

TOP NEWS

Li, Scholz vow to strengthen ties

China, Germany to pursue more vibrant trade links

By MO JINGXI
mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

The advantages of China's new energy industry are shaped through sound market competition rather than relying on government subsidies, Premier Li Qiang said on Tuesday, reiterating China's willingness to work with all parties to uphold fair competition and open cooperation for win-win results.

Li made the remarks when jointly meeting the media with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Beijing, after they held a bilateral meeting and attended a symposium of the China-Germany Economic Advisory Committee on the last day of Scholz's visit to China.

Li responded at the joint news conference to the recent hyping up of China's "overcapacity", saying that countries tend to have higher production capacity in their competitive industries but lower capacity in other sectors, and this is determined by their individual comparative advantages.

"The strong market competitiveness of China's new energy products was a result of multiple factors, including their accumulated technological superiority established through long-term research and development investment, as well as a complete industrial support capacity, an ultra-large market and rich human resources in the country," Li said.

According to the premier, the two sides have agreed to pursue further efforts to make the China-Germany dialogue more effective, trade more vibrant, cooperation closer and friendship more solid.

Li noted that strengthening strategic communication and



Premier Li Qiang (right) and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz attend a joint news conference in Beijing on Tuesday after they held talks and met with Chinese and German entrepreneurs at a symposium.

WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

deepening mutually beneficial cooperation between the world's second- and third-largest economies is not only crucial for the development of the two countries, but is also important for the peace, stability and prosperity of the Eurasian region and the whole world.

As China is ready to import more quality products from Germany and has lifted restrictions on German goods such as beef and apples, "we also hope the German side will reduce its restrictions on the exports of high-technology equipment and high value-added products to China", he said, adding that this will help facilitate the trade balance between the two countries.

Li said that China and Germany will further tap the potential of service trade cooperation. "We expect German enterprises in such sectors as education, finance, tourism and culture to provide more

high-quality services for Chinese consumers."

Germany is among the six countries that enjoy a unilateral visa-free policy extended by China since last year to facilitate cross-border travel. According to Li, the policy has so far enabled 90,000 visits by Germans to China.

He also called for the two sides to work together to provide more convenience for personnel exchanges and support communications between the two countries' arts, sports and education sectors, thus consolidating the foundation of public opinion.

Scholz reiterated that Germany does not seek to decouple from China, its most important trading partner, but rather hopes to deepen their economic ties, which benefit both sides.

Germany is ready to work with China to strengthen dialogue and communication, deepen practical

cooperation, advance people-to-people exchanges and jointly address climate change and other global challenges, in order to push for greater development of the China-Germany comprehensive strategic partnership, he said.

He also expressed Germany's opposition to trade protectionism and said his country is willing to work with China to create a level playing field.

The two leaders witnessed the signing of multiple cooperation documents after their meeting.

Roland Busch, CEO of Siemens and a member of the high-level delegation that accompanied Scholz to China, said he would give the trip a very high score because "we are bringing our collaboration to the next level".

"I hope this dialogue will give us more tail wind in the market," he said.

Growth: Steady recovery trend set to continue

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NBS data showed China's value-added industrial output grew 6.1 percent year-on-year in the first quarter, after a 4.6 percent annual gain in 2023. Fixed-asset investment rose 4.5 percent in the first three months year-on-year, while retail sales grew 4.7 percent during the same period.

Looking forward, "the economy will continue the recovery trend, underpinned by global economic recovery, stepped-up policy support and the anticipated strong holiday business", Sheng told a news conference in Beijing on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Sheng noted that China's housing market is still being adjusted. He said that more efforts will be made to increase support for the development of the real economy, foster emerging industries and boost consumer confidence.

Lu Ting, chief China economist at Nomura, said that while China's first-quarter real GDP growth beat expectations, March activity data was well below expectations.

"Activity data may drop further from March on weak momentum," Lu said. "Some sectors, especially exports, may hold up relatively well on falling prices and robust external demand."

He said the country might introduce more forceful measures to address the property woes in the coming months, especially regarding support for completing unfinished pre-sold homes.

China's economy is affected by the downturn in its property sector, said the International Monetary Fund's latest World Economic Outlook. The IMF estimated that China will grow at 4.6 percent this year, unchanged from the previous forecast in January.

Louise Loo, lead economist at

British think tank Oxford Economics, said her team expects government bond issuance to pick up again in the third quarter.

