TOP NEWS

Team harvests 4 golds at world table tennis finals

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Despite a gold-laden campaign at the world championships, China's once invincible national table tennis team has left the prestigious tournament in Doha, Qatar, with alarm bells ringing for its Olympic ambitions.

Winning four of the five events at the world championships finals, it seemed like business as usual for China's table tennis squad to have proved its mighty prowess again in the Qatari capital. However, the surging challenge from the rest of the world, underlined by the squad's early exit in men's doubles, has triggered a sense of urgency for the celebrated program.

The men's doubles final, the first event on Sunday, proceeded without a Chinese pair for the first time in 50 years, with two Chinese teams eliminated in the quarterfinals. Japan's Hiroto Shinozuka and Shunsuke Togami won the final after beating Chinese Taipei's Kao Cheng-jui and Lin Yun-ju 3-2 in the best-of-five format.

Women's World No 1 Sun Yingsha and men's World No 2 Wang Chuqin, both from China, then held court at the Lusail Sports Arena, delivering in top form to each claim a singles title, adding to their golden harvest after bagging the mixed doubles title together on Saturday.

"It felt like a huge burden relieved in my heart," Wang said after beating Brazil's reigning World Cup winner Hugo Calderano 4-1 in the best-of-seven final to win his first world championship singles gold medal.

"It was a tough battle and I am so happy to pull it off, driven by the pride representing my country and the team," said Wang, who also successfully avenged his semifinal loss to the same opponent at the Macao World Cup last month.

The recent surge of Calderano, dubbed by fans as the "Thrill from Brazil", saw the world No 3 edge out Chinese players at major events two times in a row after he beat world No 5 Liang Jingkun with a gripping semifinal win on Saturday to set up a clash with Wang. Calderano's meteoric rise has pushed Team China's best to dig harder and stay more cautious in future events.

"To face him again, I tried to position myself as a challenger. He's definitely a big threat for us in future tournaments," Wang said after helping China collect its 11th consecutive men's singles title at the worlds.

In the women's singles final, Sun retained her crown by outplaying teammate and 2021 singles world champion Wang Manyu 4-3 in a seesaw battle.

It was also the 16th consecutive women's singles final at the world championships to feature two Chinese finalists since 1995, serving as testament to the program's dominance in this event.

After a break during the men's singles final, Wang Manyu suited up again in the women's doubles final with partner Kuai Man and ended her Doha outing with a gold, after the world No 2 Chinese pair routed the Austria-Romania duo of Sofia Polcanova and Bernadette Szocs 3-0 in less than 22 minutes to cap off Team China's campaign in style.

