

CHINA

Exchanging goodwill

Youths from Fujian and Taiwan write the Chinese character *fu*, which means blessing or happiness, together during a Fujian-Taiwan youth baseball and softball exchange event that kicked off in Fuzhou, Fujian province, on Friday. Around 30 members of the Taiwan group joined Fuzhou primary and secondary school students in activities including making hairpins, bookmarks and Fuzhou jasmine tea. **LYU MING / CHINA NEWS SERVICE**



China blasts US official's baseless accusations

By ZHAO JIA
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Beijing dismissed on Friday the United States Secretary of State Marco Rubio's remarks concerning China during his Latin America tour as "unfounded accusations aimed at sowing discord between the country and relevant Latin America and the Caribbean nations."

Beijing has "lodged serious protests" to Washington and will firmly safeguard its sovereignty, security and development interests, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson said in a statement.

Rubio, during his just concluded six-day visit to Panama, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic, made several comments on China's cooperation with LAC countries, the Panama Canal, Belt and Road cooperation, 5G and cybersecurity, and the one-China principle. He also claimed to "counter the influence of the Chinese Communist Party in the hemisphere."

The groundless comments from the US "steeped in Cold-War mentality and ideological bias" interfere in China's internal affairs and undermine China's legitimate and lawful rights and interests, the statement said.

"The US pointing fingers at normal cooperation between LAC countries and a third country shows no respect for LAC countries," the spokesperson said.

"China never attaches any strings to the practical cooperation with LAC countries, or target any third party," the spokesperson said, highlighting the mutually beneficial nature of cooperation, which has delivered tangibly to relevant countries and made lives better for the local population.

Regarding the Panama Canal, the spokesperson said China has never participated in managing or operating the Canal, and never ever has it interfered.

"The world is not blind to the truth that who is keeping the Canal neutral and thriving and who keeps threatening to 'take back' the Canal," the statement said.

Describing the Belt and Road Initiative as an initiative for economic cooperation, the spokesperson expressed China's firm opposition to the US' smear campaign and attempt to sabotage the Belt and Road cooperation, saying it once again exposes the US' hegemonism.

When it comes to the cybersecurity issues, the spokesperson said China has been all along committed to safeguarding cybersecurity and carrying out cooperation in relevant areas based on the principle of win-win cooperation.

On the Taiwan question, the statement reaffirmed that the Taiwan question is purely China's internal affair which "brooks no foreign interference."

"The series of comments fully demonstrate that the new US administration has attempted to regard the Western Hemisphere, especially the Latin America, as its backyard, reviving a Monroe Doctrine for the new era," said Zhang Tengjun, deputy director of the Department for American Studies at the China Institute of International Studies.

Police crack down on cross-border gambling

73,000 cases probed, over 4,500 online platforms busted in major operations

By WANG QINGYUN
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Chinese police investigated as many as 73,000 cross-border gambling and related cases last year, dismantling more than 4,500 online gambling platforms, the Ministry of Public Security said.

They also disrupted multiple networks soliciting gamblers and underground banks in China, which had been operated for big gambling groups overseas, the ministry said in a statement on Thursday evening.

It noted that the battle against cross-border gambling has remained strong, adding that police nationwide conducted four operations to crack 45 major cases and captured 11,000 suspects.

An example was that through three years of investigation and operations, the police in Southwest China's Chongqing municipality destroyed a gambling group called "DC", which had long been

based in the Philippines and solicited gamblers in China.

Chinese police have also deepened law enforcement cooperation with other countries to "squeeze the space to the greatest extent" for cross-border gambling crimes targeting Chinese residents, it added.

More than 3,700 people suspected of engaging in cross-border gambling, including ringleaders, financial supporters and key members of the criminal groups, were repatriated back to or persuaded to return to China in a campaign last year.

Additionally, the ministry pointed out that police have cooperated with various other departments, including those of foreign affairs, tourism, immigration and the People's Bank of China, to come up with different measures to tackle cross-border gambling.