Despite the fluctuations in March, Zhou Maohua, a researcher at China Everbright Bank, said he believes the economy is well on track to a steady recovery in the following months, given the continued recovery in industrial production and investment and the gradual improvement in consumption.

He said that China "still has ample policy space to bolster the world's second-largest economy".

On the monetary front, Huang Yiping, dean of Peking University's National School of Development, said the US Federal Reserve might cut the policy rate this year, which "should also create more room for the People's Bank of China to ease monetary policy if it wants to".

Tang Yao, an associate professor of applied economics at Peking University's Guanghua School of Management, said the United States should have been more cautious with its monetary policy to avoid negative effects in emerging markets.

"The US adopted an extremely loose monetary policy during the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to out-of-control inflation. It then raised interest rates frantically and rapidly, which has had a severe spillover effect on economies globally," Tang said.

If the US dollar remains strong, "the emerging markets will face higher pressure to keep capital from flowing away to the US, especially emerging markets with relatively less room for macroeconomic policy maneuvering", he said.

Zhou Lanxun contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at
ouyangshijia@chinadaily.com.cn

Mideast: Communication seen as key to stability

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Liu Zhongmin, a professor of Middle East studies at Shanghai International Studies University, said that China seeks to maintain communication and coordination with relevant parties that can play their roles in the region and around the globe to jointly cool down the current tension in the Middle East.

The recent confrontation between Iran and Israel comes amid the unresolved long-standing differences between the two nations, and an escalation of the conflict will negatively impact the Middle East situation, he said.

Liu said the spillover effects of the Gaza conflict are being felt in various directions, including the Red Sea, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and the Persian Gulf region. Any further escalation of tension between Iran and Israel will undoubtedly affect stability in the Gulf, he added.

Since China appointed a special envoy on the Middle East issue in 2002, it has been striving to play a constructive role in promoting peace talks on many regional hot spot issues, such as the situations in Syria and Iraq as well as the Palestine-Israel conflict, the professor said.

China's mediation of a landmark agreement last year to restore diplomatic relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia is a highlight of its diplomatic efforts in the region, Liu said.

Through communication with Saudi Arabia, a country that is capable of exerting influence on both the United States and Israel, China is playing a constructive role and making contributions to maintain security and stability in the Middle East, especially in the Gulf region, he added.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

Probe into Beijing Half Marathon controversy underway

By CUI JIA
cuijia@chinadaily.com.cn

The organizer of the Beijing Half Marathon announced that an investigation is underway, after an online uproar was caused by videos that show three African runners appearing to slow down near the finish line to allow Chinese runner He Jie to win by a second.

Video clips of Sunday's 21-kilometer race showed Kenya's Willy Mnangat and Robert Keter, Dejene Hailu of Ethiopia and home star runner He approaching the finish line. Mnangat looked at He and seemingly beckoned his Chinese opponent to go ahead of him and the two other runners close to the finish line.

The video clips went viral as suspicions were aroused about the

leading runners appearing to let He overtake them, winning with a time of 1:03:44, which fell short of the Chinese half-marathon record by one minute and 11 seconds.

The 25-year-old He won the gold medal in the marathon at the 2023 Asian Games in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, and is the Chinese national marathon champion.

On Monday evening, the organizer of the Beijing Half Marathon announced in a statement that it takes people's inquiries about the final result of the race seriously. An investigation team will inform the public about the results of the probe in a timely manner, the statement said.

Mnangat told BBC Sport Africa that the trio ran as pacemakers. He added that four runners had been

contracted to help He break the national record, and that one of them did not finish the race.

After seeing the video clips on social media, many people criticized the result and questioned the integrity of sportsmanship. Zhao Ke, a veteran marathon runner, said on Tuesday that it's very clear that the African runners were the pacers for He.

"It's pretty common for professional runners to find pacers to help them achieve better results during races, but most of the public aren't aware of that. Both the organizer and broadcasters failed to inform the public about it, so it's only natural for them to raise questions," Zhao said.

It's also a common practice for pacers to participate in the competitions as athletes. "It's an athlete's choice to

become a pacer or not, so it's not about integrity of sportsmanship," Zhao said.

"People shouldn't blame the runners, but all pacers should be clearly marked especially those who serve for elite athletes," he added.

Zhao said that many marathon runners are disappointed that He had no strong competitors, so the international event wasn't as exciting as it should have been, and the combination of all these factors made the incident go viral on social media.