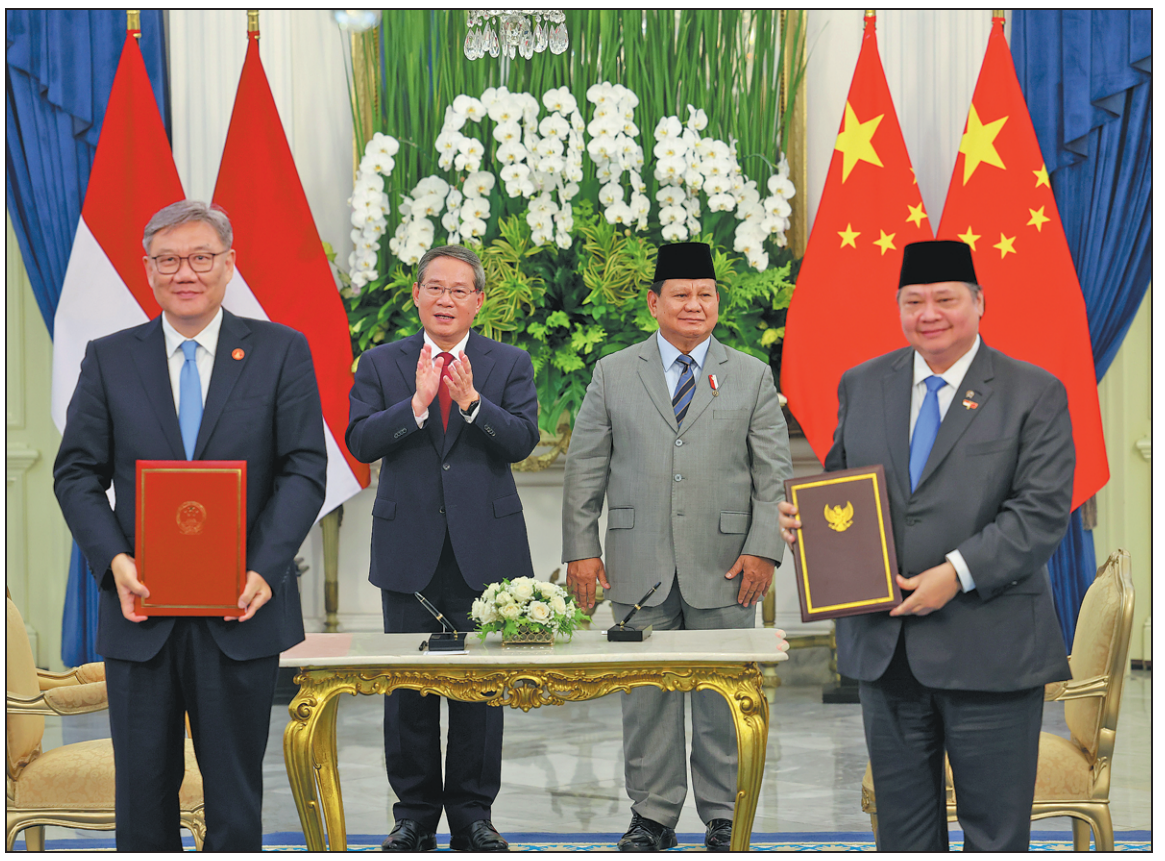
Team China's apparent decline of dominance on the men's side, measured by its own standards, at the world championships has raised concerns over its prospects for the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, where the two team events have been replaced by men's and women's doubles on the Games' program.

The adjustment is expected to pose a tougher threat for China's ambition of a clean sweep of all golds at LA 2028, where international contenders are more competitive in doubles than in team events.

"We are definitely facing much more pressure now following the change in the Olympic program. The world is ready to go harder at us, and we should be prepared better as well," newly elected Chinese Table Tennis Association president Wang Liqin told Xinhua News Agency after taking office last month.



Table tennis ace Wang Chuqin competes in the men's singles final at the World Table Tennis Championship in Doha, Qatar, on Sunday. Wang beat Brazil's Hugo Calderano 4-1 to add another gold to his collection. XIAO YIJIU / XINHUA



Premier Li Qiang and Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto attend a ceremony for the signing of cooperation documents between the two countries on Sunday in Jakarta. Li started a three-day official visit to Indonesia on Saturday. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

China, Indonesia pledge to enhance cooperation

Countries back multilateralism, oppose protectionism amid global challenges

By **WANG QINGYUN**
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China and Indonesia vowed to further enhance bilateral relations and cooperation amid ongoing major changes in the world, as Premier Li Qiang met with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto in Jakarta on Sunday.

Li, who arrived on Saturday for a three-day official visit to the Southeast Asian nation, told Prabowo during their talks that China hopes to work together with Indonesia to strengthen solidarity and collaboration and jointly address risks and challenges.

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Noting that China and Indonesia are good neighbors and good partners, Li said the two countries have supported each other and stood by each other since the establishment of diplomatic relations 75 years ago, and their traditional friendship has become stronger than ever.

China stands ready to continue its friendship with Indonesia, consolidate cooperation on the "five pillars" of politics, economy, people-to-people and cultural exchanges, maritime affairs, and security, and to elevate political mutual trust and strategic coordination between the two countries to a higher level, he said.

China is willing to work with Indonesia to enhance the alignment of their development strategies and deepen high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, especially by optimizing and strengthening landmark projects, Li said.

He encouraged the two countries to further enhance the "golden brand" of the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway, and promote the construction of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Corridor and the "Two Countries, Twin Parks" project.