They have targeted payment institutions, investment and employment involved with gam-

bling, gambling through livestreaming activities and illegal lotteries, among others, and achieved positive outcomes, it said.

Moreover, China has further strengthened the combat against telecom fraud over the past month. It is carrying out bilateral and multilateral cooperation with neighboring countries, including Thailand and Myanmar, to root out online gambling and telecom fraud, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said on Friday.

In January, the Ministry of Public Security also pledged to strengthen international law enforcement cooperation to crack down on telecom fraud dens in Myanmar's Myawaddy, which borders Thailand.

On Thursday, a total of 61 victims, including 39 Chinese people, were rescued from telecom fraud parks in Myawaddy, according to CGTN. Myanmar has transferred them to Thai authorities.

The development came a day after Thailand cut power and fuel supply and internet connection to border areas in Myanmar.

Strong gusts trigger yellow alert

By ZHAO YIMENG
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As a severe cold wave sweeps across China, the National Meteorological Center has issued a series of warnings, highlighting that the impact of strong winds, overshadowing the effects of snow and rain, is more pronounced compared to the previous cold wave.

The center renewed a yellow warning, the third severest in the four-tier warning system, for strong winds on Friday morning, forecasting gusts of up to 32 meters per second in several regions, including parts of Northeast China, North China and the Yellow River-Huaihe River region including provinces of Henan, Anhui, Jiangsu and Shandong.

In Beijing, the wind intensity

reached notable extremes from Thursday to Friday, with the maximum wind speed detected at a mountain observatory in Yanqing district reaching 40.2 meters per second, according to the municipal meteorological station.

Zhang Linna, chief forecaster at the Beijing meteorological station, said that this level of wind is unusual for early February as historical data show that the strongest gust recorded at the Beijing station was 21.9 meters per second on Feb 8, 1994.

She noted that this cold air event involves a very strong cold air mass rapidly moving southward from Siberia and its center passing just over the North China region, crossing directly over Beijing.

The meteorological center also renewed a blue alert for a cold wave

on Friday morning, indicating that from Friday to Saturday, a cold wave is expected to chill China, causing temperature drops in parts of the northwest and northern regions, the Yellow River-Huaihe River region, most parts of the southern region, the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and the Western Sichuan Plateau.

Zhu Dingzhen, a former chief expert at the China Meteorological Administration, said that the "wind chill effect" can be observed in some areas, where the perceived temperature is lower than the actual temperature due to rising winds.

Unlike the previous cold wave that brought snow and rain, this one featured strong winds, with less precipitation expected, Zhu said.

Southern China might see light rain or sleet, while northern areas could experience light to moderate snow, he added.

Pioneer of nuclear submarines passes away at 99

By ZHAO LEI
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Huang Xuhua, chief designer of China's first-generation nuclear submarines, died on Thursday evening in Wuhan, Hubei province. He was 99.

Born in March 1926 to a family of doctors in Guangdong province, Huang was the third child of his parents.

After spending his boyhood in wartime, he joined Shanghai Jiao Tong University to study shipbuilding. During the years at the university, the young man was exposed to strict academic training and learned about the communist revolution. He joined the Communist Party of China in April 1949, right before his graduation.



Huang Xuhua

After receiving his bachelor's diploma, Huang started his lifelong career in China's shipbuilding industry. In 1958, Huang was selected to join the research

team tasked with designing China's first nuclear-powered submarine.

At the beginning of the design work, Huang and his colleagues found that China lacked the basic conditions to develop such a sophisticated hardware technology at that time.

None of the researchers had any knowledge in that field, and since

other countries were extremely protective of such technologies, they barely had any technical reference materials.

Huang and his colleagues started by scouring newspapers and magazines for information.

"It was extremely difficult to find a little piece of information," the researcher recalled in 2020. "The information was either too fragmented or hard to tell whether it was true or false."

They finally came up with five plans after piecing together all the information they found and carefully analyzing and studying two US submarine models.

