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XI'S VISION | POLICY DIRECTION

Opening-up remains key to nation's growth

President Xi has used annual meetings over years to signal policy priorities

By ZHAO JIA zhaojia@chinadaily.com.cn



In 2013, as China's trade and investment ties with the world continued to grow, Mouhammadou Bassirou Pouye, a Senegalese businessman, made a decision that would reshape his life. Instead of observing China's development from afar, he chose to build his career inside the country.

Pouye has spent 12 years facilitating trade and entrepreneurship between China and African countries — a role that mirrors China's broader engagement with the Global South.

"I decided to come to China because of its rapid development, economic opportunities, cultural richness and openness to international talent," Pouye said. "Its dynamic environment and growing global influence make it an attractive destination for business, education and cultural exchange."

For him, reform and opening-up is not an abstract slogan, but a lived reality. "China's opening-up policy, launched in the late 1970s, has been a cornerstone of its economic transformation," Pouye said. "For individuals, this policy has opened doors for entrepreneurs like myself, as well as students and professionals, fostering mutual understanding and collaboration."

More than a decade later, what began as a personal journey has evolved into a professional mission. Now serving as the secretary-general of the Yiwu China and Africa Business Council in Zhejiang province,

See **Opening-up**, page 3

Inside

Editorial, page 8



A chef from the traditional bakery brand Daoxiangcun shakes a bamboo sieve, transforming fillings into the snowy-white yuanxiao for sale at the Longfusi commercial area in Beijing's Dongcheng district, on Monday. This year, Daoxiangcun has launched four classic yuanxiao flavors — refined black sesame, traditional five-nut, osmanthus-hawthorn and chocolate. WEI XIAOHUO / CHINA DAILY

IT'S LANTERN FESTIVAL — TIME TO HAVE A BALL

Yuanxiao or tangyuan? Whatever you call them, these chewy, flavor-filled glutinous rice dumplings are a quintessential treat

By DENG ZHANGYU dengzhangyu@chinadaily.com.cn

Outside a bustling Daoxiangcun pastry shop in Beijing on Monday, a day before this year's Lantern Festival, a chef deftly shakes a bamboo sieve, transforming fillings like sesame paste, red bean, hawthorn jam — even chocolate — into snowy-white balls called yuanxiao. Nearby, simmering in a large pot, these glutinous dumplings gently puff up, releasing an irresistible fragrance to customers and passersby.

In Shanghai, office worker Li Meng waits in a long line outside Meixin dim sum shop, craving its famous crab roe tangyuan. Whatever you call them, yuanxiao or tangyuan, the chewy, flavor-filled glutinous rice balls are a quintessential treat during Lantern Festival, also known as Yuanxiao Festival, which marks the first full moon in the first month of the Chinese calendar and the official end of Chinese New Year celebrations.

But be warned, asking "yuanxiao or tangyuan?" is like asking "Coke or Pepsi?" in China. It's a debate that ignites passionate opinions nationwide.

So what's the difference? It's all about the process. In the north, chefs create yuanxiao by rolling the filling in dry glutinous rice flour, much like building a snowball. In the south, tangyuan are crafted by wrapping glutinous rice dough around a filling, similar to making dumplings.

Zhang Libin, a chef from Fujian province in East China who is now based in Beijing, knows both worlds well. He serves both sweet peanut and savory pork-stuffed tangyuan on Lantern Festival nights in one bowl, a tradition from his hometown.

"Just sweet ones can be too much. They're the same food, just different regional styles," he said.

Zhang noted that yuanxiao, typically sweet, offer a chewier texture,

while tangyuan are softer and silkier. No matter the name, both symbolize family unity, harmony and hopes for a prosperous year.

They're more than just food; they represent reunion, said historian Luo Shuwen.

This tradition dates back to the Song Dynasty (960-1279), when they were called "floating round balls". By the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911), the north-south divide was firmly established.

Flavors also vary by region. Yuanxiao are usually sweet and can be boiled or deep-fried. Tangyuan boast diverse sweet and savory options. Consider the lard-and-sesame tangyuan, from Ningbo in Zhejiang province, the chicken-stuffed tangyuan with chicken soup from Xingyi, Guizhou province, or the ones filled with pork and shepherd's purse found in Yangzhou, Jiangsu province. Chaozhou in Guangdong province even has "duck mother dumplings" (yanunian) with vari-

ous sweet fillings such as green bean paste, red bean paste, taro and sesame sugar.