Li called for the two countries to strengthen connectivity of markets and coordination of industries, make bilateral trade and investment more convenient, and broaden cooperation in the fields of finance, new energy, the digital economy and artificial intelligence, among others.

China is willing to expand people-to-people and cultural exchanges with Indonesia, facilitate cross-border travel, and deepen cooperation in the fields of food, agriculture, poverty reduction and health, in order to bring more benefits to the two peoples, he said.

Noting that the rise of unilateralism and protectionism has had a serious impact on the international economic and trade order, Li said that China hopes to work with Indonesia and other developing nations to uphold multilateralism and free trade, and promote peace, stability and development in the region and the world at large.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of China-Indonesia diplomatic relations, as well as the 70th anniversary of the Bandung Conference, which was held in the Indonesian city of Bandung in 1955 and brought together delegates from 29 Asian and African countries.

Prabowo said that Indonesia will take the anniversaries as an opportunity to deepen its comprehensive strategic partnership with China, advance the construction of the China-Indonesia community with a shared future, and promote peace and development in Asia and the world.

Indonesia has high regard for the progress made in bilateral cooperation and hopes to deepen cooperation in agriculture, finance, infrastructure and other fields, he said, adding that his country welcomes more Chinese investment.

Prabowo said that Indonesia is willing to work with China to maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea and looks forward to cooperating more closely with China under multilateral platforms such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and BRICS.

After their meeting on Sunday, Li and Prabowo witnessed the signing of several bilateral cooperation documents.

On Saturday evening, they attended and addressed a reception that brought together about 200 representatives from the business community in China and Indonesia.

Calling on businesses in both countries to expand and strengthen cooperation, Li said that China will share growth opportunities with Indonesia and other countries, and will remain committed to opening up wider to the outside world.

Forum: Accession process for applicants underway

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"Redoubling our efforts to push forward regional integration and economic globalization is essential for shaping a community with a shared future for mankind," Qu said, adding that the RCEP member economies should work together to build a regional community for scientific and technological innovation.

Harnessing the synergies of artificial intelligence-enabled joint research and cooperative networks among RCEP members will greatly enhance the collective capacity for innovation and smart development, he said.

The RCEP — the world's largest free trade pact, which is aimed at gradually eliminating tariffs on over 90 percent of goods traded among its 15 members — serves as a critical counterweight to the United States' blanket tariff hikes targeting global economies.

Last year, the total trade volume among RCEP members reached $5.7 trillion, up 2.5 percent year-on-year, according to a report released at the forum.

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>
> **Chi Fulin,** president of the China Institute for Reform and Development

China, as a key player of the RCEP, has been making cutting-edge AI capabilities available both domestically and globally, with DeepSeek, a cost-effective and open-source large language model developed at a mere fraction of the cost of comparable US models, being a prime example.

"Looking ahead, an RCEP with higher standards, a broader scope and more inclusive development will surely inject certainty into the global economy," said Chi Fulin, president of the China Institute for Reform and Development.

At present, the RCEP comprises the 10 member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, as well as China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. China's Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Sri Lanka and Chile have submitted applications seeking accession to the RCEP.

Chi said that Hong Kong's accession would not only boost growth of regional trade, but also drive regional financial development and enhance the internationalization of regional industries. If Chile joins the group, it would mark an upgrade of the RCEP from a purely regional arrangement to a cross-regional one, he added.

Secretary-General of ASEAN Kao Kim Hourn said, "The growing interest from potential applicant countries and regions represents a powerful testament to our commitment to maintaining an open and inclusive agreement."

He added that relevant parties are working diligently to finalize the details of the accession process as expeditiously as possible.

Meanwhile, the full completion of negotiations on the Version 3.0 China-ASEAN Free Trade Area and the accelerating negotiations for the China-Japan-South Korea Free Trade Agreement are also converging to open up more opportunities for regional growth.

Lyu Bin, president of the China Oceanic Development Foundation, called for efforts to construct a platform for cooperation on the blue, or marine economy, helping RCEP member nations to identify their comparative resource advantages and optimize the layout of their marine industries.

