations as both political and military provocations, and it will continue to monitor air and sea activity closely and take any necessary measures, Defense Ministry spokesman Colonel Wu Qian told a regular news briefing on Thursday.

Wu made the remarks in response to media reports that the United States was planning to carry out a third "freedom of navigation" operation to challenge China's territorial claims in the South China Sea.

"We think the US's so-called freedom of navigation operations pose political and military provocations against China, which could easily lead to mishaps in the sea and air, and are extremely dangerous," Wu said.

"Freedom of navigation" has become an excuse for the US to meddle in South China Sea disputes, Wu said, adding that free navigation of the South China Sea has never been a problem.



Ministry of National Defense spokesman Colonel Wu Qian addresses a news conference in Beijing on Thursday.

ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

The US operations are promoting militarization and endangering stability, he said.

Asked about calls by some US senators for stepped-up naval activities in the South China Sea, Wu said: "No matter how frequently US ships come to the South China Sea, that will not change the fact that the islands and adjacent

islands are China's inherent territory. It will not stop the pace of China's growth and development. And even more, it will not shake the will of the People's Liberation Army to resolutely safeguard the sovereignty and security of China."

On Thursday, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said that even pub-

lic opinion in the US sees Washington as deliberately enlarging the so-called China threat in the South China Sea.

For example, Hua said, The National Interest, a US international affairs magazine, questioned Washington's assertion that China's claims over the South China Sea are affecting international trade in the region, and it asserted that China's activities in the South China Sea have not damaged US national security.

Jia Duqiang, a Southeast Asian studies researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said "freedom of navigation" operations are aimed at provoking China, which serves Washington's "pivot to Asia" strategy.

Escalating tensions in the South China Sea are something that Washington wants, Jia said, because by stirring up trouble between China and some ASEAN countries, these countries will depend on the US for security, which facilitates implementation of the US strategy.

Kazakhstan adds voice to growing support

By WANG XU
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Beijing is getting ever-increasing backing from the international community for its stance on the South China Sea issue, with Kazakhstan adding its support on Thursday.

Kazakh Foreign Minister Ertan Idrissov told his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi that Kazakhstan fully understands and respects China's stance on the South China Sea and believes that related disputes should be resolved through negotiations by countries directly concerned.

He made the remarks during a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, which started on Thursday in Beijing.

On Wednesday, top diplo-

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Zhu Feng, executive director of Nanjing University's China Center for Collaborative Studies of the South China Sea

mats from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan and Belarus also said they fully understand and support China's stance on and approach to handling the South China Sea issue.

In the past few weeks, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Russia, India, Poland, Gambia and Fiji expressed support for Beijing's wish to resolve disputes in the South China Sea through dialogue and consultation by those directly concerned.

In January 2013, the Philippines unilaterally initiated an arbitration case against China in the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague regarding its disputes with Beijing in the South China Sea. A ruling by the arbitration court is expected this year.

China said it will neither accept nor participate in the "tainted" arbitration.

By taking this position, China is upholding interna-

tional law and protecting the law's spirit, said Fu Kuenchen, dean of Xiamen University's South China Sea Institute.

Zhu Feng, executive director of the China Center for Collaborative Studies of the South China Sea at Nanjing University, said that as more people understand what really has happened in the South China Sea, a growing number of countries will support China.

The United States and the Philippines are trying to start a diplomatic battle to force China to accept the arbitration ruling unilaterally initiated by the Philippines, Zhu said.

"I think what the US and the Philippines are doing only accelerates tensions and is not conducive to resolving the problem," he added.

Disputes: Drills 'have raised tension'

FROM PAGE 1

The "countries outside the region" mentioned by Xi include the US, which is partly responsible for tension in the South China Sea, Su added.

Zhang Junshe, a senior researcher at the PLA Naval Military Studies Research Institute, said that the US has recently "grouped" with countries such as the Philippines to

"muddy the waters" by staging joint military drills in the South China Sea.

"This is a root cause that prompts militarization of the South China Sea region and rising tension there," Zhang said.

In Singapore on Thursday, China and countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations agreed to "properly control and manage

differences", according to a Foreign Ministry release.

The consensus was made as Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Liu Zhenmin and Singapore's Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs Chee Wee Kiong co-chaired the 22nd China-ASEAN Senior Officials' Consultation.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the launch of dialogue relations between

China and ASEAN.

All parties agreed that China and ASEAN countries should use the anniversary as an opportunity to "strengthen strategic communication, deepen mutually beneficial cooperation, and properly control and manage differences", the release said.

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