The veteran runner also said he hopes that marathon organizers and sponsors in China can learn from what happened at the Beijing Half Marathon to avoid such controversies, and that they will bring fiercely competitive runners.

Archaeological findings expected to help improve understanding of vassal state

By WANG RU in Huainan, Anhui
wangru1@chinadaily.com.cn

Chu, a vassal state in China over 2,000 years ago, left a lot of charming legends in history. Thanks to new discoveries at a key site, its stories can be told more vividly today.

One of the largest-scale Chu state tombs with the highest rank and most complex structure dating back to the late Warring States Period (475-221 BC) recently underwent an excavation, which is expected to help promote understanding of a once powerful state in its final days, cultural heritage experts and authorities said on Tuesday at a news conference in Huainan, Anhui province. The news conference was held by the National Cultural Heritage Administration.

The Wuwangdun Site, located in Huainan, includes a cemetery surrounded by a moat, covering an area of about 1.5 square kilometers.

In the cemetery, there are pits for chariots and sacrificial items as well as tombs accompanying the No 1 tomb, the largest, which is believed to be that of the cemetery's owner, said Gong Xicheng, a researcher at the Anhui Provincial Institute of

Cultural Relics and Archaeology and head of the archaeological team.

Zhang Zhiguo, a researcher at the National Centre for Archaeology, said the research team had succeeded in unearthing fragile artifacts such as burial chamber cover boards, bamboo mats on the boards and lacquer items.

Meanwhile, Wu Pingchuan, head of Huainan's publicity department, said there are plans to build an archaeological ruins park to better showcase the archaeological findings.

The Wuwangdun tomb had been robbed multiple times, and the local police retrieved more than 70 cultural relics in recent years.

As a result of these robberies, the tomb had been severely damaged. This led to concerns that there had been changes in the environment for buried artifacts, and a rescue excavation was carried out at the site in 2020.

The No 1 tomb has burial chambers arranged in the shape of a cross, with eight side chambers around a central one, according to archaeologists. The top of each chamber is covered with four layers of planks. Ink inscriptions were found on the cover boards, indicating the functions of

each chamber, said Gong from the Anhui Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology.

Cultural relics unearthed from chambers include bronze ritual artifacts, daily utensils, wooden figurines and musical instruments, Gong added.

As a powerful vassal state, at its height Chu once ruled a vast area along the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River. The state lasted for about 800 years before it was conquered in 223 BC by Emperor Qinshihuang, who later established the first united dynasty of China.

King Kaolie of Chu moved the state's capital eastward to Shouchun, now Shouxian county in Huainan, in 241 BC, to distance it from the rising Qin state to its west.

Eighteen years later, Chu was defeated by Qin, making Shouchun the state's last capital, and the Wuwangdun tomb is about 15 kilometers from the Shouchun city ruins, said Gong.

Last year, the Huainan city government built an archaeological building, which houses 11 conservation laboratories for the study and protection of lacquerware, textiles,



Lacquerware items are among the archaeological findings unearthed at the Wuwangdun Site in Huainan, Anhui province. XINHUA

organic and inorganic materials, low-oxygen sterilization, relics analysis and testing, and material storage.

"The facilities have provided strong support for the archaeological excavation and conservation work of the site," said Zhang from the National Centre for Archaeology.

A highlight of these efforts is the extraction of bamboo mats on the top of burial chambers' cover

boards. Experts analyzed the mats' size and preservation, and applied a method of spraying menthol on their surface for reinforcement and then extracting the mats one by one.

So far, 78 bamboo mats have been extracted, with each one measuring approximately 45 centimeters in width and the longest one around 7.5 meters. The total area of the extracted bamboo mats exceeds 200 square meters, said Zhang.

"This is currently the largest-scale ancient bamboo mat extraction project conducted worldwide. It has also formed a technical method for the on-site reinforcement and extraction of bamboo mats, as well as their packaging, transportation and protection," Zhang said.

"The Wuwangdun No 1 tomb has a huge size and is the largest Chu state tomb we have excavated to date," said Gong. He explained that it was sealed off with an earth mound, which had a diameter of over 130 meters at the bottom, and the burial pit exceeded 400 square meters.

"It serves as an important example for studying the construction techniques of large-scale tombs during the late Warring States Period," he said.

"Moreover, since the tomb was from a crucial period when the feudal state system was disintegrating and the formation of a unified country was imminent, it provides systematic information for our studies on the formation of a unified country and its culture during the Qin (221-206 BC) and Han (206 BC-AD 220) dynasties," said Gong.