

WORLD

Japanese enjoy a taste of Shandong produce

By **JIANG XUEQING** in Tokyo
jiangxueqing@chinadaily.com.cn

More agricultural products from China's Shandong province will further enrich the dining tables of Japanese people, a former Japanese prime minister said.

Japan is the largest export market for agricultural products from Shandong. At a promotional event in Tokyo on Thursday, former Japanese prime minister Yukio Hatoyama expressed his fondness for Shandong, which has many industrial products, agricultural products and seafood.

Shandong representatives are inviting people from around the world, including Japan, to explore its traditional culture, enjoy the magnificent scenery, and experience diverse folk customs.

Bai Yugang, head of the publicity department of the Communist Party of China Shandong Provincial Committee, said Shandong has extensive exchanges with Japan, with close cooperation in various fields such as economy, education, environmental protection and sports. He proposed several initiatives for deepening future exchange and cooperation.

The first is to further strengthen economic cooperation by utilizing various mechanisms, encouraging interested businesses to invest in each other's territories.

Another initiative is to further promote cultural synergy and innovation by enhancing cooperation in fields like film, animation, gaming and digital culture.

Bai also suggested further deepening of exchanges and mutual learning of civilizations, with Confucian culture as the bond, supporting

both academic and higher education institutions to conduct regular dialogues.

Other initiatives include broadening two-way tourism interaction and organizing more youth study visits and exchange programs, promoting the continuity of China-Japan friendship in the next generation.

Maintaining long-term healthy and stable development of China-Japan relations is in the fundamental interests of the two peoples and conducive to regional peace and stability, said Yang Yu, minister counselor of the Chinese embassy in Japan.

The leaders of China and Japan reaffirmed the positioning of comprehensively advancing the strategic and mutually beneficial relations between the two countries and agreed to dedicate themselves to jointly building a constructive and stable China-Japan relationship that meets the demands of the new era.

It is hoped that both sides will take the important consensus of the two countries' leaders as a guide, grasp the correct direction, deepen pragmatic cooperation, properly handle differences and disputes, and promote the stable and far-reaching development of China-Japan relations, Yang said.

During the promotional event, the Shandong provincial government displayed elements of traditional cultural heritage, innovation in intangible cultural heritage, and green, low-carbon, and high-quality development through pictures, videos and products. A total of more than 60 categories and nearly 1,000 products were exhibited on-site.



A cloud of smoke erupts down the road from an explosion as a man drives an animal-drawn cart loaded with jerrycans in Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip on Wednesday. AFP

Cease-fire talks on Gaza Strip 'stalling'

Negotiations in 'sensitive stage' as rift between Israel and Iran casts shadow

DOHA/GAZA — Negotiations between Israel and Hamas to secure a truce in the Gaza Strip and a release of hostages have stalled amid shadows of the latest rift between Israel and Iran, leading to more uncertainties in the region.

"We are going through a sensitive stage with some stalling, and we are trying as much as possible to address this stalling," Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani told a news conference with Romanian Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu on Wednesday.

Negotiators are trying to "move forward and put an end to the suffering that the people in Gaza are experiencing and returning the hostages", he said.

The Qatari prime minister also said his country is reassessing its role as a mediator between Israel and Hamas after suffering criticism.

"Qatar is in the process of a complete reevaluation of its role," he said.

"There is exploitation and abuse of the Qatari role," he said, adding that Qatar had been the victim of "point-scoring" by "politicians who are trying to conduct election campaigns by slighting the State of Qatar".

Qatar, along with the United States and Egypt, has been engaged in weeks of behind-the-scenes talks to try to secure a truce in Gaza and the release of Israeli hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails.

The mediators had hoped to secure a cease-fire before the start of Ramadan, but progress repeatedly faltered without any cessation of hostilities in the Muslim holy month which ended last week.

