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EDITORIALS

The inspirational Games

TRADITIONS ARE LOST WITH TIME. THE OLYMPIC Games, however, is one of the exceptions. The Games has the magic to unite people across the world because of the inspirational power of sports.

The opening of the 2012 Olympic Games in London today offers the world the opportunity to contribute to its legacy. The London Games' theme, "Inspire a Generation", is aimed at providing another enduring sporting legacy.

The challenge for sports today is tough and complex. Not all young people choose to play some game or another. Some lack the facilities, or coaches and role models to teach them. Others, in today's age of 24-hour entertainment and instant fame, may simply lack the desire.

London's vision is to reach young people and connect to the inspirational power of the Games. The challenge is not only for the youth and sports, but also for the development of the Olympic Games.

As competitive games have been commercialized and become increasingly professional, the Games has gradually become a market for businesses, agents of star athletes and TV channels. So reaching out to young people and inspiring them to take up sports may be the most effective way of enriching the spirit of the Olympics.

Thanks to the International Inspiration program of the London Games, about 12.9 million children and young people have taken part in sports and physical education, many for the first time. About 113,000 teachers, coaches and young leaders — many from developing countries lacking proper sports facilities — have been trained to keep up the practice in schools and communities.

The program is aimed at creating long-term, transformational change for them beyond the 2012 Games.

Just like the Beijing 2008 Olympics' emphasis on peace and harmony, the London Games' message will travel far beyond the city and sports arenas. For, it addresses the challenges for future generations across the world.

The vitality and prosperity of the modern Olympic Games lies in the wisdom and inspiration provided by different host countries. London knows the recipe to invoke the magic of the Games again and, hopefully, will make it a success. May the power of the Olympics be fully realized through the vision of "Inspire a Generation".

Preparing for more rain

THE AFTEREFFECTS OF THE HEAVIEST RAINSTORM to lash Beijing in six decades is far from over, not just because of the heavy relief efforts that the suburban and rural areas demand, but also because of the urgency to strengthen disaster preparedness.

That Beijing will have more rainy days this year has added to the urgency. When the sky over the city was overcast on Wednesday, when another heavy rainstorm was forecast, the local meteorological department sent more than 11 million text messages to alert residents. Compared with Saturday, when residents received no warning, the local government did a better job on Wednesday.

Thankfully, it proved to be a false alarm because the storm skipped most parts of the city, but even this time, not all residents received the messages. There should be no technical difficulty for local government departments in informing residents of extreme weather in time.

More lessons should be learned from Saturday's devastating rainstorm to avoid similar tragedies when another heavy rainstorm hits the city in a couple of days.

For example, a 900-meter section of the Beijing-Hong Kong-Macao Expressway in southern Beijing was submerged, the water being 6 meters high at the deepest point and the average depth being 4 meters, where 127 vehicles were inundated and three people killed. Had the expressway staff members issued a warning in advance or closed the expressway before it was flooded and converged into a deep lake, casualties and economic loss could have been avoided.

Saturday's calamity exposed all locations vulnerable to heavy rainstorms. Besides making long-term plans to improve the drainage system, these places should be monitored closely whenever heavy rain is forecast so that warnings can be issued as early as possible. And police officers and firefighters need to be well organized to deal with such emergencies.

The Beijing municipal government has proposed a flood-prevention plan that would ensure that roads are not inundated and humans and vehicles are safe even when torrential rain lashes the city. To realize the plan, precise weather forecast, timely warning and close monitoring of vulnerable areas during emergencies are more than necessary.

Hopefully, the city and its people will be better prepared for heavy rains in the coming days and in the distant future.

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CHINA FORUM | WANG XIAOXUAN

Navy has to get stronger

China's coastal defense demands more security from its navy, although it is decades behind its advanced counterparts

Since its establishment in April 1949, China's navy has taken great strides both in terms of its size and operation capabilities. With the efforts of generations, the navy has developed from a single unit into a composite force composed of submarines, surface fleet, naval aviation vessels, marine corps and coastal defense units, laying the structural foundation for its modernization.

With its strategic transformation from coastal defense to inshore defense, the overall inshore fighting capability of China's navy has improved continuously and its defense cordon has extended farther into the seas over the decades. The navy, with its growing fighting capabilities, is a reliable protector of China's maritime rights and interests, and a forceful promoter of harmonious waters.

The navy has expedited its development, from mechanization to "informationalization", and advancing toward a more powerful force. But despite its achievements of the past decades, the navy's development is not complete. It has lagged far behind the naval forces of other developed countries.

In this information age, a country's navy should have a higher tech content, which is also viewed as an important measure of its moderniza-

tion. Though the navy has dedicatedly pursued advanced technologies, including information, power and intelligence technologies, and manufacturing skills, it is still far from being a world-class outfit in terms of core technologies.

Some experts say the Chinese navy's technology is 20 years behind its advanced counterparts and the gap is even wider in some core areas. Compared with some of its developed counterparts, China's navy possesses fewer large-sized warships and those that can sail long distances. As a result, it cannot meet the demands of China's interests in overseas regions and undertake some international duties and maintain world peace.

But some foreigners have questioned China's move to build large-sized warships, arguing that its inshore defense does not need them. The fact is that the adoption of an inshore defense strategy does not mean China's navy should be confined to limited marine areas. Given the threat of long-range attack from potential adversaries, China should extend its range of defense further. Only by doing so can it realize its objective of inshore defense and protect its territory. That's why an inshore defense strategy also needs assorted vessels, large and small, as back-up.