While yuanxiao appear mainly around Lantern Festival, tangyuan are now available throughout the year, leading to wild flavor innovations like durian, snail noodles, and, as previously mentioned, even chocolate!

This year, Li Meng is ordering matcha and chocolate-filled tangyuan online. "Sweet or savory, these rice balls celebrate regional cultures and emotional connections," she said.

So, grab a bowl and join the delicious debate! Whether you prefer the squishy bite of yuanxiao or the silky embrace of tangyuan, you're partaking in a centuries-old tradition that embodies the warmth and unity of Lantern Festival.



FOOD



Displaced people fleeing Israeli strikes in southern Lebanon sit on a pickup truck on a highway linking the southern port city of Sidon to Beirut, the capital of Lebanon, on Monday. MOHAMMED ZAKATARI / AP

FM calls for joint efforts to de-escalate Mideast tensions

By ZHAO JIA and LIU JIANQIAO and CUI HAIPei in Dubai, UAE

Inside

See more, page 12

Foreign Minister Wang Yi held separate phone conversations on Monday with his Iranian, Omani and French counterparts, calling for an immediate ceasefire in the Middle East and intensified diplomatic efforts to prevent further escalation of the situation.

under the current circumstances, take seriously the legitimate concerns of neighboring countries, and ensure the safety of Chinese citizens and institutions in Iran.

Iranian Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi briefed Wang on the latest developments in the region and said the military action initiated by the United States violated international law and crossed Iran's red line, leaving Iran with no choice but to exercise full self-defense.

During his phone conversation with Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Bussaidi, Wang commended Oman for its active mediation in facilitating Iran-US negotiations and its sustained efforts to uphold regional peace.

Araghchi noted that China has faithfully articulated a position of fairness and justice, and he expressed hope that China would continue to play a constructive role in preventing further escalation of regional tensions.

Wang said that China attaches importance to the legitimate concerns of Gulf countries and supports them in safeguarding their sovereignty and national security. The spillover of the conflict does not serve the fundamental and long-term interests of Gulf states, he said.

Wang reiterated China's support for Iran in safeguarding its sovereignty, security, territorial integrity and national dignity, and in defending its legitimate rights and interests.

Wang expressed hope that Gulf countries will strengthen independence and self-reliance, oppose external interference, foster good-neighborly relations, enhance solidarity and cooperation, and truly hold their future and destiny in their own hands.

He voiced confidence that Iran will maintain national and social stability

See **Conflict**, page 3

AI helping to redefine entrepreneurship

By WANG SONGSONG wangsongsong@chinadaily.com.cn

Across China, the rapid rise of one-person companies, or OPCs, empowered by artificial intelligence tools and strong ecosystem support, is reshaping entrepreneurship, as innovators leverage AI as a virtual team to drive business creation and growth.

According to a recent report by the Zhongnancun Talent Association in Beijing, metropolises such as Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen in Guangdong province have increasingly become the top choices for OPCs, particularly in local science and technology parks. The popularization of AI technology, government support and a talent pool are among the major factors attracting one-person companies and helping them grow.

Dong Bo, president of Kr Star Innovation, operator of the ZGC AI North Latitude Hub, which is an AI development hub in Beijing's Haidian district, described the hub as an enterprise cluster

providing a supportive ecology for high-tech businesses. Its mission is to help integrate AI-driven companies, tech media, developers and tool-chain providers — entities that offer comprehensive suites of tools for building and managing AI applications.

The hub currently hosts 20 OPCs, whose entrepreneurs mainly come from domestic and foreign universities and technology enterprises.

One of the hub's members is Wu Zhen, a 44-year-old entrepreneur. He joined in January as the founder of an intelligent virtual performance platform.

Initially serving as a cross-city, cross-cultural digital performance solution during the pandemic, the platform now supports a wide range of applications, including stage-based educational courses, motion capture, AI-generated short films and AI virtual idols.

According to Wu, AI acts as a round-the-clock virtual team that plays a significant role in copywriting, content generation, visual and

video creation, and basic software and web development. AI also adapts content for cultural tourism scenarios, such as AI-generated content light shows.