The conflict began on Oct 7 when Hamas launched an unprecedented attack on Israel that resulted in about 1,170 deaths, mostly civilians, according to an

AFP tally of Israeli official figures.

Israel's military has waged a retaliatory offensive against Hamas that has killed 33,899 people in Gaza, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry.

Famine tightening grip

Besides, the United Nations Palestinian refugee agency, or UNRWA, warned that a man-made famine is "tightening its grip" across Gaza.

"Today, an insidious campaign to end UNRWA's operations is underway, with serious implications for international peace and security," UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini said.

The agency provides education, health and aid to millions of Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

"Across Gaza, a man-made famine is tightening its grip," Lazzarini said.

"In the north, infants and young children have begun to die of malnutrition and dehydration. Across the border, food and clean water wait. But the UNRWA is denied permission to deliver this aid and save lives."

Fears have grown of the month-long conflict in Gaza spilling over into a regional conflict after Iran's

first-ever direct attack on its arch-foe Israel this weekend.

Iran has characterized the barrage as an act of self-defense following a deadly airstrike on its consulate in Syria, saying it would consider the matter "concluded" unless Israel retaliated.

Brushing off calls for restraint from close allies, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel would decide whether and how to respond to Iran's major air assault.

Israel's allies have been urging Israel to hold back on any response to the attack that could spiral.

The diplomatic pressure came as Iran's president warned that even the "tiniest" invasion of its territory would bring a "massive and harsh" response.

The Security Council vote on the Palestinians' bid to become a full member state of the United Nations is expected to occur Thursday or Friday, diplomats said, as discussions continued.

Several sources had told the Agence France-Presse that the vote would take place on Thursday, but the situation has since changed with some member states asking for a Friday vote.

No firm decision had been taken, according to sources.

Whatever the date, the Palestinian initiative appears doomed to fail due to opposition from the US.

AGENCIES — XINHUA

China sends more humanitarian aid

Two batches of humanitarian supplies provided by the Chinese government to Palestinians were expected to arrive at the Al Arish International Airport and Port Said in Egypt on Thursday and Friday, the Chinese embassy in Egypt said in a news release.

The shipments, including tents, blankets, clothing, medical supplies and flour, will be transported to the

Gaza Strip through the Rafah border crossing.

To ease the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, the Chinese government has continued to provide aid to Palestine and has sent several batches of food, medicine and other emergency humanitarian aid through Egypt, according to the embassy.

XINHUA



People carry historical paintings out of the burning Stock Exchange in Copenhagen, Denmark on Tuesday. The 17th century building was one of the nation's oldest and best-known and will be fully restored, senior officials have since pledged. IDA MARIE ODGAARD / RITZAU SCANPIX VIA AP

Denmark vows to restore landmark ravaged by fire

By **JULIAN SHEA**
in London
julian@mail.chinadailyuk.com

The city and district mayors of the Danish capital Copenhagen have issued a joint statement saying that one of the city's most famous landmarks, the Old Stock Exchange, will be restored to its full glory after a devastating fire.

No cause has yet been given for the inferno that engulfed the 400-year-old building earlier this week while it was undergoing restoration work.

City mayor Sophie Haestorp Andersen and six district mayors issued a statement saying the city "could not do without the Stock Exchange" and pledging to work together to restore it.

Brian Mikkelsen, director of the Danish chamber of commerce, which was based in the building that was used as a stock exchange until 1974, offered his organization's full support, saying it would be rebuilt "no matter what", and calling the fire "a national disaster".

"This is part of the story of the building of our city," added Andersen, "and, therefore, we will do everything we can to rebuild this".

"They are simply such sad pictures," said Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, as the fire burned. "It is a piece of Danish history that burns before our eyes. I think it gave us all a jolt when the spire fell."

Mads Damsbo, head of the adjoining Christiansborg Palace, which houses the Danish Parliament, said the flames were "like an oven".