Besides, the Chinese navy in its new role also

undertakes other heavy tasks — from anti-terrorism operations to disaster relief, peacekeeping and other non-combat missions. For better and effective disaster relief operations on the high seas, a navy needs large vessels, as was seen during relief and rescue operations after the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004 and the catastrophic earthquake in Japan in March 2011.

Compared with its advanced counterparts, the Chinese navy is also weak in its maneuvering capability on high seas. With the expansion of China's national interests, the navy needs to stretch its operations further.

Of late, the Chinese navy has been undertaking more international obligations. But because of the lack of a strong pelagic guaranteeing system, it has often encountered insurmountable difficulties in its deep-sea operations, as indicated by its convoy mission in the Gulf of Aden.

Turning a blind eye to these aspects, some foreign experts have questioned China's moves to strengthen its naval capabilities, alleging that such moves are aimed at pursuing maritime expansion and thus pose a threat to other countries.

Moreover, like other navies in the world, the Chinese navy also needs maritime exercises to improve its fighting capabilities. But China's maritime drills have been singled out for criticism. The regular and limited exercises held by China's navy are completely defensive in nature and intent, aimed at boosting its capability to fight possible foreign aggression. Both in size and frequency, China's naval exercises have been minuscule compared to those held by the US navy.

Also, the Chinese navy has held the drills mainly in non-combat waters for non-combat purposes, such as maritime rescue operations, escort convoys, and anti-piracy and anti-terrorism campaigns.

A long-held distrust of China among some people and their ambivalence toward the country's development are the main reasons why they exaggerate China's military threat. They fear, and wrongly, that a powerful China will become a challenge to their dominance.

They also tend to presume, again wrongly, that China will seek hegemony after its rise, a belief that has aggravated their misgivings toward and fears over a fast-growing China. Some countries with overlapping sovereign claims with China in the seas believe the buildup of China's navy will hurt their alleged maritime interests, which they try to eternalize through illegal means.

As far as territorial disputes are concerned, China advocates that they be settled through political consultations. But defense means that it will respond accordingly if any country tries to encroach on its territory.

The development of the Chinese navy is for self-defense, and self-defense only, and aimed at maritime security and development. China has been solemnly committed to never seeking maritime hegemony or posing a threat to other countries even if its navy becomes one of the strongest in the world. It is China's long-cherished policy to seek maritime cooperation with other countries to contribute to regional and world peace.

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LI FENG



CHEN WEIHUA

A tale of summer in two cities

Like many Shanghaiese, summer is not my favorite season, given the prolonged hot and sultry days I have endured in the city.

Yet if I had to leave New York now, where I have been living for almost three years, summer will be the season I would miss the most. Summer has been my favorite season in the Big Apple.

The many outdoor events — especially the free shows and concerts — distinguish New York from Shanghai and probably all other big cities in China.

Like in previous summers, I spend much time after work and on weekends in parks, immersing myself in intoxicating music — from jazz, R&B and hip-hop to Latin and folk — played by bands local as well as from across the nation and the world. To give one example, the Concerts in Parks by the New York Philharmonic were held just a week ago.

There are many other summer outdoor events such as movie nights, walk and bike tours, dance, yoga, tennis and even tai chi classes, camps for children and star-gazing in High Line Park where volunteers bring their own giant telescopes, not to mention the 58-year-old Shakespeare in the Park program which after Shakespeare's *As You Like It* last month, unveiled Stephen Sondheim's musical, *Into the Woods*, this week.

I have not ventured onto Coney Island in Brooklyn or Rockaway Beach in Queens for concerts

accompanied by the sound of ocean waves, but sunset concerts on piers along the Hudson River are quite romantic if you love the changing sky and illuminated cityscape.

While vendors sell everything from hot dogs to beer, many people bring their own stuff — food, drinks and blankets — to find a great escape in this world's first giant concrete jungle.

It's good to know that Shanghai has also started movie nights in local parks. A cityscape outdoor concert was staged last Saturday at the Oriental Pearl TV Tower, featuring the Shanghai Philharmonic.

But overall, compared with New York, Shanghai's parks and public spaces are vastly underutilized for cultural, sports and recreational events.

The news media in Shanghai have termed last Saturday's concert as *gaoya* (elegant and classic) art, referring to the orchestra music performed. Perhaps jazz, guitar, folk and hip-hop, sadly, do not belong to the *gaoya* genre according to that standard.

But who cares? Most people go to concerts after work just for fun rather than educating themselves about a particular genre of music.

Old enough Shanghaiese would recall the outdoor cultural events (and there were many of them) held decades ago, except the only movies screened were celluloid versions of modern Peking Operas and the music and songs carried a revolutionary theme. In that sense, people's obsession with so-

called *gaoya* art today is not much different from the revolutionary theme mania.

Why can't Shanghai give young musicians and artists from the city and across the country a stage to showcase their talent in local parks and public spaces along the Huangpu River? Such a stage could well become the platform from where they start their career and even shoot to stardom.

While outdoor events in Shanghai are mainly funded by the government, events in New York are supported by foundations, corporations and individuals. On Tuesday evening, when I was sitting on the huge lawn in Brooklyn's Fort Greene Park, three young women were walking among the audience, holding donation boxes.

Shanghai, too, can find more corporate sponsors. It will be a great opportunity for businesses and individuals to show what a great community they are.

New York is a hot destination for Chinese officials and tourists visiting the US. They should come in summer to discover the great free treats in its parks and public spaces.

Shanghai's summer may be stifling, but more colorful events in parks and public spaces can add much-needed whiffs of cool air.

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