"In the age of AI, what's truly scarce is judgment, aesthetic sensibility and long-term narrative vision. OPCs are not a transitional form. They may well remain a vital and dynamic organizational model for a long time," he said.

Wu himself exemplifies the rapid development of OPCs. The report also found that as of June 2025, the number of one-person limited liability companies, primarily in the digital economy and service industries, exceeded 16 million nationwide. The number of newly registered OPCs reached 2.86 million in the first half of 2025, surging 47 percent year-on-year.

As with cross-border e-commerce, the use of AI digital humans helped OPCs reduce labor costs by 70 percent and increase sales by 300 percent.

See **Support**, page 3



Online See more by scanning the code.

INSIDE

Team China ready to bounce back

Sports, p20

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TOP NEWS

China's judges enhancing global role

Growing international recognition of nation's judicial system highlighted

By CAO YIN
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Chinese judges are making a significant mark on the global judicial arena by upholding the rule of law, adhering to professional ethics and sharing their mediation practices internationally.

Shen Hongyu, a veteran in handling foreign-related commercial and maritime cases at China's Supreme People's Court, is a notable figure on the international stage. She became a part-time judge of the International Labour Organization's Administrative Tribunal in July 2021, following a nearly nine-month selection process.

"Serving internationally marks a new chapter in my career and reflects the strong trust and recognition that international organizations have in China's judicial system and its judges' capabilities," Shen said.

As the first Chinese judge on the tribunal in nearly a century, she has been a strong advocate for introducing Chinese mediation practices to the international platform.

Shen emphasized that Chinese judges have extensive experience in dealing with complex cases and coordinating across departments, which has contributed to the success of the mediation approach.

In Chinese courts, mediation is a dispute resolution mechanism, in which the people's court, during the process of hearing cases, facilitates an agreement between the parties based on the principle of voluntariness.

Shen highlighted the importance of mediation in resolving disputes, saying that the method addresses legal issues and effectively resolves the underlying causes of conflicts.

Shen said that successful mediation relies on establishing trust through professional competence, efficiently identifying facts and setting clear mediation goals.

"Judges need to guide litigants to adjust their expectations, understand their interests and narrow differences to achieve a resolution satisfying all parties," she said.

Shen added that what greatly encourages her is the acceptance by the international community. Last year, the ILO Administrative Tribunal adopted mediation rules and named its first mediator, integrating this Chinese-originated approach into the global system, she noted.

Sun Xiangzhuang, a full-time judge at the United Nations Dispute Tribunal since July 2023, also emphasized judicial mediation as an "added value" of Chinese judges in the international community.

He shared a recent case in which an applicant had filed over 20 applications to the tribunal. "I highlighted the advantages of judicial mediation in a case management discussion, encouraging him to resolve his disputes amicably. Soon, he submitted a motion to withdraw a couple of applications," said Sun, the first Chinese elected as a judge of this tribunal. His term runs until June 2030.

He noted that as Chinese judges integrate into the international judicial environment, both the UN Dispute Tribunal and the Appeals Tribunal now have the capacity to process cases in Chinese. "This is a remarkable achievement in geographic distribution and cultural inclusivity within the UN's internal justice system, allowing more non-English-speaking parties to experience judicial fairness directly," he said.

He stressed that embracing diversity is a core value that judges of the UN Dispute Tribunal should uphold.

Shen, from the top court, said, "International service has strengthened my belief that judges, whether at home or abroad, have the honorable mission of upholding justice and fairness."

Sun has also gained from his international role, improving his English and international law skills, as well as learning the importance of finding common ground and complementing each other's strengths while working with judges from diverse legal backgrounds to achieve optimal outcomes in every case.

He pointed out that sincerity and professionalism are key to bridging gaps and advancing work efficiently, saying that meaningful exchanges and interactions among judges who come from different countries are beneficial to handling cases and broadening perspectives.

Given that the UN is currently the world's most important platform for multilateral cooperation, the relatively low number of Chinese international employees is a concern. Sun suggested that there should be an increased focus on training legal professionals with international expertise and encouraging young talent to pursue opportunities on the global stage.