"It is built mainly in wood, all the roof is made of wood, and it's not a particularly tall building but with a huge roof," he added. "That itself makes the building vulnerable to fire. The firefighters couldn't get into the fire."

The building's distinctive dragon's tail spire, which was believed to have protected it during two previous blazes at the neighboring palace, was lost in scenes reminiscent of the fire that destroyed the roof of the Notre-Dame cathedral in the French capital, Paris, five years earlier.

Defense Minister Troels Lund Poulsen called it "an iconic building that means a lot to all of us ... Our own Notre-Dame moment".

Problems faced by the dozens of firefighters who attended the scene included getting access, because of restoration scaffolding, and the fact that the building's copper roof meant water used by firefighters flowed straight off.

There were no injuries reported in the fire at the building, which was not open to the public but that hosted conferences and events.

It was famed for its art collection, and many employees and passers-by entered the building to take part in spontaneous rescues of paintings and objects, but it is believed some priceless artworks were damaged by the water used to put out the flames.



Silent observance

Members of the public return to Westfield Bondi Junction on Thursday for a day of reflection in Bondi Junction, Australia. The shopping center opened to the community for reflection following a stabbing attack that killed seven, including the offender, on Saturday.

DION GEORGOPOULOS / GETTY IMAGES

Delegation visits UK to bolster linkups in education

By **ZHENG WANYIN** in London
zhengwanyin@mail.chinadailyuk.com

An education delegation from Southwest China's Guizhou province visited the UK this week, with partnerships agreed between universities in Guizhou and their British counterparts.

The delegation comprises provincial officials as well as leaders and representatives from six local universities, including Guizhou University, Guizhou Medical University and Kaili University.

On Monday, the delegation attended a higher education cooperation conference in London, which was hosted by the provincial government of Guizhou, organized by its Department of Education and supported by the British Council.

Seven cooperation agreements or memorandums of understanding were signed between universities in Guizhou and British universities at the event, with the aim of promoting exchanges of students and academic workers, collaboration on joint research projects, and more.

Representatives from Guizhou University, Guizhou Medical University, Kaili University, Guizhou Minzu University and Guizhou Education University signed cooperation agreements respectively with representatives from Coventry University, University of Huddersfield, University of Dundee, University of Hertfordshire, Arden University and University of the West of Scotland.

"Guizhou has always maintained an open attitude and continuously deepened exchanges and cooperation with the UK in all aspects. In the field of education, the exchanges and cooperation between Guizhou and the UK have yielded fruitful results," said Lu Yongzheng, a member of the Standing Committee of Communist Party of China Guizhou Provincial Committee and secretary of Guizhou Provincial Education Commission.

Lu noted that a total of five education programs had previously been agreed between five higher education institutions from Guizhou and five from the UK.

"China cannot develop its education well if being isolated from the world, and vice versa. Thus, I hope that the two sides will further strengthen the win-win cooperation in education," Lu said.

Maddalaine Ansell, global director of education at the British Council, highlighted the Sino-British educational contacts dating back more than 45 years. She noted that the two sides are currently strengthening connections in the field, particularly with the growth in the number of Chinese students in the UK.

She said that the British Council shares Guizhou's aim to expand access to higher education, develop expertise in scientific research, and deepen international ties for mutual benefit.

"We firmly believe that, by working together, we can strengthen the UK's relationship with these important areas of China," said Ansell.

During the delegation's visit to the London Metropolitan University on Monday, Guizhou University and the Guizhou University of Traditional Chinese Medicine signed an articulation agreement and an MOU, respectively, with the London Metropolitan University.

"The presence of the Guizhou delegation here today marks a significant milestone in our ongoing commitment to fostering international cooperation and collaboration in the field of education," said Gary Davies, deputy vice-chancellor of the London Metropolitan University.

On Tuesday, during a talent exchange event held at the University of Oxford, Guizhou University and Oxford Suzhou Centre for Advanced Research signed an MOU on cooperation in technological research and training programs.