The team members didn't have any computers or digital calculators, so they used abacuses and rulers to

FROM THE GRASSROOTS

People make beeline for festival edition Huishan figurines

By WANG XIAOYU in Wuxi, Jiangsu
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Craftswoman Yu Jihong bent her head down in concentration with a fine-tipped brush in one hand, painting rosy flower petals on a clay figurine designed for this year's Spring Festival.

Though orders had been streaming in ahead of the holiday that began on Jan 29, Yu, chief painting technician at the Wuxi Huishan clay figurine company in Jiangsu province, appeared to be in no rush, dabbing the brush tip in pigments every few strokes to create different shades of pink.

"I want to add more depth and dimension to the decorative flower shapes by layering distinct shades of color, all while showcasing the uniqueness of our craftsmanship," she said.

Huishan clay figurines are a traditional folk art made from black mud collected at the foot of the Huishan mountain in Wuxi city. With a recorded history of over 400 years, the craft was added to the national intangible cultural heritage catalog in 2006.

Among an array of characters from Chinese folklore and operas that are depicted through these clay figurines, the best-known variation features a pair of plump, jovial figures symbolizing good fortune and joy.

Because Wuxi was selected as one of the four sub-venues of the widely watched CCTV Spring Festival Gala, local artisans devised a special version based on this pair and promoted them as mascots for the event staged in the city.

Zhou Lu, a municipal-level inheritor of the Huishan clay figurine like Yu, said that while the traditional version is typically seated and exudes a static, reserved demeanor, the newly designed rendition conveys a stronger sense of liveliness.

"The head and body are crafted separately, and its posture is more animated with the hands and arms stretched out wide," she said.

Zhou added that the male figure of the pair dons a persimmon-shaped cap and the female flaunts double hair buns — both styles symbolizing blessings for the new year.

Zhou specializes in shaping the

clay form of a figurine before passing the object to Yu, who applies paints to give texture to the surface. The product will then be dried in cool, shaded areas for several days before being packaged and shipped out.

"The entire process is handmade, and I am capable of crafting a maximum of 11 figures each month on my own," she said.

The public's enthusiasm for the new products has exceeded her expectations.

"The new figurines associated with the Spring Festival gala are so popular that the wait time for pre-sale orders has extended from 30 days initially to 90 days at present," she said during an interview in late January.

"Our orders are full through April," she added.

Zhou chalked up the surging popularity to extensive media exposure linked to the Spring Festival gala.

A self-proclaimed traditionalist, Zhou said she rarely paid attention to media reports or promotions in the past, but the recent surge of attention has surprised her and prompted a rethink on social media.

"I recently downloaded the short-video platform Douyin and am learning to navigate the app," she said. "I plan to use social media and short clips to promote the folk art so that more people will discover it and even fall in love with it."

According to the company, clay figurines were used solely for display purposes. It is now exploring adorning clothing and food packages with characteristic images, and producing related soft toys and decorations.

The company has also partnered with catering businesses, hotels, cosmetic brands and marathon organizers to enhance public awareness and breathe vigor into the historic craft.

"We will certainly uphold tradition, and at the same time, we want to show that we have the potential to become an internet sensation," she said.



Online
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Zhou Lu, an inheritor of Huishan clay figurines, decorates a festive edition of miniature clay sculptures for the Year of the Snake in Wuxi, Jiangsu province. **QIN YAN / FOR CHINA DAILY**

09I — in 1970, becoming the fifth nation to have such hardware.

Huang's name remained classified until 1987 when a magazine in Shanghai was allowed to publish a report on him, which only disclosed his family name of Huang.

Even in his 90s, the designer used to visit his office at the Nuclear Submarine Institute in Wuhan every weekday morning to review and compile materials of his know-how and experience, and would also counsel young researchers on technical issues.

The first product of Huang and his colleagues — a Type 09I nuclear-powered attack submarine — is now on display at the PLA Naval Museum in Qingdao, Shandong province, after more than 40 years of service.

Due to his outstanding contributions, Huang was given the Medal of the Republic, China's highest honor, in 2019.