Shen has also championed multilateralism, emphasizing that it fosters mutual understanding among legal systems and helps to shape a more inclusive and respectful international judiciary.

Gao Xiaoli, vice-president of China's Supreme People's Court, expressed similar sentiments about multilateralism. She said that her motivation to run for a UN judicial position stemmed from her extensive practice and research in international law, as well as the UN's crucial role in maintaining world peace, protecting human rights and promoting sustainable development.

"Contributing my judicial expertise and strength on such a multilateral stage is very meaningful," said Gao, who was elected as a judge on the UN Appeals Tribunal in 2022. The term of Gao, the first Chinese national to serve on the tribunal, runs until June 30.

In June 2023, Gao was elected as First Vice-President of the tribunal. In October that year, she was elected as president of the tribunal.

She said the experience gained from Chinese courts has been crucial in her work at the UN Appeals Tribunal, helping her effectively resolve complex cases and earn respect from international judges. She also called on more Chinese judges to participate in international exchanges and gain cutting-edge theoretical and practical experience in international law.

China's international judicial engagement has continued to grow in recent years. Zhang Lingling, a judge from China's Supreme People's Court, is set to start her tenure at the UN Appeals Tribunal on July 1.

Zhang pledged to uphold professional ethics and enhance judicial transparency and efficiency to address the increasing caseload, and safeguard the legitimate rights of every party involved, thereby supporting the UN's reform process and showcasing the image of justice and integrity in the Chinese judiciary.

"True justice transcends nationality, race, gender and rank, and I am aware that behind every dispute are real people whose careers, reputations and families are at stake," Zhang said.

Online
See more by scanning the code.

Campus in festive mood



Students take part in a lantern riddle game on Monday at a primary school in the Qiannan Bouyei and Miao autonomous prefecture in Guizhou province. The school welcomed students for the new semester with a variety of activities, including writing spring couplets, making tangyuan (sweet glutinous rice balls), tossing arrows into a pot and opening red envelopes. QU HONGLUN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Opening-up: Two sessions act as important policy barometer

From page 1

With this year's two sessions approaching, Poyue, the secretary-general, expects that economic growth will be high on the agenda, and he said he'd be interested in seeing measures aimed at boosting domestic consumption, supporting private enterprises and stabilizing growth amid global uncertainties.

China is likely to reaffirm its commitment to openness and global cooperation, he added.

The annual two sessions — meetings of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, China's top political advisory body — are widely viewed as a window into China's policy priorities.

This year's two sessions are scheduled to open this week in Beijing.

The 14th National Committee of the CPPCC closed the 15th session of its standing committee on Monday in Beijing. Wang Huning, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the CPPCC National Committee, presided over the closing meeting and delivered a speech.

Major economic targets, reform measures and social policies are announced, discussed and endorsed during the two sessions, making them an important barometer of the country's development trajectory. At a time when global trade faces fragmentation, rising protectionism and geopolitical tensions, the policy sig-

nals from Beijing carry added weight, analysts said.

Over the years, President Xi Jinping has used the annual gatherings to signal key directions in China's evolving reform and opening-up agenda — from expanding market access to strengthening institutional reform and innovation-driven growth.

When joining deliberations with deputies at the third session of the 12th NPC in 2015, Xi called for pursuing a more proactive strategy of opening-up. He also urged efforts to build a more vibrant, open economic system and to develop comprehensive platforms for opening-up along coastal, riverine and border regions.

During discussions with deputies from the Shanghai delegation in 2017, Xi described the development of pilot free trade zones as a strategic move to deepen reform and expand opening-up under new circumstances. He reiterated that China's door will never close, pledging to advance all-around opening-up and continue to liberalize and facilitate trade and investment.

While joining deliberations with Fujian deputies at the country's annual legislative session in 2019, Xi emphasized the need to draw impetus from reform and opening-up, in order to fully unleash the innovative and entrepreneurial vitality of the entire society, and strengthen China's influence and competitiveness amid profound changes unseen in a century.

In 2024, while taking part in deliberations with deputies from Jiangsu province, he said that China would continue to foster a first-class business environment that is market-oriented,

law-based and internationalized, and work to cultivate new strengths in higher-level opening-up.