Origins: Project provides nation's answer to how to define civilizations

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"This will provide strong support for our efforts to carry forward the best of traditional Chinese culture and increase our cultural confidence," said Xi.

The origin-tracing project has been carried out since 2002. Its ongoing fifth phase, which started in 2020, involves the participation of more than 500 researchers from 29 institutes across the country.

It primarily centers on several ancient capital sites, including the Liangzhu site in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, the Taosi site in Xiangfen county, Shanxi province, the Shimao site in Shenmu, Shaanxi province, and the Erlitou site in Luoyang, Henan province, from 3,500 to 5,500 years ago, as well as other settlements mainly along the basins of the Yellow, Yangtze and Liaohe rivers.

The project has also expanded to a wider geographic and chronological framework to decode how Chinese civilization emerged and how its diverse elements formed a unity.

Excavation of the Liangzhu site, which is over 5,000 years old and is one of the major sites covered in the origin-tracing project, has yielded an inner city covering 3 million square meters and an outer city of 6.3 million sq m, making it the world's largest capital at the time. It also had a giant water control system, which contributed to the formation of a rice-based agricultural society.

By calculating the earthwork volume, archaeologists found that building the entire ancient city, the water control system and Mojiaoshan — a 10-meter-tall man-made terrace in the center of the city — required 10,000 people working daily for seven-and-a-half years.

The discoveries show that Liangzhu had a kingship able to organize people for large-scale public construction, and its social differentiation, emergence of the city concept and existence of a kingship prove that it became a civilized society, said Wang Wei, a veteran archaeologist at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Significant topic

Wang said that tracing the origins of a civilization is a significant topic in the research of human history. Over the years, the Chinese project has provided China's answer to how to define civilizations.

In 2022, Xi commended the efforts and stressed that the project has made creative contributions to the research on tracing the origins of the world's civilizations.

Wang said: "International academia has proposed three indispensable elements for a civilized society based on features of Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations: written characters, metallurgy and the city concept. But we can find that some of the three elements were absent in many ancient civilizations. For example, the Mayan civilization had no metallurgy, while the Incan civilization didn't have written characters."

Western scholars believe that Chinese civilization began with the Yinxu Ruins in Anyang, Henan province, a capital of the late Shang Dynasty (c.16th century-11th century BC), based on the discovery of inscribed oracle bones from that time. However, Chinese archaeologists don't agree.

With continued archaeological research, international academia now believes that places around the world can propose criteria for civilization based on their own ancient social development.

China's archaeological studies have shaped the nation's criteria in defining a civilization: the development of productivity, an increase in population, the appearance of cities, social differentiation and the emergence of kingship and state.

"These criteria are suitable for identifying other civilizations as well," said Wang. "Civilizations have in common the appearance of kingship and state. They are only different in the ways of imposing kingship and the forms of state."

In China, kingship and state "were shown by exquisite jade and bronze ritual artifacts, grand palaces and magnificent mausoleums imitating aboveground palaces", he added. "In Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt, they were demonstrated through superb stone temples, pyramids and large-scale tombs."

Multidisciplinary subject

President Xi said in 2020 that archaeologists should work closely with researchers from other fields to make an interpretive analysis of material remains.

Zhang Chi, a professor of archaeology at Peking University, said that since material remains are often the research focus of archaeological studies, these should not only be observed with the eyes, but also studied using scientific and technological tools. Therefore, from the perspective of research methods, archaeology is by nature a multidisciplinary subject, Zhang added.

Wang, the CASS archaeologist, highlighted the application in archaeology of strontium isotope analysis, which determines the geographic origin of individuals by analyzing the ratio of different strontium isotopes found in their remains. Using this approach, researchers can determine whether humans whose remains they study stayed in the same place from birth to death or migrated to the place where they eventually were buried.

The technology has been applied in studies of the Erlitou site, widely believed to be a late capital of the Xia Dynasty (c.21st century-16th century BC), enabling researchers to confirm that the site had a large number of migrants.

Wang said the technology can support scholars' understanding of Erlitou's role as a capital that attracted people from other places.