Institutional reforms

Analysts said that today's opening-up is increasingly defined not only by tariff reductions and expanded market access, but also by institutional reforms aimed at enhancing regulatory transparency, policy consistency and long-term predictability.

Zhou Mi, a senior researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said that China's approach to reform and opening-up has shifted from passive adaptation to more proactive planning. Reaffirming the importance of reform and opening-up as a fundamental national policy, Zhou said China is likely to continue building a resilient, innovation-driven framework capable of adapting to rapid technological changes, particularly in areas such as artificial intelligence, in order to support high-quality development.

Zhou emphasized that major economies have a responsibility to uphold openness in the face of ongoing challenges posed by unilateralism and trade protectionism. "China is fostering a more open environment for global cooperation," he said. "This openness, in turn, strengthens China's competitiveness."

Dun Zhigang, a researcher at the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies of Renmin University of China, pointed to China hosting the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting for the

Political Lens

Book about Xi leading China's poverty elimination endeavors published

A book about how the Communist Party of China secured victory in China's fight against poverty under the leadership of Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, has been published.

The book was recently published by the publishing house of the Party School of the CPC Central Committee (National Academy of Governance) and distributed nationwide.

Featuring representative events and people involved in the battle against poverty, this book narrates how the CPC Central Committee, with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core, led the whole Party and people of all ethnic groups to eliminate absolute poverty, vividly highlighting historic achievements in poverty alleviation.

XINHUA

Medical outreach



The crew of the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy hospital ship *Silk Road Ark* stand in formation on the deck as the vessel arrives at the port of Valparaiso, Chile, on Sunday. The ship is on a seven-day humanitarian medical service mission as part of its "Mission Harmony-2025" task. CUI XIAOYANG / XINHUA

Support: Govt provides inclusive access to data

From page 1

However, Wu said that one-person companies, including his own, struggle with the lack of stable order pipelines and revenue.

Li Xiaolei, head of the Institute of Regional and Industrial Research at the Guangdong Provincial Investigation and Research Center, suggested that the government adopt open competition to enable OPCs to

undertake targeted projects and give them inclusive access to computing power and shared data.

In January, Shenzhen issued vouchers providing substantial financial support to OPCs and reducing entrepreneurial costs. The city is also addressing workspace and accommodation needs.

Yang Cheng contributed to this story.

Conflict: Escalation could cast a long shadow on regional peace

From page 1

Al Bunsaidi said it is regrettable that the US and Israel abandoned previous negotiation outcomes and launched military strikes, warning that a prolonged conflict would lead to more casualties and property losses. He noted that China has consistently upheld the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and remains a reliable and positive force.

During his phone call with French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot, Wang emphasized that the international community should oppose any act that violates international law and must not apply double standards.

Major powers should not attack other countries at will by relying on military superiority, and the world must not be allowed to regress to the law of the jungle, he said.

Wang emphasized that the Iranian nuclear issue should ultimately return to the track of political and diplomatic settlement. He expressed hope that France will maintain an objective and fair position, remain calm and rational, and work with China to steer the situation toward de-escalation while jointly safeguarding the basic norms governing international relations.

Barrot said the military strikes launched by the US and Israel in Iran were conducted without consultation with, or authorization from, the UN Security Council.

As permanent members of the Security Council, France and China

bear special responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, he said.

The flurry of high-level communications in the past three days, including the one between Wang and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, has underscored China's active diplomatic engagement aimed at de-escalating tensions and steering the situation back on the track of political and diplomatic resolution.

Following the US-Israeli attack on Iran, the Security Council, at the request of China and Russia, convened an emergency session on Saturday to discuss the situation.

On Monday, fresh explosions were heard in Iran, Lebanon and across the Middle East, with reports suggesting that the death toll in the three-day conflict had crossed 550.

According to China's Foreign Ministry, as of Monday Beijing time, more than 3,000 Chinese nationals have been evacuated from Iran, while one Chinese citizen has been killed in the conflict in the Iranian capital Tehran.

Experts said the escalating conflict could cast a long shadow on peace and stability in the region and beyond. Ding Long, a professor at Shanghai International Studies University's Middle East Studies Institute, said the killing of Iran's supreme leader "has set a dangerous precedent, undermining the existing international order".

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